



Billy Bunter's Butler!

A Splendid Long Complete Tale of School Life and Adventure.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Illustrated by C. H. CHAPMAN.

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Bunter the Beneficent

"I SAY, you fellows!" Billy Bunter, of the Remove, made that remark as he rolled out of the school-house at Greyfriars. Five juniors were seated in a row on the stone balustrade outside, sunning themselves and chatting cheerily. But as Billy Bunter appeared the cheery chat ceased suddenly, and there was a chorus of five voices:

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

Bunter did not "buzz" off. He had not come there to buzz off. He had come there to talk to the Famous Five of the Remove. And he proceeded to talk.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Don't!" said Harry Wharton, holding up his hand.

"Eh! Don't what?"

"Don't say anything! Just roll away."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"What price rolling Bunter down the steps?" asked Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "I believe he would bounce. Do you think you would bounce, Bunter?"

"Look here, you ass——"

"Let's try!" said Bob, getting off the balustrade.

Billy Bunter backed away a pace or two. He never quite knew how to take Bob Cherry; and certainly he did not want Bob to roll him down the steps to ascertain whether he would bounce.

"I say, don't play the goat, you know," urged Bunter, blinking at the sturdy Bob warily through his big spectacles. "I've come here to tell you fellows something——"

"Can't you go and tell somebody else?" inquired Frank Nugent.

"I want to do you fellows a favour!" roared Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'm going to do you a service," said Bunter blinking at the Famous Five with a great deal of dignity.

Bob Cherry sat down again. He seemed quite overcome by William George Bunter's statement.

"Fan me, somebody!" he murmured.

"I say you fellows, do be serious," urged Bunter. "It's a half-holiday to-day, and you fellows have been discussing what to do

with it. I happened to hear you as I came along. Well, I've got a suggestion to make. Let's all go to Chunkley's."

"What on earth is Chunkley's?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"Chunkley's in Courtfield!" explained Bunter.

"Never heard of it."

Bunter sniffed.

"You fellows never hear of anything!" he said scornfully. "You'd never know what's going on right under your noses, if I didn't tell you. Chunkley's is the new big stores in Courtfield. They flooded the place with circulars when they opened. They supply everything, like the big stores in London—everything from mixed biscuits to motor-cars. They've got a tea lounge——"

"A which?"

"A tea lounge," said Bunter, his eyes glistening behind his spectacles. "Coker, of the Fifth, has fed there, and he says it's topping. So does Vernon-Smith; he's spent a lot of tin there, and he says it's no end good. Now, my idea is to patronise Chunkley's this afternoon. I'll take all you fellows, and stand you a spread in the tea lounge."

"My only hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "You will?"

"Little me!" said Bunter loftily.

The Famous Five of the Remove stared at Bunter. This generous offer from William George was surprising, to say the least. William George had a wonderful scent for spreads, and a wonderful gift for securing himself a share therein; but he was not wont to stand spreads for others. The spirit, perhaps, was willing, but the financial resources were weak.

"Well, my word!" said Bob Cherry. "Do mine ears hear aright, or are they deceiving me in my old age? Sing it over again to us, Bunter."

"I'm going to stand you all

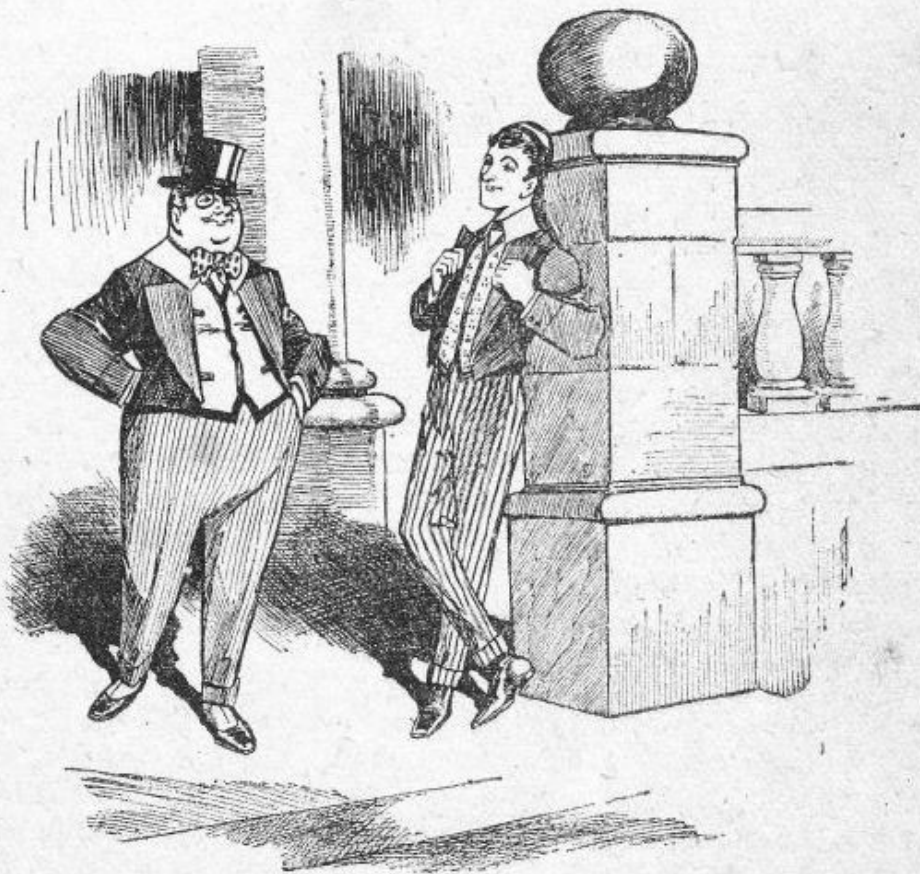
a tip-top spread in the tea lounge at Chunkley's Stores!" assured Bunter.

Frank Nugent began to quote:

"Do I sleep, do I dream?
Do I wonder and doubt?
Are things what they seem?
Or is visions about?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, don't talk rot!" exclaimed Bunter. "If we're going to Chunkley's, the sooner the better. I'm getting hungry already. It's nearly two hours since dinner, and I've had nothing but a few sausage-rolls, and a cake, and a bag of jam-tarts and some nuts; and we've got to walk to Courtfield, unless one of you fellows like to telephone for a taxi. You can get taxis from Chunkley's, they supply everything, you know. As I'm going to stand the feed perhaps one of you fellows could stand a taxi to Courtfield."



Bunter was unusually "nutty" in his looks. His collar was quite clean, his clothes were brushed, and there was a shiny silk topper on his head. He gave Smithy a lofty lock. (See page 21)

"The perhapsfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, I don't think you fellows ought to be mean, when I'm going to be so jolly generous," urged Bunter. "It isn't every chap at Greyfriars who would take five fellows to tea at an expensive place like Chunkley's, I can tell you. But I don't mind. I always was an open-handed chap."

"Open-mouthed, at least," remarked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"The fact is, Bunter, we were thinking of trotting down to the cliffs this afternoon," remarked Harry Wharton.

"If that's the way you thank a chap for asking you to tea, Wharton——"

"Ahem! You see——"

"Here I've wasted a half-holiday, thinking of you chaps," said Bunter indignantly. "Lord Mauleverer wanted me to go home with him in his car for the afternoon, but I refused on your account. Wingate of the Sixth asked me to tea, and I said 'No, I am sticking to my old pals.' And no——"

"Ahem!"

Wharton hesitated.

Billy Bunter was blinking at him more in sorrow than in anger, as it were, and the captain of the Remove felt a little remorseful.

After all, if William George Bunter wanted to play up for once and think of something else than his own capacious inside, it was a new departure on the part of William George which deserved to be encouraged.

Wharton glanced at his comrades.

"I'll leave it to you fellows," he said. "It's very decent of Bunter, if you come to that."

"Hold on a minute," said Johnny Bull, who was rather a cautious fellow. "Chunkley's, from Bunter's account, is a jolly expensive place."

"Awfully expensive!" said Bunter impressively. "They supply everything tip-top and charge accordingly. You can hire a full-blown family butler there, if you like, guaranteed the real article, same as used in the best families."

"Oh, my hat! What I mean is, can you stand the bill?" asked Johnny Bull. "To be quite candid, my dear porpoise, if we want to stand ourselves a feed, we can do it at a cheaper place than Chunkley's."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter gave the cautious Johnny an indignant blink.

"I call that suspicious, Bull," he said.

"Bow-wow!" retorted Johnny Bull. "I'm asking for information."

Bunter slapped his pocket with a boastful air. There was a clinking and a jingling from the pocket. To judge by the sound, the Owl of the Remove was unusually well supplied with coin of the realm.

"My hat! Have you been burgling a bank?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"That's not all," said Bunter airily. "I've got some notes in my pocket."

"Where did you pick up the key of the Head's safe?" inquired Bob.

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "Look here——"

"All serene, my fat tulip!" said Bob, laughing. "We'll come. If you're going to do a decent thing for once we won't stop you."

"Hear, hear!"

"I'd rather like to sample Chunkley's, too," said Bob, slipping off the balustrade once more. "Come on, you fellows; pull up your socks and follow Bunter!"

"Righto!"

Billy Bunter smiled a fat smile of satisfaction.

To judge by his expression he was as pleased at the Famous Five's acceptance of his invitation to a spread as he would have been by a similar invitation extended to himself.

Which was rather curious, for William George Bunter was not famous for parting with good things if he could help it.

"Ready!" said Nugent.

"Better dress a bit for the occasion," suggested Bunter. "Chunkley's is an awfully swanky place, and they expect fellows to be well dressed in their tea lounge!"

"My hat! Do you want us to sport our toppers?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Well, I think it would look better."

"What rot!"

"Well, Bunter's the founder of the feast," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Let's play up; it won't take us a few minutes."

"You may as well change your collar, Bob," said Bunter, with a critical blink at Robert Cherry.

"What's the matter with my collar?"

"The question is, what isn't the matter with it?" grinned Bunter. "Dash it all, we're going to a swanky place for a tip-top spread! It's up to a chap to sport a clean collar!"

Bob Cherry opened his lips to reply, but he closed them again. The Famous Five went into the house to polish themselves a little for the great occasion. Billy Bunter rolled after them, still with the fat smile of satisfaction upon his plump face. William George Bunter, at least, was going to enjoy himself that afternoon.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Bunter's Party

"WHAT a merry nut!"

Vernon-Smith of the Remove was lounging outside the schoolhouse when Billy Bunter emerged again. The Bounder of Greyfriars looked at him with great admiration.

Bunter was unusually "nutty" in his looks.

His collar was quite clean, his clothes were brushed, and there was a shining silk topper on his head.

He gave Smithy a lofty look.

"Wherefore this thushness, old top?" inquired Vernon-Smith. "Are you doing this just to dazzle Greyfriars?"

"I'm taking a few friends to tea at Chunkley's—in the tea lounge," said Bunter carelessly. "You can come, if you like, Smithy. I'm standing treat all round."

"Great Scott! You are?"

"Why not?" demanded Bunter warmly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here we are!" came the powerful voice of Bob Cherry, as the Famous Five came out in clean collars, nicely brushed Etons, and silk toppers complete. "Will we do, Bunt?"

Bunter glanced round at them.

"That's better," he said. "You look quite respectable for once, Bob Cherry."

"Why, you cheeky ass——"

"You might put your tie straight, though."

"What's the matter with my tie?"

"It only looks as if you'd been trying to hang yourself!" answered Bunter blandly.

"Still, if you prefer it like that——"

Bob Cherry gave his tie a jerk. He was beginning to repent now that he had accepted Bunter's extraordinary invitation.

"Is this a game?" inquired Vernon-Smith. "I suppose Bunter isn't really standing a terrific spread?"

"He is—he are!" replied Wharton, with a laugh. "The age of miracles is not past."

"If you call that grateful, Wharton——!" began Bunter.

"Ahem!"

"Let's get going," said Bob Cherry, rather gruffly.

"You coming, Smithy?" asked Bunter, hospitably. "The more the merrier, you know."

"Oh, I'll come," said Smithy, evidently greatly astonished. "This is an occasion worthy to be marked with a giddy white stone. Wait a tick while I cut in for my topper. I won't disgrace you with a cap, old scout."

"Right you are! Follow us on," said Bunter.

Smithy disappeared into the house, and Bunter and his flock started for the gates at an easy walk. Squiff of the Remove was in the gateway, talking with Fisher T. Fish, the American junior. Fishy was trying to sell Squiff a pocket-knife, and Squiff was trying not to purchase it. Squiff had really the more difficult task of the two; for Fishy was a determined business man, and he firmly declined to take no for an answer. Squiff turned to the Famous Five as they came along, greatly relieved by the interruption.

"Hallo! You fellows going to a giddy fashionable function?" he inquired, with a glance at the handsome array of shining toppers.

"I guess you can't do better than take this off my hands, Squiff," Fisher T. Fish went on.

"I've said no nineteen times!" grunted the Australian junior.

"Then say yep for the twentieth," suggested Fisher T. Fish.

"Rats!"

"I really calculate——"

"It's Bunter's treat," said Harry Wharton, interrupting Fishy. "He's taking us out to tea."

"Great pip!"

"You like to come, Squiff?" asked Bunter. "I'd be glad. We're going to sample the tea lounge at Chunkley's new stores in Courtfield."

"My hat! You must be rolling in tin if you're taking nearly half the Remove to that swell show!" ejaculated Squiff.

Bunter slapped his pocket, and there was a musical jingle.

"Come with us!" he said.

"Oh, all right! Thanks."

"I guess I don't mind coming," said Fisher T. Fish, without waiting for the trifling formality of an invitation. Perhaps he saw the possibility of selling the pocket-knife to somebody during tea at Chunkley's. Fishy had bought that pocket-knife for eighteenpence from an impecunious fag; and he was very anxious to sell it for five shillings.

"You can come, Fishy!"

"I guess I'm your antelope," said Fisher T. Fish, promptly.

The juniors regarded Bunter with wonder.

As a rule Bunter was as hard up as any fellow at Greyfriars; his remittances, when they came, usually found their way at once to the tuck-shop.

He was a renowned fisher for invitations; but now he was issuing invitations himself in the most reckless manner. The bill at Chunkley's was likely to be a very steep one, at this rate; but Bunter did not seem to give it a thought.

"Toppers are de rigueur," said Bob Cherry, gravely. "If you're joining this merry party, you must travel in for your toppers."

"Oh, all right."

Fishy and Squiff started for the schoolhouse as Vernon-Smith arrived at the gates. Smithy was wearing a topper, and also a rather perplexed expression.

"I'm all ready!" he said. "I was going to sport my Sunday hat in honour of the oc-

casion, but I can't find it. Some cheeky ass has borrowed my Sunday topper."

"Let's start!" said Bunter hastily.

The Bounder gave him a suspicious look.

"Hallo! Where did you get that hat, Bunter?" he exclaimed. "That's a jolly good hat—for you! Why, you fat fraud——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "It's Smithy's Sunday topper!"

"I say, you fellows—look here, Smithy, I suppose you don't mind lending a hat to a fellow who's taking you to a tip-top tea at a swanky place——"

"I've a jolly good mind——"

"Order!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "The founder of the feast is entitled to borrow a hat. I'm jolly glad he didn't select mine."

"I looked at your Sunday topper, Cherry, but it wasn't any good," remarked Bunter, calmly. "I could hardly be seen out in it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you fat rotter——"

"Order!" grinned the Bounder. "Let's get off. If you damage my topper, Bunter, I shall damage your features. That's a tip!"

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"Here they are!" said Wharton, as Squiff and Fisher T. Fish came racing down from the schoolhouse in shining hats. "Come on!"

With Billy Bunter in the lead, the party of juniors started from the school gates, up the long, white road to Courtfield.

Billy Bunter was evidently feeling very proud of himself, and he walked with what could only be described as a strut.

But Billy Bunter was entitled to strut. He was taking eight fellows—all with good appetites—to tea, at the most expensive place in the town. A little "swank" was pardonable under the circumstances.

There was an occasional clink from Bunter as he walked. The metallic supplies in his pocket made themselves heard. From Bunter's manner, it might have been supposed that his pocket was full of sovereigns; but that could hardly be the case. If it was only silver in that bulging, clinking pocket, he must have been in possession of a goodly sum; and he had declared that he had notes, too. Apparently Bunter had come in for a windfall, and was going to get rid of it

lavishly. Once upon a time, it was known, Bunter had been in funds, on an occasion when his father had been fortunate on the Stock Exchange. It looked as if Bunter senior had scored once more in that weird market where men buy what they cannot pay for, and sell what they do not possess, and make fortunes thereby—varied with an occasional bankruptcy.

William George Bunter seemed to be walking on air, as he led his merry men into the old High Street of Courtfield.

They halted at Chunkley's.

Chunkley's was a new building, of huge dimensions. Chunkley's was the last word in modern, up-to-date efficiency. Chunkley—whoever Chunkley was—had seen that there was room for such an establishment in Courtfield, and the great stores had risen like a mushroom—but a very substantial mushroom.

There were great blocks of buildings; there were endless departments, innumerable smiling shopwalkers, and battalions of charming young ladies, ready to supply everybody with everything that he did or did not desire. If you wanted a car; you telephoned to

Chunkley's, and the car was snorting outside almost as soon as you had hung up the receiver. If you wanted extra gentlemen for a dance, you rang up Chunkley's, and at the hour appointed the extra gentlemen arrived, graceful and debonair, in beautiful evening clothes. If you required a staid,

old-fashioned butler to give the house a tone, Chunkley's supplied you with a butler who looked as if he had passed his whole life in ducal mansions, and the said butler was supplied by the hour, the day, or the week. Chunkley's only asked you to pay liberally for its efficient services—the bills at Chunkley's were on as grand a scale as everything else.

Some of the Greyfriars fellows who had patronised the famous tea lounge at Chunkley's had declared that every-

thing was topping there, but that the charges made a fellow wonder whether he was in a Swiss hotel. But William George Bunter led his flock into Chunkley's, as if the place belonged to him. They invaded the tea lounge—quite a nice tea lounge, with views from the windows, and nice little tables, and palms in pots, and an orchestra half hidden by big



Billy Bunter glanced round at the party. "That's better," he said. "You look quite respectable for once, Bob Cherry. Just shove your tie straight; it looks as if you've been trying to hang yourself!"

