

There's only one Billy Bunter—here's the story of his latest exploit!



What Happened To Bunter!

A New and Amusing Extra-long story of the famous fat boy of Greyfriars School—
specially written

By **FRANK RICHARDS**

THE FIRST CHAPTER A Pressing Problem!

“WHO’S paying my fare?”
Billy Bunter asked the question.
He paused, like Brutus of old,
for a reply.

Like Brutus, he paused in vain.

There was no reply.

“Don’t all speak at once!” went on
Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not all speak
at once. They did not speak at all.

Billy Bunter blinked at them through his
big spectacles. He seemed perplexed.

“Deaf?” he asked.

No answer.

“Dumb?” snorted Bunter.

The five juniors in No. 1 Study, in the
Greyfriars Remove, really seemed to be
either deaf or dumb. If they heard Bunter,
they heeded not.

“I say, you fellows! I asked you a question!”
hooted Bunter. “You’re going over to St. Jim’s this afternoon for the
football match. I’m coming.”

Silence.

“I’m coming along with you,” explained
Bunter. “I knew you fellows would like
me to come, so I’ve fixed it. See?”

A burst of enthusiasm on the part of
the Famous Five would have been appropriate
at this point. The prospective pleasure
of Bunter’s company on a long train journey
was sufficient to evoke enthusiasm—from
Bunter’s point of view, at least.

Still Harry Wharton & Co. did not
play up. Enthusiasm would have been ap-
propriate, but—as Fisher T. Fish, of the
Remove, would have expressed it in the
American language—they did not enthu-
se worth a cent! There was not a general
brightening of faces, as Bunter seemed to
expect. On the other hand, a sort of glumness
became visible on five youthful countenances.

“I’ve arranged to come,” continued Bunter.
“I’m giving up my half-holiday to come
over to St. Jim’s and see you fellows play
football. Mauleverer wanted me to go out
with him in a car, but I’ve turned him down.”

Then Bob Cherry found his voice.

"Turn him up again, old bean!" he suggested.

"Eh?"

"Mauly's a more patient chap than we are," said Bob. "He can stand you better than we can. Stick to him; he's much less likely to kick you than we are!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, you fellows, you'd like me to come, I suppose? The fact is, Walker of the Sixth is looking for me——"

"What?"

"You know what a suspicious brute Walker is. I never had the cake——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a bit thick, the way a fellow always comes inquiring after me if he misses a cake. I don't want to see Walker. It's rather beneath my dignity to enter into a sordid argument about a measly cake that had hardly any plums in it. I'd rather not see Walker at present. Besides, I want to go over to St. Jim's; I've got some old pals there. The only difficulty is the fare. If you had sense enough to put me in the eleven, Wharton, it would be all right; it would come out of the club funds. But you always were an ass!"

"Thanks," said the captain of the Remove.

"It's not too late, if you like to make a change in the team. You can leave out some dud to make room for me. Johnny Bull, for instance."

"What?" growled Johnny Bull.

"Or Nugent. Nugent can't play footer for toffee. You don't mind my mentioning it, do you, Franky?"

"Not at all," said Frank Nugent politely.

"Or Inky," said Bunter thoughtfully. "You can leave Inky out, Wharton. He's no good, you know. Inky wouldn't mind standing out to make room for a better man, would you, Inky? Me, you know."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinned.

"The betterfulness is not terrific, my esteemed, fat-headed Bunter," he remarked.

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"Shut the door after you, old fat man!" said Bob Cherry.

This was a broad hint.

But William George Bunter was impervious to hints.

"I'm not going yet," he said. "What do you say, Wharton?"

"Rats!" said Harry Wharton.

"The fact is, I think it's about time I played for Greyfriars," said the Owl of the Remove seriously. "I quite understand that you fellows don't like being put in the shade by a better man, and all that. Still, that's not the game. Play the game, you know."

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Look here, suppose you put me down as a reserve?" suggested Bunter brightly. "You're taking some reserves, I suppose?"

"Yes—Ogilvy and Russell."

"They're not much good. Take me as a reserve, in case you want a really good man."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Then the club will have to pay my fare, see?" explained Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. chuckled.

Billy Bunter, apparently, was to be taken to St. Jim's for the football match, either as a player or as a reserve, to keep him out of the way of Walker of the Sixth, who was inquiring after a missing cake. Really, Remove footballers were not selected on those lines.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter peevishly. "I'm trying to save you fellows money by making these suggestions. My fare's got to be paid, I suppose?"

"Suppose again!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"I happen to be short of money—not a usual thing with me——"

"Oh!"

"I've been disappointed about a postal-order——"

"Ye gods!"

"Well, then, to come to the point, who's paying my fare?"

The Famous Five grinned, but they made no answer. No one, apparently, was anxious to capture the honour of paying William George Bunter's fare to St. Jim's.

"I don't mind going third!" added Bunter, with the air of a fellow making a large concession. "There!"

Still there were no takers. William George Bunter blinked at five smiling faces, one after another, anxiously; but his anxiety was not relieved. Even third-class fare did not seem to be forthcoming.

"Well, of all the rotters!" said Bunter, at last. "Of all the——"

"Bunter here?" asked Herbert Vernon-Smith, of the Remove, looking into No. 1 Study.

The Owl of the Remove blinked round at him.

"Yes, old chap—here I am. I say, Smithy, these mean beasts refuse to pay my fare to St. Jim's. But I know you're not so jolly mean as they are, Smithy, old chap."

The Bounder grinned.

"More!" he answered. "Much more! Stingy, in fact!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"Walker's coming upstairs," said the Bounder. "I looked in to give you the tip. He seems rather excited."

"Oh, dear!"

Billy Bunter forgot, for the moment, his ambitions as a footballer, and the pressing problem of his fare to St. Jim's. Walker of the Sixth, coming up to the Remove passage with his ashplant, was a more pressing problem for the moment.

There was a heavy tread on the stairs.



Bunter lost no time as Walker of the Sixth crashed to the floor, one hand clasped to his damaged nose. Bunter shot through the open doorway with lightning speed, and fled down the corridor. (See Chapter 1.)

"I—I say, you fellows, d-d-don't say anything!" gasped Bunter, and he backed behind the study door.

The heavy tread of the Sixth-former came along the Remove passage.

Bunter wedged himself in between the open door and the wall.

So long as the door remained open he was hidden from sight, unless Walker of the Sixth came right into the study.

From his hiding-place, he turned an imploring blink on the chums of the Remove.

The heavy footsteps stopped at the open doorway of No. 1 Study.

James Walker, of the Sixth Form, looked in, with an ashplant in his hand and a grim expression on his face.

"Where's Bunter?" he demanded.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked as unconscious as they could.

From where they stood, near the window, they had a full view of the fat junior, squeezed behind the door that hid him from Walker. But they tried to look as if they hadn't.

"Bunter?" repeated Wharton.

"Yes, Bunter! The fat villain is about here somewhere," said Walker savagely. "He's been raiding my study—he's got my cake. Where is he?"

"This isn't Bunter's study," said Nugent.

"I know that! I'm beginning here, and I'm going to look in every study in the passage," growled Walker. "I'll teach the fat young scoundrel to raid a Sixth-form study! Why, three or four fellows saw him bolting with the cake—my cake—a ten-bob cake, too! I'll skin him. Where is he?"

"Gentle shepherd, tell me where!" sang Bob Cherry.

"Echo answers where!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"The wherefulness is terrific, my esteemed Walker."

"I don't want any Remove cheek!" roared Walker. "I want Bunter! Is he in this study?"

Walker of the Sixth strode in, to glance round the room, giving the door a shove as he came, to throw it wider open.

But there was no room for the door to open wider.

Billy Bunter's circumference was against it. "Ooooooch!"

It was an agonised gasp from Billy Bunter, as he was squeezed hard between door and wall.

"Why—what—who——!"

Walker of the Sixth understood.

He grasped the door-handle, to drag it away from the wall.

Bunter was not famous for presence of mind. His fat intellect did not, as a rule, work quickly. But fear is said to lend wings, and on the present occasion, terror of Walker's ashplant lent wings to Bunter's slow wits. With wonderful and surprising promptness

Bunter hurled the door at Walker, as the senior pulled it; and the hard oak edge crashed fairly on Walker's nose.

"Oh!" roared Walker.

It was a painful shock. An oaken door, crashing on a fellow's nose with Bunter's weight behind it, is no joke.

Walker staggered back, and sat down suddenly, roaring.

Bunter lost no time. Only too well was he aware that there was no time to lose. He dodged round Walker, as Walker sat and roared, and fled out of No. 1 Study with lightning speed.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

Walker staggered up. He clasped his nose, which streamed red.

"Ow! My nose! Wow! I'll—I'll skin him—I—I—I——" Walker became incoherent. He gripped his ashplant with an infuriated grip, and rushed out of the study after Bunter.

Billy Bunter was already on the staircase, going strong. Walker of the Sixth raced in pursuit.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Bob Cherry. "It looks to me as if Bunter will be too busy for football this afternoon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors rushed out of the study. They had a view of Walker, going down the Remove staircase three at a time. But Bunter, on the lower stairs, was well ahead, and still going strong. Bunter was not famous as a sprinter, but he looked like winning that race. Pursued and pursuer vanished from the sight of the Removites.

Really, it looked as if William George Bunter would be too busy, for some time, to think about football matches; and Harry Wharton & Co. did not expect to see any more of him before they started for St. Jim's.

But it was the unexpected that was to happen.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Merely a Mistake!

"OH, dear!"

Billy Bunter groaned under his breath.

Really it seemed as if the troubles of the Owl of the Remove would never cease.

