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BUNTER—AND BUNTER!



BILLY BUNTER'S FAREWELL TO ST. JIM'S. 26-4-19
(An Amazing Scene in the Grand, Long, Complete School Tale in this Issue.)



A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete School Story of
TOM MERRY & CO. at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Bunter Takes the Cake!

"GRUNDY'S going it!" said Tom Merry, with a laugh.

The Terrible Three were coming along the Shell passage from the stairs when a loud and wrathful voice was heard from Study No. 3.

It was the voice of George Alfred Grundy of the Shell.

"I'll scalp him! I'll pulverise him! I'll burst him! My cake! My sultana-cake! I'll spifficate him!"

Monty Lowther chuckled.

"Now, if I were a betting chap," he remarked, "I'd lay you two to one that Bunter's had Grundy's cake."

"No takers!" grinned Manners. "It's a cert!"

"I'll squash him!" came Grundy's powerful voice. "The fat bounder! The pilfering worm! My cake—my sultana-cake!"

The Terrible Three paused at the study doorway and looked in.

George Alfred Grundy was brandishing a pair of very large flats, his rugged face pink with wrath. He looked as if he were about to commit assault and battery upon his study-mates, Wilkins and Gunn. But he wasn't. The object of Grundy's wrath was, fortunately, not present.

"Easy, old scout!" said Tom Merry. "Your dulcet tones can be heard a mile off, Grundy."

"I'll squash him!" roared Grundy

"Put on the soft pedal," urged Manners. "You'll have Railton coming up to inquire soon."

"I'll burst him!"

"It's really too bad," said Wilkins. "Here we come in hungry after cricket, and somebody's pinched the cake. I suppose it was Bunter."

"Suppose it?" roared Grundy. "Of course it was Bunter! No supposing about it. I'll spifficate him!"

"Well, a chap naturally thinks of Bunter when a cake is missing," remarked Tom Merry. "But all Sussex doesn't want to hear about it, Grundy."

"Rats! Where is he? Where's Bunter?"

"Not in my waistcoat-pocket. If he's got your cake, I don't suppose you'll find him in a hurry," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"I'm going to find him. I'm going to pulverise him! I'll make him howl! I'll make him cringe! He's always raiding fellows' grub!" howled Grundy. "Come

and help me look for him, you asses, and don't stand there blinking!"

That polite injunction was addressed to Grundy's study-mates.

Tom Merry & Co. went on to their own quarters, smiling. Grundy's cake had arrived by post that day—a terrific cake, from his affectionate Uncle Grundy—a cake that proved that the piping times of peace had really returned at last. A good many fellows had heard of that cake; and evidently Bunter of the Fourth had heard of it, and put his knowledge to account.

Grundy grabbed up a cricket-stump, and strode out of the study. Wilkins and Gunn did not follow, however. They wanted their tea; and, though the cake was missing, there were other things. They left George Alfred to look for Bunter, while they looked after their tea.

Grundy strode down the passage, stump in hand, with wrath in his brow. The destructive wrath of Achilles, so eloquently sung by Homer, was a mere joke to the wrath of George Alfred Grundy. If Bunter was discovered, it certainly meant a new recruit in the ranks of the noble army of martyrs, whether Bunter had the cake or not.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form was glancing out of the doorway of Study No. 6 when Grundy came striding by. Grundy caught him by the shoulder.

"Seen him?" he demanded.

"Bai Jove!"

"Seen Bunter?"

"Pway welease my shouldah, Gwunday," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "You are sewiously incommodin' me by gwabbin' me in that wuff mannah."

"Have you seen Bunter?" roared Grundy.

"I wefuse to weply, Gwunday, until you have weleased my shouldah. Pew-waps you are not awah," added Arthur Augustus crushingly, "that you are wumplin' my jacket!"

Grundy looked very much disposed to begin operations with the cricket-stump. However, he restrained his wrath, and released Arthur Augustus' shoulder. The swell of St. Jim's carefully smoothed out his jacket.

"You have wumpled it," he said severely.

"Have you seen Bunter?" asked Grundy, breathing hard. "The fat beast is in your Form. Have you seen him?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good! Where is he?"

"I weally do not know, Gwunday!"

"You ass! If you've seen him you know where he is, don't you?" howled Grundy.

"I wefuse to be called an ass, Gwunday!"

"You—you—you— Where's Bunter?" gasped George Alfred. "You said you'd seen him."

"Yaas; but it is quite a considerable time since I have seen him, Gwunday. I do not wemembah seein' him since lessons."

"Fathead!" howled Grundy.

And he strode on. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammèd his celebrated monocle into his eye, and gazed after the excited Shell fellow with strong disapproval in his gaze.

"Bai Jove!" he remarked: "Gwunday's mannahs seem to be gwowin' worse and worse. I weally wegard him as little bettah than a wuffian! Gwunday!"

Grundy looked back, perhaps expecting some information with regard to Bunter.

"Well?" he snapped.

"Gwunday, I feel bound to say that I wegard you as little bettah than a wuffian!"

"You—you—you silly idiot!"

"Bai Jove!"

Grundy tramped on to No. 2, the study which Bunter of the Fourth shared with Mellish and Trimble. There was little chance of finding Bunter so easily, if he really had the cake; but Grundy was beginning at the beginning, and he meant to leave no stone unturned.

The door of No. 2 flew open with a crash as Grundy's heavy boot was jammed upon it. Mellish and Trimble jumped up in surprise.

"What the thump—" began Mellish.

"Look here—" howled Trimble.

Grundy strode in.

"Is Bunter here?" he roared.

"Can't you see he isn't?" snorted Mellish.

Grundy glared round the study. Certainly, the fat junior was not visible there.

"Where is he?"

"Blessed if I know, or care!"

"He's got my cake!"

"Bother your cake!"

"My big cake—my big sultana-cake—the one my Uncle Grundy sent me to-day!"

"Bless your Uncle Grundy!"

"And I dare say you two are hand-in-

glove with him!" roared Grundy. "I dare say you're sharing the loot with him. It would be like you! I'll teach you to raid my study!"

Whack, whack!

"Why, you ass," howled Mellish frantically, dodging the stump, "you dangerous maniac—yaroooh—I don't know anything about your silly cake! Oh crikey!"

"Keep off!" yelled Trimble. "I haven't seen—I don't know—I didn't—I wasn't—Yooop!"

Whack, whack!

"Yow-ow! Help!"

Grundy strode out of the study, leaving Mellish and Trimble roaring. He had to search further for Bunter of the Fourth; but his visit to Bunter's study had given him a little solace to go on with, as it were.

CHAPTER 2.

The Way of the Transgressor!

"**A**NYTHING for tea?" asked Tom Merry.

"Lots of bread."

"Oh!"

"And a cold kipper——"

"H'm!"

"And bloater-paste. I rather wish Bunter would drop in to tea, and bring Grundy's cake with him!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Hallo! I believe he's been here!" exclaimed Manners.

He pointed to the carpet. Strawn upon the carpet were crumbs—many crumbs—and a few sultanas. Somebody had had a cake there, that was clear.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry in great indignation. "The fat bouncer brought it here to devour, like a blessed dog taking a bone to his kennel! I wish we'd caught him!"

"Especially before he'd finished the cake!" said Monty Lowther. "What rotten luck! Now it's cold kipper and bloater-paste!"

The Terrible Three sat down to tea. It was a frugal tea; but they were prepared to do it justice after an hour or so on the playing-fields.

"Manners, old chap, do you want all the floor?" inquired Lowther.

Manners stared at him.

"All the floor?" he repeated.

"Yes, if you don't, give a fellow room to put his feet under the table!"

"Ass!" said Manners politely. "My feet are on this side."

"Then it's your hoofs, Tommy!" said Lowther. "What are you spreading your hoofs all over the study for? Have you taken to wearing boots as big as Grundy's?"

"My feet are under my chair," answered Tom.

Lowther looked puzzled.

"Monty, old man, don't be a funny ass!" exclaimed Manners.

"Eh?"

"Stop bumping me on the knees, you duffer! You nearly made me spill my tea!" exclaimed Manners warmly.

"Bother your silly knees! I'm a yard or two from your idiotic knees! Blow your knees!"

"Why, there you go again!" roared Manners. "Look here, Monty, it isn't a joke to jam your boots on a fellow's bags!"

"I'm not!" howled Lowther.

"If it's you, Tom——"

"I'm not touching you, you ass! Why, who's bumping on me?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "My hat! There's something under the table! Has that silly ass Herries let his bulldog loose in the House?"

"Oh crumbs!"

Three juniors jumped up as suddenly as if they had been moved by an electric

shock. If Herries' bulldog was under the table, it was not a safe pastime to stir him up with their feet.

"Towser!" gasped Lowther.

"Towser! Come out, you beast!"

There was no motion under the table, and no sound. The cover hid what was underneath it, and Lowther stretched out his hand to the cover, and drew it back again quickly.

"I'll shift him!" he said. "There's a golf-club here—I'll shove it under the table, and——"

"Yaroooh!"

A sudden howl came from under the table, and it certainly was not the voice of Towser, the bulldog.

"Bunter!" howled Tom Merry.

"Oh, my hat! Bunter! He's under the table! Come out, you fat rascal!" roared Monty Lowther.

"Ow! Keep that club away, you beast! I'm not here!"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I—I'm coming out!"

The cover was lifted, and a fat face and a large pair of spectacles glimmered out. Bunter of the Fourth blinked hastily round the study.

"That beast Grundy isn't here?" he gasped.

"No! Come out, you porpoise!"

Bunter rolled out from under the table. A large chunk of cake was grasped in his fat hand. Apparently it was all that remained of the big sultana-cake that had arrived that day from Uncle Grundy.

"The fat rotter!" exclaimed Manners. "He was here all the time! He dodged under the table when he heard us coming."

"I—I thought it was Grundy!" gasped Bunter, blinking at them. "That—that rotter Grundy might be after my cake, you know!"

"Grundy's cake, you mean!"

"I mean, my cake! It—it came to-day from—from one of my titled relations!" gasped Bunter. "It would be just like Grundy to say that it was his cake. He's untruthful!"

Tom Merry threw open the door.

"Travel!" he said curtly.

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"Cut!"

"You—you might look out and see if Grundy's in sight! The awful beast is after my cake——"

Tom Merry laughed, and glanced into the passage.

"All clear!" he answered.

"I say, you fellows, I'll stay to tea, if you like! I'll let you have some of my cake——"

"Hold him while I get the poker!" said Lowther.

"Ow!"

Bunter did not wait to be held. He bolted. Tom Merry slammed the door after him. Bunter paused in the passage, to yell "Beast!" through the keyhole, and then hurriedly retired. But his luck was out. As he headed for the staircase Grundy came up from below, after a fruitless search in the lower passages.

Grundy jumped as he saw Bunter—with the remains of the cake still in his fat hand.

"Now, you rotter!" he roared.

"I—I say, Grundy—— Yaroooh!"

Bunter dodged wildly. The fragments of the cake were strewn on the floor as the fat junior performed unaccustomed gymnastic exercises, frantically dodging the stump.

"Yoop! Help! Fire! Murder!" roared Bunter.

Whack, whack!

"Help! Yaroooh!"

"What's this row about?" exclaimed a sharp voice, as Kildare of the Sixth came up the stairs. "Grundy! Stop that at once——"

"He's pinched my cake!" howled Grundy.

"Stop it! Bunter, you're wanted!"

"I—I say, Kildare, I haven't pinched his cake! It—it was sent to me by—by one of my relations—my titled relations——"

"Cheese it!" said the St. Jim's captain.

"Come downstairs at once, Bunter! You've been asked for on Mr. Railton's telephone."

"Oh! All right!" gasped Bunter.

The fat junior had never been so glad to see Kildare. The destructive wrath of George Alfred Grundy had been stopped in full career, as it were. Grundy shook the stump after Bunter as the latter went down the staircase with the Sixth-Former. The licking was unavoidably postponed.

But it was only postponed, and Bunter was not feeling happy as he accompanied the prefect downstairs. The Owl of Greyfriars was not finding his life at St. Jim's a path of roses.

CHAPTER 3.

A Peek of Troubles.

MR. RAILTON signed to Bunter to enter as the fat junior appeared in the doorway of his study. There were traces of

cake all over Bunter—his mouth, his hands, and his fat waistcoat. Mr. Railton's glance expressed disapproval, but he made no remark on that.

"You are wanted on the telephone, Bunter," he said. "Mr. Penman has asked to be allowed to speak to you, and I have consented. Kindly take the receiver at once! It is a trunk-call from Canterbury."

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter.

"Lose no time, Bunter!"

The fat junior blinked at the House-master and at the telephone, of which the receiver was off the hooks. He did not seem in a hurry to answer that trunk-call from Canterbury.

"I—I say, sir——" he gasped.

"Well, Bunter?" said Mr. Railton sharply.

"D-did you say Mr. Penman, sir?"

"Yes; your former employer," said the House-master. "Go to the telephone at once!"

"I—I think there's some mistake, sir. I—I don't think he can want to speak to me!"

"Bunter!"

"P-p-perhaps he's got the wrong number, sir!"

"Go to the telephone at once!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, in a voice that made the fat junior jump.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter.

He rolled to the telephone, and the House-master quitted the study, to leave him to talk undisturbed to the gentleman at Canterbury.

Bunter took up the receiver, and put it to his fat ear in a very gingerly manner. For reasons quite unknown to Mr. Railton, or to anyone else at St. Jim's, the fat junior was extremely reluctant to hold any communication with Mr. Penman.

Mr. Penman, the kind-hearted merchant of Canterbury, had sent Wally Bunter to St. Jim's, his old school, thus rewarding his junior clerk for the courage he had shown in preventing a burglary at the office. He was not in the least aware that Wally, who had made friends with Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, had changed places with his cousin and double, Billy Bunter of the Greyfriars Remove—Wally going to Greyfriars in Billy's place, and Billy Bunter starting a new career at St. Jim's.

Under those unusual circumstances the

Jess Bunter saw of Mr. Penman of Canterbury the better he liked it.

Almost a stranger at St. Jim's, he had easily passed himself there as his cousin Wally; but he was aware that a keen business man who knew Wally well was not likely to be easily deceived if they met.

Even with the length of the telephone wire between them, Billy Bunter did not look forward with pleasure to a talk with the Canterbury gentleman.