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palms at one end. The orchestra was discoursing the mysterious sounds which, in tea lounges, pass for music, as the Greyfriars party came in.

"Well, this looks all right!" murmured Squiff.

"Quite a decent show, what?" said Bunter, carelessly.

"Oh, rather."

"Topping!" said Bob.

"The topfulness is really terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Here's a table that will do for us, you fellows," said Bunter.

And the Greyfriars party sat down.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Something Like a Spread

HARRY WHARTON AND Co. enjoyed the "spread" at Chunkley's.

Billy Bunter did the honours in style.

There was plenty of everything, and the juniors did full justice to all that was provided.

"Don't spare the grub, you fellows!" said Billy Bunter hospitably. "Just you pile in. Follow my example."

Bunter's guests did their best to follow his example; though they could not follow it to its full extent. They did not share the marvellous stowage capacity of the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter certainly distinguished himself.

The delicacies provided in the tea lounge were exceedingly nice, if not very solid; and a hungry fellow could get through a very large quantity of them. The quantity Bunter travelled through was enormous. The other fellows did well.

Once or twice there was a pause; although it really was not their business, the juniors could not help thinking of the terrific bill Bunter was piling up for himself.

Squiff, after a glance at the "carte," ascertained that the jolly little cakes which were disappearing by dozens were a shilling each, and that the stuffed dates were six-pence. And the stuffed dates were vanishing by the score.

Squiff gently pointed out the fact to the

founder of the feast. But Bunter only smiled genially.

"Pile in!" was his reply.

"Well, if you can stand it——" said Squiff.

"My dear chap, this is my spread, and there's no limit," said Billy Bunter. "All I want is to see my guests enjoy themselves."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Bob Cherry.

And when the juniors slacked down, Billy Bunter urged them to renewed efforts, still setting a noble example.

Certainly the Greyfriars crowd enjoyed that spread.

It beat hollow any feed in No. 1 Study at Greyfriars; it excelled, by far, any spread at the school in the memory of the oldest inhabitant.

Billy Bunter, who had bagged feeds in every study in the Remove for whole terms, seemed bent on compensating his victims at one fell swoop as it were.

But the best of things come to an end and there came a time when even Chunkley's most tasty delicacies failed to tempt the juniors.

Even William George Bunter stopped at last.

He leaned back in his chair, with a very fat and happy and shiny face, and blinked at his guests.

"That's what I call something like!" he remarked.

"What-ho!" said Bob Cherry, cordially. "You've really done us remarkably well, Bunt."

"The donefulness is terrific!" concurred the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Our esteemed and ridiculous thanks are due to the excellent Bunter."

"Hear, hear!"

"About time we were moving," remarked Vernon-Smith, as Billy Bunter made no motion to rise. The waitress was hovering round the table, as a hint that after the feast came the reckoning.

"Eh? Oh, yes!" said Bunter.

A slightly thoughtful look came over the fat face of the Owl of the Remove.

"You fellows ready to march?" he murmured.

"Yes, kid."

"Ask the waitress for the bill, will you Wharton?"

"Certainly."

Harry Wharton proffered that request to the young lady in attendance, and the bill was laid before them.

The amount of it made Wharton start.

The items were numberless; and the total amount was twelve pounds ten shillings and sixpence.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry, glancing at it over Wharton's arm. "I thought it was piling up!"

"Well, Bunter was warned," grinned Squiff. "I suppose he knows what he's about."

"I hope so," murmured Wharton. "Here you are, Bunter."

He passed the bill across the table to Bunter.

That fat youth was not looking quite so happy and contented now. In fact, a very uncertain expression was creeping over his face.

"How much?" he asked, blinking at the paper through his big glasses.

"Twelve pounds ten and six."

"Oh!"

Wharton frowned a little. The suspicion was dawning in his mind that the Greyfriars fellows had, after all, been "done" once more by the astute Owl of the Remove.

Bunter made no motion to produce the cash.

The waitress had retired to a little distance, and was in conversation with another young lady; but her weather eye, as it were, was on the table where the schoolboys sat.

Billy Bunter cast one blink towards the exit.

But the exit was at a good distance, and it was necessary to circumnavigate a dozen tables to get there. There was no escape that way for the spoofer.

"Well, Bunter?" said Harry Wharton quietly.

"Well, old chap," said Bunter, with feeble affability.

"Hadn't you better settle the bill?"

"Oh, yes!"

"They'll be wanting the table," suggested Nugent.

"Let 'em want," said Bunter. "We can keep the table as long as we like, I suppose."

"Well, it's time we were off."

"Oh, hurry, old chap!"

Other fellows, as well as Harry Wharton, began to feel—and to look—suspicious.

"Look here," said Bob Cherry abruptly. "Settle the bill and let's get out, Bunter."

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"Well?" said Harry Wharton grimly.

"I—I'm afraid I haven't enough—quite enough—to meet this little bill," stammered Bunter. "I—I suppose you fellows could lend me a pound or two temporarily."

"I suppose so. How much are you short?"

"Lemme see—ahem! I'd better tell you what I can put up, and you fellows can put up the rest—only as a loan, of course. You're my guests," said Bunter, with dignity. "I hope I'm not the kind of fellow to stick his guests into paying for their tea. Only the bill is rather steep, and I haven't enough in my pockets."

"That's all right."

"I'll settle to-morrow, of course. I'm expecting a postal order——"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I'm expecting a postal order to-morrow."

"A—a—a—postal order!" said Wharton dazedly.

The Greyfriars party looked at Billy Bunter as if they could eat him. They had not run up a bill of twelve pounds ten shillings and sixpence in order to hear about Bunter's postal order—which he was always expecting, but which somehow never arrived.

"From a titled relation of mine," explained Bunter.

"Look here——"

"Your money will be quite safe, Wharton," said Bunter. "That postal order ought really to have arrived to-day. There's been some delay owing to these Labour troubles, I suppose. This industrial unrest, you know."

"Bunter!"

"But it will come along to-morrow, and then I'll square the small sum I require now."

"How much can you put up towards the

bill?" asked Harry Wharton very quietly.

Billy Bunter hesitated. He seemed loth to reply, but a reply had to be made at last, and he spoke.

"Sixpence!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Pay Up!

"SIXPENCE!"

The word was repeated round the tea-table in various tones. That William George Bunter could not meet the expenses he had incurred was pretty clear by that time; but that he should name the handsome sum of sixpence as his intended contribution to the bill rather took away the breath of the juniors—well as they knew their William George.

"Sixpence!" said Wharton blankly.

"A—a—a tanner!" stut-tered Bob Cherry. "Oh, you fat rascal!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You fat fraud!"

"Is that your way of thanking a chap who stood you that splendid feed, Bob Cherry?"

"It seems that we've stood ourselves the feed!" grinned the Bounder. "Bunty pays a tanner, and the rest of us find the trifling sum of twelve pounds ten shillings. We ought to have known."

"The thoughtfulness is great," murmured

Hurree Singh, "but the rascalfullness of the esteemed spoofing Bunter is terrific."

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"Sixpence!" said Harry Wharton again. "You've spoofed us into running up a terrific bill, you fat bounder, and now you offer sixpence towards it! Where is the twelve pound ten to come from?"

"You fellows can lend me some tin, I suppose? I'm squaring up to-morrow out of my postal order."

"A postal order for over twelve pounds?"

"Ahem! I—in—in fact, I'm expecting several postal orders," said Bunter, "from—from some of my wealthy relations."

"The fat spoofer has got the tin about him," growled Johnny Bull. "He was rattling it in his pocket all the way to Court-field."

A faint grin appeared for a moment on Bunter's fat face.

"You see ——" he began.

"Yes, rather," explained Wharton sharply. "You're not spoofing us like this, Bunter. Turn out your pockets—the one with the cash in it."

"There's only a tanner."

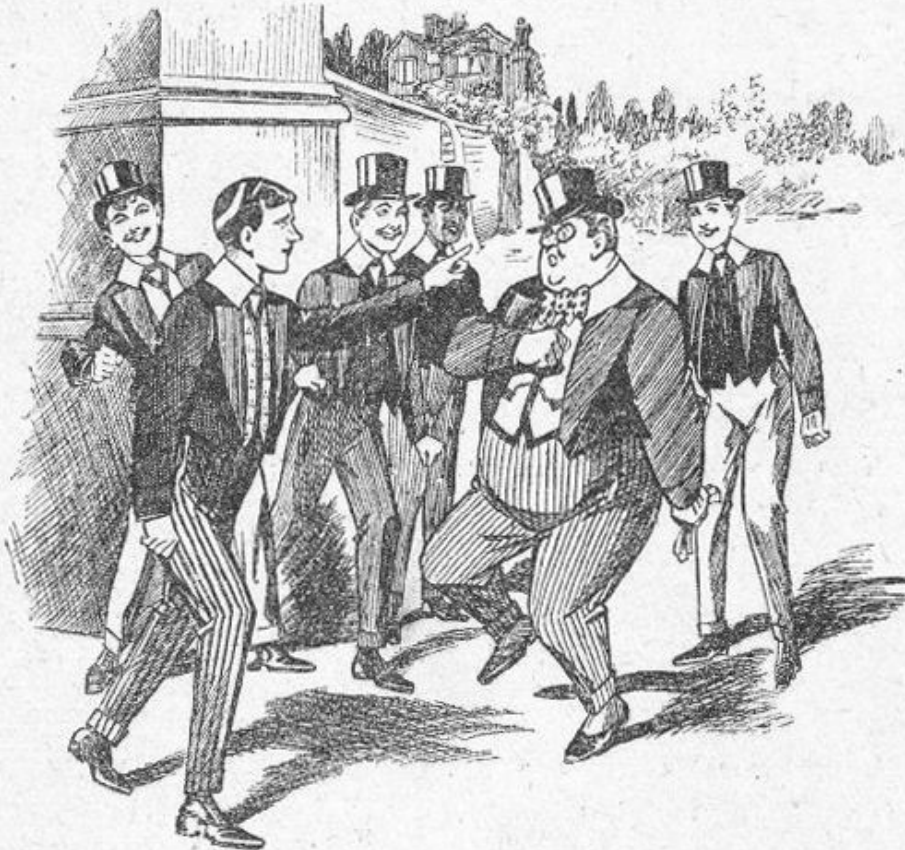
"Then what were you jingling?"

"I—I may have some old keys in my pocket.——"

"K-k-keys!"

"Yes. I don't mind showing them, if you want to see them," said Bunter.

He turned out the bulging, jingling pocket



Vernon-Smith gave Billy Bunter a suspicious look. "Hallo!" he exclaimed. "Where did you get that hat, Bunter? It's a jolly good one for you. Why, you fat fraud, it's my Sunday topper!"

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before the staring eyes of his guests. The only coin of the realm that was disclosed was a solitary sixpence. But there were five or six old keys, a number of buttons, several screws, and a number of marbles. The juniors fairly blinked at that collection which had jingled merrily in Bunter's pocket, and given them the impression that the Owl of the Remove was quite rolling in money.

"Spoofed!" muttered Bob.

"You awful rogue!" gasped Wharton.

"You planned this—you jingled that rubbish just to take us in——"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Didn't you?" howled Johnny Bull.

"I must say you fellows are suspicious," said Bunter. "I call it low. I don't like to say it, but really, it's rather low."

"Why, you—you——"

"Shush!" murmured Frank Nugent. "We don't want a shindy here. People are beginning to stare."

Bunter grinned again.

The argument proceeding at the schoolboys' table had already drawn some glances from the other guests in Chunkley's Fashionable Tea Lounge.

It was evident, too, that the waitress was interested, though she was out of hearing as yet. Two other waitresses had joined the young lady. All three were gazing towards the Greyfriars party.

The young lady had been willing to trust a party of well-dressed public schoolboys; but only as far as she could see them, so to speak. There was no possibility of the party getting out of Chunkley's Tea Lounge without the account being settled.

A "scene" in the tea lounge, under a hundred curious eyes, made the juniors shudder to contemplate it. Only Billy Bunter, perhaps, could have faced it with equanimity. Bunter would have faced worse things for such a spread as he had just enjoyed.

The juniors suppressed their feelings.

"The awful beast said he had notes, too," muttered Squiff.

"I hope you don't think I was speaking untruthfully, Field!" said Bunter loftily.

"What! You've got some notes?"

"Certainly. I said I had."

"Oh, good," said Wharton, in great relief. "Produce them, then. If this is only a silly joke, all right. Turn out the notes."

"They won't be much use here," said Bunter. "They're not banknotes, you know."

"Currency notes are all right, if you've got enough, ass."

"But they're not currency notes."

"Eh! What the thump notes are they, then, if they're not banknotes or currency notes?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Ahem! You—you see——"

"Produce them, anyhow," hissed Bob Cherry.

"Oh, all right."

Billy Bunter dived a fat hand into another pocket, and produced a number of crumpled pieces of paper. The juniors stared at them.

"There's the notes," said Bunter.

"What—what——"

"Old letters!" said Nugent.

"Notes from my father," said Bunter.

"You can call them letters if you like. It comes to the same thing."

"You—you—you said——"

"I said they were notes. So they are notes. I never said they were banknotes, did I?" said Bunter in an injured tone. "I do think it's rather rotten of you chaps to put words into a fellow's mouth like that."

"You gave us the impression——"

"I said notes. If you choose to get a wrong impression, that's your own look out. I'm not answerable for you fellows being stupid."

"Oh, my hat!"

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath.

"This really serves us right," he said. "We ought to have known Bunter better. He's planned this, and spoofed us all along the line; and it's really our own fault. We shall have to pay the bill, and take it out of Bunter's hide afterwards."

"I say, you fellows——"

"We can raise it among us, I suppose," said Bob Cherry. "But—but—but the funds don't run to a feed like this. I'm blessed if I know how we shall stand it. I've only got half-a-crown."

"Whacks all round, as much as every fellow can stand," said Wharton, with a worried look.

Fisher T. Fish rose to his feet. There was a very determined expression on Fishy's bony face.

During the spread Fishy had been making surreptitious attempts to sell his pocket-knife to one member of the party after another. He had not succeeded, though the price had come down to four shillings, which was only twice its value. Fishy was feeling discontented, and his look showed that he did not intend to be "stuck" for a "whack" in paying for the glorious spread at Chunkley's.

"I guess this lets me out," he remarked. "About time I noseyed on, I reckon."

"Hold on, Fishy——"

"I guess it's time to vamoose the ranch, Wharton."

"But the bill isn't paid."

"That's Bunter's bizney."

"You know Bunter can't pay. We've got to raise the money among ourselves somehow——"

Fisher T. Fish shook his head very decidedly.

"Nope!" he answered. "I came here as a guest; and guests don't pay for their refreshments in Noo Yark, where I was raised. I reckon this lets me out. Ta-ta."

And Fisher T. Fish reached for his hat and walked off, leaving Harry Wharton and Co. to deal with the situation as best they could, without his assistance.

The waitress hovered a little nearer the table. She was aware by this time that there was a hitch in the proceedings somewhere; and the departure of one guest at a hurried walk was a suspicious circumstance. She stood prepared to bar the way to the next, if there was a next. Guests could not pile up a heavy bill in Chunkley's Tea Lounge and then steal off one by one.

But there was no other departure. The rest of the party "played up" loyally together; there was only one Fisher T. Fish at Greyfriars.

"Cash up all round," said Harry Wharton. "Get a move on; we shall be asked for the money soon. My hat! We'll give Bunter the ragging of his life for getting us into this scrape."

"If that's your thanks, Wharton——"

"Shut up!" hissed the captain of the

Remove. "Now then, you chaps, how much can you stand? I've got a quid."

"I have three esteemed quids, my excellent Wharton," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Half-a-crown!" groaned Bob Cherry.

"Twopence!" mumbled Nugent.

"Oh, dear!"

"Bunter, you villain——"

"Bunter, you fat Hun——"

"If you fellows are going to call me names, after standing you the biggest feed of the term——" began Bunter warmly.

"Shut up! Hack his shins, Squiff—you're nearest."

"Good egg!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, with a sudden yell that woke the echoes of Chunkley's Fashionable Tea Lounge.

"Oh, my hat! Shut up!"

"Oh, dear!"

Every eye in the Tea Lounge was fixed upon the Greyfriars table as if glued there. The juniors were crimson.

Billy Bunter was not specially concerned for appearances. He had the advantage of the rest of the party there.

"Oh, wait till we get you home to Greyfriars!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Shurrup!"

"I've got a fiver," said Vernon-Smith. "Lucky I joined up—what? I think we shall get through all right."

The required sum was made up at last, Smith and Hurree Singh being the largest contributors. The other fellows handed in all they had; it was the most they could do.

Wharton, with a very pink face, signed to the waitress, and the cash was handed over with the bill. The waitress with a haughty expression marched off to the desk with it.

"Come on, now," muttered Wharton.

"Wait a minute," said Bunter.