Trouble often occurred to William George Bunter, in his career as a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles. But the purloining of that cake from Walker's study seemed to be bringing in its train more than its due amount of trouble.

The fat junior had succeeded in dodging the Sixth-former, and escaping—for the time. By devious ways, Bunter had reached the Remove box-room, where now he was lying low.

In those very moments, he knew, Harry Wharton & Co. would be starting for Friardale Station, en route for St. Jim's. Bunter's little scheme of escaping Walker of the Sixth, by joining the football party, was knocked on the head—he dared not venture forth.

It was hard cheese—he felt that it was so. By the time the party returned from St. Jim's, Walker's wrath would have cooled down—he might even have dismissed the whole incident from his mind. But those unfeeling fellows had left Bunter in the lurch, and now they would be going off without him, just as if he did not matter. And Bunter mattered very much—very much indeed.

Still, it was something to be out of Walker's reach, and Bunter sat on a big trunk belonging to Lord Mauleverer, and rested, and re-

covered his breath. And then, to his dismay, he heard the sound of footsteps on the little staircase that led up from the Remove passage to the box-room.

"Oh, dear! Oh, crikey!" murmured the fat junior.

He rose from the trunk, and listened.

He had a faint hope that the footsteps might be those of Skinner and his friends, who sometimes came up to the box-room to smoke on a half-holiday. But that hope was faint, for he knew that Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, had lately discovered a lingering smell of tobacco-smoke in that remote apart-



Bunter slung the heavy bag with all his strength—but it wasn't Walker who had come through the doorway, it was Mr. Quelch! It sent the master of the Remove staggering across the box-room. "Oh—it's Quelchy!" gasped Bunter. (See Chapter 2.)

ment, and had become suspicious. Once or twice of late the Remove master had been seen in that quarter, and Skinner & Co. had taken the alarm.

He listened intently, and his last hope vanished. The footsteps were those of only one person: and they were too heavy for a junior.

"The awful beast!" groaned Bunter.

He was run-down in his last refuge.

And there was no escape now! He was fairly cornered in the box-room; and as soon as Walker of the Sixth appeared in the doorway, he was doomed! Then the ashplant would begin its operations!

Bunter breathed hard.

He had a strong objection to being licked—an insurmountable objection to the lightest flick of a cane. And he knew only too well that this would not be a case of flicking. The damage to Walker's nose had to be paid for—the licking was likely to be a record one.

Bunter was desperate.

Even the worm will turn: and it was agreed by all the Lower School of Greyfriars that Bunter was a good deal of a worm!

He resolved to turn!

After all, as he was booked for as severe a licking as Walker could give him, he might as well take it resisting, he considered, as lying down. It was no worse to be hung for a sheep than for a lamb.

Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his big spectacles.

There was a chance—a faint chance, if he took his courage in both hands, as it were, and made the most of it. Walker was apparently coming up to search the box-room for him, and if he could upset Walker the moment he entered, and flee before the prefect could scramble up, there was a chance of getting clear. What had happened in No. 1 Study might happen again—history might repeat itself.

Bunter looked round desperately for a weapon.

There was a large and heavy portmanteau—one of Lord Mauleverer's many possessions—lying near at hand. Bunter clutched it up.

Then he took up his position behind the door.

The big portmanteau, grasped in his fat hands, was raised above his head, all ready to crash upon the prefect as soon as he stepped in.

If the shot went home, there was no doubt that Walker would be sent sprawling across the box-room; and then Bunter's cue was to dodge out of the doorway and vanish.

Really, it seemed quite a hopeful plan if the fat junior's nerve did not fail him.

And his courage was screwed up to the sticking point now—anything was better than taking the tremendous licking Walker designed for him.

He waited, breathing in jerks, his eyes gleaming through his spectacles, the heavy bag poised ready to hurl.

The footsteps came up to the little landing outside the box-room, and stopped.

The door-handle was grasped outside, and turned.

The door opened.

Whiz!

Crash!

"Oh!"

Bump!

And Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, went sprawling across the box-room.

Bunter was a short-sighted fellow; but the quickest sight could not have saved him from that mistake.

Being absolutely convinced, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that it was Walker of the Sixth who was coming up to the box-room in search of him, Bunter had acted with a swift decision and promptness that would have been admirable—had the newcomer been Walker.

But it happened to be Mr. Quelch.

Walker, in those moments, was rooting somewhere around the form-rooms in search of the Owl of the Remove. Mr. Quelch was paying a quiet visit to the Remove box-room on the trail of the unknown delinquents who had once left a smell of tobacco-smoke there.

Of course, Bunter could not know that.

A fellow could not think of everything.

But it was very unfortunate.

As Mr. Quelch crashed and sprawled, Bunter gave a breathless giggle, and darted for the doorway.

Then he saw what he had done.

His flight was suddenly arrested in mid-career. He stopped in the doorway, and stared at the sprawling Form-master, his little round eyes almost bulging through his spectacles in horror.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"Ow!" spluttered Mr. Quelch.

"Quelchy!" stut-tered Bunter.

"Groogh! Bless my soul! Bunter!"

Mr. Quelch sat up.

He had had a startling shock for an elderly gentleman quite unaccustomed to horseplay.

He gasped and spluttered in a dazed and dizzy condition, and his eyes fairly glinted at Bunter.

"Bunter! You young rascal——"

"Oh, dear!"

"You young ruffian——"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"You shall be flogged for this!"

roared Mr. Quelch.

"You shall be expelled from Greyfriars Bunter."

Mr. Quelch grasped at Mauleverer's trunk to help himself up. He was quite shaken.

Bunter backed through the doorway.

Walker would have been bad enough! But this was worse; this was awful; this was irreparable! Billy Bunter could not see that he was to blame in any way; but there was no doubt that his last state was worse than his first.

"Bunter! Stop!"

Bunter did not stop.

"Stop, I tell you!" gasped Mr. Quelch, dragging himself painfully up. "Stop! Do



Great beads of perspiration rolled down Bunter's fat face as he lumbered up to the compartment in which Harry Wharton & Co. were seated. "I—I say, you fellows, something's happened at Greyfriars—I simply must come with you!" (See Chapter 3.)

not go, Bunter! You will come with me to the Head. I shall demand your instant flogging and expulsion from the school. I shall take you immediately to Dr. Locke, Bunter!"

But Bunter was gone.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Bunter Joins Up!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Bunter!"

"The esteemed and ludicrous Bunter."

Harry Wharton & Co. were taking their places in the train at Friardale Station. A fat figure came bolting along the platform, excitedly waving a fat hand.

It was William George Bunter, and he was in hot haste. The day was cold: but W. G. Bunter looked very warm.

He panted as he ran, and great drops of perspiration rolled down his forehead and his fat cheeks.

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

"Good-bye, Bunter."

"I'm coming!" panted Bunter.

"Your mistake," said Bob Cherry, cheerily.

"The mistakefulness is terrific."

"Ta-ta, old fat man."

Bunter made a dive at a carriage from which the grinning faces of Peter Todd and Herbert Vernon-Smith were looking. Peter being his study-mate at Greyfriars, doubtless Bunter expected Peter to stand by him in this emergency.

But perhaps Peter Todd had enough of Bunter's entertaining company in the study, and did not want any in the railway carriage. At all events, he closed the door, and grinned at Bunter from the window.

"Peter, you beast——"

"Roll off, old man."

"Peter, old chap——"

"Good-bye."

"Let me in, old fellow——"

"Bow-wow."

"Beast!"

Bunter gave Peter Todd up, and rolled along hurriedly to the next carriage, which was occupied by the Famous Five. Harry Wharton was closing the door, but Bunter grabbed it.

"Wharton, old fellow——"

"Stand back, Bunter, the train's going," said the captain of the Remove.

"I'm going in the train."

"Fathead!"

"I say, you fellows, something's happened at Greyfriars," gasped Bunter. "I must go. I simply must."

"Something will happen here, if you don't bunk," growled Johnny Bull. "It will hurt you when it happens."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Back-pedal, old fat man," said Bob. "Do you want to be jerked under the train. Back off."

"I'm coming."

Slam, slam, slam, came along the train. The last doors were closing.

"Stand clear there!" shouted the Friardale porter.

"I say, you fellows——"

"You fat duffer," exclaimed Harry Wharton impatiently, "you can't travel without a ticket, Bunter! Don't play the giddy ox."

"I—I've got a ticket."

"You cross ass, why couldn't you say so before? Hop in!"

"There's no room for Bunter here," said Squiff, who was in the carriage with the Famous Five.

"I say, old chap——"

"Oh, let him wedge in, if he likes to stand," said Bob. "No time for the fat chump to get along to another carriage now."

Bunter plunged headlong in as the juniors made way for him.

Slam!

The carriage door closed after him, and the train moved. Bunter sprawled among innumerable feet at the bottom of the carriage.

"Off!" said Frank Nugent, taking his seat. "Get off my feet, Bunter, will you? You're not a light weight, you know."

"Ow, wow!"

Billy Bunter scrambled up breathlessly.

He blinked out of the window, and seemed greatly relieved to see the platform vanishing.

"Thank goodness we're off!" he gasped. "I—I was afraid Quelchy would be after me before I got clear."

"Quelchy!" said Bob. "I thought the giddy enemy was Walter of the Sixth. Have you been bagging a cake from Quelchy, too?"

"Ha, ha, ha?"

"It isn't a laughing matter," gasped Bunter. "I've knocked Quelchy down——"

"WHAT?" roared the six juniors in chorus.

"Knocked him down——"

"Gammon!"

"I thought it was Walker butting into the box-room after me, and I knocked him over with a bag, and then I saw that it was Quelchy——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Phew!"