He hesitated, half-disposed to put up the receiver and cut off the interlocutor. But he reflected that in that case the obnoxious gentleman would only ring up again.

"Hallo!" he grunted into the transmitter ungraciously.

"Hallo! Is that you, Bunter?"

"Oh yes!"

"I have requested Mr. Railton to allow me to speak to you, Bunter. He has kindly consented."

"Oh, bother!"

"Eh?"

"N-n-nothing!"

"I have a very important communication to make to you, Bunter. I am coming down to see you, as it is a half-holiday on Wednesday."

"Oh dear!"

"What did you say, Bunter?"

"N-nothing!"

"For reasons that I will explain at length when I see you, Bunter, I have made a change in my plans regarding you."

"Oh!"

"You must not think, my boy," went on the kindly voice on the telephone, "that I am displeased with you, or disappointed in you in any way. I have not forgotten that you saved me from a very heavy loss on the occasion of the burglary in my office."

Billy Bunter grinned over the receiver. It was his cousin Wally who had done that creditable action; but Mr. Penman believed that he was speaking to Walter Gilbert Bunter. Probably he had never heard of William George.

"My intention," pursued Mr. Penman, little dreaming of whom he was addressing, "was to send you to my old school, Bunter, to prepare you for taking up, at a later date, a position of some importance. This was partly a reward for the great service you rendered me, and partly because I had a high opinion of your character, and was desirous of helping you to advance."

Billy Bunter grunted.

Why Mr. Penman, or anybody else, should think so highly of Wally Bunter was a mystery to him. So far as he could see, Wally was his "blessed poor relation"—merely that, and nothing more!

"Did you speak, Bunter?"

"Numno!"

"If I have made a change in my plans, my boy, you must not think that you will lose thereby; you will, in fact, be a considerable gainer. But I shall not make this alteration without your consent. I will see you, and we can discuss the matter freely."

"Oh crumbs!"

"What—what did you say?"

Bunter jammed the receiver back on the hooks. He had had enough of Mr. Penman. He rose from the chair perspiring.

"The silly old ass!" he murmured. "He's been down to see me once, and I got Wally to come over from Greyfriars in time. What does he want to see me again for? I'm blessed if I want to see him! I'm jolly well not going to, either."

"Have you finished your talk with Mr. Penman, Bunter?"

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The fat junior started. It was Mr. Railton's voice in the doorway.

"Ye-es, sir," he stammered. "He—ho—ho's coming here to-morrow, sir."

"Very well!"

Bunter hastily quitted the study, glad to get away from the Housemaster's keen eyes.

He blinked hastily round him as he went down the passage. Fortunately, Grundy was not in sight.

His fat face was glum in expression as he rolled on.

The Owl of Greyfriars had anticipated a glorious time when came to St. Jim's. Wally Bunter had met Tom Merry & Co., and made an agreeable impression upon them, especially upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Billy Bunter had arrived at St. Jim's with Wally's blushing honours thick upon him, as it were. For a time Wally's good reputation had stood him in good stead.

But that had worn off. The juniors still supposed that he was Wally—but they concluded that they had been mistaken in Wally, and that he was Billy Bunter's counterpart in other things as well as looks.

Arthur Augustus, who was destined to be a sort of bank from which Billy Bunter was to draw unlimited loans, had been tired out—and the other fellows had been tired out much sooner. Much to his wrath and disappointment, Billy Bunter found, after a few weeks, that St. Jim's was much the same as Greyfriars, so far as he was concerned; and he might as well have remained in his old school for any benefit he obtained by the change.

It was his own fault; but that was no comfort to him, even if he had been aware of it.

In fact, when he had once worn out Wally's welcome, he found that the change was for the worse—for he had the imposture to keep up, and nothing to gain thereby.

He had agreed with Wally to keep up the change of places for the whole term; but an agreement mattered little to William George Bunter when it turned to his disadvantage.

He had pondered on the matter of late, and almost made up his mind to change back—irrespective of Wally Bunter's views in the matter.

The news that Mr. Penman was coming down on the morrow quite decided him. Somehow, he had to avoid meeting that gentleman.

"Bunter!"

The voice of Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, interrupted Billy Bunter's dismal reflections.

"Yes, sir?" he stammered.

"I gave you a hundred lines in class this afternoon, Bunter, for gross carelessness and idleness," said the Fourth Form master severely.

"Oh, sir!"

"Have you done those lines?"

"Numno, sir!"

"I told you to do them immediately after lessons, I think, Bunter."

"I—I haven't had time, sir."

"They are doubled, Bunter! Bring them to me by six o'clock, or I shall double them again!"

And Mr. Lathom, with a portentous shake of the head, walked on. Billy Bunter cast a ferocious blink after him.

"Beast!" he murmured.

He rolled out into the quadrangle dimly. His mind was quite made up; but there was a lion in the path, so to speak. Bunter was in his usual impetuous state, and the railway fare to Greyfriars was a considerable sum. If he was to "bolt" from St. Jim's and return to his old school it was necessary to raise the wind first.

Billy Bunter had considerable and

unusual powers as a borrower. As Orpheus, with his lute, drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek, so Billy Bunter had often drawn reluctant loans from the most unlikely quarters. But there was a limit to all things. There were so many little loans outstanding now that it was difficult to think of a single person who was likely to "shell out," howsoever eloquently the fat junior pitched his tale.

"Bunter!"

"Oh dear! What do you want, Racke?"

Racke of the Shell stopped the fat junior in the quad, with a very unpleasant expression.

"You owe me money!" he said.

"Do I?" grunted Bunter. "Well, I owe other fellows money, too. I'm going to settle up all round shortly."

"What with?" sneered Racke.

"I'm expecting a postal-order—"

"Oh, dry up! You spoofed me into believing that you had a rich grandfather in Australia," snarled Racke. "I let you play banker on your I O U's. I've got a stack of them. What are they worth?"

Bunter grinned. He conjectured that the I O U's were worth their weight in wastepaper; but he did not tell Aubrey Racke so.

"So you think it's a laughing matter, do you?" growled Racke.

"Numno! I—"

"I know you can't settle," continued the sportsman of the Shell. "But you can pay something! And you're going to!"

"When I get my postal-order—"

"Never mind your postal-order! You're going to hand me half your allowance every week," said Racke.

"I'm jolly well not!" howled Bunter.

"You can't claim the money, and you know you can't! You'd get flogged if the Head knew you played banker in your study!"

"I can't claim it," assented Racke, with a dark look. "But I can take it out of your fat hide if you don't square. See?"

"Oh, really, Racke—"

"I'm beginning now," continued Racke. "Every time I see you I'm going to shake you—like this—"

"Yaroooh!"

"And kick you, like this—"

"Yooop!"

"Till you square. See?"

"Help!"

Aubrey Racke walked on, and left Bunter sitting in the quad, gasping.

It really looked as if the way of the transgressor was hard!

CHAPTER 4.

Bunter Has a Brain-Wave!

BILLY BUNTER wore a dismal expression in class the next day. He was not enjoying life.

Much of his leisure time of late had been spent in dodging Grundy of the Shell. He had also had to display considerable dexterity in dodging Aubrey Racke.

With such worries on his mind, he considered that he was not at all to blame for having left Mr. Lathom's lines undone. His Form-master took quite a different view, and the lines, already doubled, were re-doubled. Billy Bunter had the happy prospect of spending his next half-holiday writing out verses from P. Virgilus Maro—a great poet, but quite unappreciated by William George Bunter.

No wonder the Owl of Greyfriars had made up his fat mind to "bolt" at the earliest opportunity, and return to his native lair, so to speak. The fellows at Greyfriars were beasts, doubtless, but the

fellows at St. Jim's were equally beasts, and there was nothing to choose between them. Bunter had taken the decisive step, the previous evening, of writing to his cousin at Greyfriars to arrange a meeting at Friardale, near the school. At that meeting it was his firm intention to change places once more with the unfortunate Wally, whether Walter Gilbert liked it or not. And, in order to make sure that Wally would keep the appointment, Bunter had mentioned that if he didn't find him under the big oak in Friardale Wood he would come on to Greyfriars.

So it was certain that Wally Bunter would be there. The problem was, how was Billy Bunter to get there? The railway fare, or, rather, the lack of it, still stood as a lion in the path.

That morning Bunter's mind was occupied with the financial problem, and he had no time to waste on lessons. Financial problems were not supposed to be thought out in the Form-room, and Mr. Lathom woke Bunter up several times with the pointer.

The fat junior was rubbing his podgy hands dismally when the Fourth were dismissed. The Terrible Three of the Shell came on him in the passage, and they stopped, sympathetically.

"Had it had?" asked Tom Merry.
"Yow-ow! Yes. Lathom's a beast!"
"Wants you to work?" asked Monty Lowther, with deep sympathy. "Just like these Form-masters!"

"Oh, don't be a funny ass!" groaned Bunter. "I can tell you I'm fed up with it. I'm not going to stand it any more!"
"Going to give Lathom a licking?" asked Manners.

"You wait and see!" said Bunter darkly. "I'm going to chuck up the whole game. I'm fed up! Wally can look out for himself."
"Wally?" ejaculated the Terrible Three together.

"I—I mean——"
"Well, what do you mean?"
"I—I——"
"Look out, Bunter!" yelled Jack Blake down the corridor. "Here comes Grundy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh crumbs!"
Billy Bunter disappeared into the quadrangle at a very creditable speed, considering the weight he had to carry.

He was not seen again till dinner, and then he came in a minute late—to keep clear of Grundy and Racke. This dodging existence was telling on Bunter, and his fat face wore a worried look. It really was a dog's life.

After dinner he was out just before Grundy, and he vanished again. It was the first time on record that Bunter was quickest to leave the dinner-table.

In the interval before classes began that afternoon George Alfred Grundy might have been seen—and in point of fact was seen—hunting up and down the quad and round the passages, with wrath in his brow and a big stick in his hand. The fate of Uncle Grundy's sultana-cake had not yet been forgotten by the great Grundy. Apparently it would not be forgotten until Bunter of the Fourth had paid the penalty.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked as the time for lessons drew near. "I wonderah where Buntah is? There goes that sillay ass Gwunday lookin' for him!"

A good many of the juniors were interested in the question. But Bunter did not turn up before lessons. The Fourth went to their Form-room without him—and they found him there! The unhappy Owl of Greyfriars had taken refuge under the master's desk in the Form-room, and he did not come out till many footsteps told him that the

Form was gathering, and that all danger from Grundy was over for the present.

There was a chortle as Bunter emerged from under Mr. Lathom's desk.

But Bunter did not join in it. He failed to see anything comic in this painful situation of affairs.

"I say, you fellows!" he gasped. "I say——"

"Look out!" yelled Julian. "Here he comes!"

Dick Julian was alluding to Mr. Lathom, who was whisking along the corridor, but Bunter supposed he was speaking of Grundy—as perhaps Julian expected. The fat junior dived under the Form-master's desk again.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Herries.

"Come out of that, you fat duffer!"

"Keep him off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Lathom, as he entered the Form-room. "You seem

"Oh dear!"
"You utterly absurd boy! What are you doing under my desk?" thundered Mr. Lathom.

"Oh crumbs! I—I—I——"

"What absurd trick is this, Bunter?"

"I—I dropped something, sir!" gasped Bunter, crawling out, gasping. "I—I dropped a—a—a sovereign, sir——"

"Have you found it?"

"Nunno—yes—exactly! I mean——"

"You are a foolish boy, Bunter!"

"Yes, sir! Thank you, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Go to your place at once!"

Billy Bunter went to his place, thankful that Mr. Lathom did not pick up his cane. The Form-master's frown reduced the grinning class to order, and lessons began.

If Bunter had been absent-minded and inattentive that morning, he was doubly so in the afternoon. Somehow, after



"Bunter is the most unpunctual boy in the Form!" said Mr. Lathom crossly, as he went to his desk. "Why!—What!—Bless my soul!—BUNTER!" (See Chapter 4.)

very hilarious this afternoon, my boys! Pray quiet in the Form-room. This is not a place for uproarious merriment."

The Fourth-Formers suppressed their uproarious merriment as well as they could, and went to their places. Billy Bunter peered out from his hiding-place, and popped back as he saw Mr. Lathom.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "That uttah ass——"

"Silence in the class, please! One-boy does not seem to be here," said Mr. Lathom, blinking over the juniors. "Bunter is not present."

Silence.

"Why has not Bunter come in to lessons? Blake, do you know where Bunter is?"

"Ahem!"

"Kindly answer me, Blake."

"I—I think he—he—he's not far away, sir," stammered Blake.

"Bunter is the most unpunctual boy in the Form!" said Mr. Lathom crossly as he went to his desk. "Why—what

—bless my soul! Bunter!"

lessons that day, he was resolved to make a "break" for Greyfriars, and say a long farewell to St. Jim's. Somehow, he had to think out the transport problem. It was certain that he couldn't walk to Greyfriars, and equally certain that he couldn't travel by railway without paying his fare. The burning question was, what was going to be done—or perhaps it would be more correct to say, who was going to be done?

The geological strata of Great Britain were not likely to interest Bunter at such a time, and Mr. Lathom's voice was simply a worrying drone to his fat ears. Mr. Lathom could not be expected to sympathise with that point of view. Bunter was the recipient of some personal observations which ought to have made his ears burn—but didn't! His fat knuckles burned a little, however, when the pointer came into play.

But he hardly minded the pointer, for once; his fat brain had not worked without avail, and a little scheme had been

hatched there. He blinked reproachfully at Mr. Lathom.

"You are the stupidest boy in the class, Bunter!" rapped out the Form-master. "But that is no reason why you should be the idlest!"

"I'm sorry, sir! I—I'm worried!" said Bunter.

"Nonsense!"

"I'm in fearful trouble, sir!"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Lathom, his manner altering. "If that is correct, Bunter, I am sorry! What is your trouble?"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to Digby. "Is the fat duffah goin' to tell Lathom about Gwunday?"

The Fourth listened breathlessly for Bunter's explanation. They were surprised by his next words.

"It's my cousin, sir—my cousin at Greyfriars—"

"I was not aware you had a cousin at Greyfriars, Bunter. Is anything the matter with him?"

"He's ill, sir."

"Indeed! I am sorry to hear that, Bunter!" Mr. Lathom was quite kindly now. "Do you mean to say that you have been so very inattentive in class because you are troubled by your cousin's illness?"

