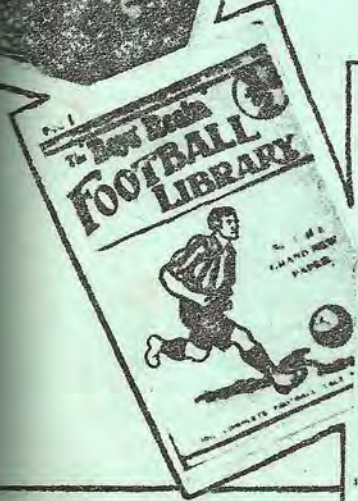


Collectors'

PRICE
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VOLUME 13 NUMBER 156

DECEMBER, 1959 Digest



Bob
Whiter

Frank Richards stands; when Bunter falls, Frank Richards falls; and when Richards falls, there will be an end to the art of writing for young people."

And so say all of us. Congratulations, Frank Richards. A mighty fine show. May Billy Bunter's Colosseum stand for a long, long time to come!

Part of the programme was repeated in "Pick of the Week" on the following Friday.

* * * * *

BILLY BUNTER at the VICTORIA PALACE

Gerald Campion will be Billy Bunter again for four weeks, commencing December 22nd, at the Victoria Palace, for matinees only. The new show is entitled "Billy Bunter Flies East." The opening scene is set at the school, after which Harry Wharton and his friends go to India, accompanied, without their knowledge, by the Owl of the Remove. Though the play is not written by Frank Richards it comes to London with our author's approval and good wishes.

It is written by Maurice McLoughlin, a man who knows his Greyfriars, and he has tried hard to make sure that there shall be nothing which might be irritating to the most conservative Hamiltonian. Mr. McLoughlin is now a subscriber to the C.D. He speaks of the sadness he feels when he recollects the hundreds of Magnets which have passed through his hands and beyond his reach. He still has four Holiday Annuals which he cherishes.

We appeal to all C.D. readers, so far as they are able, to support this show. Very few of the heroes of our youth are left to us. It is up to us to keep alive the few which remain, and give all our help to keep them going strong.

The London Club is organising a party for Saturday, January 2nd, and has booked a block of seats at the Victoria Palace. It is expected that photographs will be taken of our party with Billy Bunter and Co., and it promises to be an hilarious afternoon.

If you would like to join the party on January 2nd, drop a few lines to Ben Whiter, the Secretary of the London Club, with your remittance at 12/6 per seat, or to the Editor of the C.D. You will be given a warm welcome.

In any case, please take your relatives and friends - and particularly the youngsters (the Billy Bunter fans of to-morrow) - to the show, some time during its run, and then write and tell us your opinion of it.

* * * * *

MORE ABOUT THE "VIC" SHOW

Last year, Bernadette Milnes and Michael Anthony (who are man and wife in private life) obtained the rights to present Billy Bunter on the stage for the first time. The show was more successful than even they had imagined it could be, delighting audiences of all ages. We hope that they will be equally successful with this year's production.

At present, Bernadette and Michael are appearing in the B.B.C. Television series "Private Investigator."

Maurice McLoughlin (referred to earlier), the writer of the play, was once a cartoonist with "Punch". He has a twelve-year-old son, Adam, who, presumably, is also a Greyfriars fan.

On November 19th, David Stuart (grandson of the famous composer, Leslie Stuart), called at our "editorial office" and spent a happy time discussing Billy Bunter, browsing over old Magnets and back issues of the C.D., and getting genuinely interested in hobby matters. Mr. Stuart, who is now a subscriber to the C.D., is the assistant-producer of the new Victoria Palace show. He is particularly keen on the school stories by Desmond Coke.

* * * * *

I MEET GEORGE RICHMOND SAMWAYS - Part 5

By W. O. G. Lofts

Foreword

This is the last of the present series of articles and I would very much like to express my appreciation to the many readers who have written to me, and who have shown such interest in Mr. Samways' revelations. At a later date, more articles on Mr. Samways will be written for the interest of C.D. readers - perhaps an article from Mr. Samways' own pen.

Readers who receive the "Story Paper Collector" will perhaps be interested to know that a full-length article on Mr. Samways will be in issue No. 71, complete with a photograph. Unfortunately, for technical reasons, it was not possible to reproduce the photograph in the C.D.

MORE QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

Q. It was once suggested that substitute stories in the Magnet and the Gem should have been published under the authors' own names. Do you agree with this?