"Well, you've done it now!" said Bob Cherry, staring at the Owl of the Remove. "Knocked a Form-master over with a bag! Oh, my hat!"

"The donefulness is terrific," grinned Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Quelchy will be infuriated."

"Infuriated isn't the word for it," groaned Bunter. "He was as mad as a hatter. I'm to be flogged and expelled. I don't mind being expelled so much, but fancy being flogged! Me, you know."

"Well, you seem to have put your whole hoof in it this time," remarked Squiff. "But what's the good of bunking? You will have to face the music sooner or later."

"Oh, really, Field——"

"The best thing you can do, Bunter, is to go straight back to Greyfriars when we change at Lantham," said Harry Wharton gravely. "You will only make matters worse by clearing off like this. I daresay it will only be a flogging—and you can stand that."

"Can I?" hooted Bunter.

"Well, you will have to, you know."

"I jolly well shan't," said Bunter.

A flogging wouldn't matter if it was you—but I'm delicate. I can't stand it. I'm jolly well not going to, anyhow. I'm not going back to Greyfriars till that matter's settled. See?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Let 'em expel me if they like," said Bunter. "They can settle that with my pater. I've never had justice at Greyfriars. But I fancy that when they realise what they're doing they'll think twice before they lose me."

"Lose you?" repeated Bob.

"Yes. After all, I do the school credit,



"I—I've lost my ticket," stammered Bunter, as the collector barred his path. "Better go and find it, then," answered the official grimly, and Bunter stared helplessly as the grinning crowd of Removites passed on to the platform, leaving him on the wrong side of the barrier. (See Chapter 3.)

which is more than you fellows do. It gives a school a tone to have a fellow like me."

"Great pip!"

"I'm not afraid of being sacked," went on Bunter. "That's a minor matter. But I'm not going to be flogged. That's important."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. I say, you fellows, isn't there room for me?"

"It doesn't look like it," said Bob Cherry. "There are six places and six fellows sitting in them. You can have the floor."

"Beast! Who's giving me a seat?"

"Echo answers who!" grinned Squiff.

"I suppose I can sit on your knees, Bob."

"My knees won't stand more than half a ton, old bean. You're beyond the limit."

"Beast!"

Bunter had to stand. As he had plunged into a carriage that was already full up, he really might have expected to stand. But he seemed to feel it as a great injury, all the same.

"Better go back at Lantham, Bunter," advised Nugent. "Quelchy will only be rattier with you if you keep him waiting for his giddy vengeance."

"Rats!"

The train rattled on, and the Removites, much to Bunter's disgust, began to discuss the forthcoming game at St. Jim's. That was a matter of the very slightest importance in Bunter's estimation, compared with the disastrous position in which he now found himself. But the Remove fellows seemed to think that it still mattered, somehow. In Bunter's opinion, it was like Nero fiddling while Rome was burning—only worse.

Lantham Junction appeared in sight down the line.

"I say, you fellows, there's Lantham," said Bunter. "Which of you is taking my ticket?"

"What!" exclaimed Hary Wharton, "You told me that you had a ticket."

"That was only a platform ticket."

"Wha-a-t?"

"A platform ticket. They wouldn't let me on the platform at Friardale unless I took it."

"You—you—you've got into the train,

with only a penny platform ticket?" ejaculated the captain of the Remove.

"Yes. I knew my old pals would stand my fare to St. Jim's, in these awfully serious circumstances."

"Oh, that's all right, then: better look for your old pals, when we get into Lantham. I hope they'll see you through."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Are you're old pals waiting for you at Lantham, or are they on the train, and who are they, anyhow?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

The train stopped, and the Remove crowd poured out of the carriages. In a chery crowd they marched across the bridge to the other line, to take the express for Wayland in Sussex.

Billy Bunter rolled with them.

Apparently, Harry Wharton & Co. were the old pals upon whom he was relying, though they declined to recognise the fact.

"I say, you fellows, keep round me, and we may get through all right," whispered Bunter. "I don't want to waste money on a ticket if it can be helped, of course. I hope I'm considerate."

"Oh, my hat! Are we to help you bilk the railway company?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Buzz off, Bunter."

"The buzzfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed and ludicrous Bunter."

"Tickets, please!" said the collector at the barrier.

Harry Wharton & Co. showed their tickets and passed. An arm was extended as the Owl of the Remove strove to dodge through.

"Tickets, please."

"I've lost it——!" stammered Bunter.

"Better go and find it, then," said the collector grimly.

"I—I mean, my friend has got it—that chap who's passed——"

"He'd better come back and show it, then, or you don't go on the platform."

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Bunter.

The crowd of grinning footballers walked on.

"Wharton, old chap——!"

No reply.

"Wharton, you rotter——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

Harry Wharton & Co. disappeared along the platform, and William George Bunter was left at the impassable barrier, blinking after them—like a very fat Peri at the gate of Paradise.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Bunter Too!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here's the giddy train."

It was twenty minutes later; there had been a wait at Lantham for the Wayland express.

It came into the station from a siding at last, and stopped by the platform. The Greyfriars crowd came out of the waiting-rooms and buffet, and gathered to take their places.

Bob Cherry glanced along the platform and grinned.

"No Bunter!" he remarked.

"The fat duffer," said Harry Wharton, "I hope he's gone back to Greyfriars. It's the wisest thing he can do."

"Then Bunter isn't very likely to do it," remarked Nugent, "I half-expected to see him here somehow."

"Thank goodness he's not."

The Famous Five got into a carriage, and Peter Todd followed them in, the rest of the party dispersing along the train.

Bob Cherry kept an eye on the platform till the train started. William George Bunter was a sticker, and Bob would not have been surprised to see him at the last moment, bolting for the train.

But nothing was seen of Bunter; and the Remove crowd rolled out of Lantham Junction in the express, convinced that they were done with the Owl of the Remove at last.

"Poor old Bunter!" remarked Bob Cherry, as he settled down in a corner seat for the long run to Wayland, "I'd have stood my whack in his ticket, if it would have done him any good to dodge Quelchy for the afternoon. But of course, it would only have made matters worse for him when he did get back."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

Bob jumped.

"Great pip! Is that Bunter's ghost!"

It was not Bunter's ghost: it was Bunter in the flesh. Every eye in the carriage turned upon a fat face and a large pair of spectacles which blinked out from underneath a seat.

"Bunter!"

"Bunter! Oh, my hat!"

Bunter grinned up at the astonished Removites.

"I say, you fellows, have I surprised you? Fancy you fellows getting into the same carriage! I was jolly glad when I heard your voices—I should have had to keep under the seat all the way to Wayland if it hadn't been you. Real luck, what?"

Bunter crawled out from under the seat.

He was considerably dusty, but he seemed in a cheery mood. The chums of the Remove stared at him blankly.

"How on earth did you get here?" exclaimed Bob.

Bunter chuckled.

"That rotter—that low beast—wouldn't let me come on the platform," he explained, "but I knew that it was the Wayland train on the siding, as it happened. I dodged into it all right."

"Without a ticket?"

"If I'd had a ticket I shouldn't have needed to dodge into the train on the siding. Don't be an ass."

"And what are you going to do when we have to show up tickets at Wayland?" demanded Johnny Bull.

Bunter blinked at him:

"I expect my old pals to stand by me," he answered. "After all I've done for you fellows——"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I shall settle up, of course," said Bunter, with dignity, "I shall pay you out of my very next postal order. Did I mention to you fellows that I was expecting a postal-order?"

"I think you did!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I think you've mentioned it—once or twice."

"That's all right, then. You were saying you'd be willing to stand your whack in my ticket, Bob, old chap. The other fellows can



“Great pip! Is that Bunter’s ghost!” Every eye in the carriage was turned to Bunter as he crawled ponderously from beneath the seat, grinning up at the astonished Removites. (See Chapter 4.)

help you out. Arrange it among yourselves. I don’t mind.”

Bunter blinked round the carriage.

“I suppose you’re not going to let me stand all the way to Wayland,” he said, “I know you’re selfish, but there’s a limit.”

“Isn’t he a beauty?” said Peter Todd.

“Isn’t he a card? Isn’t he a corker? I suppose there would be a row if we dropped him out of the train.”

“Oh, really, Toddy——”

Harry Wharton laughed.

“We’ve got to stand his ticket, or else let him be taken up as a bilk,” he said. “I suppose we can’t let a Greyfriars man be charged with bilking the railway company.

We’d better see him clear at Wayland, when we get there.”

“I knew you wouldn’t be a mean beast, old chap. After all, it’s little enough, considering all I’ve done for you,” said Bunter. “Now, what about giving me a seat?”

“Go and eat coke!”

“You can take it in turns to stand, you know,” urged Bunter. “I don’t mind taking my turn with the rest.”

“Sit down!” grunted Johnny Bull.

He hooked Bunter’s leg, and the Owl of the Remove sat down very suddenly, on the floor of the carriage.

“Ow!”

“Now sit there!” said Peter Todd. “You’ve diddled us into paying for your ticket, you fat bouncer, and that’s the limit. The floor for you till we get to Wayland.”

“Beast!”

Bunter sat on the floor. Otherwise there was “standing room only,” and Bunter did not want to stand.

“I say, you fellows——”

“Dry up!”

“Look here, Toddy——”

“Cheese it!”

“Is that what you call sympathetic?” hooted Bunter. “Can’t you understand that I’m in a frightful position——”

“Rot! The floor’s all right.”

“I don’t mean that, ass! I mean, in the circumstances I can’t go back to Greyfriars.”

“Oh, you’ll be able to stick somebody for your return fare, just as you’ve stuck us,” said Johnny Bull.

“Oh, really, Bull——”

“We’ll pay your fare back, somehow, Bunter,” said Harry Wharton.