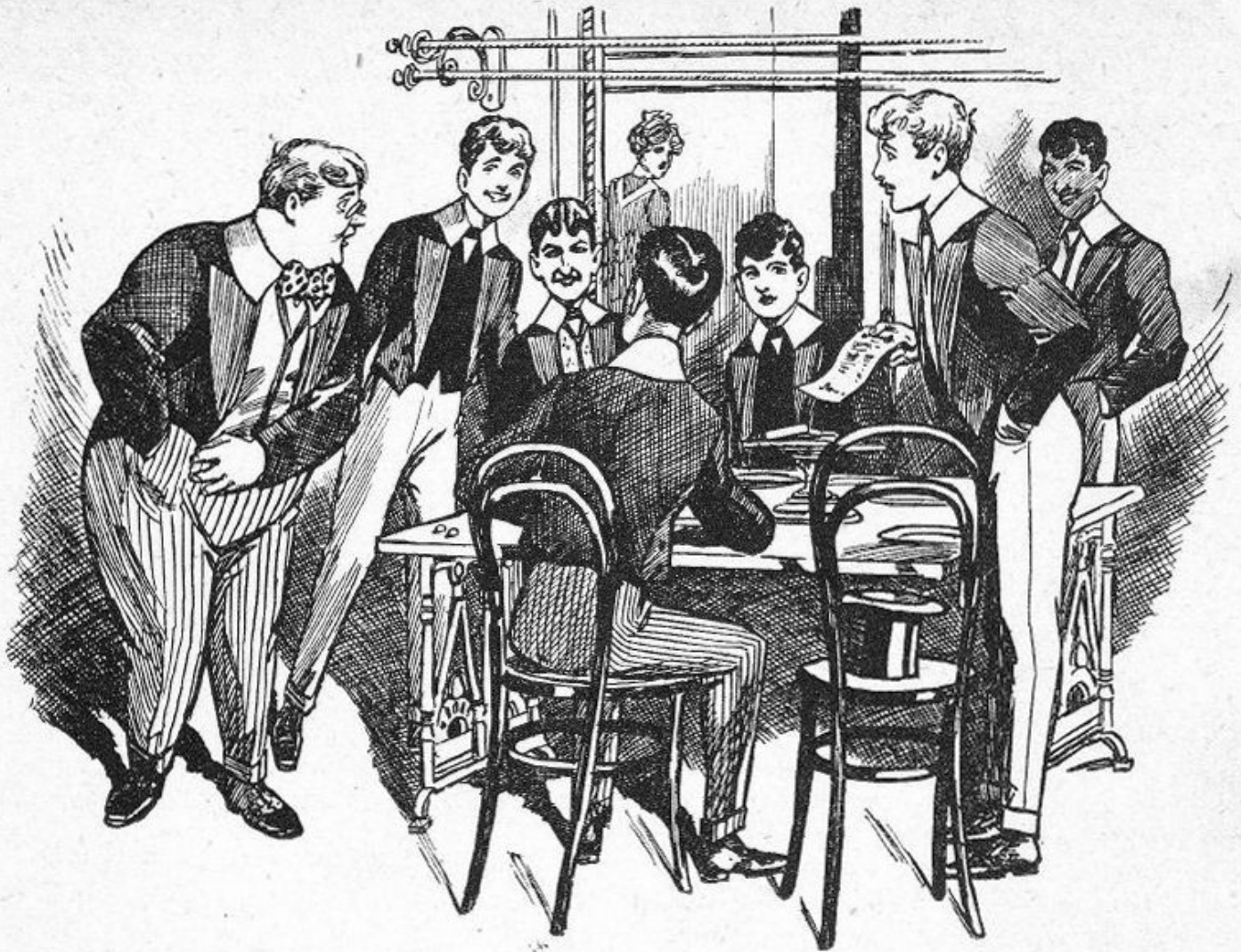
"What for you, fat villain?"

"I want my receipt."

"Your receipt!" stuttered Bob.

"Yes, certainly."

"Let him have the receipt," said the Bounder. "He owes us twelve pound ten, and we're going to rag him every day till he pays up."



"Spoofed!" stuttered Bob Cherry. "You awful rogue!" gasped Harry Wharton. "You invited us to this spread, and all you've got to foot the bill is—sixpence!" (See page 27)

"Every day of his life, then," growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

The waitress brought the receipt on a plate, and Billy Bunter pocketed it. The immediate results of his game of spoof were likely to be painful to William George Bunter; but that receipt was a valuable asset, all the same. On future occasions Bunter would be able to let that little paper be seen by apparent accident, and fellows would know that he had "fed" at Chunkley's Fashionable Tea Lounge to the tune of twelve pounds ten shillings and sixpence. It was probable that Billy Bunter would make use of that receipt for purposes of swank, till it was worn to shreds and patches.

"Now come," muttered Wharton.

"Better leave half a crown for the young

lady, Wharton," said Billy Bunter reprovingly. "She's waited on us a lot. As I've stood the feed I think you might stand the tip."

"Why, you—you——" Wharton almost exploded.

"Tips" were expressly forbidden by several large notices in the tea lounge, nevertheless, there seemed to be an expectant air about the young lady. Vernon-Smith found half a crown in his pocket, and laid it on the table, and the juniors marched off. Something suspiciously resembling a sniff was heard behind them as they went. Probably the young lady had anticipated more than half a crown as the fee for a twelve pound ten repast.

Harry Wharton and Co. marched out of Chunkley's Stores in a frame of mind that was

almost Hunnish. But Billy Bunter did not march out with them. He slid off quietly and disappeared among the huge departments of Chunkley's. The Greyfriars party started home without him. Probably the Owl of the Remove considered it judicious to let his "guests" cool down a little before he saw them again.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Pleasant Prospects for Bunter!

"BUNTER in yet?"

That question was being asked by half a dozen fellows as the hour of calling-over drew near at Greyfriars School.

The fat junior had not turned up yet.

Vengeance waited for him at Greyfriars, and Billy Bunter doubtless was perfectly well aware of it. It was close on call-over, and he had not put in an appearance.

Seven juniors were exceedingly anxious to see him.

Of the merry party at Chunkley's only one member was taking the affair cheerfully and smilingly. That one was Fisher T. Fish of New York. Fishy even saw something humorous in it. As he airily explained, he was far too "spry" to be "stuck" by Bunter or any other guy; he had scoffed a good share of the great spread, and wasn't a penny the worse. Fishy was, in fact, greatly tickled by the wrathful looks of the Famous Five, and inclined to admire the "cuteness" of Bunter's "stunt."

"I guess you guys were fairly roped in," Fisher T. Fish remarked as he found seven wrathful youths waiting for Bunter in the big doorway. "You look a bit mad about it. Ha, ha, ha!"

Johnny Bull glared at him.

"What are you chortling about?" he demanded gruffly.

"Waal, it's funny," urged Fisher T. Fish. "You can't deny that it's funny. You galoots were real done. I guess Bunter wouldn't have put the cinch on me in that way. No, sir; not on a galoot who was raised in Noo Yark. We cut our eye-teeth too early in Noo Yark."

"You came—the same as we did."

"But I guess I slid out of the paying stunt."

"Somebody had to pay."

"I guess that was Bunter's game. They could have called a bobby, and given him in charge, you know," said Fisher T. Fish coolly. "I reckon I should have smole! You galoots are too soft! Ha, ha, ha!"

In the circumstances Fisher T. Fish's merriment was ill-timed. The exasperated juniors showed their sense of that by collaring the hilarious Fishy, and sitting him down on the floor with a heavy bump. Fishy's unmusical chortle changed suddenly to a fiendish yell.

"Yooooop!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Why don't you laugh?" chortled Bob Cherry. "Isn't that funny? You've got such a sense of humour, you know."

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Give him another," said Squiff.

Fisher T. Fish hurriedly scrambled out of reach. He did not want another, and for the moment at least his merriment was suppressed. He shook a bony fist at the Famous Five and retreated.

"Call-over, you fellows!" shouted Peter Todd down the passage. "What are you waiting for?"

"Bunter! We're going to slaughter him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here's another funny ass! Bump him!"

Peter Todd promptly fled into Hall, chuckling as he went. The story of Bunter's spoof had spread, and most of the Remove fellows seemed to find something amusing in it; though all agreed that William George Bunter ought to be punished by something lingering with boiling oil in it.

"Better cut off," said Harry Wharton, at last. "We don't want to be late for call-over. Quelch's taking the roll."

And the wrathful seven headed for Hall.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was taking call-over. At the last moment a fat and breathless figure wedged into Hall, and answered to the name of Bunter.

William George had put off his return till the latest possible moment. But he could not

venture to cut call-over, and here he was. Seven fiery glances were turned upon him as he joined the ranks of the Remove. Bunter gave Wharton a feeble and propitiatory smile after answering to his name.

"I say, Harry, old chap," he murmured.

"I'll give you Harry, old chap, presently!" muttered the captain of the Remove.

"Bob, old scout——"

"B-r-r-r-r!"

"I—I hope you fellows enjoyed the spread at Chunkley's!"

"I hope you'll enjoy what you're going to get presently!" answered Johnny Bull.

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"Silence!" called out Wingate of the Sixth.

There was silence in the Remove; but the glances that were cast upon Bunter spoke more eloquently than words.

Billy Bunter wore a worried look.

Now that he had fairly digested that terrific feed, it was possible that he was beginning to repent. But repentance of that kind was not likely to serve the Owl of the Remove. There was only one way of making his peace with the aggrieved juniors, and that was by handing over the sum of twelve pounds ten shillings. And Bunter's last sixpence had been expended at Chunkley's, in his contribution towards the payment for the spread. Evidently there were squalls ahead for Bunter.

The moment the signal to dismiss was given Billy Bunter scuttled out of hall. His only hope was to keep out of reach, and stave off the evil hour. Perhaps he hoped that the wrathful Removeites would not let the sun go down on their wrath. If so, he was likely to be disappointed.

"After him!" muttered Bob Cherry, hastily. "The bounder's mizzling!"

"Don't let him get away!"

"After him!"

There was a rush of the Removeites. Mr. Quelch's cold, clear voice rang out sharply.

"Wharton. Cherry! Kindly do not rush out of Hall in that disorderly way. Return to your places at once, and walk out in an orderly manner."

"Oh, dear!"

Mr. Quelch's command was law. William

George Bunter had to be suffered to escape! He was not in sight when Harry Wharton and Co. emerged from Hall at last.

"Anybody seen Bunter?"

That question was being asked up and down the House during the next half hour, by seven furious juniors.

But nobody had seen Bunter.

The fat junior was understudying Brer Fox, and "lying low"—very low, indeed.

The juniors had to go to their studies for prep., and after prep. the Famous Five looked in at No. 7. Bunter shared No. 7 with Peter Todd and Tom Dutton, and should have been there at work. But he wasn't there.

"Seen that fat villain, Peter?" asked Harry Wharton, as the juniors looked in.

Peter chuckled.

"No; he hasn't turned up yet."

"Hasn't he done his prep.?"

"Apparently not."

"Oh, the fat rotter!"

Harry Wharton and Co withdrew. Bunter was evidently abandoning prep. for that evening, chancing his luck with his form-master in the morning. He was still adhering to his policy of putting off the evil hour.

"Never mind—we'll catch him at dorm!" said Bob Cherry.

There was an hour beyond which the elusive Owl could not put it off. He had to turn up in the Remove dormitory, with the rest of the form, at half-past nine. The avengers gave up hope of seeing him until then, but their wrath did not spoil by keeping. In fact, it seemed like wine to improve with age.

By the time the Remove were shepherded off to their dormitory, they were quite prepared to hang, draw, and quarter Bunter.

Wingate of the Sixth was in charge of the Remove that night. He noted that one was absent from the dorm. when the Remove marched in.

"Bunter's not here," said the Greyfriars captain. "Where is that fat rascal?"

"I—I—I'm here, Wingate!" gasped Bunter from behind him.

"Roll in!" snapped Wingate.

Billy Bunter rolled in from the corridor. He cast nervous blinks towards Harry

Wharton and Co; but they avoided looking at him. What they had to say to Bunter was not to be said in the presence of the head perfect of Greyfriars.

"I—I say, you fellows!" mumbled Bunter.

"Turn in, sharp!" said Wingate.

When the Remove had turned in, Wingate extinguished the light, and retired from the dormitory. Then seven juniors sat up in bed, as if moved by the same spring.

"Now, Bunter!"

"Have him out!"

"Scalp him!"

"Slaughter him!"

Harry Wharton struck a match and lighted a candle-end. Bob Cherry strode towards Bunter's bed.

"Now, Bunter, you rascal!"

Snore!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, he's asleep! I'll wake him—hand me that water-jug, Franky——"

"Yaroooh!"

"Hallo, he's awake after all! Turn out, Bunter!"

"I—I—I say, you fellows——"

"Turn out!"

"I—I'm asleep—I—I mean—yaroooooooh!"

Bob Cherry grasped the bedclothes, and there was a loud bump, and a yell, as William George Bunter landed on the floor in a tangle of sheets and blankets.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

In the Hands of the Amalekites

"**B**EAST!"

That was William George's remark, as he sat up in the tangled bedclothes. He made it with emphasis.

Seven avenging figures in pyjamas surrounded the fat junior, as he sat and gasped.

"Now, you fat toad!" said Squiff.

"Ow! Wow! Ow!"

"Gerrup!"

"I—I can't get up!" gasped Bunter.

"My back's broken——"

"What?"

"I mean my neck—that is to say, my leg. Broken in the spinal column of the knee," gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Most of the Remove fellows were sitting up in bed to watch the scene with grinning faces. Skinner had lighted a candle, and two or three fellows followed his example. The Remove apparently looked upon the ragging of Bunter as an entertainment.

Bunter didn't. He was in a state of great alarm.

"I—I say, you fellows," he stammered. "Lift me back into bed carefully, will you? My arm's broken in two places."

"It was your leg a minute ago," said Bob.

"My arm as well as my leg, Cherry—both are busted in several places. I think you had better call a doctor. I'm in fearful agony."

And Bunter gave a deep groan.

"Lift him up carefully," said Bob Cherry.

"Look here, he's only spoofing, as usual," grunted Johnny Bull. "You're not ass enough to believe him, I suppose."

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Of course not, ass," said Bob Cherry. "But lift him up, all the same. He's asked to be lifted up."

"Oh, all right."

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull lifted Bunter—Hurree Singh lending a helping hand. Bunter's weight was not easy to negotiate. The fat junior breathed with relief. He was under the impression that he was to be lifted back into bed, on account of his broken limbs. But he wasn't. Having raised him to the level of the bed the juniors stopped.

"Put me in," said Bunter, in a faint voice. "Careful, now. I'm suffering awfully. You needn't trouble about calling a doctor, if you put me in the bed very carefully. Now—yoooooop!"

Bunter gave a yell as he was suddenly lowered, not into the bed, but upon the floor again. He smote the floor hard.

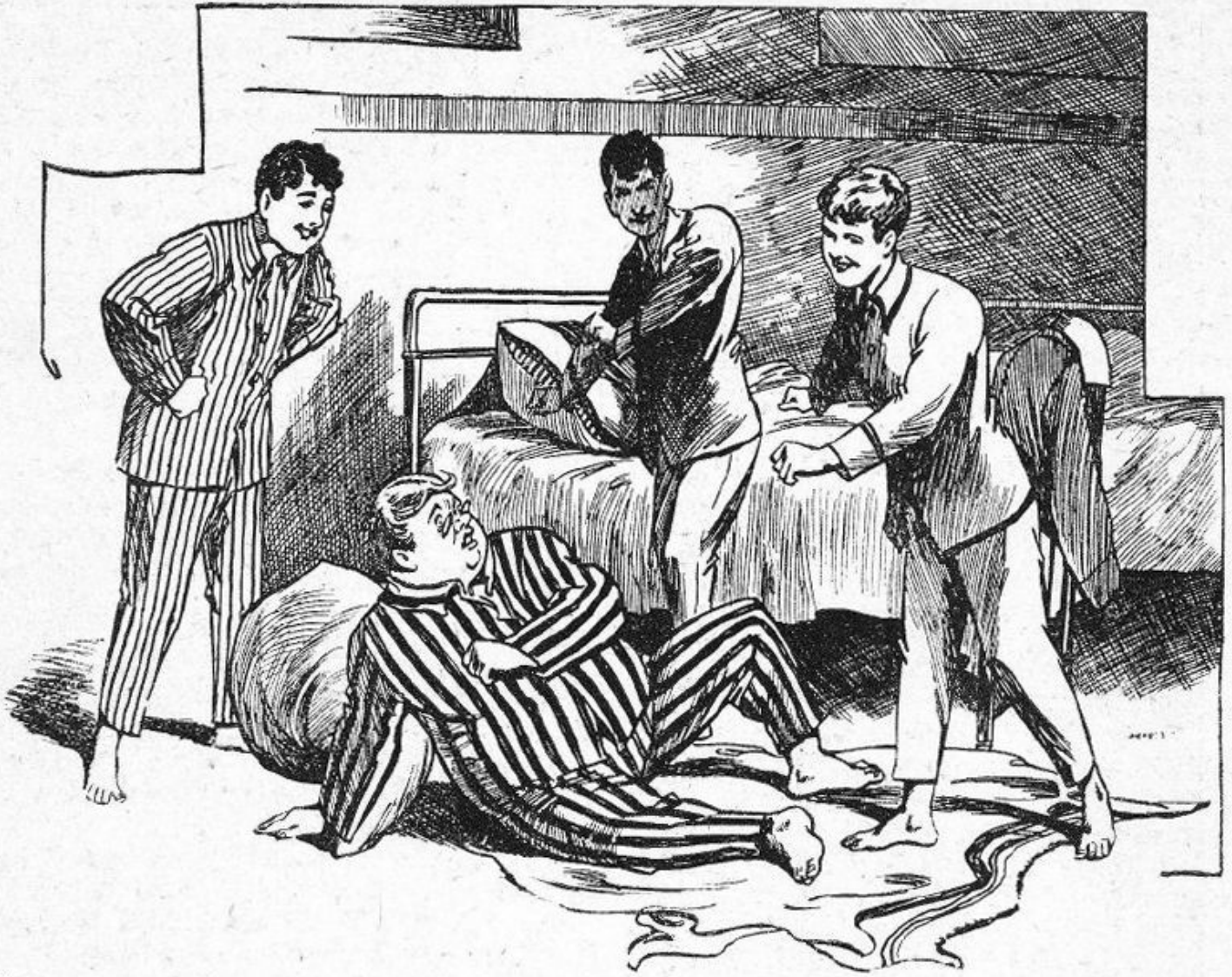
"Oh, crumbs! Oh, yaroooh! Beasts! Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner. "Any more legs broken, Bunter?"

"Yow-wow-wow!"

"How are you going to get up, old fat top?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Yow-ow! I c-c-can't! My back's broken now. Broken in three places. Oh, dear! Wow!"



Billy Bunter gave a yell as he was suddenly lowered, not into the bed, but upon the dormitory floor. He smote the hard boards with a crash! (See page 32)

"Still broken?" said Bob. "All serene; we'll lift you up again as carefully as before. Lay hold, you chaps."

"Yah! Gerraway!"

Billy Bunter bounded to his feet, without waiting to be lifted. For a fellow whose back was broken, he displayed remarkable activity.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! He can get up, after all!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, let's go to bed," mumbled Bunter. "I—I shall miss my sleep, you know. I—I don't want any larks at this time of night. I—I say, you fellows, after the spread I stood you to-day at Chunkley's—"

"Shut up, Bunter! Are you going to pay

for that spread?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, certainly!"