A. "The names 'Frank Richards' and 'Martin Clifford' were used from the beginning to the end of Magnet and Gem history. This was editorial,

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JANUARY, 1960

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The C.D.
marches on
into the
Future!

Bob Whiter

HAMILTONIANA

THE REV. HARRY WHARTON



John Stokes of Dublin sends us a cutting from a religious newspaper, published in Ireland. It announces a Protestant Crusade led by the Rev. Harry Wharton. The headquarters of the movement are in Richmond Road, Kingston-on-Thames.

John says in his letter: "We thought you would be interested to know what became of Harry Wharton. We always thought that he would join H.M.'s army, didn't we?"

ECHO FROM AFAR

Lady Archer-Shee died recently in New York. Her husband was the older brother of George Archer-Shee, the Osborne cadet wrongly dismissed from the naval college on an accusation that he stole a 5/- postal-order. In 1908 the boy's father instructed Sir Edward Carson to proceed against the Admiralty to clear George's name. Despite official apathy and obstruction, this was achieved. It was a case that aroused the nation.

Terence Rattigan took the story and made it into *The Winslow Boy*, but of greater interest to us is that Frank Richards based a fine story on the affair, in a Red Cover Magnet; in that story, Bob Cherry was accused of the theft, and Major Cherry fought for his son's honour.

"BILLY BUNTER FLIES EAST"

The most striking feature of the new Billy Bunter play at the Victoria Palace is how well it is acted. Players, in a production of this type, could so easily spoil it by over-acting. Neither apathy nor over-acting are allowed to rear their fearsome heads in "Billy

"Bunter Flies East" and the result is a credit to all concerned. Every member of the cast gets his teeth into his part, and all give sterling performances. The team-work is grand to see.

Gerald Campion, as always, is the perfect Bunter. His performance is amazing. John Downing and Alastair Speed, as Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry respectively, strike one at first as hailing from the Sixth form, but so well do they enter into the spirit of the thing that the Famous Five rapidly come to life as a bunch of high-spirited school-boys.

Michael Anthony and Aidan Turner, as the crooks of the piece, are fine, acting with commendable restraint yet convincing villainy. They do not put a foot wrong.

The story is slight, but the interest is sustained till the final curtain. The humorous situations are slick and well contrived, and they follow one another with a smoothness which is obviously the result of hard rehearsal. Particularly well done is the sequence where Bunter drinks the spirit intended for the stove, and causes brilliant pantomime-like explosions all over the stage.

The Victoria Palace is a large theatre, but the diction of the players is so good that they can be heard, without exception, from every seat in the house. Perhaps it is apt to say that the Gem line of the play is when Bob Cherry views the giant idol, and says: "It's as ugly as Herries' bulldog at St. Jim's."

The only point that made this critic click his tongue at the opening performance was that Hurree Singh wore a turban at school, and later on wore it in conjunction with his pyjamas. Even this may subsequently have been put into line.

Obviously aimed at the younger element, which is right and proper at this season of the year, "Billy Bunter Flies East" is a delightful entertainment for the young at heart from eight to eighty. The leering idol might startle those over eighty, though they would still be delighted with Billy Bunter's gastronomic performance.

A full report of the visit of the London Club in force on 2nd January, will appear in our next issue.

* * * * *

DO YOU REMEMBER? - BY ROGER M. JENKINS

No. 34 - Magnet No. 789 - "Billy Bunter's Boat-Race Party."

Charles Hamilton did not often write a story with a topical interest. It is true that some of the earlier Gems and Magnets contained references to the Coronation of 1911 and descriptions of trips to

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O.B.B.C. TAKES THE VICTORIA PALACE



BY STORM

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB TAKES THE VICTORIA PALACE

By
DON WEBSTER

BY STORM

By
DON WEBSTER

If any proof were needed regarding the popularity of that immortal Frank Richards' character, Billy Bunter, the attendances at the Victoria Palace matinees during the month's run of "Billy Bunter Flies East", have been evidence itself.

On Saturday, January 2nd, thanks to the untiring efforts of Eric Fayne, some fifty or so members of the London Branch of the O.B.B.C. visited the performance.

A report on the play has already appeared in the C.D., so further comments on the cast and acting would be superfluous, but I must reiterate that Gerald Champion is the ideal Bunter - he lives the part.

Furthermore, the characters portraying the Famous Five are infinitely superior to those playing the Removites on television.

An added interest to the show, as far as we were concerned, was that one of our own members had written the incidental music for the production.