"I don't want you to. I'm not thinking of the fare, you ass! I can't go back to Greyfriars until Quelchy comes to terms."

"Eh?"

"You see, I can't be flogged."

"Oh!"

"Quelchy said distinctly that I was to be flogged. He's got to chuck that before I consent to return to the school."

"Consent! Oh, my hat!"

"If he doesn't, and until he does, I shall not return. That's fixed and settled, like the laws of the—the Swedes and Russians!" said Bunter.

Possibly Bunter meant the laws of the Medes and Persians.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not a laughing matter. I can't go back; that's definite. Not until Quelchy comes down off his high horse, you see. Of course, he will come down when he realises that he may lose me for good. I know my value to Greyfriars, if you fellows don't. See? But it may take time, and, in the meantime, I have to keep clear of Greyfriars. Well, my pals at St. Jim's may put me up for a time—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Tom Merry is a decent sort—quite decent—"

"The more decent he is, the less likely he will

be to stand you, old fat man," said Peter Todd.

"Beast! And there's D'Arcy—my old pal, Gussy! You know, Gussy came to stay with me once at Bunter Court on a summer vacation, and, of course, he's bound to stand by me now. Besides, he likes me."

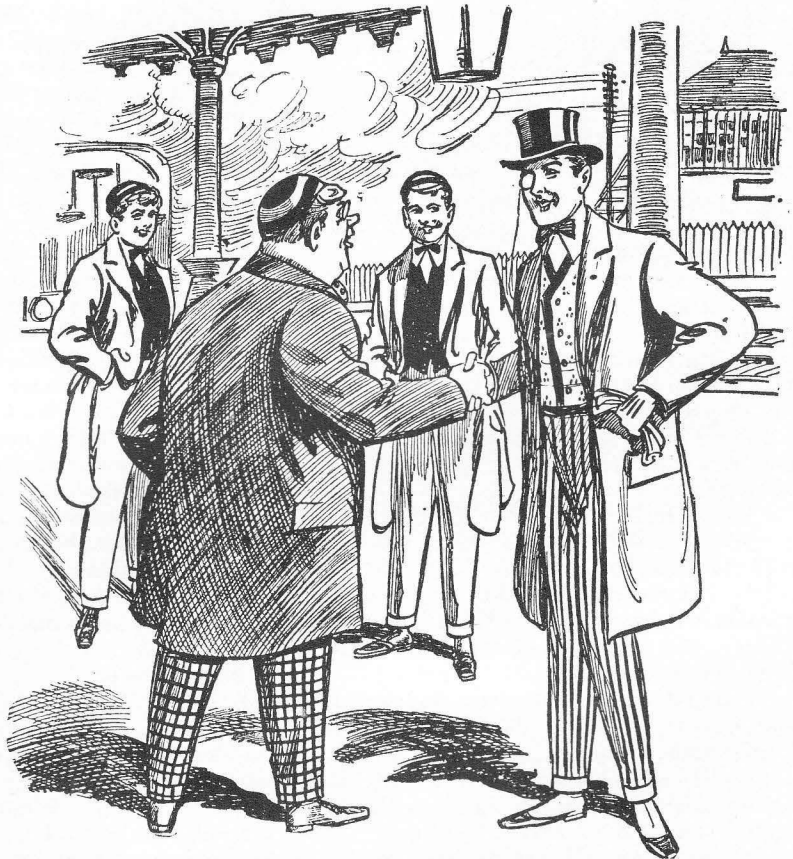
"No accounting for tastes—if he does."

"If!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"The if-fulness is terrific!"

"But the point is," went on Bunter, "I shall need some money."

"Quite a new need with you, what?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.



"Jolly glad to see you, Gussy!" exclaimed Bunter, capturing the somewhat reluctant hand of Arthur Augustus and shaking it with great vigour. "Ripping to see one another again, what?" "Oh, yaas!" answered Gussy, a little doubtfully. "Oh, yaas, wathah!" (See Chapter 5.)

"Oh, quite! I've no doubt that D'Arcy can arrange to put me up for a time, but I can't very well borrow money of the chap. You see that?"

"Let me catch you trying to borrow money of any St. Jim's man!" exclaimed Wharton wrathfully. "I'll jolly well scalp you!"

"I shall have to have some money. I'd much rather not borrow anything at St. Jim's; I've got a sense of dignity, and what is due to a Greyfriars man, if you fellows haven't. So the question is, what are you fellows going to lend me?"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at Bunter. Really, they did not quite know what to answer.

"Well," said Bob Cherry, at last, "I can lend you something, Bunter."

"What's that?"

"A boot."

"Yarooooooh!"

Bunter did not seem grateful for the loan. He squirmed along the carriage to get out of range of Bob Cherry's feet. Bob took a large size in boots.

"Look here, you fellows——"

"Shut up!" roared Peter Todd.

"But I say——"

"Another word and we'll jolly well roll you under the seat, and keep you there till we get to Wayland."

Billy Bunter snorted angrily, but he did not utter the other word.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Bunter's Old Pal.

"BAI JOVE! Heah they are!"

It was the well-known voice and remarkable accent of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus was standing on the platform at Wayland Junction when the express came in.

In his natty overcoat and shining hat, Arthur Augustus was, as usual, a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.

He raised his shining topper gracefully to the cheery faces that looked out of the carriage windows as the express stopped.

Two other St. Jim's fellows were with D'Arcy—Blake of the Fourth and Tom Merry of the Shell.

The train stopped, and the Greyfriars crowd swarmed out. There was a cheery and genial greeting.

"Gussy, old man——"

"Bai Jove! Is that Buntah?"

"Yes, old chap! Jolly glad to see you, Gussy," said Bunter, capturing the somewhat reluctant hand of Arthur Augustus and shaking it with great vigour. "Ripping to see one another again, what?"

"Oh, yaas!"

"I knew you hadn't forgotten me, old fellow."

"Eh? Oh, no!"

"Friends like us don't forget one another in a hurry, do they?" said Bunter brightly.

"Oh, yaas, wathah!"

"What?"

"I—I mean——"

"This way," said Tom Merry cheerily. Tom's eyes had dwelt rather curiously on Bunter for a moment. "We've got a charabanc waiting outside."

"Good!"

"A new recruit of yours, what?" asked the St. Jim's junior captain, as he walked down the platform with Wharton.

"Bunter?" Harry Wharton laughed.

"No, not quite! He's come over with us because he's landed himself in a row at Greyfriars, and wants to put off the licking as late as possible. I keep on telling him that he's only making matters worse, but it's no use talking sense to Bunter."

"I remember him!" grinned Blake.

"What has he done at Greyfriars?"

"Knocked his Form-master over in mistake for somebody else."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows," yelled Bunter. "Don't forget that I haven't a ticket. You'll have to pay at the gate."

The St. Jim's fellows grinned. They remembered William George Bunter of old, and they were not at all surprised to hear that he was travelling without a ticket.

Bunter's fare was paid when they reached

the gate, and the Greyfriars footballers walked out to the charabanc, Bunter keeping hold of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

According to Bunter, D'Arcy of St. Jim's was an old and trusty pal of his; and so the meeting ought to have caused mutual delight. But no one would have guessed from D'Arcy's looks that he was an old attached pal of Bunter's. The expression on his aristocratic face was almost unhappy, as Bunter took possession of him. But the swell of St. Jim's was a long-suffering youth in the cause of politeness and good manners. He gave Bunter his head, as it were.

In the charabanc, Bunter sat beside the swell of St. Jim's, and expanded into his most genial mood.

If D'Arcy answered him only in monosyllables, Bunter did not seem to notice it; as a conversationalist, Bunter was easily equal to the work of two. In fact, he preferred monologue to dialogue.

The run to the school was quite a pleasant one, for Bunter. Whether Arthur Augustus enjoyed it was another question.

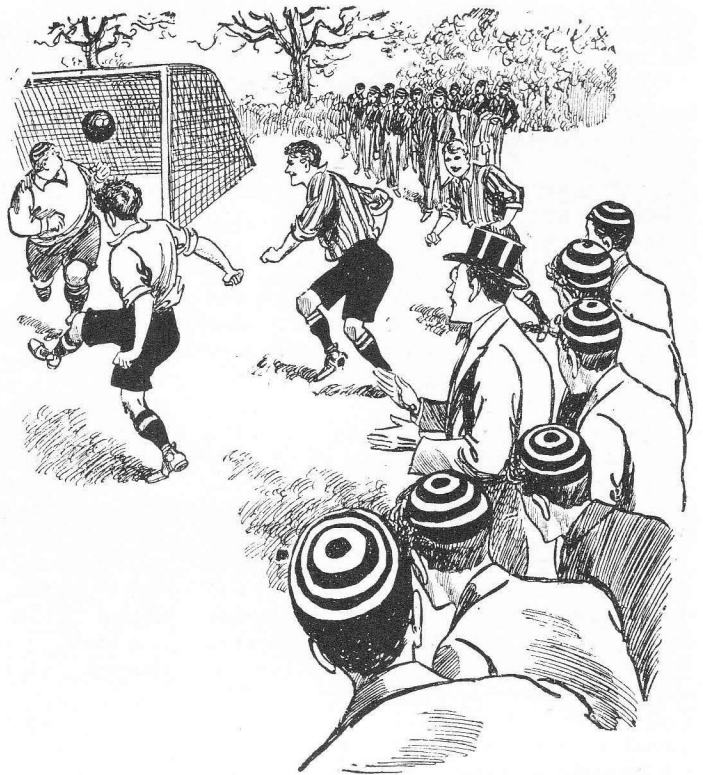
Certain it was, that when the party arrived at St. Jim's, somehow or other Arthur Augustus became detached from his affectionate friend, and disappeared. Perhaps even his Chesterfieldian politeness was not equal to too great a strain.