"Yes, sir. I—I'm a very tender-hearted chap."

"Very well, Bunter; you need take no further part in the lessons this afternoon," said Mr. Lathom.

Bunter's fat face brightened.

All was grist that came to his mill; and an opportunity of slacking during lessons was not to be despised. He sat in fat contentment till the Fourth were dismissed.

When the juniors went out, he joined Blake & Co. in the corridor—after a cautious blink round to ascertain that the Shell were not out yet.

"I say, you fellows—"

"I am sorrow your cousin is ill, Buntah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy kindly.

Bunter's face assumed a sorrowful length.

"Yes, isn't it rotten?" he said. "And—and I can't go and see him! That's what I wanted to speak to you chaps for. I—I'd cut over to Greyfriars and see him if I could raise the railway fare. But—but I've been disappointed about a postal-order."

"Jolly long way to Greyfriars, to see a chap," said Blake.

"He's my cousin!" said Bunter, with dignity. "We were brought up together—ahem!—we played together as little children."

"Very pathetic!" grunted Herries.

"Oh, really, Herries—"

"I don't believe a word of it!" said Herries. George Herries was almost painfully candid at times. "You spun Lathom that yarn to get off lessons! You're a fat spoofer!"

"Bai Jove! Hewwies, old chap—"

"I think you're unfeeling, Herries!" said Bunter. "When my poor cousin is tossing in delirium—"

"Not much good going to see him if he's delirious!"

"I—I mean he's suffering the awful pangs of influenza—"

"My hat! If he's got influenza, you're jolly well not going to see him!" exclaimed Digby. "We don't want the 'flu here, you ass! The Head wouldn't let you go!"

"I—I don't mean influenza. I—I mean smallpox!"

"That's still more dangerous!" grunted Blake. "We don't want it here. You will have to bear up under this sorrow, Bunter."

"If you don't believe me, Blake—"

"Well, which am I to believe?" asked Blake. "The delirium, the influenza, or the smallpox? I don't mind which; but give it a name!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The—the fact is, I don't know what he's ill of, but I know he's awfully ill—expiring, perhaps. My tender heart—"

"Tender rats!" grunted Herries.

"I call that brutal, Herries. I, think you fellows might lend me the railway fare to Friardale, as we're in the same Form. I'll settle up out of my very next postal-order—"

"Weally, Buntah—"

"How do you know he's ill?" asked Blake suddenly.

"He wrote—"

"Trot out the letter, then; seeing is believing!"

"I mean he telephoned—"

"Got out of a sick-bed to get a trunk-call?" yelled Herries.

"He—he got another chap to telephone, I mean."

"That's an easier one," agreed Herries. "Why don't you think of a good lie to begin with, instead of trotting it out after a bad one?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chaps in the Fourth get a lot of trunk-calls on the telephone—I don't think!" grunted Digby. "Have you had a 'phone put up in your study, Bunter?"

Bunter blinked at Dig more in sorrow than in anger.

"It was on Railton's telephone," he said.

"Gammon!"

"You can ask Mr. Railton, if you like!"

"Ha, ha! I'm likely to ask the House-master that question!" chuckled Dig.

"Why don't you say the Head?"

"You can ask Kildare, then—Kildare came to call me to answer the telephone yesterday," said Bunter calmly.

"Rats!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "We could ask Kildare, you chaps! There he is, in the quad, with Dawwel."

"He will tell us! And if we find that Buntah is lyin', as usual, we will give him a fearful thwashin'!"

"Done!" said Bunter, at once.

"Oh! You agree to that?" exclaimed Blake.

"Certainly—being a truthful chap—"

"Bow-wow! I'll speak to Kildare. Mind that he doesn't bunk, you fellows."

"Yaas, wathah!"

But Bunter showed no desire to "bunk." He knew what Kildare's answer to the question would be. The St. Jim's captain knew that he had been called to answer a trunk-call on Mr. Railton's telephone; but he knew nothing more. Jack Blake stepped out into the quad, while his comrades gathered round the Owl of Greyfriars.

"I say, Kildare—"

"Hallo?" said the prefect, looking round.

"Did Bunter of our Form have a call on Mr. Railton's telephone yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" ejaculated Blake. "Was it a trunk-call, Kildare?"

"I believe so."

"Was it—was it from Greyfriars?"

"I don't know. Cut off!"

Jack Blake rejoined his chums, his face expressive of the great astonishment he felt.

"Bunter's told the truth!" he said, in a gasping voice.

And from his three chums came exclamations of amazement at that unexpected and startling information.

"Great Scott!"

CHAPTER 5.

All Clear at Last!

"HALLO! What's this game?" asked the cheery voice of George Figgins of the Fourth Form.

Figgins & Co. of the New House were coming along from the Form-room. They stopped, as they saw the chums of Study No. 6 gathered round Bunter, with blank astonishment in their faces.

"Bunter been pricing your rations?" asked Fatty Wynn, with a look of deep disfavour at the Owl of Greyfriars.

"He's told the truth!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hold me, somebody!" gasped Figgins.

"Bunter has?" yelled Kerr.

"Oh, fan me!" murmured Fatty Wynn.

Billy Bunter glared at the merry Fourth-Formers in great wrath. They seemed to think that this was the first time he had ever told the truth; and it wasn't. He had not done it often, perhaps; still, he had done it.

"Look here, you silly asses—" he began.

"He said he'd had a trunk-call on Railton's 'phone," said Blake—"and he had! It turns out that he really had! What do you think of that?"

"Extraordinary!" said Figgins & Co., with one voice.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I say, you fellows, this is very unfeeling, considering that my poor cousin is lying—"

"If he's your cousin, he would naturally be lying," remarked Kerr.

"Lying on a sick bed, I mean," howled Bunter.

"Dash it all, he might stop lying at such a time as that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Suffering fearful agonies," said Bunter pathetically, "and here I want to run over to Greyfriars and see him, and I'm stuck for want of a quid or so. He's asking for me."

"Jolly queer taste, I must say!"

"Beggings to see me, with tears in his eyes," said Bunter. "Wharton was crying on the telephone when he told me, I heard him sob."

"Bai Jove!"

"It's breaking my heart, you know," said Bunter. "I'm a very tender-hearted chap. I—I feel this as much as missing a meal—I do, really."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! If you'd heard Bob Cherry break down, in telling me on the 'phone—"

"It was Wharton a minute ago," said Kerr.

"I—I mean—that is— It—it was Wharton first, and then Cherry—Wharton was so cut up he couldn't finish."

"Oh!"

"I'd be willing to travel third-class to Friardale to see poor old—ahem!—my poor old cousin. If you fellows—"

"Bai Jove! If Buntah is tellin' the twuth, it is wathah hard cheese!" said Arthur Augustus. "We weally ought to lend him the tin, if he wants to go and see a sick weliation."

"Only he's spoofing," said Blake.

"He wants the tin to blue on tuck."

"Yaas, I suppose that is more pwob."

"It's a dead cert!" grunted Figgins.

"I think we know Bunter by this time."

Billy Bunter gave a snort. His bad reputation was rising up to smite him once more, as it often did.

And, as a matter of fact, he really had no designs on the tuckshop this time. He really did want the money to pay his fare to Greyfriars—though it was not to see a sick weliation.

"I say, you fellows——" he began desperately.

"N. G.!" said Blake. "You really seem to have had a call on Railton's phone yesterday; but we don't know that it was from Greyfriars. I dare say it wasn't."

"I've told you——"

"What you've told us, my pippin, doesn't make any difference, one way or the other. If you want to know, I'd as soon take a Hun's word as yours!"

"But I say——"

"Nuff said!"

"You can come to Wayland and see me off if you like!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"Come with me and take my ticket, if you don't trust me," said Bunter. "I can't say fairer than that."

"Bai Jove!"

Bunter had succeeded in making an impression at last. Kerr eyed him very keenly.

"If your cousin at Greyfriars is ill, and you want to see him on that account, we'll pass round the hat like a shot," he said; "but you're such an awful spoofer, Bunter. If you give one of us a walk to Wayland for nothing——"

"I really want to go!" protested Bunter, almost tearfully. It was really hard not to be believed, when he was telling the truth for once.

"Have you got leave to go?"

"No; I'm going on my own. I mightn't get leave."

"You'll be jolly late back——"

"That's all right," said Bunter, suppressing a grin. He had no intention of coming back, if the juniors had only known it. Indeed, if they had known all the facts it was quite possible that they would have raised Bunter's railway fare with a great deal of pleasure—to Greyfriars, or to anywhere else, on condition that he did not come back!

"I mean, you'll get a licking, Bunter," said Kerr.

"I don't care!"

"My hat!"

"Weally, dear boys, I believe that Buntah is statin' the facts for once," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Buntah, I will come to Wayland with you, if you like, and purchase your railway ticket."

"Thanks, old chap!" said Bunter. "Come on!"

"He really seems to mean business," said Jack Blake, in wonder.

"I'm ready," said Bunter. "I've only got to get my cap—I'll run up to my study for a minute——"

"I will meet you at the door in a few minutes, Buntah."

"Right-ho!"

Billy Bunter ran for the staircase. He was anxious to get off—before he met Grundy or Racke again, and before Mr. Lathom made any further reference to the over-due lines. The Fourth-Formers looked at one another.

Jack Blake expressed his feelings in a prolonged whistle.

"He's really going, then," he said. "Blessed if I catch on! He will get into a row for going without leave—he can't be back much before bed-time."

"It is wathah decent of him, Blake."

"Ye-es—if it's genuine."

"I am goin' to take his ticket."

"More likely he's depending on spoofing Gussy," said Kerr. "I think I'll go, too."

"Weally, Kerr——"

"And I, too!" said Figgins grimly. "And if he takes us to Wayland, we'll see that he gets into the express, if we have to bundle him in neck and crop."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good egg!" said Blake. "I'll come!"

And when Bunter of the Fourth came down to the door he found four juniors

ready to accompany him to Wayland—and, to the surprise of all four, he did not seem to mind.

"You fellows ready?" he asked.

"We're ready!"

"Right—I'll be after you in a minute."

Bunter ran down the passage, to the door of Mr. Lathom's study. He did not enter that study. He stopped, and put his mouth to the keyhole, and yelled:

"Beast!"

"Bless my soul!" came Mr. Lathom's surprised voice from within. "That is Bunter's voice—— Bunter, you impermanent young rascal——"

The study door opened. But Bunter was gone; he was scuttling away as fast as his fat little legs would carry him, and had already turned the corner. In a few seconds he had joined Blake & Co. in the quad, and they were going down to the gates.

CHAPTER 6.

Bunter's Farewells!

GRUNDY of the Shell was strolling near the school gates with Wilkins and Gunn. He gave a growl, a good deal like Herries' bulldog Towser, as he saw Bunter, and started towards him.

"Hold on, Grundy!" said Figgins. "Hands off, fathead!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'm going to lick that fat rotter!" roared Grundy. "He's had my cake, and I haven't licked him yet."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Pway stand back, Gwunday! Buntah is goin' to catch a twain——"

"He's going to catch a hiding, and he's going to catch it from me!" growled Grundy.

Bunter dodged behind Jack Blake. "I say, you fellows, keep him off! I've no time to thrash Grundy now——"

"To—to thrash me!" gasped Grundy.

"Yes, you rotter!" said Bunter, blinking at him round Blake. "You're a bully, Grundy, and a rotter, and a worm, and a beast, and I'm going to lick you when I come back. You wait for me in the gym!"

"Why, I—I—I'll——" stammered Grundy.

"Pway wethah, Gwunday. You have heard Buntah's challenge," said D'Arcy. "It is up to you to wait for him in the gym."

And the juniors walked on, keeping Bunter in their midst, and forming a sort of guard round him. George Alfred Grundy blinked after them.

"Did you—did you hear him, you fellows?" he gasped, addressing Wilkins and Gunn.

"I heard him," grinned Wilkins. "It's up to you, Grundy."

"Do you think that fat rooster can stand up to me, for a minute?" roared Grundy.

"Well, he's undertaken to do it," remarked Gunn.

"I'll—I'll—I'll wait in the gym," gasped Grundy, "and when he doesn't turn up, I'll go and look for him, and squash him! I'll burst him!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of gates with the juniors, with a fat grin of satisfaction on his face. As he was not coming back to St. Jim's at all it was quite safe to slang the great Grundy, and he had found it agreeable. Outside the gates, Racke of the Shell was lounging with Crooke and Scrope, and he scowled at Bunter.

The Owl of Greyfriars halted. This was another chance for him to say a polite farewell.

"Hold on a minute, you fellows, I want to speak to Racke!" he said.

"Racke, you sneaking, gambling rotter——,"

"Eh? What?" ejaculated the astonished Aubrey.

"You say I owe you money, and you're going to pitch into me till I pay up!" said Bunter, blinking at him. "I've no time to thrash you now, Racke—I've got to catch a train. I'll thrash you in the gym this evening, if you've got pluck enough to come there and meet me."

"Wha-a-at?"

"You're a sneaking, card-sharping rotter!" said Bunter, wagging a fat and accusing forefinger at him. "I despise you, Racke! I believe you had cards up your sleeve in your study that time—you would, you know. That's why I'm not going to pay you! You're a sneaking worm, Racke! I despise you! Yah!"

With that elegant apostrophe Billy Bunter rolled on, leaving Racke rooted to the ground, and his companions grinning.

Blake & Co. glanced very curiously at Bunter as they walked on down the lane. Bunter seemed to be hurling reckless defiance about on all sides, regardless of the consequences. It really was not like Bunter to issue these challenges to meetings in the gym—it was more like him to dodge such a challenge if addressed to himself. The juniors were puzzled.

"That's two fights you've got on hand for this evening, Bunter," said Kerr.

"Nothing to me," said Bunter airily. "I'm a tip-top fighting-man, you know."

"Oh, my hat!"

They walked on, and turned into the wood, a short cut to Wayland. Almost at every step the juniors expected Bunter to "begin," as Blake called it. But he did not begin. He made no request for the railway fare to be handed to him—he did not tell the juniors that he wouldn't trouble them to come on to Wayland with him—in fact, he only seemed in a hurry to get to the station. And after a quick walk they reached the market town, and Kerr announced that they had ten minutes to catch the express.

"Time for a snack in the buffet!" said Bunter.

"I am goin' to get your ticket now, Buntah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the fat junior, perhaps with a lingering doubt.

"Good. Get first class."