"Pony up, then!" said Vernon-Smith.

"I—I'm going to settle up to-morrow," said Bunter, in an injured tone. "It's nothing to me—only twelve pound ten. Nothing at all to a wealthy fellow like me. I'm expecting a postal order—"

"You spoofing porpoise—"

"Several postal orders—a lot, in fact. I—I'm going to write to some of my titled relations—"

"Oh, collar him!" exclaimed Johnny Bull impatiently.

"Yah! Hands off, you beasts!" Billy Bunter dodged round his bed. "I—I say, you

fellows, I—I mean business, honest Injun. I—I really meant to be standing you fellows a feed. I'm really expecting a postal order—I mean a lot of postal orders——”

“You're going through it,” said Johnny Bull grimly. “You bilked us into spending twelve pounds ten shillings on a feed, and you bagged the lion's share of it, as usual. You took us all to Chunkley's intending to spoof us; you ordered things right and left, while you had only a tanner in your pocket——”

“And some old keys!” grinned Fisher T. Fish.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“I think it's rather mean to make this fuss about a temporary loan, Bull; merely temporary——”

“It will be all the better for you if it's temporary,” remarked Vernon-Smith. “You're going to have a ragging every day till you pony up.”

“Oh, really, Smithy——”

“Every day regularly, beginning now,” said Harry Wharton sternly. “You've passed the limit, Bunter. You've spoofed us, and told awful whoppers, and cleared us all out of cash. All for the sake of guzzling a spread you couldn't afford. Are you ready to be ragged?”

“Nunno! I—I'd rather leave it over till—till—till next term, if you fellows don't mind. I—I'm really thinking of you, you know. You're losing your sleep.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” howled the Removites. Bunter's consideration for the fellows who were losing their sleep was quite touching, in the circumstances.

“In fact, I'd rather let the whole matter drop now,” said Bunter, blinking at the indignant seven. “I stood you a splendid feed. There was a slight misunderstanding about payment. But that's nothing to row about. Misunderstandings will occur. I really prefer to let the whole matter drop.”

“Collar him!”

“Yaroooh!”

Seven juniors rushed round the bed after Bunter, and Bunter made a wild scramble across the bed just in time. Never had the fat junior shown so much activity.

“Stop him!”

“After him!”

Bunter scrambled across Peter Todd's bed to escape. There was a wild howl from Toddy as he caught Bunter's elbow with his eye. Bunter rolled off on the other side.

But the Philistines were close on the track. Bunter rolled under the next bed, which happened to be Tom Brown's, and stayed there. Seven faces were bent down, and seven ferocious glares were turned under the bed.

“Come out!”

“Roll out, you fat frog!”

“Anybody got a cricket stump?”

“Yank him out!”

“I—I say, you fellows,” spluttered Bunter, “d-d-don't you think this has gone far enough? I—I can take a joke with anybody—he, he, he!—but I really think this joke has gone far enough.”

“Roll out!”

“If you're going to make a rotten fuss over a paltry twelve pound ten, I'll settle up to-morrow, honour bright!” groaned Bunter.

“Your honour isn't very bright,” remarked Squiff, “it's badly in need of some polishing.”

“Have him out!”

“To-morrow,” howled Bunter, squirming, as Bob reached under the bed for him, “Give a fellow a chance. I'll really have the cash to-morrow, on the word of—of a Bunter!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Only gas!” said Vernon-Smith. “I'll get a water-jug and swamp him out.”

“Good egg!”

“Yaroooh! I say, Harry, old chap—Wharton dear boy—give a chap a chance. I—I'll hand you the tin after morning lessons to-morrow. I will, honest Injun.”

“Give him a chance!” chuckled Skinner. “It will be interesting to hear what whoppers he will tell when the time comes.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Honest Injun!” howled Bunter. “Can't you give a fellow a chance! I put it to you as captain of the Form, Wharton.”

Harry Wharton hesitated. He did not believe a word that Bunter uttered, as a matter of course; but, after all, even Bunter was entitled to be given a chance.

“What do you fellows say?” asked Wharton. “After all, we can begin ragging

the fat swindler to-morrow, if he doesn't pay up."

"Give him a chance," said Peter Todd, "Bunter may get a postal order from his uncle the marquis, or a cheque from his grandfather the duke. Or his pater may send down the family butler with a sack of bank-notes for him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, he sports, you know," urged Bunter, from under the bed, "play the game, you know. I'm settling up to-morrow, and—and, if you like, I'll take you along to Chunkley's Tea Lounge for another spread. I can't say fairer than that, can I?"

"Oh, roll into bed, and give us a rest," growled Bob Cherry. "We'll give you till after lessons to-morrow. Then, if you don't shell out, you will get scalped bald-headed."

And the seven avengers went back to bed, leaving Bunter to his own devices. Bunter crawled out, and blinked round him very nervously, and bolted into bed like a rabbit into his burrow. His fat voice was heard again in a few minutes.

"I—I say, Harry——"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Good-night, old boy."

"Good-night, you fat rascal!"

"I hope you'll sleep well, dear old chap."

"I hope you will!" answered Wharton. "You need a good night's rest, to go through what's going to happen to you to-morrow."

"I—I hope you fellows don't bear me any malice."

"Not at all," said Bob Cherry. "We're only going to rag you every day till you square."

"Oh, dear!"

Bunter decided to go to sleep. Evidently the hearts of the spoofed juniors were not to be softened by "soft sawder." Bunter, fortunately, was a good sleeper. Otherwise the alarming prospect for the morrow might have kept him awake till dawn crept in at the dormitory windows. But, as it was, Bunter slept quite soundly, and dreamt that he was at Chunkley's Fashionable Tea Lounge, enjoying that tremendous feed over again—and a sweet smile played over his face during his balmy slumbers.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

No Cash

HARRY WHARTON and Co. left the Owl of the Remove severely alone on the morrow.

Bunter was being given his chance; for what it was worth. If he succeeded in raising the sum of twelve pounds ten shillings by the time lessons were over, it was "all clear" for him. It did not seem likely that it would be all clear, however; for Bunter would have had considerable difficulty in raising the sum of twelve pence.

He had gained time, that was all. Perhaps he hoped that the wrath of the "bilked" juniors would die away with time. Perhaps he depended on his sagacity to elude the punishment when it fell due again. At all events the postponement was so much to the good.

But it was not a happy day to Billy Bunter. He did an unusual amount of thinking that day. He looked so thoughtful in the form-room that Mr. Quelch supposed he was really giving some attention to his lessons for once.

But when Bunter was called upon to construe, he made so lamentable an exhibition, that Mr. Quelch's pointer was called into play. And for some minutes the Remove master was quite eloquent to Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove bore it with what fortitude he could. Even Mr. Quelch's sharp tongue, even his pointer, did not worry Bunter so much as the alarming prospect of what was to happen after lessons. For the twelve pound ten was as far off as ever. At dinner, Bunter turned a very pathetic look upon Harry Wharton; which the captain of the Remove did not heed in the least. Pathos, however, did not affect Bunter's appetite; he proved quite as good a trencherman as usual. When the juniors came out of the dining-room, Bunter joined the Famous Five.

"I say, you fellows," he began.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! have they come?" asked Bob Cherry.

"They—what?"

"That cargo of postal orders!" said Bob, genially.

"N-n-n-no."

"Not the cheque from your uncle, the earl?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"Or the esteemed remittance from the grandfatherly duke?" inquired the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I—I say, you fellows, I'm going to settle up!"

"You'd better!" assented Wharton.

"The betterfulness is terrific!"

"But there may be some—some delay."

"That will be unlucky for you," remarked Bob Cherry. "I'm taking a fives bat to the dorm. to-night. Better put on your thickest pyjamas, Bunt."

And the Famous Five walked away, leaving William George Bunter in a dolorous mood.

The alternative lay between the twelve pounds ten and the fives bat. The odds seemed to be on the fives bat.

In class that afternoon Bunter was more thoughtful than ever, but it was not his lessons that occupied his thoughts.

After lessons, when the Remove came out, seven juniors surrounded William George Bunter before he had time to escape.

"Well?" said seven voices at once.

Bunter blinked at them uneasily.

"Time's up!" remarked Frank Nugent.

"The—the post isn't in it!" murmured Bunter. "I—I'm expecting my—my remittances by the next post, you fellows."

"Still keeping that up?" grunted Squiff.

"If you can't take my word, Field——"

"Your word! Oh, crumbs!"

"I've written to my pater," said Bunter, with dignity. "I've pointed out to him that I must have twelve pound ten to-day. As my pater's rolling in money——"

"Bow-wow!"

"He's bound to send it. You see," said Bunter confidentially, "my pater's been doing them brown on the Stock Exchange lately. He's been a bull."

"A which?"

"A bull!"

"Your pater's been a bull!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Exactly."

"If he's anything like his son, I should think he was an ass, if he's any kind of

animal at all! How could he be a bull, you fathead?"

"It's a Stock Exchange expression," said Bunter. "It means, he's been buying to buck up the market."

"Oh, that's a bull, is it?"

"Yes. I think he had bad luck when he was a bear."

"My hat! Has he been a bear, too?"

"Of course he has!"

"That accounts for your manners, I suppose!" remarked Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "Inherited, what?"

"You silly ass! A bear is a chap who sells to lower prices. Sometimes he's a stag," said Bunter.

"Great Scott! There seems to be a whole Zoological Gardens in the Bunter family! Is he ever a tiger or a lion?"

"No, you ass!"

"Well, suppose he has been a bull, will that make you able to hand out the twelve pounds ten shillings you owe us?"

"I—I hope so. You see, the pater has been skinning them. When you're a bull, you buy up no end of shares, and the price rises. The public think it's a good thing," explained Bunter, with an air of great knowledge. "They rush in to buy; price goes higher. Then you sell off and slide out. You make a lot of profit that way."/>

"Rather a risky game, I should think," said Bob Cherry. "Suppose the police got after him?"

"You silly ass!" shrieked Bunter. "It's not against the law. It's called operating."

"My hat! There must be something amiss with the law, then. But to come back to business, where's the twelve pound ten?"

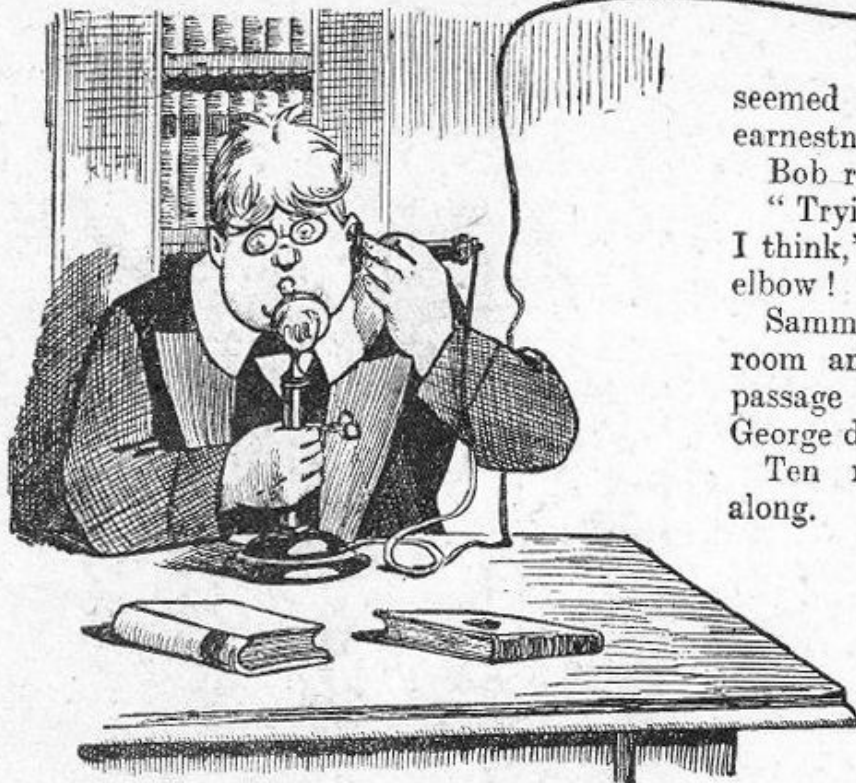
"I—I'm expecting it by the next post."

"We'll give you till the post comes in, then," said Harry Wharton; "and we'll keep an eye on you. You won't dodge us this time!"

"No fear!" said Bob emphatically.

Billy Bunter rolled away disconsolately into the quad.

He was not feeling happy. Whatever "operations" Bunter senior might have been conducting on the Stock Exchange,



"I had your letter, Billy," went on the fat voice. "The amount you have asked for is a large one. I shall not send you a cheque, as you might have some difficulty in cashing it!"

his hopeful son did not expect to see any of the results in the form of cash.

He expected twelve pounds ten shillings from his father about as much as he expected it from the man in the moon, and he felt that he was getting very near the end of his tether.

But that alarming situation made his fat brain work with unusual activity. It was only too clear that something had to be done. Bunter was doing some hard thinking as he strolled under the elms in the quad.

Harry Wharton and Co. were also strolling in the quadrangle. They did not mean to lose sight of their William George this time.

Bunter blinked at them morosely, and started for the schoolhouse at last. The Famous Five sauntered on his track.

Bunter rolled into the house and disappeared into the Second Form-room. Bob Cherry glanced in at the door, and found him deep in talk with his minor, Sammy Bunter of the Second.

Sammy was grinning, but William George

seemed to be explaining himself with great earnestness.

Bob rejoined his comrades in the passage. "Trying to squeeze a loan out of Sammy, I think," he remarked. "More power to his elbow! Lucky for him if he does!"

Sammy Bunter came out of the form-room and passed the Famous Five in the passage with a grin on his face. William George did not appear.

Ten minutes later Vernon-Smith came along.

"Post's in," he said.

"Anything for Bunter?"

"No,"

"Come on!" said Harry.

And the juniors marched into the form-room, where Billy Bunter greeted them with an uneasy blink.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

At the Eleventh Hour

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Post's in!" said Wharton curtly.

"Oh, good! I'll go and see whether there's a letter——"

"Smithy's been. There isn't!"

"Oh, dear!"

Billy Bunter was edging towards the door, but Bob Cherry's sturdy form was in the way. There was no escape for the Owl of the Remove.

"Here begins the first lesson," remarked Johnny Bull. "Put Bunter across a desk. Old Twigg's left his cane here. That will do. Are you ready, Bunter?"

"I say, you fellows," murmured Bunter, with a longing blink at the door.

"Are you ready?" thundered Johnny Bull.

"Nunno! I—I say as—as my pater hasn't written, I—I expect he will telephone——"

"Rats!"

"There may be some delay as it's a trunk call," mumbled Bunter. "Just you

fellows wait till my dear pater telephones

"Is he going to send you twelve pound ten by telephone?" grinned Bob.

"The—the fact is——"

Redwing of the Remove looked in.

"You fellows seen Bunter, somebody saw him coming this way? Oh, here he is! Bunter, you're wanted."

"He's wanted here," growled Bob.

"Wingate's sent for him," answered Redwing. "He's been called up on the telephone in the prefect's room."

"Oh!"

It was a general exclamation of surprise. For once, amazing as it was, it seemed that Billy Bunter had been telling the truth.

"On the telephone!" repeated Wharton.

"Yes, it's his father," said Redwing.

"Wingate took the call, and he was going to cut off when the johnny said he was Bunter's father. So Wingate sent me to call Bunter."

"I'd better go," said Bunter.

"We'll come with you."

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

"Get a move on. We're coming."

It was quite a little army that marched into the prefects' room. Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, was there, and he raised his eyebrows at the sight of the invasion.

"Your father's called you up on this 'phone Bunter," said Wingate rather gruffly. "I suppose he mistook the number. Still, you can take the call."

"Ye-e-es, Wingate."

The captain of Greyfriars quitted the room, and Bunter went to the telephone. Harry Wharton and Co. went with him. There was a second receiver to the instrument, and Vernon-Smith picked it up and put it to his ear. The Bunder intended to know whether it really was Bunter's father at the other end of the wire. He had his suspicions.

"Hallo!" began Bunter. "Is that you, father?"

"Yes. Is that you, Billy?"



Vernon-Smith started. The voice that came through was a fat voice, not unlike Billy Bunter's own, and it really seemed as if it were Bunter's father at the other end of the telephone!

"Yes, dad."

Vernon-Smith started. The voice that came through was a fat voice not unlike Bunter's own, and it really looked as if it was Bunter senior at the other end.

"I had your letter, Billy," went on the fat voice. "The amount you have asked for is a large one."

"Oh!"

"I shall not send you a cheque as you might have some difficulty in cashing it."

"Oh!" murmured Vernon-Smith, in great surprise.

"I will send you the money on Saturday, William."

"T-t-thank you, father."

"I will send it down by hand, William. The butler will bring it."

"Yes, father."

"That is all, William. Good-bye."

"G-g-good-bye, father."

Bunter put up his receiver, and Vernon-Smith put up the other. Smithy fairly blinked at Bunter.

"Well, my hat!" he ejaculated.

"What's it all about?" asked Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter elevated his fat little nose haughtily.

"Smithy can tell you," he said. "You mightn't take my word."

"Go it, Smithy."

"Bunter's pater says he is sending the butler with the money on Saturday as Bunty mightn't be able to get a cheque cashed," said the Bounder.

"Great Scott!"

"Gammon!"

"Well, that's what he said," answered the Bounder. "I don't pretend to understand it. I suppose Bunter's father wouldn't enter into a game of spoof with Billy. But——"

"I say, you fellows, I've told you often enough about Bunter Court and the pater's butler," said Bunter, in an injured tone.

"But we never believed a word of it," said Nugent.

"That's suspicious, Nugent. Suspiciousness is low," said Bunter crushingly. "I suppose you'll believe in Pilkington when you see him."

"Pi-pip-Pilkington!"

"That's the butler's name," said Bunter loftily. "He was with a duke before he came to us. The pater offered him higher wages."

"Oh, my hat!"

Loder of the Sixth came into the prefects' room. He gave the group of juniors a grim look.

"This isn't a meeting-place for fags," he remarked. "Clear out."