Bunter did not see his St. Jim's pal again till the footballers had changed, and were going down to the field.

"I say, Gussy——"

"Yaas, Buntah," almost groaned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I'm not playing in this match," said Bunter.



There was a shout as Wharton drove the ball into the net. "Goal!" It was first blood to Greyfriars. "A mere fluke!" was Billy Bunter's opinion. (See Chapter 6.)

"I know."

"I'm left out," said Bunter, rather bitterly. "There's a lot of jealousy in football."

"Bai Jove! Is there?"

"Oh, yes! Seeing me looking on at this game, while those chaps are playing, you'd hardly think that I was a better man than any of that crowd, would you?"

"I certainly should not, Buntah."

"Yet it's the case," said Bunter.

"Bai Jove!"

"Jealousy, you know," said Bunter. "Wharton can't stand being put in the shade by a better man. That's how it is."

"Weally, Buntah——"

"Centre-forward is my favourite place," said Bunter. "That's where I come out really strong. But you do think

Wharton will give up the place to me? No fear!"

"Pwobably not," assented Arthur Augustus, with a faint grin.

"Few can beat me in the half-way line, too," said Bunter. "Look at that clumsy ass Bob Cherry! I've offered to take his place! Wharton refused my offer."

"Did he weally?"

"He did! Then look at the backs," said Bunter. "That elephant, Johnny Bull, and that duffer, Mark Linley. I could play their heads off. Wharton either can't or won't see it."

"Oh!"

"In goal," pursued Bunter. "In goal, I'm what may be called a tower of strength. Wharton's picked out that chap Field—Squiff, you know. I don't say he's not a good man—he's fair. But look at him, and look at me!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glanced at the sturdy, hefty Australian junior, and then at the fat figure rolling at his side, and smiled. Having looked at Squiff, and looked at Bunter, as requested, he was not really surprised that Wharton was playing Squiff in goal, and that W. G. Bunter was merely a spectator. However, he did not say so.

"Jealousy all round," said Bunter. "Bit sickening, isn't it?"

"Oh!"

"But I'm used to it," said Bunter. "It's what you might call the penalty of superiority—carping envy and jealousy all round."

"Bai Jove!"

"Come on, Gussy!" called out Blake.

"Comin', deah boy."

"I'll see you after the game," said Bunter. "I've got something rather particular to say to you, old chap. You know that I'm rather n trouble at Greyfriars."

"Sowwy, deah boy."

"Precious few fellows would have the nerve o knock over a Form-master," said Bunter. "But I'm not the man to stand any cheek, ven from a Form-master."

"Wasn't it an accident, then, Buntah?" asked Arthur Augustus, staring at the Owl if he Remove blankly. He had heard in the harabanc what had happened at Greyfriars that afternoon.

"Well you see——"

"Buck up, Gussy!" shouted Blake; not that there was any particular hurry, but Jack Blake was kindly desirous of rescuing his chum from William George Bunter.

"It's a flogging," said Bunter. "A Head's flogging, you know. Quelchy was talking about having me expelled; but I know jolly well that the Head would think twice about that. He wouldn't like Greyfriars to lose a fellow like me."

"Oh! Wouldn't he?" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"No fear! But the fact is, I'm not going to take a flogging. I'm not going back to Greyfriars till Quelchy chucks up that idea."

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm going to say a few days with you, Gussy, old chap," said Bunter affectionately. D'Arcy jumped.

"Wha-a-at? I'm sowwy, Buntah, but that is imposs, weally imposs. We are not allowed to have visitahs stayin' at the school, you know." Arthur Augustus seemed quite alarmed. "Quite out of the question, deah boy."

"I daresay you could get permission from your Housemaster."

"But——"

"Putting it to him that your best friend wants to stay a day or two, and has leave from his school," explained Bunter.

"But you haven't leave from your school, Buntah."

"That's all right. You can say so, you know."

"Gweat Scott!"

"We'll arrange it all right," said Bunter, airily. "If it's necessary to stuff your Housemaster, I'll put you up to what to say. I'm rather a dab at stuffing people."

"Weally, Buntah——"

"You can leave that to me," said Bunter. "I'll put you wise, and we'll pull Mr. Railton's leg all right. Rely on me."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, almost overcome.

Jack Blake grasped his friend's arm and fairly dragged him on the field. Arthur Augustus had quite a dazed look.

"Blake, deah boy," he gasped, "that fat

boundah—I mean Buntah—is thinkin' of stayin' on heah aftah the match and—and—I'm to stuff Mr. Waitlon that he has leave fwom his school, and—and—I suppose it would not be civil to kick a fellow who has come ovah with the Gweyfwiahs chaps, would it ? ”

Blake chuckled.

“ Civil or not, I shall chance it if I find him around St. Jim's after the other fellows have gone,” he answered.

“ He weally is the limit, you know.”

“ The outside edge ! ” agreed Blake. “ It's all right—I'll settle that matter with him after the game, before I take my football boots off.”

And the footballers went on to the field.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

The St. Jim's Match.

BILLY BUNTER took up a position to watch the game. Ogilvy and Russell, who had come over with the team, were with him. There was a good crowd of St. Jim's fellows round the field, and Bunter knew a good many of them. In fact he had, as he so often said in the Remove, many friends at St. Jim's. Every fellow to whom Bunter ever spoke, and who did not kick him, was apparently a friend, and by this computation the name of Bunter's friends was legion.

The Owl of the Remove adopted a lofty and supercilious expression as he watched the kick-off and the beginning of the game. He wanted to make it clear that he looked on this game from the lofty and patronising point of view of a fellow who could do much better things.

“ Not much chance for us this time, Russell,” he remarked.

Russell looked at him.

“ Why not, fathead ? ”

“ Look at the way they've started,” said Bunter. “ Look at St. Jim's going up the field. That's a certain goal to begin with.”

“ What on earth do you know about football ? ” inquired Russell. “ It that's a goal I'll eat my hat.”

“ You'll jolly well see in a minute ! ”

Russell was under no necessity of eating his hat. The ball was cleared into the St. Jim's half, and the Greyfriars men followed it up.

Johnny Bull had cleared with a tremendous kick.

“ Well ? ” grinned Russell.

Bunter sniffed.

“ Look at that ! ” he said. “ Skying the ball just for fluff ! That's not the way to play soccer.”

“ You silly owl ! ” said Russell, and he moved off a little further from Bunter. He did not seem to want to hear any more expert comments on the game.

“ I say, Ogilvy——”

“ Oh, cheese it ! ” said Ogilvy, and he moved off after Russell. He did not want any enlightenment—from Bunter—about the game of soccer.

“ There they go ! ” said Bunter, addressing his valuable remarks to some St. Jim's fellows. “ You chaps can count on a win this time ! Look at that ass Wharton—he could put the ball in now—but he won't. You see——”

The next moment there was a shout.

“ Goal ! ”

“ Oh ! ” ejaculated Bunter.

It was first blood for Greyfriars.

“ That's a good man,” remarked Wildrake, of the St. Jim's Fourth. “ That was a jolly good goal ! ”

“ A mere fluke ! ” said Bunter.

“ Eh ? What ? ”

“ You've got a pretty rotten goalie to let a shot like that pass him,” said Bunter scornfully.

“ Our goalie's Fatty Wynn, the best junior goal-keeper at St. Jim's,” said Wildrake, with a stare at Bunter.

“ My hat ! If he's the best, what is the worst like ? ” grinned Bunter.

Wildrake gave him another look, opened his lips and closed them again and moved off.

“ Hallo, Grundy ! ” Bunter blinked at Grundy, of the St. Jim's Shell, and nodded to him.

Grundy stared at him.

Grundy was a Shell fellow, and a very important fellow in his own eyes. He was not in the least pleased by the familiar greeting from a Lower Fourth fellow from another school.

“ Rather a scratch lot you've got playing to-day,” said Bunter affably.

“ Think so ? ” grunted Grundy.



"How's that?" asked Blake, as he stepped back to admire his handiwork, and the three juniors chuckled softly, as they gazed upon the soot-daubed countenance of the sleeping Bunter.

(See Chapter 7.)

"Well, our lot are pretty feeble, but look at the way they're mopping up your men," said Bunter. "Is this what you call football at St. Jim's?"

Grundy walked away.

"There comes another goal!" said Bunter. "My hat! Two in ten minutes! The ball's going in this time—just look!"

Manners, of the St. Jim's Shell, at back, cleared away the ball even while Bunter was speaking. When the Owl of the Remove blinked again the game had swayed away into the visitors' half.

"Well, where's that goal?" asked Digby, of the St. Jim's Fourth, with a sarcastic grin at Bunter.

Bunter's fat lip curled.

"I should have taken it," he explained. "But we're playing a rotten lot to-day—and a kid could stop them. Call this football?"

Digby moved off. In fact, although there was a good crowd on the spot, William George Bunter soon found himself standing quite alone, as if somehow or other the St. Jim's fellows did not understand what a treat they were missing in losing his company and his comments on the game.

Billy Bunter was soon yawning.

As a matter of fact, what he did not know about Soccer would have filled large volumes. There was really first-class play on both sides, but it was all lost on Bunter. He was soon tired of watching the game; and would gladly have transferred his fat presence to the school shop. But as he was in his usual impecunious state, it was not of much use to do so; and he deeply regretted not having already "touched" his old pal Gussy for a little loan.

At half-time the score was goal for goal, Tom Merry having equalised. But Bunter hardly noticed what the score was. He was thinking of more important matters.