"Ahem!"

"I'm accustomed to travelling first. Of course, I shall settle up the amount later, D'Arcy—when my postal-order comes."

"Get third!" growled Blake. "What's the good of throwing money away?"

"I am afraid it will not want to first class, Buntah. The fare is wathah expensive. I should travel third."

"You might!" grunted Bunter. "All right for you, I dare say. It's a bit different for me. I'm accustomed to the decencies of life."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Well, if you're going to get third, I suppose you can lend me a few bob for a snack before I start?" said Bunter, discontentedly.

"Y-a-a-as."

"We'll see to the snack," said Figgins. "You get the ticket, Gussy. We'll whack it out afterwards."

Arthur Augustus went to the booking-office. Bunter made no effort to detain him, and did not even ask for the money to take the ticket himself. The juniors had to be convinced at last; Bunter was really going to Greyfriars.

The swell of St. Jim's rejoined the party in the buffet, where Bunter was taking a snack; though, if appearances

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were to be relied upon, he was laying in provisions for at least seven lean years. He had not finished when the express came thundering in, but he had to stop.

"I'll take some of these cakes with me," he said. "You can settle, Blake. I'll square for the lot together. And a few oranges, and some buns."

"Get a move on."

"One of these pies, too, I think. Yaroooh! Leggo my collar!"

"Do you want to lose the train, fat-head?"

Kerr rushed the fat junior out of the buffet by the collar. It looked for a moment as if Bunter did want to lose the train, and suspicion revived. But only for a moment. The fat junior hopped into the train, and secured a corner seat and drew the door shut.

"Landed at last!" grinned Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Bunter's fat face looked from the window above the four juniors. He grinned down at them.

"All serene!" he said. "I say, you fellows, you might lend me a few bob to get a snack at Friardale?"

Arthur Augustus silently passed up his remaining small change to Bunter. The fat junior grunted as he blinked at it, and slipped it carelessly into his pocket.

"Off!" said Blake, as the guard waved his flag. "He's really going! Blessed if I quite believed it, till now."

Bunter leaned from the window.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Good-bye, Buntah!"

"I've got something to say to you fellows," said Bunter, as the train began to stir. "I've wanted to say it for a long time. You're a silly ass, Jack Blake!"

"What?"

"You're a long-legged scarecrow, Figgins!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"You're a skinny Scotchman, Kerr!"

"You fat, cheeky rotter—"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Buntah—"

"And you're a rotten, lazy, fat-headed, mean bounder, D'Arcy!"

"Gweat Scott!"

The train was moving now. Bunter waved a fat hand from the receding window, his fat features wrinkled into a scornful sneer.

"That's my opinion of you!" he shouted. "Tell Tom Merry, from me, that he's a lout, and tell Lowther he's a worm, and tell Manners—"

But the remainder of Bunter's farewell address was lost on the wind as the express rushed out of the station. The fat junior sank down in his seat with a grin on his face. He had had quite a happy parting with his schoolfellows of St. Jim's.

On the platform, Jack Blake and his comrades looked at one another in deep silence.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus at last.

And they started for home.

CHAPTER 7.

Waiting for Bunter!

THAT evening quite a number of fellows in the School House at St. Jim's were waiting impatiently for Bunter's return.

If the Owl of Greyfriars had been the most attractive and charming fellow possible his return could not have been more eagerly awaited.

The fellows wanted to tell him what they thought of him; and it was only too probable that they would proceed from words to actions.

Even the kind-hearted Arthur Augustus was wrathful.

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The juniors who had seen Bunter off at Wayland gave the Owl's kind message to the Terrible Three, and rather enjoyed the looks of Tom Merry as it was delivered.

"The fat worm!" exclaimed Tom indignantly. "What did he mean by it?"

"He slanged us all round," said Blake. "He waited till the train was moving, so that we couldn't get at him, and then slanged us high and low. He called Gussy—"

Arthur Augustus interrupted. "Pway do not repeat Buntah's oppwobwious wemarks, Blake. They are weally offensive to my cahs."

"He called us all names," said Blake. "Figgins and Kerr are going to scalp him. So am I. I'm going to squash him! Even Gussy is going to give him a hiding."

"I am certainly goin' to give him a feahful thwashin'. I wegard it as bein' up to me, though I shall be sowwy to soil my hands on the boundah!"

"And he called me—" said Tom Merry, with a deep breath.

"And told us to tell you," said Blake. "And Lowther—"

"I'll worm him!" said Monty Lowther.

"There was something for Manners, but we didn't catch it."

"I dare say it's no loss!" growled Manners. "I'll thump him, all the same, the cheeky, fat rotter!"

"Grundy and Racke are waiting for him, too," said Tom Merry, laughing.

Read

"THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE!"

The Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale dealing with the return of BILLY BUNTER to Greyfriars, in

The "MAGNET"

NOW ON SALE.



"Bunter has booked himself for a high old time when he comes home."

"But what does he mean by it?" asked Blake, in perplexity. "He must know that he's going to get the ragging of his life."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I give it up," he said. "Bunter can't mean to fight anybody, if he can help it; and he's booked himself for a whole series of thumping lickings. I suppose he's coming back, isn't he?"

"Why, he must be! He's not leaving St. Jim's that I know of."

"It looks as if he was going for good, and took the chance of slanging us before he went. But we should have heard something of it if he was leaving the school; so it can't be that. I give it up. The fact is, Bunter is rather a puzzle in a good many ways," remarked Tom Merry.

"When we first met him we all liked him—he didn't seem anything like that cousin Billy of his, excepting in looks. Since he came here, though, he's seemed simply Billy Bunter over again, so far as I remember that fat bounder. Blessed if it didn't really look as if the two fat bounders got mixed up somehow, and the wrong one turned up here."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We were mistaken in him," said Manners. "But he didn't leave us long in the mistake. He opened our eyes soon enough."

"Lathom has been inquiring for him," said Lowther. "He seems to have cheeked Lathom just before he went out, from what I hear. Old Lathom is wrathful as anything. The silly ass seems to have gone out of his way to arrange a hot reception for himself when he comes home."

"He'll get it, anyway," said Tom.

That much was certain. There was trouble, serious trouble, waiting for Bunter of the Fourth when he turned up again at St. Jim's. And as the evening wore on the fellows were very eager for his arrival.

But he did not arrive.

Lowther looked out trains in a timetable, and announced that Bunter could hardly be home before bed-time. He missed evening call-over, and Mr. Railton frowned, and marked him absent. After calling-over, Figgins of the New House gave Tom Merry a look-in.

"That fat slug crawled in yet?" asked Figgins.

Tom Merry smiled. He recognised W. G. Bunter by that description.

"Not yet," he answered.

"He'll get into a row with the House-master," said Figgins.

"As well as with us," said Tom.

"Well, Kerr and I are going to skin him," said Figgins. "But we'll leave it over till the morning. You chaps can have him to yourselves this evening, if you like."

"Thanks!" said Tom, laughing. "We shall keep him busy."

And Figgins went back to the New House, and allowed the sun to go down on his wrath.

Trimble and Mellish did their prep in Study No 2 without their fat study-mate. Evidently there was to be no prep for Bunter that evening. And Grundy looked in the gym for him in vain.

As bed-time drew near there was much speculation in the School House as to what had become of Bunter.

It was almost unprecedented for a fellow to stay out till nine o'clock without special permission; but Bunter was staying out. Soon after nine Jack Blake was sent for to Mr. Lathom's study.

"Has Bunter come in yet, Blake?" the Form-master asked.

"I think not, sir."

"It is extraordinary!" said Mr. Lathom. "Do you know where he is gone, Blake?"

"I—I think he's gone to Greyfriars, sir, to visit a sick relation," said Blake.

"Bless my soul! He told me that his cousin was ill at that school. But he had no right to take such a long journey without leave. Tell him to report to me the moment he comes in, Blake."

"Yes, sir."

Blake retired, leaving Mr. Lathom with a deep frown upon his usually kind face. Bunter's parting benediction through the keyhole was still echoing in Mr. Lathom's indignant ears. It was the first time any member of his Form had ventured to "slang" Mr. Lathom. It was really an almost incredible happening, and the Form-master almost suspected that Bunter was not quite in his right senses.

Blake returned to the Common-room, where quite a number of fellows were getting anxious about Bunter. They were anxious lest he should not turn up by bed-time.

"Bed in ten minutes," remarked Manners, as the clock indicated twenty past nine. "The fat boulder is sticking it out."

There was a deep growl from Grundy. "He knows what he's going to get," said George Alfred. "He's staying out on purpose."

"He will get something from the Housemaster if he stays out after bed-time," remarked Levison of the Fourth.

There was keen interest in the subject as the big hand of the clock moved round. When it indicated the half hour, Kildare of the Sixth looked into the junior Common-room.

"Has Bunter come in?" he asked, addressing nobody in particular.

"Not yet, Kildare."

"The young rascal! Get off to the dorm," said Kildare.

"We shall have to leave him over till to-morrow," murmured Monty Lowther regretfully.

"We sha'n't, though," said Jack Blake. "He's in our dorm. I'm going to stay awake for dear old Bunter!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors went to their dormitories. The Shell had to give up Bunter for that night; but the Fourth still expected to see him. And Blake and D'Arcy did not intend to be asleep when he came in. They had something to say to Bunter—and something to do!

CHAPTER 8.

Wally Arrives!

TING—TING—A-LING!

Taggles, the porter, growled. "That there Bunter! Blow him!" said Taggles.

Taggles was aware that Bunter was out of bounds, and when the bell rang in his lodge he guessed who was the applicant for admission. Taggles did not hurry himself. The bell rang again twice before the old gentleman lumbered out to open the gates.

Through the bars of the gate a fat figure was visible in the gloom outside. A fat face looked through at Taggles, and there was a glimmer of spectacles, set very low down on a fat little nose.

"Ho!" said Taggles. "You, Master Bunter?"

"Little me!" answered a cheery voice.

"Nice goings on, I don't think!" said Taggles, with a grunt.

The fat junior smiled. To all outward appearance that fat fellow was the Bunter who had quitted St. Jim's that afternoon. But he was only so in outward appearance. Taggles did not see any difference; but the difference was great.

For the Bunter at the gates was not the Bunter who had said such affectionate farewells to Blake & Co. at Wayland.

That Bunter was already in bed in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars; back at his old school, and safe from the wrath he had roused at St. Jim's.

This was quite another Bunter; Walter Gilbert Bunter, the protege of Mr. Penman of Canterbury; the youth who had been destined for St. Jim's by his late employer, and who had changed places with Billy Bunter, and gone to Greyfriars instead.

The Bunters had changed back.

Wally Bunter, certainly, was not keen on changing back. He liked Greyfriars, and had been getting on well there, having succeeded at last in living down the reputation Billy had left for him.

But he had no choice in the matter. Billy Bunter had insisted; and, as Billy was determined to get back to Grey-

friars he did not yet know of, his fat face was cheerful enough as he watched Taggles unlock the gate.

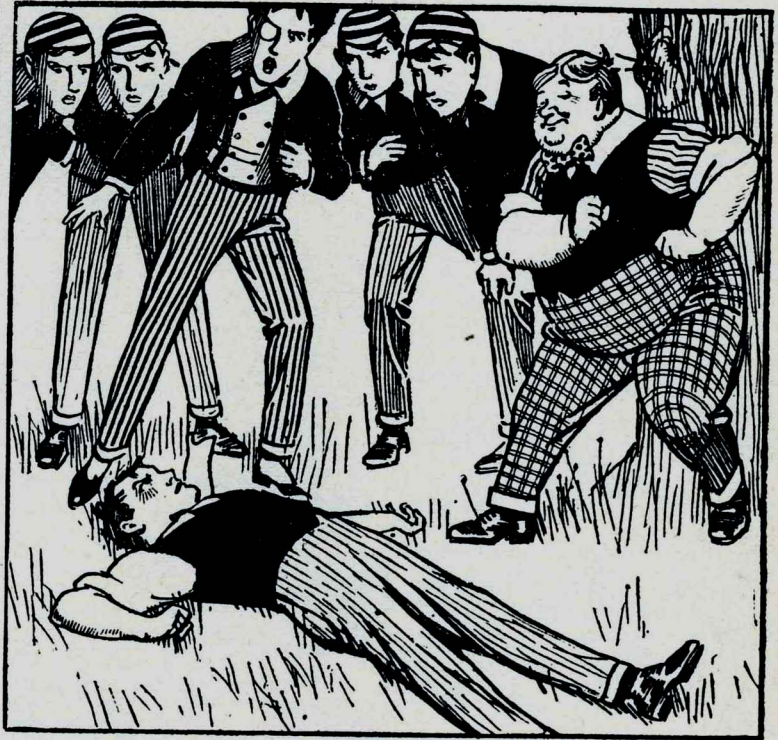
"Which you're to report yourself at once to Mr. Railton, in his study," said Taggles, with a grunt, as the fat junior rolled in.

"Right-ho!" said Wally Bunter. "Good-night, old scout!"

Grunt!

Wally Bunter cheerfully started for the School House. It was fortunate that, on his previous visit to St. Jim's, he had learned his way about the school. He looked portentously grave as he presented himself in Mr. Railton's study. He found Mr. Lathom there with the Housemaster. Both the gentlemen looked portentously grave as he presented himself.

What excuse to give for his supposed conduct Wally Bunter did not know. He had to trust to luck. He wondered,



Grundy found himself gazing up at the branches overhead, and the blue sky beyond, in a dazed state. "Gweat Scott! Gwunday's down!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. (See Chapter 11.)

friars, there was nothing for Wally to do but to "clear." And, having solaced himself by bumping the unreliable Owl, hard, he had cleared.

His annoyance had faded away on the journey. He was a cheerful fellow, and disposed to make the best of things. It was necessary for him to be at St. Jim's on the morrow, in any case, when Mr. Penman was coming down to see him. He had visited the school before on a similar occasion. Now he had to stay; and though he would have preferred to remain at Greyfriars, he was cheerfully prepared to make the best of it.

Bunter had landed him into a row by this sudden change of plans. He was arriving late at St. Jim's—and he had to arrive as Bunter, without any explanation, of course, as to the change of identity. He expected a caning, and it was a comfort to reflect that he had bumped Bunter hard in the wood at Friardale. But in spite of the caning he knew loomed ahead, and the possibility that other things loomed ahead

too, whether the two masters would discern any difference between him and the Bunter they were expecting. He was relieved to see that there was no doubt or suspicion in their faces.