Eric Fayne, whose name appeared among the "credits" on the printed programme, composed two Bunter songs, "Roll Along, Billy Bunter" and



"Old Billy Bunter, the chocolate hunter" and these were happily used as theme music. Though we received copies of the lyrics, and made efforts to sing, we were not too successful in this direction, but we made up for our vocal shortcomings by tapping our feet and humming.



At the end of the performance, Eric Fayne announced that the O.B.B. Clubs all over the world, had sent Billy Bunter a cake. The presentation was made by two little girls, the daughters of Vernon Evett of Gravesend, who is himself a keen Greyfriars fan. Gerald Campion was brilliant when "Bunter took the Cake." The house rocked with unrestrained laughter.

Then Eric produced a postal-order (manufactured by our artist supreme, Bob Whiter), and announced that the O.B.B.C. felt that it was time Bunter's long-expected postal-order arrived. Once again Bunter had us in stitches with his antics.

Finally, Eric called for three cheers for Billy Bunter, asking the boys and girls from eight to eighty to cheer so loudly that Frank Richards would hear them down in Broadstairs. The result was shattering and ear-splitting. The audience in the Victoria

Palace showed no signs of lung trouble that afternoon.

After the performance most of our party went on to the stage, and were photographed with Gerald Campion. It was an afternoon of

Gerald Campion

tremendous success, and one which none of us who were fortunate enough to be there will ever forget.

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SECOND PARTY

Another large party, for which the O.B.B.C. was indirectly responsible, attended the show the following Saturday, January 9th. This time it comprised old boys and girls of the Modern School, Surbiton, who were joined by several club members, including the Rev. John Dockery and George Sewell. This time Billy Bunter was presented with a Tuck Hamper (Les Rowley will be delighted to know that it was his famous hamper - refilled), and the presentation was made by two old boys of the Modern School in their red and white striped blazers. This time Eric Fayne informed the audience that the O.B.B.Clubs, all over the world, had sent Bunter a Tuck Hamper, and two boys of St. Jim's had come along to present it to him. The joke was enjoyed by the vast audience.

Then came the cheering again. Whether it was louder than on the previous Saturday it is difficult to say, but it was truly terrific. Finally, the two boys of St. Jim's stood among the Greyfriars boys while several "curtains" were taken before a wildly enthusiastic audience.

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TRUE STORY

One afternoon at the Billy Bunter show, a little girl of no more than three years of age sat with her eyes glued on the stage. When Billy Bunter went off, during the performance, she announced in a shrill voice "Billy Bunter's gone to the bathroom."

After the last curtain had fallen, and the National Anthem had been played, she sent up a wail "Billy Bunter has gone. I want Billy Bunter."

Truly our fat Owl catches the fancy young!

- - - - -

AU REVOIR, BUT NOT GOOD-BYE

The final curtain fell on "Billy Bunter Flies East" on Saturday, January, 16th. Gerald Campion received a tremendous ovation. He could so easily have spoiled things by stepping out of character, and

making a typical curtain speech. He didn't. It was Billy Bunter who came forward, with a typical Bunterism, to squeak "All I have to say to you is that you're a lot of cheeky beasts." And all the cheeky beasts wended their way homewards, happy and contented, and humming "Roll Along, Billy Bunter."

Enthusiasts will be delighted to know that this year's presentation has been even more successful than last year's. Our Northern friends will be delighted to know that arrangements are in hand to present "Billy Bunter Flies East" at a northern theatre next Christmas. And we are all delighted to know that Billy Bunter has become as much a national institution of the London stage at Yuletide as Peter Pan, and a brand new Billy Bunter play will be presented in London next season.

OPINIONS, PLEASE. No. 3.

VERA NICHOLLS writes:

"Why is Mr. Arlington Wilkes, a master at St. Frank's, never mentioned? He was an insignificant, shabby little man, yet I liked him. Didn't anyone else care for him?"

Have you any views on the above opinion. If you have, jot them down, keeping them short and snappy, and post to the Editor.

W. LISTER writes:

"It is many years since I saw a Nelson Lee, but I well remember that Handforth was a favourite character of mine. Anything good will always create a demand. The demand at that time was for Handforth. I don't think he featured too much."

BERT HOLMES writes:

"Why the dickens does one of your readers regard Wodehouse's school stories as 'Almost unreadable'? What's wrong with 'Mike' and 'The Golden Bat'?"

DON'T FORGET TO FILL UP AND RETURN TO THE EDITOR

YOUR WHO'S WHO QUESTIONNAIRE!