He was hungry!

When Bunter was hungry, all other things faded into utter insignificance. At such a time there was only one thing in the wide universe that mattered.

In the interval, he hoped to find an opportunity of speaking to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But he did not find the opportunity; possibly because Arthur Augustus did not desire it to be found.

When the game re-started, Bunter was no longer watching it.

He left the football field, and wandered

away to the School House. Bunter had been at St. Jim's a good many times before, and he knew his way about the school. He had no hesitation whatever about "butting" into quarters where casual visitors were not supposed to penetrate. He rolled into the School House as if the House belonged to him. Some St. Jim's fellows glanced at him, but did not speak, and Bunter rolled on to the big staircase. He mounted the stairs, and on the first landing came on Cutts of the Fifth, who gave him a stare.

"Who the dooce are you?" asked Cutts.

"Eh! I belong to Greyfriars," said Bunter. "I came over with the football team, you know."

"I don't know," said Cutts coolly. "What the thump are you wandering about the House for, anyway?"

"I suppose I can sit down in my friend D'Arcy's study if I like," said Bunter. "It's jolly cold out there."

And he rolled on, Cutts of the Fifth glancing after him doubtfully.

Bunter knew his way to Study No. 6 in the Fourth, and he soon reached that celebrated apartment, fortunately without being asked any more questions.

Bunter blinked round Study No. 6.

No doubt, being D'Arcy's old pal and best friend, he felt entitled to make himself at home there.

At all events, entitled or not, he proceeded to do so.

There was no fire in the grate, and it was a cold afternoon. Bunter found firewood in the bottom of the study cupboard, and coal in a box, and a Latin grammar which, fortunately, happened to be lying on the table, furnished paper to start the fire. There was soon quite a cheery fire going; and Bunter pulled the study table and the arm-chair towards it.

Then he explored the study cupboard, the upper part of which was used by Blake & Co. as a larder.

Bunter considered it probable that the chums of Study No. 6 would want something substantial for tea after a

football match, and equally probable that the supply was already laid in. On both points he was right.

Ham and eggs, and a cold meat pie, and a cake, and several other excellent things, caught his eye.

He lifted them out on the table.

The good things had been intended to make a "high tea" for four. They supplied Bunter with almost enough for tea.

His fat face was irradiated with satisfaction as he sat down to warm his toes and dispose of Blake & Co.'s tuck.

It did not take him very long. In many things Bunter was slow, but as a trencherman he far exceeded the usual speed-limit.

Having finished the supplies in Study No. 6 to the last crumb, Billy Bunter leaned back in the arm-chair, with his feet



"Gweat Scott!" ejaculated D'Arcy, as he saw Bunter's black face; his glasses, catching the gleam of the fire, shone from his sooty features with weird effect.

(See Chapter 7.)

on the fender, in a full and happy and satisfied mood.

How the football match was going he did not know; and he cared not at all. He had, in fact, forgotten it. His eyes closed behind his big spectacles, and a deep snore proceeded from him. Bunter was sleeping the sleep of the just.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

The Sleeping Beauty.

“GOAL!”

“Bravo!”

“Good old Wharton!” chuckled Russell.

“Bai Jove! Quite wippin’, deah boy.”

While William George Bunter was taking his ease in Study No. 6, the football match went on merrily in a keen wind, and drew to its close. Hard and fast was the play in the second half, and both sides came near to scoring—but the goals remained intact. Fatty Wynn for St. Jim’s, Squiff for Greyfriars, put paid to all attempts—right up to the finish. And then by luck and pluck Harry Wharton & Co. came through, and the leather went in from the foot of the captain of the Remove.

It was a ripping goal, as D’Arcy generously declared; and it was the winning goal in the match. The whistle went.

“Well, we win,” said Bob Cherry, as the footballers came off. “But I think we’ve earned it. A good game, you chaps.”

“Topping!” said Tom Merry, with a cheery smile. “You really deserved that goal! Better luck for us next time.”

“Yaas, wathah!”

The footballers changed, in a cheery crowd, and then the Greyfriars party joined Tom Merry & Co. at tea in the School House. Bob Cherry glanced round with a rather puzzled look.

“Where’s Bunter?” he said. “Bunter knows we’re teing here with the St. Jim’s chaps; it’s not like him to miss it.”

“Anybody seen Bunter?”

Nobody had, apparently.

Nobody, however, cared very much where Bunter might possibly be, and the Greyfriars fellows did not waste much thought on him. It was Blake & Co. of the Fourth who discovered the missing owl.

Blake & Co. did not tea in hall; they had something special in their own study. Arthur Augustus D’Arcy remained with the visitors, but Blake and Herries and Digby went up to Study No. 6.

As they approached that apartment, a strange sound met their ears. It was something like the rumbling of a train in a tunnel, and something like the whirr of a distant aeroplane.

“What on earth’s that?” exclaimed Blake.

“Some dashed animal in the study,” said Digby. “Is it your blessed bulldog, Herries?”

“Towser doesn’t make a row like that,” answered Herries.

Blake threw open the door of Study No. 6. Then the Fourth-formers discovered the source of the strange and mysterious sound.

It proceeded from William George Bunter.

Leaning back in the arm-chair, with his eyes closed and his mouth open, was the Owl of the Remove, snoring as if for a wager.

Blake & Co. stared at him.

“Bunter!” ejaculated Blake.

“Well, we want our giddy visitors to make themselves at home,” said Dig, with a grin. “This chap looks as if he’s been doing it.”

“He does—he do! He’s been feeding here.”

“Wake up, Bunter!”

Bunter did not wake up. It was not easy to wake Bunter when he was sleeping off the effects of a Gargantuan feed.

Blake glanced into the study cupboard, and frowned. He was a hospitable fellow, but there was a limit. Visitors were not supposed to clear out a fellow’s study cupboard uninvited.

“Well, my hat!” said Blake. “He’s bagged the lot! It will be tea in Hall for us, after all.”

“Fat pig!” grunted Herries.

“He is the giddy limit, and no mistake. Here, wake up, Bunter! Tea’s going on downstairs, and you can’t have had enough—you’ve only had enough for four. Wake up, fatty.”

Snore!

“Look here, this is too jolly thick!” growled Herries. “Politeness is all very well, but this is too thick. I’ve a jolly good mind

to kick that fat boulder out of the study. Wolfing the whole shoot ! ”

“ Well, he is a giddy porker, and no mistake ! ” said Dig. “ But we can’t make a fuss about the grub. ”

“ Like his cheek to butt in here and go to sleep. ”

Blake grinned.

“ It doesn’t seem easy to wake him, ” he said. “ Let him rip ! I’ve got a wheeze. ”

Blake took the fire-shovel, and scraped soot down from the chimney. Dig and Herries watched him, and grinned, too.

Bunter slept on, snoring hard. Only a cannon-shot near at hand, or a severe shaking, would have wakened him. But the juniors did not want to wake him now.

Jack Blake proceeded to daub soot over the countenance of the sleeping Owl of the Remove.

Bunter did not stir.

While more and more soot was daubed on, he snored away peacefully, his little round eyes glued shut behind his spectacles.

“ Oh, my hat ! ” murmured Dig. “ He looks a beauty ! ”

“ The sleeping beauty ! ” grinned Herries.

“ Ha, ha, ha ! ”

“ Shush ! ” whispered Blake. “ Don’t wake him up till I’ve finished. ”

But there was no danger of Billy Bunter waking up. He snored on peacefully while Blake rubbed on the soot.

In five minutes, Bunter had been transformed into a very good imitation of a Christy Minstrel. When there was not a spot on his fat face left unblackened, Blake stepped back to admire his handiwork.

“ How’s that, umpire ? ” he asked.

“ Ha, ha, ha ! ”

“ Now we’d better cut down to tea, ” said Blake cheerily. “ We’ll leave him to it. It will be quite a pleasant surprise for him when he wakes. ”

And the chuckling juniors left the study.

Bunter snored on, while the early dusk leepened, and the study was illumined only by the firelight.

Blake & Co. joined the merry party downstairs.

They “ tea’d ” in Hall, with Tom Merry

& Co. and the Greyfriars fellows. It was a cheery tea, but it had to be brief, as the visitors had their train to catch at Wayland. Tea over, Harry Wharton & Co. donned their coats to go in the charabanc which was waiting to take them to Wayland Junction. Then they remembered Bunter again.

“ Hallo, hallo, hallo ! Where’s Bunter ? ” exclaimed Bob Cherry. “ We can’t go without our prize porker ! ”

“ Bai Jove ! Buntah seems to be missin’ ! ” said Arthur Augustus De’Arcy. “ Pewwaps some of his fwiends heah have been entertainin’ him in a studay ! ”

“ Perhaps he’s taking a rest in our study, being such a pal of yours, Gussy, ” said Blake gravely.

“ I’ll wun up and look, ” said Arthur Augustus ; “ Buntah must not be left behind by his fwiends. ”

Bunter being left behind was too alarming a prospect. Almost any St. Jim’s fellow would have taken any amount of trouble to prevent William George Bunter from being left behind at St. Jim’s.

Arthur Augustus hurried up to Study No. 6, with as much haste as was consistent with the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

As it happened, Billy Bunter had awakened a few minutes before. Possibly his inner Bunter was beginning to feel the need of another meal. At all events, he had awakened, and was sitting up lazily in the arm-chair, in the glow of the firelight, yawning.

Arthur Augustus looked into the study.

“ Bai Jove, he can’t be here, as the light’s not on, ” murmured Arthur Augustus. “ I wondah where he is ? It would be too feahful for him to be left behind when those chaps go. I—— ”

Arthur Augustus broke off.

