

A FURTHER STORY FROM FRANK RICHARDS

By The Rev. J. P. H. Hobson

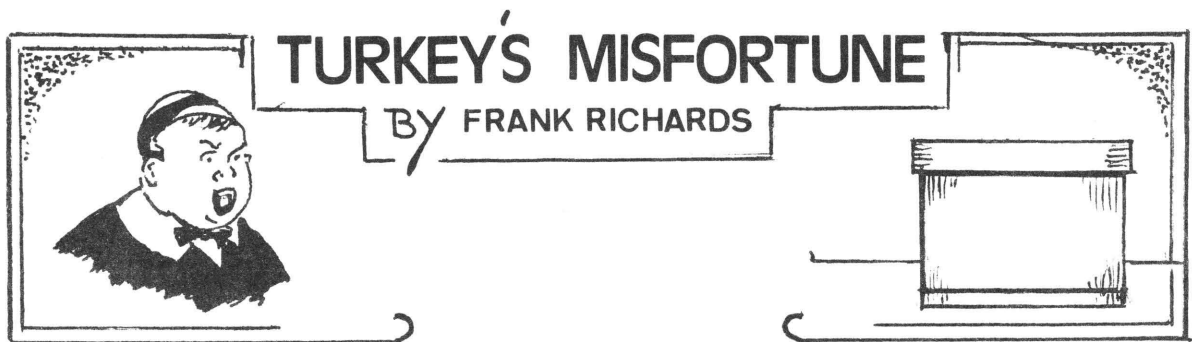
At the end of my article in the 1986 C.D. Annual on "My correspondence with Frank Richards" there appeared the first story "No Tuck for Turkey", which he wrote for me.

I published this in the 1953 Special Coronation edition of the magazine of the school of which I was Headmaster.

On receiving a copy of the magazine Frank Richards wrote to me on April 6th, "I like very much the way it is printed: it is a pleasure to read such beautifully clear type. I am glad to hear the boys liked the little Carcroft story." I was encouraged by this letter to behave like Oliver Twist and ask for more!

He agreed and wrote to me in August 1954 enclosing the typescript of "Turkey's Misfortune". It was in this letter that he wrote rather sadly: "To tell the truth, I am not just now quite so fit on I was this time last year --- and the years do accumulate".

They do indeed!! Once again there is no tuck for Turkey in "Turkey's Misfortune".



"PUT them in this box!"

"And lock it!"

"Safe there, even from Turkey!"

Turkey Tuck could not help grinning, as he listened to those remarks. Harry Compton, Bob Drake, and Dick Lee, in the corner study at Carcroft, were speaking with the study door half-open. Every word was audible in the passage, where the fat Turkey lurked and listened. The Carcroft Co. were well aware of Turkey's nefarious manners and customs. They knew that he would listen at doors, and had indeed sometimes booted him for the same. They knew that no fellow's tuck was safe from his fat hands. Yet they seemed to have no suspicion, as they talked in their study, that Turkey was in the offing: or that his gooseberry eyes had watched them conveying parcels to the study.

"Cram it in," came Harry Compton's voice.

"Hardly room for the lot, by gum!" said Bob.

"Must get it all in", said Lee, "Leave anything out, and it will do

the vanishing trick while we're gone. You know Turkey!"

Turkey suppressed a fat chuckle.

He heard a sound of packing and cramming from the study. Then the sound of the lid of a box, closed with some difficulty. And then the click of a key, as the box was locked.

"Safe now!" said Bob Drake. "If that fat villain comes nosing round, before we come back, he will nose into the cupboard. Not likely to think that there's tuck in that old box."

Turkey Tuck retreated rapidly at that point. He did not want the chums of the Fourth to see him on the spot when they came out of their study. He was standing at the passage window, gazing out at the pigeons in the quad, his plump back to them, when they came along to the stairs and went down. If they glanced at him, he did not see it, having of course no eyes in the back of his head. If they grinned, he remained in ignorance of that also. He waited at the window till they were gone, and did not turn his fat head till their footsteps died away down the

staircase.