The Removites cleared out. Billy Bunter was strutting now, just as he had strutted on the way to Chunkley's Fashionable Tea Lounge. He felt that the storm was averted.

In the passage Harry Wharton and Co. looked at Bunter, and looked at one another.

"Well, this is a go!" said Bob Cherry.

"I—I suppose if the money is coming on Saturday we can let that fat bounder off?"

"I—I suppose so," assented Wharton.

"He ought to be boiled in oil, but if the tin is going to be paid he can go."

"But is it going to be paid?" said the Bounder.

"Well, if the merry family butler is bringing it down by hand on Saturday——"

"But is he?" persisted Smithy.

"Well Bunter's pater said so."

"Was it Bunter's pater on the 'phone at all, though?" said Vernon-Smith. "Bunter's such a spoofer——"

"Phew! Bunter, you awful rascal——"

"I say, you fellows, I don't think you ought to be suspicious beasts like Smithy. You wait till Saturday, and I shall settle up this trifling amount," said Bunter loftily. "It's rather sickening for a fellow like me to be bothered for a trifle like this. I must say I'm rather ashamed of you fellows."

"Wha-a-at!"

"If you want to keep my friendship," said Bunter calmly, "you'll have to be a little less mean in money matters. That's all. Don't let me hear any more about it, and perhaps I can overlook your rather rotten attitude in the matter."

And Bunter rolled away, with his fat little nose in the air. He left the chums of the Remove speechless.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

Doubting Thomases!

"It's the biggest one yet!" said Skinner of the Remove, after due reflection.

Harold Skinner was referring to the statement that the family butler belonging to the Bunter mansion was coming down to Greyfriars on Saturday, with hard cash for William George.

As Skinner put it, the "whoppers" Bunter had often told might have excited the envy of a Prussian. But this was the biggest. This one, according to Skinner, took the whole cake.

Most of the Remove fellows agreed with Skinner.

Bunter Court, and the wealth appertaining thereto, had been heard of a great deal in the Greyfriars Remove, and indeed in other Forms. But nobody seemed to have seen Bunter Court: and the wealth, if it existed,



See face page 40

A GENERAL VIEW OF GREYFRIARS SCHOOL, KENT

remained there, and very little of it travelled as far as Greyfriars School. The Bunter family butler, who preferred Mr. Bunter's service to that of his former ducal employer, had also been heard of. But, like Bunter Court and the Bunter riches, he had never been seen.

Skinner's opinion was that he never would be seen. Only Bunter's eye had beheld him, according to Skinner; and even Bunter had only beheld him with his mind's eye.

Harry Wharton and Co. hardly knew what to believe. If it was really Mr. Bunter who had telephoned, it seemed that the yarn must be true; but Smithy's doubts were shared to some extent by the Co..

Little circumstances came to light during the next day which rather confirmed Smithy's doubts.

For instance, Ogilvy of the Remove had seen Sammy Bunter sneaking out of Mr. Quelch's study, just after Billy had received that call. Mr. Quelch was out of gates at the time. The question arose, had Sammy been using Mr. Quelch's telephone, in the service of his major? It was quite possible that the fat fag, seated at Mr. Quelch's instrument, had rung up the prefects' room number, and that, so far from its being a "trunk" call, the call had come from the Remove master's study.

Sammy, questioned on the subject, had nothing to say. He only seemed surprised by the question. But Sammy's veracity was known to be on a par with Billy's; neither of the fat juniors bore the most remote resemblance to the late lamented George Washington.

Moreover, Peter Todd was a witness to a little scene in No. 7 Study, Sammy of the Second presented himself there, demanding a "two-bob bit" which had been promised him by his major. Bunter major was not in a position to liquidate that liability; his efforts to borrow a trifling couple of shillings from Peter were fruitless. The fat fag was finally satisfied with the gift of Bunter's pocket-knife in lieu of the two shillings. And when Peter inquired of Billy Bunter as to the grounds of Sammy's demand for cash payment, Billy's replies were very vague and unsatisfactory.

From all of which Skinner astutely deduced

the theory that it was Sammy who had 'phoned to Billy, in his parent's name; that he had done it from Mr. Quelch's study on Mr. Quelch's telephone, and that Billy had promised him a loan of two shillings for the service.

Which theory fitted in so well with Bunter's duplicity, that the least suspicious member of the Famous Five was inclined to believe that Harold Skinner had hit the right nail on the head.

Possibly Bunter had expected the whole affair to die away by Saturday. Schoolboys have short memories; and Harry Wharton and Co. were not the fellows to nurse an injury for long, even with a good cause.

Bob Cherry observed that, after all, they had had the big spread at Chunkley's, and if they had to pay for it themselves, well, anyhow, they had had it. That, doubtless, was the humour in which the fat junior wished to see the fellows he had so ruthlessly spoofed.

But Skinner's discoveries and deductions, exasperated Bunter's victims afresh. If the whole scene in the prefects' room was another sample of Bunter's incurable duplicity, they felt that the Owl of the Remove was still more severely in need of a lesson than they had supposed. It was, as Harry Wharton remarked, bad enough to be spoofed and swindled, without having their leg pulled in addition.

Bunter, taxed upon the subject, could only refer the indignant and suspicious juniors to Saturday. On Saturday afternoon, according to the Owl, the Bunter butler would arrive in all his glory. That ought to silence the most captious of critics.

"You're spoofing again!" said Harry Wharton, shaking a warning finger at him. "As Skinner says this is simply the biggest whopper you've ever told. You think it will all blow over by Saturday."

"That's it!" agreed Johnny Bull. "But it won't!"

"No fear!"

"The no-fearfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with great emphasis. "It is time that the esteemed and lying Bunter was given a ridiculous lesson."

Bunter blinked uneasily at the chums of the Remove. He had his own reasons for not feeling easy in his mind.



"I sold the pocket-knife to young Tubb, of the Third, for one-and-six," said Sammy Bunter. "That leaves you owing me sixpence!" (See page 44)

"I say, you fellows——"

"Well, are you going to own up!" asked Frank Nugent.

"Of course, I've told you the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," said Bunter. "That's my way! If you fellows were as truthful as I am, you'd do."

"Great pip!"

"But really, I think it's time you let this trifling matter drop," urged Bunter. "If there's any delay in the money coming——"

"He's owning up!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Collar him."

"I'm not!" howled Bunter, jumping back in alarm. "The tin is coming to-morrow afternoon—our butler's bringing it. I've said so."

"Sticking to that?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Certainly! But—but suppose the butler

has a railway accident coming here—that won't be my fault, will it?" said Bunter, almost pleadingly.

"It will be your misfortune, not your fault," answered Wharton. "You'd better hope that he won't! If he doesn't arrive, there will be a mangled porpoise lying about Greyfriars afterwards."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"You may as well own up, you fat bounder," said Vernon-Smith impatiently. "There isn't any butler and there isn't any tin, and your pater never 'phoned at all; and you're only trying to gain time for your swindle to blow over."

"Well, what are you keeping it up like this for, I'd like to know?" mumbled Bunter, with a very injured look. "It was Wednesday

we had the spread at Chunkley's, and here you are still jawing about it on Friday evening. I'm sick of the subject!"

"He's admitted it!"

"I haven't!" howled Bunter. "It—it's all right. You wait till to-morrow afternoon, when Walsingham arrives."

"Walsingham? Who's Walsingham?"

"Our butler," said Bunter, with a touch of his old manner, in spite of his uneasiness.

"His name was Pilkingham yesterday!" snorted Johnny Bull.

"W-w-w-was it?" stammered Bunter.

William George had never laid to heart the sage maxim that a certain class of person should have a good memory.

"You said so!" grunted Johnny.

"D-d-did I? I—I made a slight mistake. Pilkingham was our old butler—the one we had before we had Walsingham," stammered Bunter.

"Can't he pile it on?" said Skinner, who was listening admiringly to this little heart-to-heart talk in the common-room. "They can say what they like about the Kaiser, but he's a fool to Bunter when it comes to real, downright lying!"

"Oh, really, Skinner——"

"Well, you've got till to-morrow, Bunter," said the captain of the Remove. "It's pretty plain that you're lying, but you're going to have your chance. Though why you can't own up now beats me."

"May as well take your medicine and get it over!" suggested Squiff.

But Bunter did not see that. He had no desire to take his "medicine" at all, and the longer the painful operation was put off, the better he was pleased. Indeed, as he was promised a ragging daily until his debt was liquidated, every day gained was so much clear gain.

Bunter rolled away rather dismally to an arm-chair, where he sat with a very thoughtful cast of countenance. Probably he was trying to devise some new "stunt" which would save his worthless skin when the family butler failed to put in an appearance on the morrow. He was the recipient of many grinning glances that evening. Many of the Removites were looking forward with ex-

pectation to Saturday afternoon, not at all expecting to see the stately butler of the Bunter mansion, but wondering by what terrific "crammer" Bunter would endeavour to account for his non-arrival.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

Bunter Sees Light!

BILLY BUNTER wore quite a worried look on Saturday morning.

The unhappy state of affairs was really beginning to tell upon the Owl of the Remove.

The Chunkley's affair had not blown over—far from it. Bunter's series of "whoppers" and pretences had, in fact, helped to keep it alive. On Saturday morning seven juniors of the Remove were as keen as ever on being indemnified to the tune of twelve pounds ten shillings, or on taking the equivalent value of that sum out of Bunter's "hide." It was easy enough for Billy Bunter to devise some astounding yarn to account for the butler's non-appearance, but the problem of saving his "hide" remained unsolved. At morning lessons on Saturday there was a deep wrinkle in Bunter's fat brow. He was finding the way of the transgressor very thorny indeed, and the time was getting very close now.

After breakfast he joined the Famous Five in the quad with an almost beseeching expression on his fat face.

"I say, you fellows——" he began.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Has the merry old butler died overnight?" asked Bob Cherry sympathetically. "Bad for you if he has, my pippin!"

"Nunno! But—but——"

"Go it!" grinned Bob. "Gather round, you fellows, and receive an object lesson in the exploits of Ananias!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I—I was going to say, I—I remember now that Packington has rheumatism! He—he—he may not be able to travel to-day on account of it!" stammered Bunter.

"Packington!" yelled Bob.

"Ye-es, our old butler, you know!"

There was a yell of laughter from the

Removites. Bunter's hapless memory had played him false again.

"So his name's Packington now?" gasped Nugent.

"Eh? His name always was Packington—I—I—I mean, Walsington!" stuttered Bunter "T-t-that is, Packingham!"

"Try again!" grinned Bob.

"I—I say, you fellows, do be serious!"

"That butler chap changes his name like a giddy German spy!" chuckled Bob. "Now, is he Pilkingham, Walsingham, or Packington? We're not particular, but we'd like to know what to call your butler, if any."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean Walsingham!" gasped Bunter.

"I see! When you say Packington, you really mean Walsingham?"

"Ye-es, exactly!"

"And when you say Walsingham, you mean Pilkingham?" suggested Bob Cherry gravely.

"I—I—I——"

"You're sure you don't mean Smith, or Jones, or Robinson?"

"Nunno!"

"Oh, good! So it seems that Pilkingham-Walsingham-Packington has the rheumatics, and may not be able to travel to-day. I dare say he finds travelling rather difficult with that thundering lot of names to carry about! You'd better send him a wire, Bunter."

"W-w-w-why?"

"Telling him not to have rheumatism till to-morrow, because if it prevents him from travelling to-day, you're going to have a jolly good licking with a fives bat!"

"B-b-but he can't help having rheumatism, can he?" stuttered Bunter.

"No more than you can help having a licking with a fives bat if he doesn't show up this afternoon!"

"I—I say, he's coming all right! But—but as the poor old chap really suffers from lumbago——"

"As well as rheumatism?"

"I—I mean rheumatism! I—I wonder what made me say lumbago?"

"You forget the whoppers you've told

when you're making up new ones!" explained Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's rather hard on the old fellow to travel with lum—rheumatism, isn't it? Suppose—suppose he doesn't come till Monday?"

"Then he'll be two days late to see you licked."

And the Famous Five walked away chuckling.

"Beasts!" ejaculated Bunter, dolorously, as they went. And the fat sinner of Greyfriars heaved a sigh.

"He, he, he!"

Bunter blinked round as he heard that unmusical cachinnation. His hopeful young brother Sammy grinned at him.

"What are you cackling at, you fat little beast?" was William George's brotherly greeting.

"You've fairly landed yourself this time," grinned Sammy Bunter. "I thought it was a rotten yarn at the time. You might have guessed that the fellows would be keen to see the butler man."

Bunter groaned.

"I—I thought it would all blow over by Saturday," he mumbled, "I never thought they'd be keeping it up like this. Mean, I call it. P-p-perhaps I overdid it a bit at Chunkley's the other day. I—I thought I might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb, you know. Who'd ever have thought of the beasts keeping it up like this? A paltry twelve pound ten——"

"You owe me sixpence."

"Rats!"

"You jolly well do!" persisted Sammy. "I sold the pocket-knife to young Tubb of the Third for one-and-six. That leaves you owing me sixpence."

"Go and eat coke!"

"P'r'aps you can let me have it out of what the butler is bringing you this afternoon!" jeered Sammy.

"Oh, dear!"

"You're fairly landed!" grinned the fat fag. "I wouldn't be in your shoes for something, Billy."

"Oh, dry up!"

"What are you going to do when the butler doesn't turn up?" giggled Sammy, apparently deriving only entertainment from his major's unhappy predicament.

Bunter gave another groan. That was the problem he was trying to think out, without success.

"He, he, he! You'd better hire one at Chunkley's!" cackled Sammy. "They let 'em out by the hour, you know."

And the fat fag rolled away in a state of uproarious merriment.

Bunter blinked after him.

There was a curious expression on his fat face. Sammy had made his suggestion ironically; but to Billy Bunter's troubled mind it came as a plank to a drowning man. The Owl of the Remove drew a deep, deep breath.

"Chunkley's! My hat!"

A few minutes later Billy Bunter astonished the Famous Five. He rolled up to them as

they were chatting in the gateway, and fixed a very dignified blink on them.

"You fellows have doubted my word!" he said accusingly.

"We have!" agreed Bob Cherry. "We have! Guilty, my lord!"

"I hope you'll have the decency to apologise when Blessington comes this afternoon."

"Blessington!" roared Bob.

"I—I mean Pilkington. That is to say, Walsingham. You fellows don't believe that Walsingham is coming."

"Of course we don't, you fat duffer," said Harry Wharton.

"Very well!" said Bunter, with great dignity. "I'll make you an offer. When you're proved to be in the wrong, you'll have to admit that you owe me an apology."

"When!" grinned Bob.

"The whenfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter."

"Very well! When he comes you'll see with your own eyes. Seeing is believing, isn't it? You've doubted my word in public,

and held me up to ridicule," said Bunter, with an air more of sorrow than of anger. "You're bound to make it up to me. I owe you some paltry sum—twelve or thirteen pounds —"

"Twelve pounds ten shillings!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"You can't expect me to remember these trifles exactly. Walsingham is bringing me the money to pay you."

"Bow-wow!"

"But under the circumstances I shall refuse to do so. You have doubted my word, and it's up to you to make recompense. When you're proved to be in the wrong, you can call it square. I put it to you as sportsmen," added Bunter loftily.

The Co. stared at Bunter.

It really looked as if the heir of Bunter Court believed in the existence of the ducal butler—vague as he seemed to be on the subject of the gentleman's name.

"What is he getting at now?" said Bob



"P'raps you young gents know where Master Bunter is," said Gosling, who regarded the portly visitor with great admiration.

(See page 49)

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

Great Expectations !

Cherry, rubbing his nose. "Some more spoof, I suppose. Of course, we shall never get the money out of Bunter in any case. If he's really been telling the truth all this time, I suppose we can let him off the raggings."

"If!" grinned Nugent.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I think we can agree, Bunter," he said. "If the family butler really turns up this afternoon, we'll let you off. Mind he does."

"Ha, ha! Mind he does!" grinned Vernon-Smith. "If he doesn't, Bunter, you will want a new hide for to-morrow."

"Our butler," said Bunter, calmly, "will be here about three o'clock. Perhaps a little later——"

"Perhaps a lot later!" chuckled Bob.

"The latefulness will probably be terrific," remarked Hurree Singh, with a shake of his dusky head. "But better late than neverfully. The odds are on the neverfulness."

"Say half-past three—not later," said Bunter. "I trust you will apologise for these low suspicions when you see him. I hope you will behave yourselves rather decently, too."

"What?"

"You see, Walsingham is a decent old fellow—trained in a ducal family, and accustomed to aristocratic surroundings in our mansion. I hope there will be no vulgar horseplay in his presence. He would fail to understand it."

"Why, you — you ——" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"That will do!" interrupted Bunter, and with a lordly wave of a fat and rather grubby hand, he rolled away.

"My only hat! Is—is—is there really a Bunter mansion, and a Bunter butler," stuttered Bob, "or is that fat idiot only keeping up his spoof till the last possible moment?"

"You've hit it!" answered the Bounder.

And on consideration the Co. agreed that it was so. But they could not help, now, envisaging the bare possibility that Bunter—William George Bunter—had broken his lifelong record by telling the truth.

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER was not seen again till dinner-time. Apparently he took a walk out of gates. Indeed, Hazeldene of the Remove noticed him plodding on the Courtfield road. But he turned up at dinner, and he turned up smiling. The afternoon seemed to have no terrors for William George, after all.

Which was curious, for there was no doubt that a record ragging was waiting for the Owl of the Remove. All the Form agreed that what Bunter wanted was a really thorough ragging, to teach him the difference between truth and untruth and between "meum" and "tuum." Seven juniors, at least, were determined that Bunter should get what the whole Form agreed that he wanted.

The incensed seven had let the sun go down upon their wrath several times, and it was unabated—indeed, it was increased by the fat junior's incessant shuffling and spoofing. When the ragging came it was probable that Bunter would be sorry that he hadn't taken it in a milder form at once.

Yet Bunter did not seem uneasy.

Whatever trepidation he had had seemed to have disappeared. He was smiling and contented at the dinner-table, and ate with a remarkably good appetite.