Bunter had heard his footsteps, and he rose from the arm-chair and blinked towards the doorway.

The swell of St. Jim’s stared at him in amazement and alarm.

In the firelight he saw a startling black face, and Bunter’s glasses, catching the light of the fire, gleamed from the black countenance with a startling and weird effect.

"Gweat Scott!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

He jumped back into the passage.

"What—what—who—which——!"

Bunter rolled towards the doorway. Arthur Augustus was a courageous youth, and he feared no foe, in shining armour or otherwise. But he was utterly startled by this awful apparition in his study. Looking there for a fat schoolboy, he had found a horrible-looking black man, and the shock was rather too much for him. He scudded away to the stairs. "Found him?" called out Tom Merry, from the staircase.

"Eh? No! Look out!" gasped D'Arcy.

"What on earth——!"

"There's somebody in my studay—a howwible negwo——"

"What?" yelled Tom.

"A feahful-lookin' negwo!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"A negro?" repeated Tom Merry blankly.

"Yaas, wathah—an awful-lookin' cweature. Bai Jove, there he comes!"

Bunter rolled out of Study No. 6.

Tom Merry stared at him and jumped.

"Who—what——!" he stuttered.

"I say, you fellows——"

Arthur Augustus jumped clear of the floor in his amazement.

"Buntah!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

Astonishing the Natives!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Bunter rolled along the passage towards the St. Jim's juniors.

He was quite unconscious of the change that had been made in his appearance. He had not the faintest idea that his fat face was as black as the ace of spades.

The amazed stares of the St. Jim's juniors astonished him.

"I say, you fellows, what's the matter?"

"Gweat Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Is—is—is that weally you, Buntah?"

"Eh? Of course it's me! What do you mean?"

"But—but what is the mattah with you?"

"Nothing—only I'm hungry."

"What have you been doing?" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Been up a chimney?"

"Eh? Of course not!" said Bunter, blinking at him—a black blink. "What are you driving at? I've had a snack in your study, D'Arcy, but I'm ready for tea. I understand that we're teasing here. What the thump are you fellows staring at?"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"It seems to have got dark," said Bunter. "I've had a little nap in your study, D'Arcy. I knew you wouldn't mind, old fellow."

"Oh, you've been asleep!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

The captain of the Shell understood now. It was clear that some humorous youth had dealt with Bunter while he was sleeping.

"Eh? Yes, I had a little nap. I'm ready for tea," said Bunter. "Look here, what's this game? What are you staring at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. If these are St. Jim's manners, I must say I don't think much of them!" said Bunter warmly.

"Weally, Buntah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Somebody's been jesting with you, I think, Bunter. You look a giddy picture."

"I don't know what you're driving at, Tom Merry, and don't want to, as far as that goes! I'm going down."

"Are you going down like that?" gasped Tom.

"Like what?" hooted Bunter.

"That! Come and have a wash first——"

"Well, of all the cheek!" exclaimed Bunter. "I don't need washing so much as you St. Jim's chaps do, and chance it!"

"I—I mean——"

"Oh, rats!"

Billy Bunter rolled past the two juniors and took his way down the stairs. He was greatly incensed by the hint that he needed washing. Often and often he received such hints from Remove fellows at Greyfriars; but really he had not expected it at St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove, Buntah!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Go and eat coke!"

Bunter rolled on.

On the stairs he passed Levison, Clive, and Cardew, of the Fourth Form, coming up. The three juniors jumped as they saw him.



All the footballers became serious as soon as they saw Mr. Quelch's grave expression. "Wharton! Do you mean to say that Bunter has deliberately remained behind at another school?" he demanded—"that he is not returning to Greyfriars to-night?" "I—I suppose so, sir," answered Wharton. Mr. Quelch stared at them in amazement, stuttering as though he found it difficult adequately to express his opinion of Bunter's action. (*See Chapter 9.*)

"What on earth's that?" exclaimed Levison.

"Look here, Levison——"

"Bunter!" yelled Clive.

"Oh, gad, Bunter!" ejaculated Cardew. "Behold, he is black but comely."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter gave the hilarious three a glare.

"You cheeky cads! What's this game?" he hooted. "My hat! This is St. Jim's manners, is it?"

"Do you know what you look like?" shrieked Levison.

"Yah!"

Bunter brushed past them and rolled on down the stairs, leaving Levison & Co. shrieking.

He reached the lower hall, where Harry Wharton & Co. were gathered, dressed for their journey home. There was a roar as he appeared.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Is that Bunter?"

"It's Bunter's circumference, but where did he get that face?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass, Bunter, what have you been doing?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"What do you mean, you fat duffer? Is it a lark?"

"The larkfulness is terrific."

"I don't know what you mean!" howled Bunter. "I know I want my tea. You fellows needn't wait for me, if you're going. I'm not going back with you, you know."

"You jolly well are!" said Harry. "Tea's over, and you'll have to wait till we get home. Get a wash first, and quick!"

"Oh, cheese it!" exclaimed Bunter. "I don't know what the joke is, but I can tell you I'm fed up with it. I'm not going without some tea; in fact, I'm not going at all. I——"

"Bless my soul! What is this?" Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, had come along to speak a word to the Greyfriars footballers ere they departed, and he started at the sight of Billy Bunter. "Who—who—who is this?"

"I'm Bunter, sir," said the Owl of the

Remove, blinking at the Housemaster. "You remember me, sir?"

"Upon my word! A Greyfriars boy!" said Mr. Railton. "How came you into that extraordinary state, Bunter? What has happened?"

"Eh? Nothing that I know of," said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is—is extraordinary!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "Is it possible, Bunter, that you are not aware that your face is black, that it is covered with soot——?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What!" gasped Bunter.

"I cannot understand this," said Mr. Railton, a little sternly. "If this is a jest, Bunter, I fail to understand it. How can you possibly have had your face blackened in that manner without knowing it?"

"Mum-my fuf-fuf-face——" stuttered Bunter.

"Buntah has been to sleep in my studay, sir," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, from the stairs. "I gweatly feah, sir, that some pwactical jokah has been playin' a twick on Buntah while he was asleep, sir."

"Upon my word!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"D'Arcy, kindly take Bunter to a bath-room at once!" said Mr. Railton, and he turned away with his face twitching.

"This way, Buntah, deah boy."

"But—but what——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter rubbed his face with his hand. His fingers came away black, and Bunter stared at them, as if he could not believe his spectacles. The expression on his sooty face made the juniors yell.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh! I—I say, you fellows, this is a rotten trick! I—I say, do I really need a wash?"

"You look like it!" roared Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"This way, Buntah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

And the Owl of the Remove was led away to a bath-room. There, he blinked at his reflection in a glass, and jumped.

"Oh, my hat! Is—is—is that me?" gasped Bunter.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy," chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Bettah get a wash, old scout! Heah's a towel, and I've turned on the hot watah! Go it."

Arthur Augustus retired, leaving Bunter to his ablutions. He joined the fellows downstairs with a smiling face. Bunter was very busy in the bath-room, with steaming water and soap; he had a great deal of washing to do to restore his normal complexion.

"It was weally too bad, you know," said Arthur Augustus. "I wondah who played that twick on Buntah?"

"I wonder!" murmured Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton glanced at his watch, after a considerable wait.

"We've none too much time," he said. "Bunter will have to buck up. If we lose our train we're done; there isn't another to-day."

"Bettah give Buntah a call!" said Arthur Augustus hastily.

He mounted the stairs again.

In a few minutes he came back, alone, with a rather blank expression on his noble face.

"Has Buntah come down?" he asked.

"No."

"I can't find him."

"Can't find him?" exclaimed Wharton.

"He seems to have disappeared."

"Oh, my hat!"

"It's a dodge!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "The fat idiot has some wheeze of getting left behind, because there's a licking waiting for him at Greyfriars. For goodness' sake root him out, you chaps; we can't lose our train."

There was a rush of Tom Merry & Co. to look for Bunter. Harry Wharton & Co. did not want to leave him behind; and most assuredly Tom Merry & Co. did not want him to be left.

But they came back without Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove was not to be found.

"What on earth's to be done?" exclaimed Harry Wharton blankly. "We can't lose our train—it's the only one. What the dickens——"

"You'd better start," said Tom Merry. "Goodness knows what's to be done with

Bunter. But it looks as if he's keeping back on purpose. I—I—I suppose we can put him up for the night, and bundle him off in the morning."

"The duffer!"

"The fat chump!"

Wharton, with a worried brow, consulted his watch. There was time left to catch the express at Wayland, and that was all. Evidently the footballers could wait no longer for Billy Bunter, unless the whole party was to be landed at St. Jim's for the night; and that, of course, was not to be thought of. In a wrathful mood, Harry Wharton & Co. went out to the charabanc, and it rolled away with them to the railway station at Wayland—minus Bunter!

THE NINTH CHAPTER

Baffled!

"UNPRECEDENTED!"

"Unpardonable!"

"Extraordinary!" said the Head.

"Amazing!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Scarcely credible, in fact."

"Really, quite incredible!"

It was a sort of chorus, strophe, and antistrophe.

The Head and the Remove master were, of course, discussing Bunter.

William George Bunter, the least important fellow at Greyfriars in the estimation of everyone but W. G. Bunter himself, had drawn an unusual amount of attention that afternoon.

Flooring a Form-master was not an everyday occurrence at Greyfriars.

It was, in fact, as the Headmaster observed, unprecedented. It was, as the Remove master said, unpardonable. Likewise, it was extraordinary and amazing. All these epithets were well deserved.

Obviously, there was only one thing to meet the case. That was the Head's birch.

But there was a difficulty in the way.

The Head was there, and the birch was there! But William George Bunter was not there!