Then he revolved upon his axis. He gave one squint over the banisters, to make assurance doubly sure that the Co. were quite gone. Then he shot up the passage to the corner study.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Turkey, as he rolled into that study. Under the table stood a wooden box. Turkey might not have noticed it there, and certainly would never have guessed that it contained comestibles, but for what he had overheard. Now he knew!

He stopped, and dragged the box out from under the table. It was heavy, and Turkey was no athlete. Meals between meals had developed Turkey's circumference, but not his muscles: and dodging games-practice did not make for fitness. He panted as he dragged at that heavy box.

It was no wonder that it was heavy. The wood was rather thick, in the first place: and then, it was, as Turkey knew, crammed to the very brim. The contents of three parcels had been packed into it. Still, the weight surprised him a little. Jars of jam, probably, tins of pineapple and apricots and that kind of weighty thing, Turkey concluded. It looked as if the Carcroft Co. had planned to stand a very extensive spread, -- perhaps asking a dozen fellows. If so, a dozen fellows were going to be disappointed. It is sad to relate that Turkey had not the slightest scruple about annexing that munificent supply of tuck. He ought to have had. But he hadn't! All Turkey was thinking about was getting that box open, and transferring the contents to the inner circle of his circumference.

He could not deal with the lock. His eyes strayed to the study poker. But he realised that banging that box open with a poker would draw more attention to the spot than was convenient. Also, he did not know how long Harry Compton and Co. would be gone, or how soon they might return. Obviously, there was only one thing for Turkey to do, -- get that box away to a safer quarter, and get it open at his leisure.

He grasped it and heaved it up.

"Oh, haddocks!" gasped Turkey, as he heaved.

The weight was tremendous. He staggered under it. For the first time in his fat life, Turkey would have been better satisfied with a smaller supply. But it was all or nothing: and he staggered out of the corner study with that heavy box on his shoulder, panting for breath.

He perspired up the passage with his burden. He dared not halt at his own study: they might look for him there. He tottered on to the box-room stair. How he got that heavy box up the stair, even with resting it on step after step, he hardly knew. He was streaming with perspiration by the time he reached the landing above, where he sat on the box for a much-needed rest, and pumped in breath. For full five minutes he was incapable of another effort. But at long last, he rose, and bent himself to the task again: and with an almost expiring effort heaved the box into the box-room.

"Ooooh!" gasped Turkey. He mopped his brow with his handkerchief. He could not help feeling that, immense as was the quantity of tuck in that box, he had earned it.

However, there it was at last, safe in a secluded retreat. Nobody was likely to hear banging from the box-room: and Turkey had to bang hard and often, with a billet of wood, before the lock yielded. But the lid was open at last: and Turkey threw it back, and prepared to enjoy the fruit of his long labours. And then--!

Then, as the poet has remarked, a change came o'er the spirit of his dream!

"Oh!" gasped Turkey.

He stared into the box.

He goggled into it.

It was hard for Turkey to believe his gooseberry eyes, as he stared and goggled at a solid mass of bricks and half-bricks, which packed that box to capacity.

"Oh haddocks!" gurgled Turkey.

He had taken it for granted that the parcels he had seen the

Co. convey into the corner study contained tuck. What else should they contain? Why, in the name of wonder, should they carry in parcels of bricks and half-bricks and lock them up in that box? It was quite inexplicable: until it dawned on Turkey's fat brain that they had known, all the while, that he was listening outside the study, and that the whole thing was a leg-pull, planned for his especial benefit!

Turkey gazed at that box of bricks and half-bricks, with feelings that could not be expressed in words. He had

laboured and perspired and almost collapsed under that terrific weight --for this! Turkey could eat almost anything: but bricks and half-bricks were beyond even Turkey. There was no tuck for Turkey. There was only an ache in all his fat limbs, in an ocean of perspiration. Words failed him. He just groaned.

When Harry Compton and Co saw Turkey again, they smiled. But Turkey did not smile. Turkey seemed to be understudying that ancient monarch who never smiled again!

THE END

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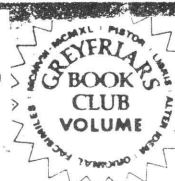
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