"So you have returned, Bunter!" said Mr. Railton, in a deep, stern voice.

"I—I've come in, sir," said Wally meekly.

"It is now a quarter to ten."

"Is it, sir?"

"A quarter of an hour past your bedtime, Bunter. You have ventured to absent yourself until this unheard-of hour."

"I—I'm sorry, sir."

"Where have you been?"

"I've just come from Greyfriars, sir."

"You had no right to make such a journey without permission, as you know very well," said the School House master. "However, as Mr. Lathom informs me that your relative at that school is sick, I will excuse you on that point."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Wally.

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"What did you say, Bunter?"
 "I—I—n—n—nothing, sir!"
 "You will be punished, Bunter, for staying out after bed-time. I shall call you."

Wally was silent.
 "But even that is not the most serious matter I have to refer to," said Mr. Railton, his voice growing sterner. "Immediately before you left, this afternoon, Bunter, you dared to insult Mr. Lathom."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Wally, in dismay.
 "You shouted a disrespectful and opprobrious expression through the key-hole of Mr. Lathom's study, Bunter."

"Oh!"
 "A most disrespectful expression," said Mr. Lathom. "You had the insolence and tonnage, Bunter, to apply the name 'beast' to your Form-master."

"Oh, no, sir! Not at all!" gasped Wally.

"I heard you!" said Mr. Lathom sternly. "I recognised your voice, Bunter, though you were gone before I could open my door."

Wally breathed hard. His chief regret, at that moment, was that he was not within punching distance of Billy Bunter's nose. He was glad, however, that Mr. Lathom had not actually seen Billy Bunter on the occasion. If Billy had been seen, certainly Wally's denial would not have been of much use.

"Have you anything to say, Bunter?" asked Mr. Railton, taking up his cane.

"I—I—oh, yes, sir!" gasped Wally. "Certainly, sir! There's a—a mistake. I never called through Mr. Lathom's key-hole, sir. I wouldn't do such a thing!"

"Mr. Lathom knew your voice, Bunter."

"Most certainly," nodded the Fourth Form master.

"I—I—I assure you, sir, it wasn't my voice," said Wally earnestly. "I should think such a thing caddish, sir. I haven't been near your study door, sir. I certainly never called you names. It—it must have been some other fellow with a voice like mine, sir."

Mr. Lathom looked at him very keenly over his glasses. There was an earnest and truthful ring in the junior's voice.

"That is absurd, Bunter!" said Mr. Railton.

"I assure you, sir, I'm speaking the truth. I—I don't mind a licking, sir, but I—I want Mr. Lathom to believe I wouldn't have done such a caddish thing!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Lathom. "I certainly never expected to hear you deny your action, Bunter. I was quite certain that it was your voice."

"It was not, sir, on my word of honour!"

Mr. Lathom coughed.
 "Well, well," he said. "You certainly appear to be speaking the truth, Bunter, and it is barely possible that a mistake may have been made. Mr. Railton—"

"The matter rests with you, Mr. Lathom, of course," said the House-master.

"In that case I should prefer to say no more about it," said the Fourth Form-master. "Although I felt sure at the time that it was Bunter's voice, there is a possibility of injustice being done."

"Very well, Bunter. Mr. Lathom prefers to give you the benefit of the doubt," said the School House master.

"Thank you very much, sir!" said Wally gratefully.

The new arrival had had one narrow escape. But his troubles were not over. He had to "face the music" for his late return—or, rather, his late arrival—and Mr. Railton felt it his duty to lay the case on soundly.

Wally Bunter's fat palms were flogging
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when he was dismissed to his dormitory. In the corridor he rubbed his hands, and then sparred in the air with his fat fists clenched, as if he saw the podgy features of his cousin Billy before him.

Having thus relieved his feelings, Billy Bunter's double made his way to the Fourth Form dormitory.

CHAPTER 9.

In a Hornets' Nest.

"HEAR! he comes!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Jack Blake sat up in bed.
 The dormitory door opened quietly, and a fat figure came in, and turned on the light.

"So you've come back, you fat rotter!" said Blake grimly.

Wally Bunter looked at him, and nodded.

"Hallo, Blake!" he said cheerily.

"I'll 'hallo, Blake' you!" answered Jack Blake. "Wait a minute, you fat worm, and I'll come to you!"

"My hat! What's the matter?"

"Weally, Buntah, you know verry well what is the mattah. Pwag don't get out of bed, Blake. I am goin' to thrash Buntah first."

"My turn first," answered Blake.

"Wats! He applied more opprobrious expressions to me than to you, Blake," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I claim the right of givin' him a fearful thrashing first."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Wally.

Billy Bunter had evidently left a hornets' nest for him to walk into. It reminded him of his earlier experiences at Greyfriars.

Kildare looked into the dormitory. He had come to see the light out after the late arrival.

"Now, then, what are you getting up for, Blake?" he demanded. "Get back to bed at once!"

"I—I was going to speak to Bunter."

"Turn in!"

"Oh, all right!"

Blake turned in, and Arthur Augustus changed his mind about getting up. The head prefect of the School House was not to be argued with.

"Get to bed, Bunter," said Kildare. "Mind, Blake, no ragging in this dormitory to-night, or I shall come back. If I come back there will be trouble."

Wally Bunter grinned as he turned in. Kildare, with a warning look at Blake, turned out the light and left the dormitory.

Blake sat up again.

"Bunter!"

"Hallo, old trump?" said Wally.

"I can't lick you to-night—"

"You couldn't lick me any time."

"What?"

"Getting deaf in your old age?" asked Wally cheerily. "You couldn't lick me any time. Got it now?"

Jack Blake breathed hard.

"You fat worm, you know Kildare will come back if there's a row here," he said.

"I'm going to burst you in the morning!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Sufficient for the evening is the evil thereof!" yawned Wally. "I'm sleepy. Put off your merry eloquence till the morning, old scout!"

And Wally laid his head on the pillow and closed his eyes, and was fast asleep a minute later.

"My word!" came a murmur from Cardew's bed. "Bunter's grown a big neck since this afternoon. Where is he gettin' all this nerve from?"

"The feebly cheeky wathah—"

"I'll give him something to cure all that in the morning!" growled Blake. And as thrashings were "off" for that night, Blake settled down to sleep.

If it had been the Owl of Greyfriars in Bunter's bed sleep would probably not have visited his eyes for some time, considering the alarming prospect before him in the morning; but Wally Bunter was untroubled by the prospect, alarming as it was, and he slept like a top.

His eyes did not open till the rising-bell was clanging out over St. Jim's. Then he sat up in bed, rubbed his eyes, and yawned.

The spring sunshine was glimmering in at the high windows cheerily. For a moment Wally expected to find himself in the familiar surroundings of the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars.

The strange faces round him recalled him to himself at once, however.

Greyfriars was a thing of the past. He was a St. Jim's fellow now, as he had been supposed to be all along.

Many glances turned towards him, and they could not be called friendly. Jack Blake, in particular, was looking very grim, and Arthur Augustus's face seemed to have lost its benign expression.

"There's the fat lot!" remarked Trimble.

Wally looked round.

"Hallo, old barrel!" he remarked.

"Are you calling me names?"

"Get up, you fat slacker!" grunted Herries.

Wally turned promptly out of bed. He grinned as he dressed himself that morning. There was something rather entertaining, in a way, in his novel and peculiar position at St. Jim's.

Billy Bunter had always been the last out of the dormitory. Wally was one of the first. And some of the juniors had remarked, with surprise, that he had washed all over, instead of indulging in what Herries termed a "cat-lick"—such as Billy Bunter had always considered sufficient to begin the day on. And there was an unaccustomed springiness in the step of the fat junior as he went down and walked out into the quadrangle. It might have been noticed, too, that he wore his glasses so low on his nose that he did not use them, and yet he seemed to see better than ever.

The chums of Study No. 6 followed him into the quadrangle, and cornered him under the elms. They surrounded him as they came up, to cut off his escape; but, to their surprise, he showed no desire to dodge. He greeted them with an affable grin.

"Top of the morning, old top!" he remarked. "You're looking quite merry and bright. Nice morning—what?"

"Weally, Buntah—"

"I don't know what this game is, Bunter," said Jack Blake. "If you think you're going to squirm out of a licking you're making a big mistake!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a roar in the distance. Grundy had come out with Wilkie and Gunn.

"There he is!"

And Grundy of the Shell came speeding up.

At the same time the Terrible Three came out of the School House, and they also bore down on Bunter. And from the direction of the New House, Figgins & Co. were pointing towards the same spot.

It was quite a reception.

CHAPTER 10.

A Surprise for St. Jim's!

WALLY BUNTER did not look alarmed.

He looked puzzled.

"Is this a game?" he asked.

"A wathah serious game for you, you fat boundah!" answered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sternly.

"What's the matter with you, Gussy?"

Gussy, Buntah. I wegard you as a wogue and a wapsallion!"

"My hat!"

"Lemme get at him!" roared Grundy of the Shell. "Can't you get out of the way, Tom Merry?"

"Captain of the Form takes precedence," explained Tom. "Stand back a bit, Grundy."

"Look here—"

"Yaas, wathah! I'm going to thwash him first, Grundy!"

"You can leave him to me!" exclaimed Aubrey Racke, arriving on the scene and pushing forward. "I owe him a licking for—"

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows," said Wally Bunter gravely. "Let us have this in order. It seems that you've all got up early to thrash me—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You can't all do it at once. You will simply have to take it in turns," said Wally, with a coolness that astounded the St. Jim's juniors. "Fair play's a jewel, you know. One at a time, gentlemen—one at a time!"

"You cheeky ass!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "It's not a fight—you couldn't fight a bunny-rabbit. It's a ragging!"

"I've never tried fighting a bunny-rabbit, but I can fight a silly ass, old bean. And you can take your turn with the other asses!"

"Bai Jove!"

"What's come over him?" said Figgins.

The juniors stared at Bunter quite blankly. Instead of showing the least sign of alarm, he appeared to regard the matter as a huge joke. And really there was no joke in nine fellows competing for the privilege of thrashing him first—with the rest to follow in their turn.

"Is this sheer neck, or is he off his dot?" said Manners.

Wally Bunter raised a fat hand.

"Order, gentlemen! One at a time! I appear to have trodden on your honourable corns, or you think I have, which comes to the same thing. I don't know what I've done—"

"Why, you fat rotter—"

"You bagged my cake!" roared Grundy. My big sultana-cake from my Uncle Grundy!"

"Did I? My hat!"

"You called us all names at Wayland Station yesterday!" roared Figgins.

"Oh!"

"You sent us insulting messages!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Oh, the beast!" gasped Wally.

He was thinking of his excellent cousin, William George Bunter; but naturally the St. Jim's juniors could not guess that.

"Bai Jove! He's beginnin' again!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "If you are alludin' to me as a beast, Buntah, I haul back the expression in your teeth! I wegard you—"

"Collar him!"

"Bump him!"

"Hands off!" roared Wally. "Look here—"

"Give him the frog's march, to begin with," said Kerr.

"Good! Collar him!"

"Let me get at him with my boot!" shouted Racke.

"Fair play!" yelled the unfortunate Wally, as the juniors closed on him, "I'll fight the lot of you, one after another! Fair play!"

"Rats! Spoof!"

"Hold on, though," said Tom Merry. "If that fat boulder means business, he's entitled to fair play! We'll let him fight it out, on condition that he begins on the spot."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He's only spoofing!" exclaimed Blake, impatiently. "He wants to wrangle off!"

"I'm jolly well going to kick him," said Racke. "He asked me to meet him in the gym. He never came. I'm going to kick him!"

"Shut up, Racke!"

"Gentlemen," said Wally Bunter, "be calm—calmness, I beg. Racke—this chap is Racke—"

"Eh? Don't you know my name now?" jeered Racke. "What game are you playing now, you podgy spoofer?"

"You want to kick me, I understand?" said Wally. "I appear to have failed to keep an appointment with you in the gym. I'll keep it now. Put up your hands, and these chaps can stand round and see fair play."

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm not going to wait for Racke!" roared Grundy. "Me first!"

Wally looked at him.

"You're a bit hefty for me," he remarked cheerfully. "I'd rather have the gloves on when I tackle you, old trump."

"Tackle me? You couldn't tackle one side of me!" hooted Grundy. "I'm going to whop you!"

"Shut up, Grundy!"

"Yaas, wathah! If Buntah pwefers to begin with Wacke, Buntah has a wight to please himself. It is poss that he may lick Wacke, as Wacke is a wathah weeday and sinokay boundah."

"You silly idiot!" snarled Racke.

"Wealdy, Wacke—"

"Let him begin with me," growled Aubrey. "I'll alter his podgy nose for him. Get behind the trees, where we can't be spotted—he thinks some of the masters may see us, and come out." "Behind the trees, with pleasure," said Wally.

He moved off, and Jack Blake promptly caught him by the arm. He was prepared for dodging.

"You don't bunk just yet, my fat pippin," said Blake.

"I don't want to bunk, fathead!"

"Well, we'll see that you don't!"

The whole party moved on to a more secluded spot. Other fellows were gathering on the scene now from both Houses, and there was quite an army round Wally Bunter.

He was the cynosure of all eyes. The amazing coolness and pluck he was displaying simply astounded the juniors. It did not seem at all like the Bunter they knew, though it occurred to Tom Merry that it was quite like the Wally Bunter they had known earlier.

The ring was too thick for Bunter to have the slightest chance of fleeing from the wrath to come. But the amazing thing was that he plainly did not want to flee.

Racke was a little uneasy, as well as amazed. He was prepared to reap a little cheap glory by thrashing a fat and not very courageous fellow like Bunter of the Fourth. But the unexpected display of cool courage on Bunter's part made him feel less sure of an easy success.

But he was taller and older than Bunter, and really the fat junior did not look like having much chance. Anyhow, it was too late for the festive Aubrey to back out now.

"Ready, old infant?" asked Wally Bunter carelessly. He had measured the black sheep of St. Jim's with a keen eye, and he did not anticipate much difficulty with Racke.

"I'm ready, you fat rotter!"

"Who's going to keep time?"

"No need to keep time. You won't stand up for one round, and you know you won't, you fat worm!"

"You keep time, Talbot," said Tom Merry.