Many curious glances were turned upon him. His placid contentment was a puzzle. Harry Wharton and Co. really began to doubt whether, after all, they had not been too hard on Bunter for once. Suppose he really had been telling the truth all along——

It was rather an uncomfortable reflection. If the stately Walsingham arrived, it placed the Famous Five in a very unenviable position. Bunter, assuredly, was entitled to compensation for the ridicule and contumely that had been heaped on his statements—if Walsingham did appear. The seven swindled juniors agreed that in that case it would be only fair to call the matter square, and put up with the loss of their money. That was the least compensation they could make.

Bunter's manner was so assured, as he strutted out of the dining-room after dinner,

that even Skinner began to have his doubts. Skinner talked it over with his chums, Snoop and Stott.

"You can never tell!" Skinner remarked sagely. "I know old Bunter had money once—some swindle on the Stock Exchange, you know. Billy had fivers at that time."

"But he was soon hard up again!" said Snoop.

"And he's been hard up ever since!" remarked Stott.

"True, O king!" said Skinner. "But what's happened once might happen again."

"Something in that!" agreed Snoop.

"There's always fortunes being made and lost in stocks and shares. Old Bunter may have bagged somebody's money this time, instead of somebody bagging his."

"It's possible."

"And if he's made money, he's just the kind of fat old goat to set up a mansion, and a ducal butler, and so forth—to last till the next time he goes bust!" said Skinner. "These new-rich blighters do, you know. Like the munition millionaires, you know, who are buying up Park Lane out of their war-profits. Just look at Bunter now! He doesn't look like a chap who's expecting the ragging of his life to-day, does he?"

Snoop and Stott looked at Bunter. Certainly the fat junior didn't look as if he were expecting trouble. He was strutting in the quad with his fat little nose in the air, as if at peace with himself and the universe generally.

"Blessed if I don't think there's something in it," decided Skinner. "I can see that Wharton has his doubts now. Those silly asses have agreed to let Bunter off his debt if the butler turns up."

"Well, they owe him that, after the way they've run the chap down," said Snoop. "I thought all the time they were rather hard on old Bunter."

"Just what I thought," said Skinner. "We know Bunter has his faults. We all have. But I don't believe in jumping on a chap when he's down. Billy is a good sort, in his way."

"He's got his good points."

"Just what I've always said, Snoop."

"Blessed if I've ever heard you," said Stott,

in astonishment. Stott was rather slower of comprehension than Sidney James Snoop.

"If you're going to join in running Bunter down, Stott, you needn't do it to us," said Skinner virtuously. "I don't see why a chap shouldn't be civil to Bunter. He's not at all a bad chap—in his way."

"In his way!" agreed Snoop.

"Oh!" ejaculated Stott, comprehending at last. "You mean you really think he's got money now——"

"That's a rotten way of putting it, Stott; I must say I'm rather surprised at you. Let's go and speak to Bunter," said Skinner. "A civil word is never thrown away"

"Let's!" said Snoop.

And the three worthy young gentlemen bore down upon Billy Bunter. That fat youth blinked at them through his big spectacles with some suspicion. Harold Skinner slapped him on the shoulder in a very friendly way.

"Yow-ow!" ejaculated Bunter. "Don't you punch me, Skinner——"

"My dear chap, as if I'd punch you!" said Skinner reproachfully. "Just greeting you, that's all. Let me see anybody punch you."

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter.

He understood.

Skinner and Co. were feeling the effects of the family butler, in advance, as it were.

At that thought Billy Bunter drew himself up. Like the young lady at the tea-party, he "swelled wisely."

"I was just thinking you might like a ginger-pop after your dinner, Bunter," said Skinner, with great affability.

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Bunter loftily.

"Trot along then, old scout."

Billy Bunter trotted along cheerfully to the tuck-shop. His footsteps were always easily led in that direction. Fisher T. Fish came scudding across the quad, and he joined the little party.

"Hallo, Buntty!" said Fisher T. Fish amiably. "I say, that was a stunning spread you stood us the other day at Chunkley's. I've been going to ask you ever since to tea in my study—something rather special—if you'd care to come."

"Like a bird!" said Bunter promptly.

Skinner and Co. glared at Fishy. Evidently

that transatlantic young gentleman was of the same opinion as themselves, and "guessed" that there might be something in the Bunter butler after all. Skinner and Co. were by no means pleased by the presence of this rival for the crumbs that were going to fall from the rich man's table. But Fisher T. Fish was not to be daunted by glares.

Fishy accompanied the little party into the school shop; and after Skinner had "stood" the ginger-pop, Fisher had the pleasure of standing Bunter tarts. It gave Fishy a pain to part with the money; but he felt that it was well expended—a sprat to catch a whale, as it were. Billy Bunter was beginning to prosper, and the Bunter butler had not yet appeared. It was probable that when he actually did put in an appearance, the new popularity of William George would grow.

Harry Wharton and Co. were in the quad, and they had observed the little scene. The Famous Five exchanged glances.

"Skinner believes in the merry old butler!" murmured Bob Cherry. "And Skinner's very keen."

"Too keen!" said Wharton.

"Fishy believes in him, too—and Fishy is spry, I guess," grinned Bob. "I shall begin to believe in Pilkington-Walsingham-Packington-Blessington myself soon, at any rate."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five had not quite reached that point; but certainly their doubts were shaken; and they were very curious indeed to see what would happen that afternoon.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

Bunter's Butler

"HE'S come!"

"What!"

"Not really!"

"My hat!"

"Bunter's butler! Great pip!"

There were suppressed exclamations from a score or more of the Greyfriars juniors

The great expectations had been realised.

He had come!

"He," of course, was that stately gentleman, the family butler of the Bunter man-

sion; at all events, there seemed to be hardly any doubt about it now.

For "he" was there!

Vernon-Smith was the first to spot him. The station hack from Friardale had rolled in at the gates, and stopped at the porter's lodge. The solitary passenger within had descended, and was seen in talk with Gosling, the porter. So far, that was all. But in a few minutes, scores of eyes were upon the new arrival, from various directions and various distances.

For if ever there was a family butler who could not possibly be mistaken for anything but a butler this was the man!

He was a portly gentleman; and it is, of course, well known that the genuine brand of butlers is portly in figure. He was not too portly: just portly enough to give him an appearance of weight and dignity.

His garb was becoming and quite tasteful and quiet; just what might have been expected in a butler of ducal training. The Bunter livery—if there was a Bunter livery—might have been pictured as something rather loud and flamboyant—something rather in keeping with Bunter's manners and customs. But the butler had evidently profited by his training in a ducal household, and Mr. Bunter, perhaps, had profited by it at second hand. At all events the portly gentleman had a quiet, staid, and dignified appearance; and at the first glance it could be seen that he would have been an ornament to any nobleman's hall. Gosling was plainly impressed.

He was quite respectful to the portly gentleman, whose clean-cut, clean-shaven countenance contrasted rather strongly with the rugged aspect of Mr. Gosling.

"It's real!" murmured Bob Cherry, and there was a chuckle from the juniors under the elms.

"The realfulness is terrific," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "But is it an esteemed Bunterful butler?"

"Well, he's a butler right enough!" said Johnny Bull. "Anybody could tell he was a butler a mile off."

"Yes, rather."

"And he's inquiring for somebody—must be for Bunter."

Harry Wharton was puzzled.

If such a manservant had arrived on account of Lord Mauleverer, or Temple of the Fourth, there would have been nothing surprising in it. But on account of Billy Bunter!

That was the astonishing thing!

Judging by the portly gentleman's looks, he emanated from a first-class establishment; his mere aspect told of a huge servants' hall, in which he reigned supreme over the smaller fry; it suggest-

ed gigantic accumulations of family plate, over which he kept watch and ward.

Assuredly such an imposing gentleman could not have come from a suburban villa: such a dwelling as that in which the Bunters were suspected of living and moving and having their being.

The portly gentleman was a sort of living proof of the genuine existence of Bunter Court and the glories thereof.

"He can't be for Bunter!" said Frank Nugent, at last.

"Most likely it's old Mauly's butler, turned up by chance."

"Most likely," agreed Bob, rather doubtfully however.

"Let's ask him," suggested Squiff.

"Ahem!"

"No harm in asking," said Vernon-Smith.

"A cat may look at a king, and a Lower Fourth chap can talk to a butler. I'm going to ask him. If he's for Bunter, we'll take him in. He's asking Gossy about something."

"Oh, all right."

Harry Wharton and Co. bore down on the porter's lodge. The stately gentleman saluted them slightly, distantly, but respectfully. His manners were quite in keeping with his looks, his clothes, and his portliness.

"Inquiring for somebody?" asked Vernon-Smith, who was blessed with rather more "cheek" than the other fellows. "Perhaps we can be of assistance to you."

"You are very kind, sir!" said the stately gentleman, in a rich voice that seemed to tell a tale of excessive bins, crammed with bottles of old port. "I was inquiring for Master William."

"Bunter?"

"Yes, I should have said Master Bunter, sir. But I am accustomed to speaking of him as Master William. Perhaps I should mention," added the stately gentleman, with dignity, "that I am Mr. Bunter's butler. My name is Parkinson."

It was proof positive.

True, the gentleman's name, apparently, was Parkinson; not Pilkington, Walsingham, Packington, or Blessington. Billy Bunter certainly had a remarkable vagueness on that point. But here was the man! Whatever his name was or wasn't, here he was!

"P'raps you young gents know where Master Bunter is," said Gosling, who was regarding the portly visitor with great admiration.



Tubb's excited entrance interrupted the little party. He collided with Billy Bunter's stool, and a portion of dough-nut went the wrong way as the fat junior rolled over. (See page 50)

"Pr'aps you'd care to step in a minute, Mr. Parkinson, an' sit down."

Mr. Parkinson inclined his head slightly in acknowledgment.

"Thank you very much," he said. "But I think I had better see Master William at once."

Mr. Parkinson's manner to Gosling was very civil; but it marked the distinction between the position of a butler and that of a porter. At the same time his attitude towards the juniors was one of respectful deference, showing that he realised also the difference between his own position and theirs. Mr. Parkinson was evidently that rarest of birds, a man-servant who exactly knew his place.

"Come with us, Mr. Parkinson," said Vernon-Smith. "We know where Bunter is. We'll take you to him at once."

"Thank you kindly, sir."

"Not at all. This way!"

Mr. Parkinson inclined his head again, and followed the Bounder. Harry Wharton and Co. accompanied them, in a state of great astonishment. And the whole party proceeded in search of Master William.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

The Perfect Parkinson!

TUBB, of the Third, burst in to the tuck-shop in a state of great excitement. In Mrs. Mible's little shop William George Bunter was perched on a high stool at the counter, with several very civil fellows round him. Skinner and Co. were there, and Fisher T. Fish. Smith minor was urging Bunter to "try the dough nuts." Bunter did not need much urging. Smith minor, evidently, had joined the ranks of those who believed that Bunter was probably going to be in great funds. Already Billy Bunter's manner was lofty and patronising to his new admirers. That only confirmed their new faith. A really wealthy fellow, as Skinner remarked to his pals, was entitled to swank a little. Besides, Bunter was such a good fellow, that a chap could put up with a little "side" from him. It was surprising how many good qualities Harold Skinner had

already discovered in the Owl of the Remove. Tubb's excited entrance interrupted the little party. He collided with Bunter's stool, and a portion of dough-nut went the wrong way, and the fat junior spluttered.

"You young ass, Tubb!" exclaimed Skinner warmly. "What do you mean by bumping into Bunter?"

"Cheeky little beast!" said Snoop indignantly.

"Grooh-hooh-hoop!" came from William George.

"I say!" gasped Tubb.

"Shut up!"

"Get out!"

"You're bothering Bunter!" exclaimed Skinner, with great indignation.

"Grooh-hooooop!"

"I say, he's come!" shrieked Tubb, dodging Skinner.

"Eh! Who's come?"

"Bunter's butler."

"Oh!"

Billy Bunter gave a jump. He coughed away the dough nut hastily. Skinner and Co. exchanged glances. They had begun to believe it, and they were "buttering up" Bunter in case it was true! Evidently Harold Skinner had been wise in taking time by the forelock. Lots of fellows would be very civil to Bunter after the event. But dear old Bunter would remember that Skinner had been pally before the butler came.

"The—the butler!" murmured Snoop. "Oh, my hat! I—I say, Billy, old scout, you'll want a ginger-pop after those dough nuts."

"I don't mind," said Bunter.

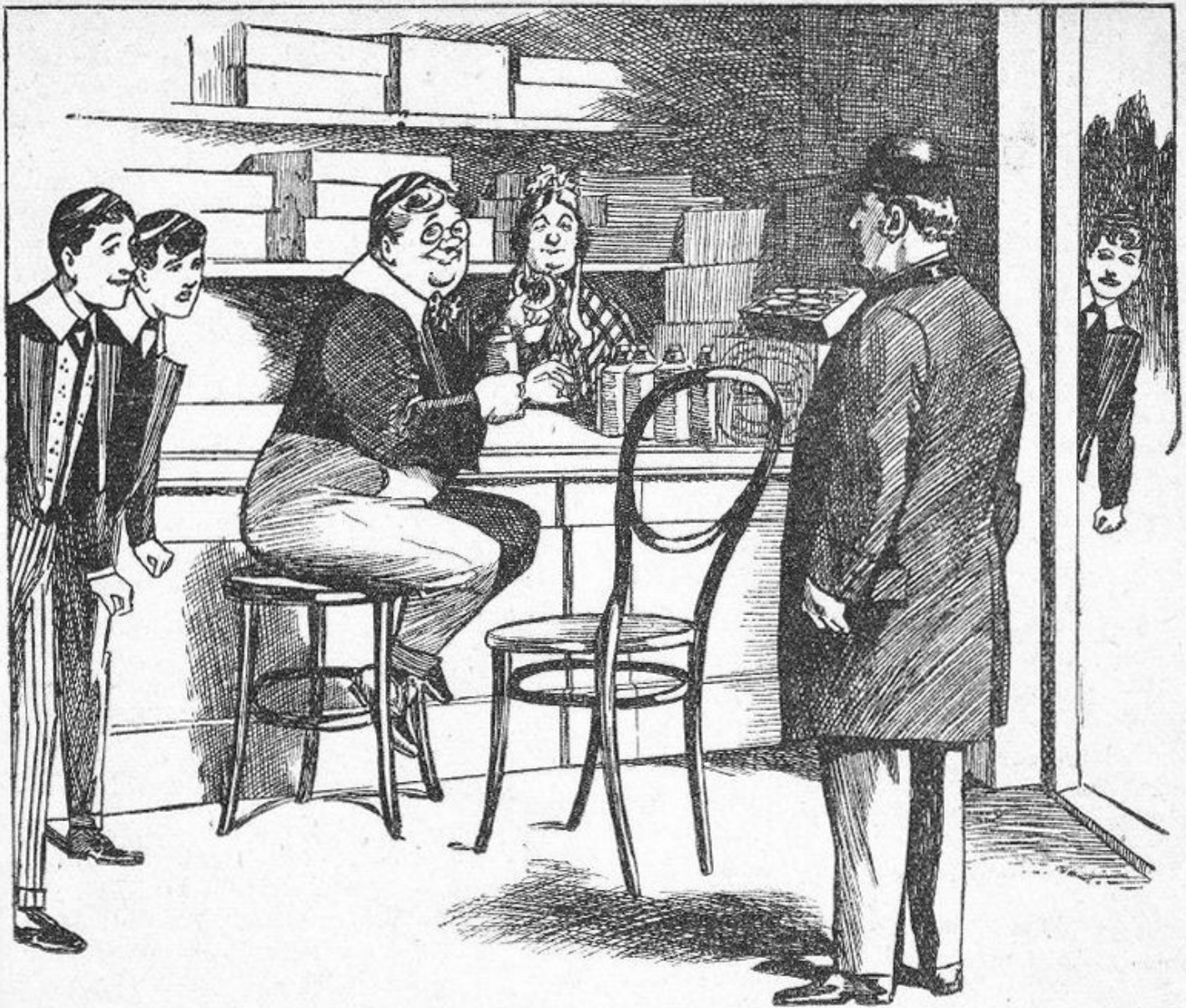
"He's coming!" said Tubb. "Smithy's bringing him here, Bunter."

"All right."

"Ain't you going to speak to him?" demanded Tubb, rather puzzled by Bunter's calmness. "I say, he looks a regular nob."

Bunter gave the Third Former a lofty blink.

"I'm certainly not going to disturb myself on account of a dashed man-servant," he said haughtily. "I'm surprised at you, Tubb. Pilkington can come here."



The dialogue was listened to with breathless interest by the juniors in the tuck-shop. (See page 52)

“His name’s Parkinson,” said Tubb, with a stare. “I heard him tell Smithy his name was Parkinson.”

“I mean Parkinson.”

Tubb joined Paget of the Third, in the doorway. Paget was regarding the on-coming juniors, and the butler, with a critical eye. Paget, of the Third, was a highly connected youth, and counted earls and marquises among his relations; and he was much looked up to in the Third on account of his knowledge of the aristocracy, and their manners and customs. Tubb looked to Paget for an expert opinion on the Bunter butler.

Paget was pleased to approve.

“So that’s Bunter’s butler, is it, Tubby?”

“That’s him,” said Tubb, eagerly and ungrammatically. “What do you think of him, old kid?”

“Quite decent!” said Paget.

“Think so?”

“The genuine article,” said the youthful connoisseur. “I’m rather surprised. I shouldn’t have expected the Bunter gang to run a butler like that.”

“As good as yours at home?” asked Tubb, much impressed.

Paget smiled.

“Not exactly, but quite near it,” he said. “Bunter’s pater can’t be such an awful outsider as Bunter. His butler proves it.”

Paget's word on such subjects was law in the Third. The Bunter butler was the genuine article, on the word of an expert in such things. It followed that the Bunter mansion was a real mansion, and that the Bunter wealth was not the myth the juniors had always supposed it was. And within a quarter of an hour Sammy Bunter of the Second Form was surprised to find that he had friends in the Third, of whose existence he had never dreamed before. Tubb and Co. were on the way to finding the same shining qualities in Sammy Bunter that Skinner and Co. had already discovered in his major, Billy.

Meanwhile Harry Wharton and his comrades escorted the portly Parkinson into the school shop.

There he was eyed with much admiration.

