Deutsch. Originally simply a ‘glossary of terms used in librarianship and the book crafts’ it has been extended to provide a general reference book to librarianship. It will be more than twice as large as the previous edition.

Several members of Council had the pleasure of entertaining Mr. J. Arthur Greenwood to lunch when he was on holiday in England during September.

Dr. Lindsay Verrier, the Society’s Corresponding Member in the South Pacific, and E. Neal Bozarth, Jr., of Takoma Park, Maryland, U.S.A., have become Life Members.

Mr. H. Anthony Rydings, Librarian of the University of Hong Kong, is compiling a cumulative index to the Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. It is due for publication this year.

CORRESPONDENCE
The Editor, The Indexer.

BEST, MR. JUSTICE, HIS GREAT MIND
Sir,

Your correspondent, Mr. George Chowdharay-Best, seeks information regarding the above alleged index entry. I have always thought of it as a sort of boy-Chattertonian hoax-entry, concocted pour rire.

It may be as well to see what is said on the subject in Benjamin Wheatley’s How to make an index (1902), which is responsible for many of our best indexing anecdotes, too often quoted without acknowledgment. It will be observed that Wheatley, who was writing twenty years before the publication of Lord Birkenhead’s book quoted by Mr. Chowdharay-Best, mentions two other possible sources of the entry; we find on p. 157:

A good instance of the frivolous entry is the hackneyed quotation,

‘Best (Mr. Justice), his great mind’,
which is supposed to be a reference to a passage in this form: ‘Mr. Justice Best said that he had a great mind to commit the man for trial’.**

This particular reference is almost too good to be true, and I have not been able to trace it to its source. That has been said to be in the index to one of Chitty’s law-books, and it is added that possibly Chitty had a grudge against Sir William Draper Best, one of the Puisne Judges of the King’s Bench from 1819 to 1824, and Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas from 1824 to 1829, in which latter year he was created Lord Wynford. Another explanation is that it was a joke of Leigh Hunt’s, who first published it in the Examiner.

Wheatley’s last sentence provides a possibly potent clue, which might prove well worth following up. James Henry Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) edited the Sunday newspaper, The Examiner, from 1808 to 1821. Since Sir William was not appointed a Judge until 1819, any reference to him as ‘Mr. Justice Best’ in the paper would have to have occurred in the last two volumes, and by a strange coincidence those are (I believe) the only two volumes available at the Library Association. It would be a notable triumph if Mr. Chowdharay-Best—can he by any chance be a descendant of the ‘great-minded’ Chief Justice?—were to succeed in a research in which the distinguished Dr. Wheatley had failed.

Incidentally, it so happens that Lord Birkenhead’s connexion with the ‘hackneyed quotation’ was also mentioned (but quite differently from his own statement in his book) in a leading article in The Times of 8 May, 1957:

The story has been attributed to Lord Birkenhead that seeing in an index ‘Lord X, his great mind’, and being interested to have such an evaluation, he looked up the reference to find it was that Lord X said ‘he had a great mind’ to do something or other.

This was part of the famous leader (quoted in full facsimile in the first number of The Indexer, Spring, 1958), in welcoming the formation of The Society of Indexers. The thunderer expressed its view that ‘here is a necessary body if ever there was one’.

Yours obediently

NORMAN KNIGHT.

**Commit . . . for trial. This alone is enough to make one suspicious of the quotation’s genuineness as having come from any law-book. High Court Judges do not commit for trial, that being the function of magistrates.—G.N.K.