Talbot of the Shell nodded, and took out his watch. At the call of time Aubrey Racke rushed to the assault, and

all eyes in the interested ring were on Bunter of the Fourth. The juniors expected to see him run, or at least to collapse under the attack.

Instead of which he stood up to Racke's rush with cool steadiness, and met the black sheep of the Shell with left and right. Aubrey Racke's heavy blows went nowhere, as his hands were rapped away, and Wally's right came into his eye, followed up by the left on his nose. And Aubrey Racke, with a howl of anguish, went to the ground with a crash.

CHAPTER 11.

Amazing!

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"My only hat!"

There was a buzz of astonishment as Racke went down in a heap.

The fat junior had handled him as easily as a baby, and he stood grinning down at the collapsed Aubrey.

Arthur Augustus took off his eyeglass, polished it, and stuck it back in his eye, as if to make sure that he was seeing aright. He scarcely believed the evidence of his celebrated monacle.

Racke sat up dazedly. His sharp nose was streaming red.

"Ow, ow, ow, wow!" mumbled Aubrey.

"I'm waiting!" remarked Wally Bunter politely.

"Yow-ow-ow..."

"My only hat!" said Grundy. "Are we dreaming? I don't think Racke wants any more. Do you want any more, Racke?"

"Yow-ow-ow..."

It was pretty clear that Aubrey Racke did not want any more. He picked himself up, and limped away with his handkerchief to his nose. The crowd made room for him to pass.

Wally Bunter grinned at the staring faces round him.

"Next man in!" he said.

"This must be a giddy dream," said Tom Merry. "Racke isn't much of a fighting-man, but—but—but—well, my hat!"

Grundy of the Shell shoved forward.

"I'm your man, Bunter!"

"Wealdy Grundy—"

"Oh, let him come on!" said Wally.

"I refuse to allow him to come on. My turn comes first. Stand back, Grundy!"

"Rats!"

But three or four pairs of hands dragged the obstreperous Grundy back. Arthur Augustus slipped his eyeglass into his pocket, and faced the fat junior.

"I am weady, Buntah!"

Wally Bunter put his hands into his pockets.

"I'm not going to fight you, Gussy!" he answered.

"And why not, pway?" demanded Arthur Augustus warmly.

"I don't want to."

"You have no choice in the mattah, Buntah, aftah the opprobrious epithets you applied to me—"

"I didn't!"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I withdraw them," said Wally desperately. "Any old thing I I—I'll apologise if you like."

"If you apologise, Buntah, I feel bound to allow the mattah to dwop," said Arthur Augustus, after some consideration.

"Right-ho, old son! Let it drop."

"Cold feet!" came a chuckle from somewhere.

Wally looked round.

"If the chap who said cold feet will stand forward, I'll give a lesson in

"meaners," he remarked, "I'm not going to fight Gussy or Tom Merry, but I'll fight anybody else here present."

"And why not me?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Because I rather like you, old top," answered Wally affably. "I should be sorry to spoil your good looks."

"You cheeky ass!" roared Tom.

"Same to you, and many of them. Let Grundy come forward. I'll oblige Grundy, if there's time before breakfast."

Grundy did not need asking twice. He rushed forward.

The next moment a battle royal was in progress.

The fat junior had to give ground, so heavy was the attack. But it was noted that none of Grundy's heavy drives reached his cool, fat face. His guard was always there, and the juniors, in utter amazement, had to realise that Bunter of the Fourth was as good a boxer as any fellow in the Lower School at St. Jim's. Grundy piled in with terrific vehemence, but he exhausted himself on a defence that seemed nearly impregnable; and when he paused at last for breath, Wally Bunter piled in, in his turn, with such suddenness that George Alfred was on his back before he knew what was happening.

Grundy found himself gazing up at the branches overhead, and the blue sky beyond, in a dazed state.

"G'wate Scott! 'Gwunday's down!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Bunter—Bunter's knocked down Grundy!" stuttered Figgins.

"Hallo! There goes the bell!" It was the breakfast-bell, and at that sound Wally Bunter started for the School House.

"I'll see you again, Grundy, old top, if you like!" he called back.

Grundy did not answer. He was too dazed. Wilkins and Gunn picked him up, and George Alfred blinked at them like a fellow in a dream. Tom Merry joined Bunter as the latter rolled into the School House, giving the fat junior a keen glance.

"Where's your specs, Bunter?" he asked suddenly.

"Eh? In my pocket."

"Don't you need them?"

"Ahem! I've had a sudden recovery. I sha'n't wear specs any more," said Wally, with a chuckle. "Congratulate me, old fellow."

And he went in.

Tom Merry shook his head.

He simply could not understand Bunter that morning.

The fat junior found himself the centre of all glances at the breakfast-table.

Bunter had surprised the St. Jim's fellows before, but never so much as now.

He turned up cheerful and smiling for morning lessons, in the Fourth Form-room. Then there was another surprise.

Billy Bunter had become quite famous in the Fourth for the number of things he did not know, or could not understand. But Bunter—this Bunter—was easily up to the work of the Fourth. Indeed, he was ahead of a good many fellows there. Mr. Lathom, surprised and pleased, gave Bunter approving glances, and even words of commendation.

After dinner that day Wally Bunter went up to Study No. 2 in the Fourth Form passage. He was aware that that had been cousin Billy's study. As his old employer—Mr. Penman—was coming that afternoon, the fat junior proceeded to make the study very tidy, in case his visitor should come that way. Monty Lowther found him thus engaged.

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"What on earth are you up to, Bunter?" ejaculated Lowther, as he saw the fat junior with a duster in his hand.

"Tidying up! I'm expecting a visitor."

"You haven't much time for tidying. There are several fellows waiting to slaughter you, including myself!"

Wally shook his head.

"No more scraps till my visitor's been," he said. "I can't show Mr. Penman a black eye or a red nose. I'm at anybody's service after six. Up to six I shall take the poker to anybody who bothers me!"

"Will you?" roared a voice in the passage, as George Alfred Grundy glared in over Lowther's shoulder.

"Just so."

"Let's see you do it!" grinned Grundy, and he pushed Lowther aside and rushed into the study.

Grundy did not really want to see Wally do it, as a matter of fact; but he did see Wally do it, all the same. The fat junior whipped up the poker, which he had thoughtfully placed between the bars of the grate. Grundy retreated with a loud yell as the glowing end came near his nose.

"Yatoooh! Keep off!" he roared.

"Travel!"

"I—I—I'll—"

"Better get out!" advised Wally.

"Otherwise you might get a tap—like that!"

"Yow-ow-wooop!"

George Alfred fled.

Monty Lowther walked away with a smile. Tom Merry & Co. agreed that Bunter should not pay his dire penalties until after his distinguished visitor had come and gone; that was only considerate. The fact was that the Co. no longer nourished much wrath against Bunter. Pluck will tell; and the fat junior's undoubted pluck that morning, while it amazed the juniors, had raised him very much in their estimation.

So Wally Bunter was left in repose; and when Mr. Penman of Canterbury arrived, the fat junior greeted him with a cheery and smiling face.

CHAPTER 12.

Arthur Augustus Finds His Old Pal!

"ME first!" said Grundy.

"Wats!"

The dusk was gathering over St. Jim's. Play was

over on Little Side, and fellows were coming in from the river. Near the gates of the school a group of juniors had gathered—the Terrible Three, Figgins & Co., Study No. 6, Grundy, and a few others. They were waiting for Bunter.

Bunter's visitor had stayed quite a long time, and most of the time he had been in Study No. 2 with Bunter, engaged in discussion.

When Mr. Penman left, Bunter walked to the station with him; and some of the juniors noticed that his fat face was very grave.

They were waiting for him now to come back, after seeing his visitor off at Rylcombe.

"It's my turn first!" persisted Grundy. "I've started, you know!"

"Wubbish!"

"The fact is, Grundy," said Tom Merry, "I don't think there's any need to rag Bunter. Somehow, he doesn't seem such a worm as he was. I think he might be let off."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I was thinking the same," said Kerr, with a nod. And Figgins nodded, too; and there was a general nodding.

"He's knocked me down," said Grundy, but his tone was somewhat mollified. "Who'd have thought he'd have the pluck to try it? I owe him a

thrashing. Still, I must say I think better of him than I did. But—"

"Heal he comes!"

Wally Bunter came in at the gates, the expression on his fat face still very serious. He smiled slightly as he saw the group of juniors.

"Waiting for my scalp?" he asked.

"No," said Tom. "We've decided to look over your being such a worm, Bunter. You don't seem such a worm to-day, somehow."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wally.

"Bai Jove! What are you cacklin' at, Buntah?"

"Ahem! Never mind. You fellows may as well bury the hatchet," said Wally. "I'm leaving St. Jim's in a few days."

"Leaving?"

"Yes."

"Bai Jove! I should like to say I am sowwey, Buntah, but—but weally, you—"

"Only, it wouldn't be true!" grinned Wally. "All right, old bean. I'm glad to be able to make you happy like this. It's a pleasure to confer pleasure, you know!"

"Well, if you're going, I won't lick you!" said Grundy.

"Thank you for nothing, old hoss! You couldn't, anyway!"

"I'm jolly well—"

"No, you won't!" said Tom Merry.

"Shut up, Grundy!"

And Wally Bunter passed in peace.

The fat junior seemed in a thoughtful mood that evening, though he was quite cheery. If he was leaving St. Jim's, it did not seem to weigh upon his spirits very much. As a matter of fact, the change in Mr. Penman's plans had not been much of a shock to him, as it might have been if he had been still at Greyfriars. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, remembering the friendship he had once had for Wally Bunter, joined him in the Common-room that evening, where the fat junior sat looking reflectively into the fire.

"So you are goin', Buntah?" he remarked.

Wally looked up.

"Yes—on Saturday."

"I twust there is nothin' w'ong?"

"Nothing at all," answered Wally.

"I'll tell you, if you like."

"I should be honahed by your confidence, Buntah!" said the swell of St. Jim's graciously.

"Mr. Penman's changed his plans—not without my agreeing, of course. His son is going to take charge of a branch of the business they're opening in Paris, and I'm to go with him. My French is A 1, you know."

"Bai Jove! Is it?" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I—I didn't know—"

Wally chuckled.

"You wouldn't know, under the cires," he said; "but it is. It's a big opening for me—no end of chances—and better than the post Mr. Penman had in his eye for me. Of course, I've accepted. It's the chance of a lifetime, and jolly good of the governor to give it to me. I mean to work jolly hard, and show that I'm worth what they're giving me."

"That is a vevy pwopah w'esolution, Buntah. I—I twust you will be able to stick to it."

And Wally chuckled again. There was no doubt that he would stick to his resolution, whatever might have been the case with Billy Bunter.

The next morning there was a letter in the rack for Bunter. He opened it rather eagerly, as he saw that it was addressed in the hand of Harry Wharton of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Oh, my only sainted aunt!" he ejaculated, as he glanced over the letter.

"Oh, my only sainted aunt!" he

ejaculated, as he glanced over the letter.

"The game's given away! Well, it doesn't matter now!"
His eye lingered on a paragraph in the letter:

"We know all about it now, and Billy Bunter has owned up. Snoop seems to have known it all along. You boulder, I never heard of such a trick! But you're forgiven, and we shall be jolly glad to see you next time you can come along to Greyfriars—in your own name this time."

"Good old Wharton!" murmured Wally Bunter. "I must drop in and see them before I leave England. And—and I'm glad it's out! I can explain to the fellows here now, and not leave them thinking that that fat boulder was me!"
And after lessons that day Bunter of the Fourth dropped in at Study No. 6, where he found Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three at tea.

Seven forefingers pointed to the door, and seven voices pronounced in unison one expressive word:

"Cut!"
Wally Bunter did not cut. He grinned, and came into the study, and closed the door after him.

"I've got something to tell you fellows," he said calmly. "It's rather a secret—at least, the masters are not to know. I believe you don't think me

such a worm as you did up to yesterday—"

"Well, that's true," said Tom Merry. "You seem to have changed, somehow. But what are you driving at?"

"I'm changed a lot," chuckled Wally—"lock, stock, and barrel! You see, I'm not the same person!"

"What?"
"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry fairly blinked at the fat junior as he went on to explain the little game that had been played. Arthur Augustus' eyeglass seemed glued upon Wally Bunter, and his mouth was wide open—the first time it had ever been seen thus—so astonished was he.

"So, you see," Wally wound up, as the juniors gasped, "I'm me, and the other chap was my cousin Billy. He busted our agreement, and made me come here in a hurry. But it doesn't matter, as it turns out, as I'm leaving on Saturday. The Greyfriars chaps know now—so you may as well know. That's all!"

And he turned to the door.
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jumped up and caught him by a fat arm.

"Pway remain heah, Buntah—"
"I didn't come in to tea," grinned Wally. "I'm not Billy, you know."

"You're going to stay, all the same," said Jack Blake. "I really think we ought to have guessed how it was."

"Yaas, wathah! I don't want to tell

you fellows that I told you so," said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass severely upon his chums. "But I must remark that I said ffrom the first that Wally Buntah was a splendid chap. He saved me ffrom havin' my clobber wuined on one occasion. I must say I am surprised at you fellows!"

"Why, you fathead," howled Lowther, "you never guessed—"

"Pway don't argue, Lowthah! You are always arguin'. Pway make woom for my fwiend Buntah to sit down, Dig. Heah you are, Wally, old chap!"

And, for once, Bunter of the Fourth was an honoured guest in Study No. 6; but it was a different Bunter, and that made all the difference.

Wally Bunter's time was passed most agreeably during the remainder of his stay at St. Jim's; and when he left quite a little army of juniors marched to the station with him to see him off. Tom Merry & Co. were quite sorry to see him go; and it was likely to be a long time before they forgot Bunter—and Bunter!

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"RATTY JUNIOR!"—by Martin Clifford.)



THE SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS!

An Easter Comedy at Greyfriars School. Related by S. Q. I. FIELD.

EASTER, like Christmas, comes but once a year, and Harry Wharton, the President of the Remove Amateur Dramatic Society, had decided that when the first peace-time Easter came round he would hold a performance of "Hamlet"—a performance which would make the bones of Billy Shakespeare fairly rattle!

Wharton made no secret of his plans. He pinned the following announcement on the notice-board for all the school to see:

NOTICE!