Bunter was busy with ginger-pop. Parkinson coughed respectfully to attract his attention; but Bunter was not in any hurry to bestow his lordly attention on a dashed man-servant. He finished his ginger-pop calmly.

"Bunty!" began Vernon-Smith.

"Mr. Parkinson's arrived, Billy," said Squiff.

Bunter glanced round loftily through his big glasses.

"Oh! You're here, Parkinson," he said carelessly.

"Yes, Master William!"

"You're late, Parkinson," said Bunter severely.

"I regret it very much, Master William. The 'ack from the station was a little slow."

"The 'ack' gave the finishing touch, as it were, to Parkinson. Evidently he was too well-trained a man-servant to presume to put in his aspirates. Plainly, he was the genuine, old-fashioned family retainer, who had no idea of putting himself, even in speech, on a level with the quality.

"Oh, never mind," said Bunter. "But you've kept me waiting, all the same, Parkinson."

"I am very sorry, Master William."

"Oh, all right! How did you leave the pater?"

"Your 'onoured father is very well, Master

William. 'E 'opes I shall be able to tell 'im that you are the same, sir."

"Oh, that's all right. I never get enough to eat here, but otherwise, I'm fairish," said Bunter. "How's the mater?"

"Your respected mother is still in the south of France, Master William."

"Ye-e-es—I forgot. Is Bessie at home?"

"Miss Bessie is still at school, sir."

"How is the pater's new car turnin' out?" inquired Bunter, with an air of interest.

"Your respected father was not quite satisfied with the new car, Master William. He is changing it for a Rolls-Royce."

"Oh, good!" said Bunter. "I advised him to have a Rolls-Royce in the first place. You heard me, Parkinson?"

"I remember perfectly, Master William."

This dialogue was listened to with breathless attention in the tuck-shop. Mrs. Mible was gazing at Mr. Parkinson across her little counter as if her eyes were glued to his portly figure. The good lady was beginning to regret that she had not allowed Master William to run up the little account he was always so keen to run up. Where Mr. Parkinson came from there was evidently plenty of cash.

"Well, I'll speak to you presently, Parkinson," said Bunter, in a very offhand way. "You'd better wait in my study."

"Yes, Master William."

"Perhaps one of you fellows would show Parkinson the way to my study," said Bunter, glancing at Skinner and Co.

"Certainly, old top!" said Skinner, with alacrity.

"Thanks. Go along with Skinner, Parkinson, and wait for me."

"Yes, Master William."

"You can put the pater's letter in my desk: I'll look at it presently. Here's the key."

"Yes, Master William."

"Lock the desk. I don't want banknotes left about."

"Yes, Master William."

Bunter's butler took the key, and followed Skinner from the tuck-shop. Bunter glanced, in the midst of an admiring silence, at a stand of jam tarts close at hand.

"I think I'll try a tart," he remarked. He

ran his fat hands through his pockets. "My hat! I'm out of cash——"

"Please take the tarts, Master Bunter," murmured Mrs. Mible. "I shall be very pleased to put it down to the account."

Bunter helped himself. With his mouth full of jam tart, the Owl of the Remove blinked loftily at Harry Wharton and Co.

"Perhaps you believe me now," he said, with a curl of the lip.

"Well, seeing is believing!" remarked Bob Cherry. "It beats me hollow! You must have been telling the truth lots of times, when we thought you were only buntering."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter sniffed.

The Famous Five quitted the tuck-shop very much perplexed. Billy Bunter had evidently been much wronged: much that the juniors had set down as mere "gas" seemed now to be founded in fact. The portly Parkinson exuded an atmosphere of wealth and importance.

"Well," said Bob Cherry, "it beats me!"

"Hollow!" agreed Wharton.

"Bunter can't be such an Ananias as we've always supposed——"

"I—I suppose not."

"It's dashed queer," said Vernon-Smith ruminatingly. "I was prepared for some spoof or other; but that man Parkinson is the genuine article."

"Oh, quite!"

"Bunter might have been rogue enough to hire some fellow to come here and spoof us. But he couldn't hire a thoroughly respectable man like that."

"Impossible."

"Truth is stranger than fiction," grinned Squiff. "Anyhow, Bunter scores. We agreed to let the twelve pound ten drop if the butler showed up. Now it seems that he could pay the money if he liked."

"Well, of course, we didn't believe in the merry butler. But—I suppose a bargain's a bargain."

"I suppose so."

Wharton rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"It beats me," he said. "I can't quite believe it yet. But—there's the giddy butler. It beats me hollow!"

"The beatfulness is terrific."

Billy Bunter came out of the tuck-shop. He bestowed a lofty blink on the Famous Five, and rolled on to the schoolhouse—to see Parkinson in his study. And while Bunter was shut up in No. 7 Study with Parkinson, there was endless and amazed discussion in the Lower School of Greyfriars—and the sole subject of discussion was Bunter's butler!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

Bunter in all His Glory

THERE was quite a gathering in the Remove passage during the following half-hour.

The curiosity on the subject of Bunter's butler was intense.

He was shut up in No. 7 with Bunter, and fellows who passed the door heard a murmur of voices within.

That was all.

Doubtless Bunter was asking his butler questions about home and the family, and Parkinson was imparting information.

At the end of the passage, and up and down the passage, in little knots, Removites had collected, as well as a good many fellows of other forms.

Fellows who had not yet seen Bunter's butler wanted to catch sight of him as he went.

He was naturally an object of great interest. He was the living substantiation of the Owl's many yarns; and as several fellows remarked, if the butler was genuine why shouldn't the rest be genuine?

And the butler looked as genuine as a butler could possibly look. There was general agreement upon that.

Harry Wharton was not in the crowd in the passage, perhaps the captain of the Remove did not consider so much curiosity consistent with his dignity. But some of his chums were there, and nearly all the rest of the Remove. Skinner and Co., of course, were much in evidence. So was Fisher T. Fish. Fishy had a deep and truly republican admiration for such an institution as a genuine, old-fashioned, respectful man-servant. Such critters, as he sorrowfully acknowledged, were not to be had in "Noo Yark." And

Bunter's butler was not merely a common or garden butler, so to speak, he was the very last word in butlers.

There was a breathless hush in the Remove passage when Bunter's door-handle was heard to move at last.

"He's coming!" murmured Skinner.

The door of No. 7 Study opened.

Parkinson, staid, sedate, loftily humble as became his position, stepped forth into the passage.

All eyes were upon him.

The fat figure of Billy Bunter was framed in the study doorway. He glanced carelessly at the juniors along the passage, and grinned a little.

"Parkinson!"

"Yes, Master William."

"You'll remember all I've told you?"

"Yes, Master William."

"Don't forget to tell the pater I want him to write to the Head, and ask for an exeat for me. I want specially to try the new Rolls-Royce."

"I will remember, Master William."

"And give that envelope to the pater. Tell him I'm much obliged, but I sha'n't need the money after all."

"Yes, Master William."

"That's all. You can go, Parkinson."

"Good-bye, Master William."

"Oh, good-bye, Parkinson," said Bunter carelessly.

Bunter's butler trod down the passage with a dignified portliness. The juniors made way for him, affecting to be engaged in conversation with one another,

or in looking out of the windows. As a matter of fact, their attention—scarcely disguised—was concentrated upon the portly Parkinson.

Parkinson did not seem aware of it.

He descended the stairs, and stood aside respectfully on the landing as he met Mr. Quelch coming up.

The Remove Master glanced at him as he descended the lower stairs. He glanced again as Parkinson disappeared into the lower hall, and called to Harold Skinner, who was craning his head over the upper banisters, catching a final glimpse of Parkinson and his atmosphere of wealth and distinction.

"Skinner!"

"Yes, sir," said Skinner.

"Who is that?" asked Mr. Quelch. "I have not seen the man here before."

"Oh, that's Bunter's butler, sir."

"What?"

"I mean Bunter's father's butler, sir! He's been down with a message to Bunter from his pater."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, indeed, sir," said Skinner officiously. "An old servant in the Bunter family, sir. He's known Bunter since he was a little kid so high. He told me so, sir. Spoke of him almost with tears in his eyes, sir."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Very touching, sir, the attachment of a faithful old family servant," said Skinner.

"Very," said Mr. Quelch drily.

Mr. Quelch stepped to the window at the end of the passage, and glanced down.



The man from Chunkley's handed an envelope to Mr. Quelch. (See page 61)

The portly Parkinson dawned upon him again, sedately going his way towards the porter's lodge.

Mr. Quelch looked at him hard, and then turned away from the window and went his way. Some of the juniors glanced at their Form-master, wondering whether he was greatly impressed by the Bunter butler. But Mr. Quelch's face was as impassive as usual, and gave no sign.

There were admiring eyes upon Parkinson as he stepped into the station cab, of which Gosling officiously closed the door for him. The back rolled away with the portly gentleman.

Greyfriars had seen the last of him.

Bunter's butler had come and gone! But the atmosphere of wealth and distinction which he had brought with him, lingered, and it cast a sort of halo about the head of William George Bunter.

And that day the Owl of the Remove carried his fat little nose very high in the passages and the common-room.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

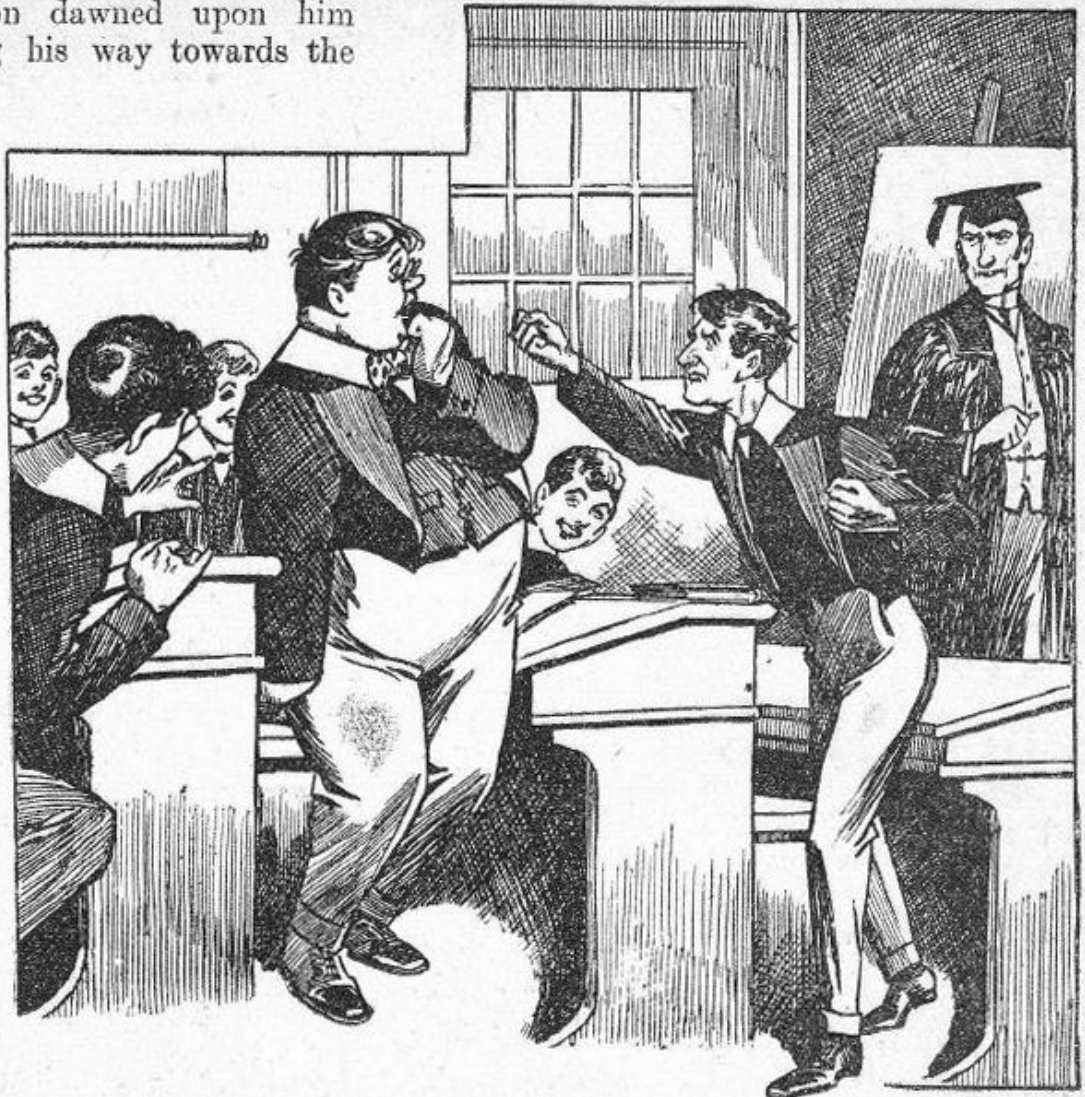
Dark Doubts!

THE next day was Sunday, and almost for the first time in his fat career at Greyfriars School, Billy Bunter found himself in request for "Sunday walks."

As a rule, fellows did not seem to yearn for Bunter's society, indoors or out.

But there was a change.

Harry Wharton and Co. certainly did not



Fisher T. Fish jumped up, forgetful of where he was, and brandished a bony fist under Billy Bunter's fat nose. (See page 62)

seem to yearn for his fascinating society any more than of old. But there were plenty of fellows who did. If Bunter went for a "walk" with any fellow, he displayed a marvellous knowledge of all the places of refreshment within a radius of two miles of Greyfriars, and a dogged persistence in inducing his companion to drop into as many of them as possible, and a wonderful skill in contriving that the other fellow somehow should foot the bill incurred. This did not make fellows eager to take a walk with Billy Bunter.

But on this especial Sunday Bunter had no lack of comrades. Skinner had bagged him first for a Sunday walk, and Snoop and Stott came with Skinner as his friends, and also because they found much gratification

in the charming society of "old Bunter." Billy Bunter was now "old Bunter" to quite a number of fellows, who had been wont heretofore to refer to him as that "pig Bunter," or "that fat boulder Bunter," or "that porpoise, Bunter." No longer was William George, in their eyes, a pig or a fat boulder, or a porpoise. Far from it. He was now "old Bunter," and "Billy, old bean." It was the portly Parkinson that had wrought the difference.

Fisher T. Smith, and Smith minor, and several other fellows, joined Bunter's little crowd, as they started on their walk. And Bunter, as he passed the Famous Five in the quad, gave them a scornful blink. Bunter was a fellow of some consequence now, and he wanted the Co. to understand it. Moreover, Bunter had money in his pocket. Skinner had lent him ten shillings—ten sprats, as it were, which were to catch twenty whales or so. Snoop had found five shillings for a loan to "old Bunter," and Stott had lavished half a crown on "Billy, old bean." Even Fisher T. Fish, though it gave him a pain, felt that he couldn't do less, and with many inward pangs he had pressed William George to accept a loan of two and six.

Visits to the Bunter mansion, where they would be waited on by the Bunter butler, floated before the eyes of those mercenary young gentlemen. They thought, too, of extensive feeds in Chunkley's Fashionable Tea Lounge at Courtfield. They had seen Bunter's receipt—indubitably a receipt for the sum of twelve pounds ten shillings and sixpence. And they had heard a new version of the affair from Billy Bunter. According to this new version, Bunter actually had stood that feed and paid for it on the nail—witness the receipt.

As Fisher T. Fish had been present, and knew the circumstances, he could not be expected to swallow that version; but he held his peace. Skinner and Co. professed, at least, to believe it.

Anyhow, it was assured that Bunter could afford to stand such feeds, if he liked; a fellow whose father had a butler like Parkinson evidently had a horn of plenty at home, upon which to draw.

"Bunty's getting quite popular!" Bob Cherry remarked, as the Owl of the Remove rolled out of gates with his crowd.

Harry Wharton smiled.

"Looks like it!" he assented. "There must be some money about somewhere; at least, those fellows think there is."

"They've been lending him money."

"Then they must think he's got plenty."

"The thankfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh, "but the factfulness may be a boot on the other leg."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter came in from his walk looking very fat and shiny. He had utilised his knowledge of the places of refreshment that were open on Sunday, and he had done himself very well at the expense of his admirers. His borrowed cash was still safe in his pocket.

The next day William George Bunter was in high feather.

He was still the admired centre of Skinner and Co.'s society; though he had not seemed, as yet, to see Skinner's hints as to the advisability of paying a visit to Chunkley's Tea Lounge.

But on Tuesday it was to be observed that William George Bunter seemed a little troubled.

He received a letter that day, which the inquisitive Skinner had noticed bore the local postmark of Courtfield, with "Chunkley's Stores" printed on the flap of the envelope.

"Been shopping at Chunkley's, what?" asked Skinner, affably, as Bunter took the letter from the rack.

"Eh! Oh, no!"

"That's from Chunkley's, isn't it?"

"Nunno!"

"Their name's on the envelope."

"Oh! Eh? Yes, certainly! It—it's about a motor-bike I'm thinking of buying there!" stammered Bunter.

"Phew!" murmured Skinner.

Bunter only glanced at the letter, and put it hastily in his pocket, and walked away. Apparently he did not mean to communicate any details about Chunkley's epistle on the subject of motor-bikes.

But, afterwards, he wore a worried look.

He had been in high feather until the receipt

of that letter from Chunkley's Stores, but it really looked as if that letter had dashed his spirits, somehow.

He brightened up a little at tea-time, when Skinner asked him to tea in his study.

"Nothing very special, you know," said Skinner. "I can't afford what you can afford, Bunter; I'm not rich like you, old chap. But a nice little spread, and a few of your own friends. You'll come?"

"Like a bird!" said Bunter.

And he came.

It was quite a nice tea in Skinner's study, and Skinner and Snoop and Stott vied with one another in making Bunter feel at home. Bunter made himself quite at home, and he cleared the table of the good things at a great rate.

Then his thoughtful look returned.

"I say, you fellows——" he began, interrupting Snoop, who was talking.

"Yes, old chap?" said Skinner. "Dry up, Snoopey; Bunter's speaking!"

"Sorry!" murmured Snoop. "Go on, Bunter."

"The fact is——" he said.

"Yes, old bean?"

"You know my father sent his butler down the other day?"

"Yes, rather."