"A full-dress rehearsal of 'HAMLET' will be held in the Common-room on Wednesday evening, at eight sharp, and the actual performance will take place in the Public Hall, Courtfield, on the following Saturday.

"Admission free!
"The principal members of the cast will be as follows:

- Hamlet, Prince of Denmark... H. Wharton.
- Claudius, King of Denmark... H. Vernon-Smith.
- Gertrude, Queen of Denmark... W. Whibley.
- Horatio, Friend to Hamlet... R. Cherry.
- Polonius... J. Bull.
- Ghost... P. Todd.
- Laertes... M. Linley.
- Ophelia... F. Nugent.
- Bernardo... T. Brown.
- Francisco... R. Rake.
- Chief Grave-digger... H. J. R. Singh.

"There will be the usual collection of courtiers and other silly asses, and they are requested to keep as far away from the stage as possible.

"Greyfriars fellows are invited to roll up in their thousands!

"(Signed) **HARRY WHARTON,**
President, Remove Amateur Dramatic Society."

The majority of the fellows needed no second bidding. The idea of Johnny Bull playing Polonius, and being slain behind the arras, was in itself a super-attraction; and Peter Todd as Ghost, to say nothing of Inky playing the part of Chief Grave-digger, would be sights to see and wonder at.

Long before eight o'clock on the fateful evening the Common-room was packed; and when the curtain went up there was a babel of applause:

"On the ball, there!"
"Don't trip over the battlements!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

The opening went with a swing—until the ghost appeared.

Peter Todd tripped across the stage at a very ungliblike pace, and became hopelessly entangled in his robes.

"What do you think you're doing, fathead?" hissed Wharton.

"Me? I—I'm the ghost of you murdered father!"

"Shurrup, you ass! You've got it all wrong!"

"Me lord," said Bob Cherry, turning to Hamlet, "this is the same spook that Brown and Rake—I mean, Bernardo and Francisco—saw when we were keeping watch last night!"

"You burbling jaberwocky!" muttered Wharton fiercely. "Those aren't Shakespeare's words!"

"Sorry! I was forgetting."
"Well, don't keep butting in, for goodness' sake! Half the audience are in hysterics already!"

Thus admonished, the wretched Horatio slunk to the back of the stage, and was no more seen.

Meanwhile, Peter Todd sorted himself out, and the players settled down once more.

Johnny Bull, in a flowing beard, was a great success. He gave Laertes—alias Mark Linley—his blessing, and bundled him off to France; and everything went swimmingly.

When the time came for Hamlet to despatch Polonius to his happy hunting-ground, however, he did it with such unnecessary violence that Johnny Bull roared with anguish for quite a long time after his death.

Inky proved an admirable Grave-digger. He wielded the spade with great vigour, scattering dirt over everybody on the stage, and keeping the audience in roars of laughter.

But the greatest scene of all—the duel between Hamlet and Laertes—was the audience's chief delight.

All the time the duel was in progress there were weird noises going on underneath the

platform; but in the excitement of seeing several people poisoned, and several more slain with the sword, nobody took much notice.

The stage was littered with players in recumbent attitudes, either dead or in the act of dying; and Hamlet himself was preparing to chuck in his mit.

He turned wearily to Horatio.

"Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath
in pain
To tell my story."

Bang!
Something in the nature of an earthquake followed.

The entire platform suddenly collapsed, and king, queen, prince, and courtiers went toppling down to destruction.

Clouds of dust arose, and wild shrieks from the unfortunate players.

Then the curtain was hastily rung down, and the members of the audience hugged each other in the last stage of hysterics.

II.

"WE'VE been let down horribly!" said Wharton.

"In more senses than one!" groaned Bob Cherry.

As soon as they had recovered from the terrific collapse which had crowned the rehearsal, the performers set to work to try and discover who had caused the calamity.

They found that the wooden supports underneath the platform had been sawn through while the play was in progress.

But there was not a sign or a shadow of the practical jokers.

"Who is responsible for this rotten trick?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Coker, of course!" growled Johnny Bull. "Every time we get up a play Coker tries to muck it up. I've noticed that he's been cackling like a hyena for the last day or two!"

"My hat! Come to think of it, I've noticed the same thing!" said Bob Cherry. "Coker's at the bottom of this bizny right enough!"

Wharton nodded. "There's only one thing to be done," he said. "We must go along and slaughter the bouncers!"

"In full force!" said Nugent. "We'll smash their study, and their chivvies into the bargain! They make my blood boil!"

So the Remove players massed themselves together, and marched away to Coker's study in the Fifth Form passage.

Coker, Potter, and Greene were there; and they sprang to their feet in astonishment as the invaders trooped in.

"What the thump—" began Coker. "Explain yourself, you cad!" said Harry Wharton warmly. "What do you mean by it?"

"You cheeky young ass!" snorted Coker. "Have you suddenly gone potty?"

"You won't wriggle out of it by pretending you're innocent!" said Nugent. "We guessed you'd deny it, as a matter of fact. Come on, you fellows! Sock it into 'em!"

"Why, you—you—" spluttered Coker. "Pile in!" said Wharton. "We won't stand on ceremony!"

The Removites stood on a good many other things, though. They swept the mantelpiece clear, and trampled vases and pictures underfoot. They wrenched the chairs asunder; they hurled the table at the bookcase, with disastrous results to both; and by the time they had finished the study was in a state of absolute chaos.

Coker & Co. put up a desperate defence, of course; but they were hopelessly outnumbered.

"Now," said Wharton, catching up a cricket-stump, "hold these beauties down, some of you, while I wallop 'em!"

The "walloping" was carried through with great thoroughness, and Bob Cherry likened the performance to the beating of carpets.

Coker had his dose first, then Potter, and lastly Greene; and all three of them got it hot. Their yells of rage and pain were sufficient to awaken the celebrated Seven Sleepers.

Somewhat consoled by having let off steam to this extent, the avengers dispersed.

The Famous Five went along to Study No. 1.

On the table was a note, in the unmistakable handwriting of Temple of the Fourth.

It ran as follows:

"You must give us best over what happened this evening. We scored off you a treat!
THE FOURTH."

The Famous Five stared at each other blankly.

"Oh, help!" gasped Bob Cherry. "It was Temple & Co. all the time!"

"And we've been and slaughtered Coker!"

"Oh dear!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"We were on the wrong track!"

"We've properly put our foot in it—or, rather, both feet!" said Harry Wharton. "For once in a way the innocent have suffered for the guilty. Coker & Co. got it in the neck for something they know nothing about!"

"However, we needn't reproach ourselves," said Nugent. "They've done dozens of things for which they've never been bowled out, so they only got their just deserts."

"All the same, I think it's up to us to apologise," said Wharton. "Poor old Coker! Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker accepted the apology with very ill grace. And the three Fifth-Formers showed a strange reluctance to sit down for several days afterwards!

In due course the real performance of "Hamlet" took place in Courtfield before a packed house.

Bob Cherry had mastered his part by this time, and he made no further lapse into very modern English.

Peter Todd, too, was careful not to trip over his robes; and the duel scene in the last act was got through without mishap.

The Greyfriars fellows were there to a man, and there was no further attempt on the part of Temple & Co. to wreck the performance.

The Fourth-Formers had certainly spoilt the rehearsal, but they drew the line at spoiling the actual show.

The play was a stunning success from start to finish.

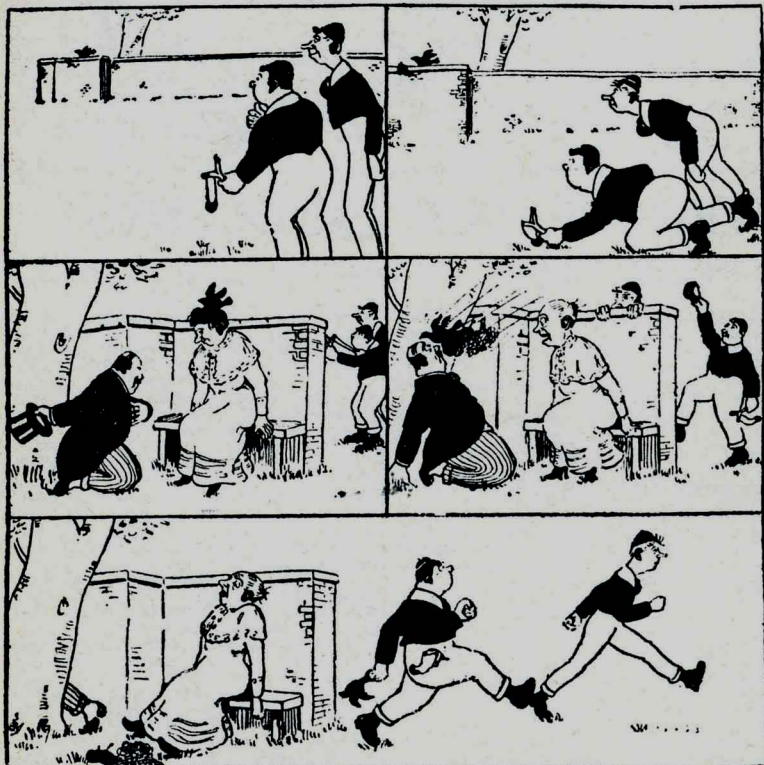
The Remove had intended to wreak vengeance on Temple & Co.; but they were so delighted at the complete success of the performance that they agreed to Bob Cherry's suggestion to bury the hatchet.

And when the amateur actors trooped back to Greyfriars in the cool of the evening they told themselves that Easter had turned up trumps after all.

Coker & Co. thought otherwise. But what they said about it would make the printing-machine go on strike!

THE END.

TUBBY & LANKY, THE TERRIBLE TWINS.



Drawn by JACK BLAKE of St. Jim's.

CASH ON DELIVERY
Some Interesting Correspondence.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The following interesting correspondence has been excavated from the ruins of Study No. 7 after a raid on that apartment by the Famous Five. We are publishing it herewith, as it gives one a good insight into the life and character of William George Bunter.]

I.
FROM Master W. G. Bunter to the Boneshaker Bicycle Co., Ltd., London.

"Dear Sirs,—I have seen your advertisement in the 'Weekly Welsher,' offering a number of your famous Boneshaker bikes for sale.

"I am gratefully in need of a bike. The other fellows at this school are an awfully mean lot, and they won't lend me theirs, because they say that my grate wate smashes the saddle in. Please send me won of your bikes (katalog price ten kwid), and address it to:

W. G. BUNTER, ESQ.,
Friardale Station,
Kent,

to be called for.
"I will let you have the money on resat of my next remittans from my titled relations.
"Hoping you are kwite well, as it leaves me at presant,

"Yours trewly,
"W. G. BUNTER."

II.

"From the Boneshaker Bicycle Co., Ltd., to the Headmaster, Greyfriars School.

"Dear Sir.—We are in receipt of a letter from W. G. Bunter, one of your pupils, who contemplates the purchase of one of our celebrated machines, value ten pounds.

"Before executing this order we should be glad if you would kindly inform us whether Master Bunter is in a position to pay for the bicycle.

"Might we take this opportunity of drawing your attention to our wonderful self-starting, three-speed, umpteen-horse-power, eighteen-carat bicycles, stamped in every link, jewelled in every movement?

"You are doubtless advanced in years, but this would not prevent your skimming along the roads like a swallow.

"DON'T DELAY! ORDER TO-DAY!

"We remain, dear sir,

"Your obedient servants,

"THE BONESHAKER BICYCLE CO.,

"per pro A. BEESTLY-CROCK,

"Manager."

III.

"From the Headmaster, Greyfriars School, to the Boneshaker Bicycle Co., Ltd., London.

"Sirs,—In reply to your communication, I regret to state that I do not consider Master Bunter sufficiently sound, either financially or physically, to receive one of your bicycles.

"With regard to your suggestion that I should avail myself of one of your machines, let me at once state that I decline to do so. I heard of a gentleman at Courtfield who was once misguided enough to purchase a bicycle from you and experiment upon it. They buried him in the local cemetery.

"Not only are your machines unsound, unstable, and unreliable, but they place the rider in a position of grave peril. I have no wish to be cut off untimely from a world which, although it harbours knaves and rogues, is well worth remaining in.

"Yours truly,

"HERBERT H. LOCKE."

IV.

"From Master W. G. Bunter, Greyfriars School, to the Boneshaker Bicycle Co., Ltd., London.

"Dear Sirs,—I am very indignant to find, after waiting pashuntly for menny days, that you have not yet sent the bike.

"Every day I have been to the station, but there has been no sine or shaddo of a bike. Is it never kumming?

"If it's the money that's trubbling you, I give you my word of onner that I will pay you the ten kwids as soon as my postal-order arrives.

"Please shake a leg!

"Yours trewly,

"W. G. BUNTER.

"P.S.—Buck up with the bike!

"P.P.S.—Send it by passinger trane.

"P.P.P.S.—Don't forget to send it 'karridge paid.'"

V.

"From the Boneshaker Bicycle Co., Ltd., London, to Master W. G. Bunter, Greyfriars School.

"Sir,—We have had your letter translated, and, in reply, beg to state that it is impossible for us to despatch you the bicycle on account of your alleged impuciosity.

"You will kindly refrain from troubling us again on this subject.

"Yours truly,

"THE BONESHAKER BICYCLE CO.,

"per pro A. S. WINDLER,

"Assistant-Manager."

VI.

(Postcard.)

"From Master W. G. Bunter, Greyfriars School, to the Boneshaker Bicycle Co., Ltd., London.

"Yah! Beest!! Frawd!! Spoofer!!!"

"GO AND EAT COKE!

"W. G. BUNTER."

The Editor's Chat.

The Companion Papers are:

THE MAGNET. THE BOYS' FRIEND. THE GEM. THE PENNY POPULAR. ONUCKLES.
Every Monday. Every Monday. Every Wed. Every Friday. Every Friday.

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS GLAD TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS.

EASTER GREETINGS TO ALL!

On the occasion of this, the first peacetime Easter, let me convey to all my chums—boys and girls; yes, and the old folks, too!—my sincere good wishes for a merry time. With the loyal aid of Mr. Martin Clifford, I have done my utmost to make this week's issue of the GEM Library contribute to the delights of Bank Holiday. Our space for reading-matter is still very restricted, but I have endeavoured to make this Easter Number as bright and enjoyable as possible.

EXIT BILLY BUNTER!

Billy Bunter has now left St. Jim's, and the school is the richer for his loss.

For next Wednesday we have:

"RATTY JUNIOR!"

By Martin Clifford.

Mr. Martin Clifford's renown as a humorous writer will extend yet further through the medium of this magnificent long complete story of the chums of St. Jim's.

Mr. Ratcliff, the sour, ill-tempered master of the New House, is expecting his nephew Bartholomew to arrive at the school, and he sends Figgins & Co. to meet the new boy. Figgins & Co., in turn, send Gussy; and the swell of St. Jim's puts his foot in it—in fact, both feet! Anyway,

"RATTY JUNIOR!"

has a most painful and surprising reception; and, as a result, Figgins & Co. get it "in the neck" for not having carried out Mr. Ratcliff's instructions in the first instance.

This is a refreshing story, brimful of fun and comedy, and the boy or girl who misses it is missing a real good thing!

THROUGH FIRE AND FLAME!

Coolness and Pluck at a Big Public School.

Some of the more critical of my readers are inclined to scoff at the idea of a big school being threatened with destruction by fire. They are apt to regard such incidents as far-fetched and impossible.

Before me is a letter from G. R. K., of Winchester, who writes:

"I am greatly enjoying your serial in the 'Magnet' entitled 'Gogs, Gram-marian,' but I must say that the author shows a lamentable ignorance if he imagines his readers will swallow the absurd statement that Franklingham School was destroyed by fire. In some of your stories this 'fire, flame, and fury' business is carried to excess. I am at a big public school myself, and I know for a fact that such fires seldom or never happen."

Since writing this letter my Winchester chum will probably have seen the account of the great fire which recently occurred at Wellington College, and he will modify his views.

The fire in question was a gigantic blaze, and could be seen for many miles around. The coolness of the boys, and the plucky part played by one of the masters, were the outstanding features. The newspaper reports do not enlarge upon these two facts;—and one does not wonder why. Coolness and pluck in a crisis are just what we may expect from British schoolboys, and from men who are responsible for their education.

The fire started in the wing in which the Orange, Blucher, Anglesy, and Bercsford dormitories are situated. The Orange and Blucher dormitories, on the top floor, were burnt out; and the others, on the floor beneath, as well as some of the class-rooms on the ground-floor, were damaged by water.

About seventy boys who slept in the Orange

and Blucher dormitories lost most of their personal belongings. The fire was detected by a porter, who saw smoke coming from the dormitories. He ran to the top of the water-tower and rang the alarm-bell. He was in danger of being overpowered by the smoke, but Mr. Whitehead, an assistant-master, dashed into the burning wing and assisted him down.

For an hour or two the fate of the college was in the balance. The school fire-brigade got to work promptly, but was unable to make much headway against the flames, which burst from the dormitory windows and through the roof, and could be seen for many miles around. Motor fire-engines arrived from Wokingham, Reading, Camberley, Guildford, Aldershot, and Broadmoor, and saved the situation.

The boys took the affair very calmly. One said, "Never mind about our things being burnt so long as we get a day off to-morrow!"

His comrade straightway wagered him six doughnuts that lessons would carry on as usual—and he won!

The headmaster said that all the boys whose bed-rooms had been destroyed would be accommodated in the sanatorium, the class-rooms, or the masters' Houses.

"No one was hurt," he added, "and the usual evening service was held. Classes will be as usual to-morrow."

The parents of many of the boys were staying for the week-end at an hotel close by. They were at luncheon when they heard the fire-bell, and, rushing out, went to find if their sons were safe.

Fortunately, they were; and the great fire of Wellington is by this time only a memory.

SHOULD FATTY WYNN SPEAK IN WELSH?

Some of my Welsh chums seem to think he should, anyway. This is what one of them says:

"The boys of Talsarn, North Wales, would be extremely obliged, Mr. Editor, if you would persuade Mr. Martin Clifford to make Fatty Wynn speak in his native tongue.

"I am a Welsh boy, and if I can help I will do so with pleasure.

"ydwyl,

"yn gywir ac.

"yn fyddlon.

"TREVOR WYNN OWEN."

I am afraid my English and Scottish readers would not take kindly to this idea at all; so Fatty Wynn must continue to talk in an intelligible manner. Why, if he started spouting in Welsh, the result would be worse than Grundy's spelling!

EVERYBODY'S HAPPY!

At least, they seem to be, if my postbag is any criterion. Not since happy pre-war days have I received such a budget of cheery letters.

Allan H., of Sheerness, bursts forth as follows:

"Dear Editor,—To-day is Wednesday, and the sun is shining, and the blue sky is out, and so I feel all merry and bright!"

Perhaps the fact that the GEM is out as well has something to do with it. Anyway, Allan H. feels so bucked with life that he sends me a crowd of drawings, which he assures me he did alone and unaided. One of them shows Wells and Beckett scrapping in the ring; another shows Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in one of his elegant attitudes; but the masterpiece of them all is a fearful and wonderful picture entitled "Emile Cottin's Attempt on the French Premier's Life." I am glad my chum explains what the subject is. Had he not done so I should have thought it was a bomb-raid on Cologne!

(Continued on page 16.)

However, Allan H. is probably very young, and "as-time goes on his work will improve. In fact, he may one day become the GEM Library's special artist. Who knows?

THERE'S A GREAT TIME COMING, BOYS!

Superstitious people will say that Friday is an unlucky day; but if they buy the "Penny Pop" week by week, and read the splendid stories of school-life contained therein, they will change their minds.

The circulation of the merry little "Pop" has already reached heights which make one's head turn dizzy; but it will soar yet higher in the near future because of a new and altogether unprecedented feature which will shortly be introduced. I may not at present divulge what this new feature is; but all my chums should make a point of buying the "Penny Pop" each week and endeavouring to solve the great secret themselves!

Weekly papers for boys continue to wax and wane, but

THE "PENNY POP" IS STILL ON TOP!

NOTICES.

Correspondence, etc., Wanted by—

G. Britton, 4, Rossiter's Lane, St. George, Bristol—with readers interested in geology.

Ernest Gundry, Unley, 24, Donald Street, North Brunswick, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia—with readers, about 17, in-British Isles. Chas. Findlay, 15, Glebe Street, Hobart, Tasmania—with readers in China, India, West Indies, West Africa, and Canada, interested in stamp-collecting.

James Eccles, 11, James Street, Preston, Lancs—with readers anywhere, especially those interested in amateur magazines. He would like to hear from Albert E. Thompson, South Wales.

H. Lambert, 141, Berners Street, Leicester, wants 100 members over 14 for GEM and "Magnet" League. Magazine monthly. Stamped addressed envelope.

Miss Lucy Wilkinson, 30, Alexander Street, Nelson, Lancs—with girl readers anywhere, 15-16.

T. Doyle, 38, Henry Street, Newport, Mon—with readers anywhere.

Miss Eileen Lawford, 1, Milton Street, West Hartlepool—with girl readers, 17 or over.

Charles H. Smith, 10, Chapel Street, Port Elizabeth, South Africa—with readers anywhere.

Victor G. Yivash, Waverley Road, East Camfield, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia—with readers in Africa and England interested in photography.

Norman Stockton, Paraparap, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia—with readers in United Kingdom, Canada, and the States.

Miss Joyce E. Warr, 63, Linda Crescent, Glenferrie, Victoria, Australia, wants members, 11-12, outside Victoria, for Girls' Own Correspondence Club.

G. Hollingworth, 1, Hardwick Terrace, Norton Road, Stockton-on-Tees, wants advertisements for amateur magazine. Stamped addressed envelope.

A. O., 23, Lillie Mansions, Lillie Road, Fulham, S.W. 6, wants hectograph jelly in good condition. State price. Envelope, please.

J. Howell, 236, Smithdown Lane, Edge Hill, Liverpool, wants members for correspondence club and amateur magazine. Addressed, stamped envelope.

Miss Hilda Opie, 24, Coventry Street, Upper Stoke, Coventry—with girl readers, 17, in Winnipeg.

Miss Nellie Mahoney, 87, George Street, Redfern, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia—with girl readers in British Islands or America.

A. Howden, 116, Rose Street, So. Lane, Edinburgh—with readers, 16-17, overseas, preferably North and South America.

Jack Kendall, 6, Thackray Street, Highroad Well, Halifax, Yorks, would like to contribute to amateur magazines, sports and athletics. Specimen copies asked for.

M. G. Clay, Manor Farm, Over Haddon, near Bakewell, Derbyshire—with readers anywhere.

Percy Rossiter, 23, White Road, Vicarage Lane, Stratford, E. 15, wants members for serious amateur theatricals.

Miss Maude Cook, 2, Essex Grove, Forest Road, Walthamstow, Essex—with readers anywhere.

Miss Agnes Rhynas, 47, St. Mary Road, Hoe Street, Walthamstow, Essex—with readers overseas.

Ned Sullivan, 66, Pasquier Road, Forest Road, Walthamstow, E.—with readers anywhere.

F. Wiriz, 12, Tavistock Place, Bloomsbury, W.C. 1, wants members for correspondence club and magazine—not on pass-round system.

John McGrau, 20, Carr Street, Stockton-on-Tees, wants readers for the "Universal Amateur Magazine." Post free, 3d.

Miss L. Betts, The Beehive Inn, Henry Street, Chatham—with readers, 14-16, in America or Australia.

C. Morland, c/o Mrs. Kramer, 729H, Vandiventer Avenue, St. Louis, Montana, U.S.A., wants members for International Correspondence Club.

Jimmy King—13 years—32, Barnsbury Street, Barnsbury, N.—with readers of his own age, about the GEM and "Magnet" stories.

Arthur Griffiths, 5, Evans Street, Newport, Mon—with readers anywhere.

M. G. Hall, 54, Burley Lodge Road Leeds, wants members for club; 10 miles of Leeds. Stamped, addressed envelope.

C. A. Sherlaw, 3, Argyll Terrace, Porterfield, Inverness—with readers anywhere.

T. Ffrench, 6, Castlewood Avenue, Rathmines; Dublin, wants members for the Irish Amateur Press Association.

J. Howell, 236, Smithdown Lane, Edge Hill, Liverpool, wants members for correspondence club and amateur magazine.

F. C. Mullan, 184, Replingham Road, London, S.W. 18—with readers anywhere, 15+.

Amateur writers wanted for the International Amateur Press Club. Three magazines free monthly.—Joseph Parks, 38, Garnet Street, Saltburn-by-the-Sea, Yorks.

Jack Cully, 20, Villiers Street, Murton S.O., Durham, will contribute stories to amateur magazines.

S. Jackson, Police Station, Kemble, Gloucestershire—with readers anywhere.

Alfred E. C. Waugh, 3, Station Terrace, Haydon Bridge, Northumberland—with readers, 11-13, anywhere.

W. Duncan, 25, Beechfield Street, Cholham Hill, Manchester, wants members for Stamp Exchange. Overseas readers especially invited; magazine, competitions, and prizes.

H. Swindells, 10, Vernon Street, Buxton Road, Macclesfield, offers advice to readers about amateur magazines.

Percy Gritten, 354, Beresford Avenue, Runnymede, West Toronto, Canada—with readers anywhere interested in postcards.

Miss Dorothy Davies, 15, Queen's Road, Chester, Ladies' Branch, Junior Arts Club, would like to hear of new members. Headquarters, E. Acott, 57, White Lion Street, Angel, Islington, London, N. 1.

B. Porter, 4, Percy Street, Fleetwood, Lancs—with readers abroad, 13-16, interested in stamps and photography.

Miss Winifred Lax, 1, Throston Street, West Hartlepool—with readers, 17 and over, anywhere.

Miss Ethel Cattermole, 3, Saggitt Street, West Hartlepool, Durham, with readers anywhere.

Frederick W. Archer, 53, Victoria Avenue, Tottenham, London, N. 17—with readers in stamp-collecting.

Miss Dorothy Barnes, 304, Burley Road, Leeds—with readers anywhere, 13-14.

Miss Curly Gibson, c/o 4, Cedar Road, Tottenham, London, N. 17—with readers in South Africa, 17 and over.

Miss Nance Carver, 85, Chester Road, West Hartlepool—with girl readers anywhere.

Hugh Stewart, 11, Burnbank Terrace, Lenzie, Dumbarton—with readers anywhere.

J. W. Penn, 125, Dartmouth Park Hill, Highgate, London, N. 19—with readers in foreign countries interested in stamps.

W. McNally, Glenview, Glenluce, Wigtownshire, Scotland, wants readers for amateur magazine. Copy, 2d., post free.

H. Ward, 23, Wansbeck Gardens, West Hartlepool, wants contributors for magazine—photograph exchange, etc.

W. McL. Sigston, 62, Enbridge Street, Salford, and A. B. Green, 32, Robertson Street, Waste, Manchester, want members for their correspondence club. Stamped, addressed envelope.

Ronald Else, 7, Stolewood Terrace, Smedley Street, West Matlock, Derbyshire—with readers anywhere.

G. Mogridge, 95, Argyll Street, Swansea, South Wales—with readers anywhere.

W. Summerell, 38, Belle Vue Road, Bell Hill, St. George, Bristol—with a French boy. Would like to hear from Wm. Bezodis.

U. Carey, 1, Carpenters Yard, Tredegar, Mon., wants foreign coins (not French). Write, stating price.

C. M. Cowie, 46, King Edward's Road, Swansea—with readers anywhere, 16-19.

Thomas Reddan, 24, Irvine Street, Port Elizabeth, South Africa—with readers overseas.

C. D. Lea, c/o Brameld & Smith, 4, Cannon Street, Manchester—with a French reader, reader.

Miss W. is anxious to have an answer from George.

Miss Joyce E. Bell, 12, Frank Street, Roker, Sunderland—with girl readers in the Colonies, aged 13.

N. J. Leaf, 66, Kenilworth Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, wants members for Junior Stamp Exchange Club.

Miss Marjorie Baugh, 50, Victoria Street, Clifton, Bristol—with girl readers interested in the cinema. All letters answered.

Football.

Boys wanted in Lewisham district to form a football club for next season, 15-18.—I. Williams, Blessington Road, Lee, S.E. 13.

Hugh Stewart, 11, Burnbank Terrace, Lenzie, by Glasgow, wants football fixtures in Glasgow district; ages 14-18.

Cricket.

St. James' Cardiff—17-12 miles, home and away.—H. W. Tutchter, 16, Hendy Street, Roath Park, Cardiff.

H. A. H. (YOUR EDITOR.)

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