"He sent me a couple of tenners," said Bunter.

"My hat!"

"Like an ass," said Bunter, "I sent them back—I wasn't specially in need of the money. I forgot that I owed a little bill. Now, as the matter stands, I'm hard up for six guineas."

"Phew!"

Skinner and Co. looked very oddly at Bunter.

"Why not write to your pater?" asked Stott.

"As it happens, he's run over to the south of France to see the mater."

"Oh!"

"So temporarily, of course, I shall be short of money. I'm expecting a postal order."

"Wha-a-at?"

"From a titled relation. But there's been some delay in the post."

"Oh!"

"I happen to want six guineas in a hurry," said Bunter. "Can you fellows suggest anything?"

The fellows looked at one another.

"I've got it!" exclaimed Skinner, suddenly.

"Got the six guineas?" asked Bunter, with great eagerness. "Skinner, old chap, I'm awfully obliged!"

"Nunno! Not the six guineas! I've got the idea; write to Parkinson!"

Bunter jumped.

"Pi-pip-pip-Parkinson!" he stammered.

"Yes; your butler, you know. Your pater must have left him plenty of dibs to carry on, while he's away. Write to him."

"Oh!"

"Jolly good idea!" exclaimed Snoop heartily. "Parkinson will play up, of course. He's no end attached to you, Bunter."

"I—I—I don't exactly care to ask a servant for a loan," faltered Bunter. "I—I was thinking you fellows might—might lend me the money."

"Like a shot," said Skinner blandly, "only we're not rolling in it, Bunty. I'm down to my last tanner."

Snoop and Stott nodded in agreement. Apparently they had lent Billy Bunter all the cash they deemed it advisable to lend him, on "spec." And they were growing a little suspicious, too. Bunter's butler was great and impressive, in fact, distinguished. But it was certain that, since his visit, Bunter had been as impecunious as before—whether Bunter had sent back two tenners or not, it was certain that he was none the richer for the butler's visit.

Bunter looked rather discouraged.

"It isn't much," he remarked; "only six guineas. You—you see, a fellow in my position doesn't like being dunned."

"Oh! A bill from Chunkley's?" asked Skinner.

"Nunno! Just a bill!"

"Well, sorry we can't do anything. I'll tell you what—I'll lend you a stamp to write to Parkinson."

Billy Bunter did not accept that offer. He cast a last glance over the table, and as there was nothing left to eat, he drifted disconso-

lately out of the study. Skinner and Co. exchanged rather queer glances when he was gone.

"It looks——" murmured Skinner.

"It does!" said Snoop.

"If we've been spoofed again——"

"After all, he's a fearful spoofer——"

"But the butler——"

"Ten bob!" murmured Skinner. "I've lent him ten bob! If he's spoofed us—if he borrowed that dashed butler from somewhere——"

"Oh!"

"I—wonder——"

The loyal and admiring attachment of Bunter's new friends seemed to be breaking down

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

Light at Last!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! What's the merry trouble?"

Bob Cherry slapped Bunter on the shoulder, as the Remove were going in to classes on Wednesday morning. Billy Bunter was looking worried and downcast, as if most of the troubles of the universe had descended upon his podgy shoulders and found a permanent lodgment there. Hence the exuberant Bob's hearty greeting

"Ow! Don't bust my shoulder, you ass!" growled Bunter. "I—I say, Bob, old chap——"

"Sorry—stony!" answered Bob Cherry promptly; apparently regarding "Bob, old chap" as a preliminary to a demand for cash.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" grunted the Owl of the Remove

"But what's the row?" asked Bob good-naturedly. "You've been looking awfully down, Bunty. Seems to me you're a jolly lucky bargee. You've wriggled out of paying twelve pounds ten you owed among seven fellows. You've had seven narrow escapes of being scalped. Isn't that good enough?"

Bunter grunted.

Benefits received never lingered long in Billy Bunter's mind. He had succeeded, in the end, of clearing himself of the liability the visit to Chunkley's Fashionable Tea Lounge

had brought upon him. The rash agreement of the juniors to forgive the debt if the Bunter butler showed up, saw him clear. It had been founded upon an utter disbelief in the existence of Mr. Parkinson, certainly; but the chums of the Remove were fellows of their word; they felt that they had been caught, but they held to what they had agreed. Bunter ought really to have been very contented. But he was looking anything but contented.

On wriggling out of one scrape he had wriggled into another, as he usually did when he exercised his fatuous cunning. And the last state of William George Bunter was worse than his first. He had owed money to Remove fellows, who would have taken it out in "raggings" as a last resort. Now he owed money to much more business-like people, who assuredly wouldn't take it out in raggings, or in anything but hard cash.

Hence the worried looks of Bunter.

"Bob, old fellow——" he recommenced.

"I've mentioned that I'm stony," grinned Bob Cherry.

"We've always been pals——"

"Have we?" ejaculated Bob, in astonishment. "This is the first I've heard of it."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Come on, you fellows; you'll be late," called out Harry Wharton.

"I—I—I say, Bob, could you lend me six guineas?" gasped Bunter.

Bob Cherry jumped.

"Six which?" he exclaimed.

"Six guineas."

"My only hat! Sixty thousand just as soon," said Bob, with a chuckle. "My dear old porpoise, guineas don't grow in my study."

"You might raise it among the fellows," suggested Bunter. "It's only temporary, of course. I've been disappointed about a postal order——"

"Ha, ha, ha! The same old postal order?"

"Nunno—another one. I—I'm rather in want of six guineas; in fact, I owe a little bill——"

"Yes—twelve pound ten!" assented Bob.

"I don't mean that. I mean a real bill, and—and I've got to pay it. I—I say, you might stand by a chap."

“If you run up bills for six guineas a time, old scout, you’d better write to your pater. Or write to Parkinson,” suggested Bob, with a chortle. “That devoted old retainer would stand you all his life-long savings, I’m sure—he’s so attached to Master William.”

Leaving Bunter to make the most of his advice, Bob Cherry followed his chums into the form-room. Billy Bunter rolled in after them with a dismal face.

There were grinning glances for Bunter in the Remove that morning.

That the fat junior was in financial troubles again was well known by this time. Skinner and Co. gave him black looks.

Nothing had come of their attentions to Bunter, except desperate attempts on Bunter’s part to borrow six guineas of them.

What he wanted that particular sum for he did not disclose, but it was clear that he wanted it badly.

Skinner and Co. were more than suspicious now. Bunter had spent, by this time, the small sums he had extracted from them in the way of loans; and there were no more sums, large or small, to be extracted. His statement that he couldn’t write to his father for a tip because that gentleman was at his villa on the Riviera received no confirmation from Sammy of the Second. Questioned by the suspicious Skinner, Bunter minor proved to know nothing of his father’s being abroad—or even of the existence of a villa at Cannes. And Bunter

persistently declined to take Skinner’s advice to write to Parkinson.

It was dawning upon Skinner and Co. that they had wasted time—and cash—on Bunter, for nothing—and Fisher T. Fish especially was in a state bordering on anguish. Fisher T. Fish had parted with half a crown—but if it had been half a million dollars, it could scarcely

have given Fishy a more acute pain to think of it. The thought that that half-crown had been thrown away on a fellow harder up than himself made Fisher T. Fish feel that there were some wrongs that could only be wiped out in blood.

Billy Bunter sat in his place with a gloomy brow, heedless of grins and of black looks alike. Sometimes his glance wandered to the door, and then his expression was quite apprehensive.

Plainly he was in dread of something; that was clear to all the Remove, though they could not guess what it was.

Mr. Quelch found Bunter more inattentive than ever at lessons. His pointer came into play once or twice; but even the pointer failed to fix Bunter’s attention on his work. Weightier

matters were occupying his fat mind.

In the middle of morning lessons there was a tap at the door of the form-room, and Trotter, the House page, looked in. Mr. Quelch gave him an irritated glance. He disliked interruptions in classes.

“What is it, Trotter?” he snapped.



When William George Bunter crawled out of the Form-room, after lessons, he was looking as if he found life on this troublesome planet scarcely worth living! (See page 62)

BUNTER'S AILMENTS

BY THE GREYFRIARS RHYMESTER



WE found him lying in the
Close,

A porpoise, fat and sleek ;
And as we crowded up to
him,
He gave a piercing shriek.

"Oh, dear! Oh, crumbs! Oh,
help! Yaroooooh!

I'm swiftly dying, boys!"

"Well, die away!" growled
Johnny Bull.

"But do it with less noise!"

"What ails you, Bunty?"
Cherry cried.

"Is Quelchy on your track?"

Said Bunter, "Shooting, stab-
bing pains

Are torturing my back!

"My head is going round and
round,

My eyes are growing dim ;
I feel as if I'd fallen from
The top trapeze in gym.

"I've broken both my legs, I
think,

And twenty bones, at least!
How dare you cackle at me,
Todd,

You horrid, heartless beast?

"My number's up, and very
soon

You'll find me cold and still.
Wharton, upon your blotting-
pad

I've written out my Will.

"To Cherry I have left my
knife

(The one I pinched last May
From Bulstrode, when I found
that he
Had gone out for the day!).

"To you, Wun Lung, I've left
my bike,

So thank your lucky stars!
(The whole machine was Whar-
ton's once,
Except the handle-bars!)

"My purse, containing half-a-
crown,

I'm leaving to my minor.
He calls me stingy, but, my
hat!

What action could be finer?

"Good-bye, you chaps; I'm
going West!

Farewell, my comrades true!
With panting breath and feeble
voice,
I bid you all adieu!"

"One moment, please!" Bob
Cherry cried.

He then produced a pin.
Said Bunter, "What's the little
game?"

"I'm going to stick it in!"

Then Bunter gave a fiendish
yell;

He promptly rose and fled—
A very smart performance for
A fellow nearly dead!



"Genelman to see Master Bunter, sir."

"What! Nonsense! No one can see Bunter during classes! Tell the man so——"

"I've told him, sir, but he won't go."

"What?"

"He says he's instructed to wait for the money, sir."

"Bless my soul! Bunter!"

"Ow! Ye-e-es, sir," stammered Billy Bunter.

"Have you been incurring some debt which you have failed to pay, Bunter?" exclaimed the Remove master in a terrifying voice.

"Nunno! I—I mean, yes, sir! That is to say, n-n-no!" stammered Bunter.

"Where does the man come from, Trotter?"

"Chunkley's Stores in Courtfield, sir."

"Has he the account with him?"

"Yessir; and which he says he's to wait for the money, and hutherwise to go to the Ead, sir."

"Bring the man here."

"Yessir."

Trotter quitted the form-room, and Mr. Quelch breathed hard, fixing a look upon William George Bunter which almost pierced like a gimlet. The juniors sat breathless. Nobody wanted to catch Mr. Quelch's eye just then; the form-master was plainly in a very exasperated mood.

"So, Bunter, you have incurred a debt at a very expensive establishment, reckless of your inability to liquidate it!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, dear!"

"For how much is this debt, Bunter?"

"Sis-sis-sis-sis-six guineas, sir."

"Upon my word! You have run into debt to the amount of six pounds six shillings; you, a junior boy in the Lower Fourth Form! And you cannot pay the amount?"

"Nunno, sir!"

"Have you no regard, Bunter, for the reputation, and good name of the school you belong to!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Nunno—I—I mean, yes, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Oh, certainly."

"Then what do you mean, Bunter, by incurring a debt you cannot pay? Had you any intention of paying it?"

"Oh, yes, sir! I—I hoped something would turn up——"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I—I was expecting a postal order——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a sudden, involuntary, but irresistible yell from the Removites."

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "This is not a laughing matter. Bunter, what have you purchased at Chunkley's Stores to the value of six guineas?"

"N-n-nothing, sir!"

"What! You deny the transaction?"

"N-n-no, sir!"

"Then, what do you mean?"

"I—I—hired something, sir," groaned Bunter, dismally.

"Oh! Very well! The article can be returned, then."

"It's gone back already, sir."

"What! For how long did you use it?"

"Only for a couple of hours, sir."

"What! Do you mean to say Chunkley's are charging you six guineas for the hire of an article for two hours? This is an imposition—probably a matter to be laid before the profiteering tribunal. I must see into this. What was it you hired of Chunkley's Stores?"

Bunter did not answer.

"Do you hear me, Bunter? Answer me at once."

Billy Bunter blinked at the floor, and then at the ceiling, as if seeking inspiration. He found none, however; and then he blinked at the Remove master, still without replying.

Trotter's tap was heard at the door again, and it opened to admit a well-fed-looking commissioner with "CHUNKLEY'S" in gold letters on his cap. Mr. Quelch turned a gimlet glance upon him.

"You have an account for Master Bunter from Chunkley's Stores?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir!"

"Kindly hand it to me."

The man from Chunkley's handed an envelope to Mr. Quelch. All eyes in the room were upon Mr. Quelch as he opened it, and took out the bill. He glanced at it, and his eyes seemed to bulge from his head. In a voice that seemed like the rumble of thunder to the unfortunate Owl, Mr. Quelch read out the bill from Chunkley's aloud. And the Remove, as they listened, wondered a little whether they were dreaming.

CHUNKLEY'S STORES, COURTFIELD.

To Hire of one First-Class Family Butler	£5 5 0
To Expenses of above, including Hack from the Stores to Greyfriars School, and from Greyfriars School back to the Stores	£1 1 0
Total	£6 6 0

As our terms are strictly cash, an immediate settlement will oblige.

A pin might have been heard to fall in the Remove form-room of Greyfriars when Mr. Quelch had finished reading out that extraordinary invoice. The Remove sat dumb; and Mr. Quelch, having read out the bill, seemed to be deprived of the power of further speech. Billy Bunter was blinking longingly at the floor, wishing fervently that it would open and swallow him up.

Mr. Quelch found his voice at last.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated.

At the same time the Remove found their voices, too, and a wild yell rang through the form-room.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter's butler!"

"Hired at Chunkley's!"

"Spoofed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

But for once Mr. Quelch called in vain for silence. The junior's roared and yelled, and howled. The discovery was too much for them, and even the awful voice of their form-master passed unheeded.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Bunter—good old spoofer!"

"The butler from Chunkley's—ha, ha, ha!"

"So attached to Master William—at five guineas!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish jumped up, forgetful of where he was, and brandished a bony fist under Bunter's fat nose.

"You fat clam!" he cried. "You spoofing mugwump! Pulling me leg—the leg of a galoot who was raised in Noo Yark! Gimme my half-crown!"

"Silence!" roared Mr. Quelch.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Remove master made a clutch at his cane. Then there was order at last. The Removites wiped their eyes.

"Silence! Fish, go back to your place—how dare you leave your place, sir? Skinner, if you throw that volume at Bunter, I shall cane you severely. Bunter, stand out before the class."

There was a suppressed chortle in the class as the woebegone Owl of the Remove rolled dismally out. Mr. Quelch eyed him wrathfully.

"So, Bunter, you—you—incredible as it seems—you hired the—the man—the man-servant—who came here the other day—you hired him, in order to play off a miserable, pretentious deceit upon your schoolfellows."

"Oh, dear!"

"This bill," thundered Mr. Quelch, "must be paid! I shall pay it, Bunter, and immediately forward the account to your father."

"Ow!"

"With a full explanation of the circumstances——"

"Oh! Oh, dear!"

"And you, Bunter, will be given a lesson severe enough to keep you from such absurd and pretentious pranks in the future."

"Oh, lor'!"

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER

Bunter in Disgrace

LET us draw a veil, as a novelist would say, over the scene that followed.

It was a painful scene—to Bunter, at least! It was very painful indeed.

Mr. Quelch had said that he would administer a severe lesson. He was as good as his word. He felt that he had a stern duty to do, and he did it well. The hapless Owl of the Remove was of the opinion that he did it too well. He would have been satisfied with a much less conscientious form-master.

When William George Bunter crawled out of the form-room after lessons, he was looking as if he found life on this troublesome planet scarcely worth living.

And then he had to face Skinner and company. Those young gentlemen had quite lost

sight of the sterling qualities they had lately discovered in Bunter. They seemed now to be yearning, not for his fascinating society, but for his blood,

Fortunately for William Bunter, Harry Wharton and Co. came to the rescue, and Skinner and his comrades were driven off, howling.

Billy Bunter blinked dismally at his rescuers.

He seemed dispirited.

"I—I say, you fellows!" he mumbled.

"All serene now, Buntie," said Bob Cherry laughing.

"And don't worry about the twelve-pound ten," chuckled the Bounder. "We ought to make you pay up, as there wasn't a merry Bunter butler after all; but I think you've earned it."

"I—I say——"

"And you're not going to be ragged," said Harry Wharton reassuringly. "You deserve it—but Quelchy has given you beans. We'll let it go at that."

"Yes, but I—I say——"

"Well?"

"I—I say, you fellows, my pater will kick up no end of a shindy if that bill goes to him. Perhaps you'd like to lend me the money——"

"Eh?"

"It will get me out of an awful scrape! All you've got to do is to lend me the money—only lend it to me, you know, and I'll pay you back."

"Oh!"

"Of course, I'll let you have it back again! You see, I'm expecting a postal order——"

"Another postal order for six pound six?"

"I mean a lot of postal orders, Cherry. When I've heard from all my titled relations, there will be more than six mouldy pounds, you know, so I shall pay you back with interest!"

"Just hark at the fat dummy!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"If you haven't the cash in hand, you could sell something——"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Your bike, for instance, Wharton——"

"Mum-mum-my bike!" stuttered Wharton dazedly.

"Yes, I think you fellows ought to be willing to do me a good turn, after the splendid feed I stood you at Chunkley's——"

"What?"

"And look here," said Bunter, in a burst of generosity, "you see me through this, and I'll take you home with me for the holidays. To Bunter Court, you know."

"Bub-bub-Bunter Court?"

"Yes—where you'll be waited on by our butler, you know——"

"Your bib-bib-butler!" babbled Bob Cherry.

"That's it—you'll like it, you know—it will be a chance for you to see high life. What do you fellows say?"

Harry Wharton and Co. did not say anything. They simply stared at William George Bunter; and then they fell upon him, and seized him, and bumped him on the floor of the passage. Then they walked away leaving Billy Bunter roaring.

And from William George, at least, no more was heard at Greyfriars of Bunter's Butler!