It was said of old that it takes two persons to make a bargain. A flogging could not take place without a floggee, so to speak, as well as a flogger.

BUNTER THE BOXER!



Billy Buater is a terror when he's roused—if his opponent is small enough!

The performance was unavoidably postponed, owing to the absence of the principal performer.

Flooring a Form-master was bad enough—it was unprecedented and unpardonable and several other things. But Bunter had added to this offence by his incredible audacity in absenting himself and avoiding the dire but deserved punishment.

He had cleared out—where, was a mystery at first. Mr. Quelch, quite eager to see Bunter flogged, had sought him far and wide, and inquired for him up and down Greyfriars. He learned, at last, that Bunter had gone after the football party; he learned at the station that Bunter had taken the train with Harry Wharton & Co.

That was the climax.

There was no harm in a fellow going over to another school with a football team on a half-holiday; but it was necessary to obtain leave to go so far out of customary bounds. Bunter had not stopped to obtain leave. In the circumstances, leave would scarcely have been granted. But it added to his offences, that he had ventured to go over to St. Jim's without leave—at the very time that his Form-master was, in a manner of speaking, raging for gore.

Mr. Quelch had to bottle up his wrath, and consume his own smoke. It was not a pleasant process. His wrath did not diminish with the passage of time: rather, it improved in potency, like wine, with keeping. No punishment could be administered until the footballers came back from St. Jim's, and brought William George Bunter home with them. The punishment was not likely to be lightened on that account.

The sun went down upon the wrath of Mr. Quelch.

It was now time for the footballers to return. Mr. Quelch knew what time the express stopped at Lantham, and when the local train would get in at Friardale. He was in the Head's study now, and on the Head's table lay the birch—ready for service. Bunter was to have no respite. As soon as he appeared, Gosling, the porter, had orders to bring him directly to the Head. After which, Bunter was to suffer for his sins.

A sound of footsteps, and a buzz of voices in the quadrangle, warned the two masters that the Remove footballers were home again.

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet

“Now——!” he murmured.

He expected to hear the tap of Gosling's horny hand on the door. He expected to see the door open, and to see Gosling march Bunter into the room. But it did not happen.

There was no tap at the door: the door did not open. Mr. Quelch frowned portentously.

“Is it possible that Gosling has forgotten his orders?” murmured Dr. Locke.

“It is possible. I will see.”

Mr. Quelch quitted the study.

In the hall of the House there was a cheery crowd of juniors, just come in. Wingate of the Sixth had come out of his study to ask how the match had gone. Mr. Quelch was not much interested in that matter. His gleaming eye roved over the crowd in search of Bunter.

“How did it go, Wharton?” asked the Greyfriars' captain.

“We beat them,” said Harry cheerily.

“Two goals to one, Wingate.”

“Good man.”

“Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Quelchy!” murmured Bob Cherry.

“Mind your eye—he looks waxy!” muttered Vernon-Smith. “This is where we are very good and respectful, and an example to all Greyfriars.”

“The waxfulness is terrific.”

All the footballers became very serious at once. The look on Mr. Quelch's speaking countenance showed that matters were grave. They had almost forgotten the existence of Billy Bunter; they were reminded of it now.

“Wharton!”

“Yes, sir.”

“Where is Bunter?”

“B-B-Bunter, sir?” stammered the captain of the Remove.

“Yes. I understand that he went over to St. Jim's with you, without obtaining leave,” said the Remove master.

“He went with us, sir,” said Harry.

“You should not have allowed him to do so, Wharton, as head boy of the Remove, when you must have been aware that he had no leave.”

"Oh, sir!"

Wharton wondered how he was to have prevented Bunter, or anybody else, from making a railway journey on a half-holiday if he liked. But he did not say so. Mr. Quelch, obviously, was not to be argued with.

"Where is he now, Wharton? I presume that he has returned with you."

"N-n-no, sir."

"What!"

"He—he hasn't come back with us, sir."

"Do you mean that he is travelling by himself?"

"I—I don't quite know what he's doing, sir. But he did not leave St. Jim's with us," said Harry.

"You left him behind?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"We had to catch our train, sir," said Wharton. "As Bunter was not on the spot when we had to start, we had no choice."

"You left him behind?" repeated the Remove master.

"We had to, sir."

"Cannot you answer yes or no, Wharton?" Mr. Quelch was not in a mood of sweet reasonableness. "Did you leave him behind, or did you not leave him behind?"

"Yes, sir."

"You should not have done so, Wharton."

"How could I help it, sir?" asked Harry. "If we'd stayed longer for him, we should have lost our train."

"He wasn't on the spot, sir," said Bob Cherry. "We——"

"You need not speak, Cherry!"

"Oh! Yes, sir."

"Wharton, you are head boy of the Remove and have responsibility in the matter. You should not have allowed Bunter to accompany you on the journey, and you should have taken care that he returned with you. You have been very remiss, Wharton."

The captain of the Remove did not answer. He was well aware that Mr. Quelch was "blowing-off steam," so to speak: and that middle-aged gentlemen had to be allowed to blow off steam when so disposed.

"Do you mean to say that Bunter deliberately remained behind at another school?" asked Mr. Quelch, with gleaming eyes.

"No, sir; I only know that he did not turn up in time for the train, and we couldn't wait for him. I can't say any more than that."

"Is he following by a later train?"

"I—I think there isn't a later train, sir."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

Bunter's conduct, hitherto, had been unprecedented and unpardonable and incredible. How to characterise it now was beyond Mr. Quelch's vocabulary. The superlatives in the English language were not equal to it.

"Then—then—then," the Remove master almost gasped, "then Bunter is not returning to Greyfriars to-night at all."

"I don't see how he can, sir."

"He is remaining away from school at night, without leave!"

"I—I suppose so, sir."

"Upon my word!" stammered Mr. Quelch.

He stared at Wharton in silence. Perhaps he was trying to think of a word adequately applicable to Bunter's proceedings. If so, the resources of the language failed him.

There was a painful silence. Mr. Quelch broke it at last.

"Very well! Very well, indeed! No doubt you are aware, Wharton, that Bunter was to be flogged for no less an offence than assaulting his Form-master."

"Bunter told us something about it, sir," said Harry. "I understand that it was an accident——"

"Then your understanding is at fault, Wharton, as it was nothing of the kind," snapped Mr. Quelch.

"But, sir——"

"That will do!"

"Oh, very well, sir."

"Tom Merry told us that he would put Bunter up for the night, and bundle him off in the morning, sir," ventured Frank Nugent.

"He will, I presume, return in the morning," said Mr. Quelch. "Wharton, I am very displeased with you. You have been very remiss. You have not acted as I have a right to expect of my head boy. You need not speak. I am extremely displeased with you."

And Mr. Quelch whisked away, to return to the Head's study and acquaint Dr. Locke

with this amazing and unexpected development.

The footballers looked at one another.

"The fat's in the fire now!" grinned the Boulder. "I pity Bunter when he does come back."

"Yes, rather."

"This is rather thick," said Wharton.

"What the thump could I have done?"

"Nothing, old chap."

"Quelchy seems to think——"

"The dear old scout is waxy," said Johnny Bull. "Let him blow off steam, if it's any comfort to him. He will be all right again when he can take it out of Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch, in the Head's study, was deep in discussion with Dr. Locke—in deep wrath.

There was discussion of Bunter's amazing proceedings in most other studies at Greyfriars that evening. Even the great men of the Sixth talked about it. In the Fifth-form passage, Coker of the Fifth asked what Greyfriars was coming to; and nobody in the Fifth could tell him.

In the Remove dormitory, when the Lower Fourth went up to bed, there was a vacant place. One bed remained unoccupied; and, for once, the deep and resonant snore of William George Bunter did not echo and re-echo through the dormitory. Bob Cherry remarked that somebody else was getting the benefit of Bunter's snore; and Bob

charitably hoped that somebody else was enjoying it.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

Gussy's Guest!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Bunter!"

In Study No. 6, at St. Jim's, four juniors had just finished prep. when the door opened, and a fat face and a pair of large spectacles glimmered in.

Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, stared at Billy Bunter.

That the fat junior of Greyfriars was somewhere in the School House of St. Jim's they knew, as he had not gone off with Harry Wharton & Co. They had wondered when and where he would turn up. Now they knew.

Here he was, fat and fatuous as ever, apparently in a cheery mood. He nodded and grinned to the juniors in Study No. 6.

"They're gone, of course?" he asked, as he rolled in.

"If you mean the Greyfriars chaps, they've gone long ago," answered Blake, staring at the fat junior. "They're home before now."

"Good!"

"Weally, Buntah——"

"It's all right," said Bunter, "I thought I'd keep out of sight for a bit. Nothing like making sure, what?"

"Well," said Herries, with a deep breath, "you take the bun, and no mistake! What



"I could lend you ten shillings, Buntah, if that's any use," said D'Arcy. Bunter held out his hand. "Thanks, old chap, it's not much—but, of course, you St. Jim's fellows are not wealthy. I forgot that!" (See Chapter 10.)

do you think you are going to do here, Bunter ? ”

Bunter blinked round the study.

“ Well, I could do with some supper,” he answered. “ I’m jolly hungry. Are you having any supper in this study ? ”

“ Supper’s off,” answered Blake. “ Somebody came in here and scoffed all there was in the cupboard.”

“ Oh, really, Blake——”

“ You’re welcome, as far as that goes,” said Blake. “ But there’s nothing left, see ? But you can get bread and cheese in Hall.”

Bunter sniffed.

“ That isn’t the kind of hospitality we hand out at Greyfriars,” he said. “ We treat our guests to something better than that.”

“ Perhaps your guests wait to be asked ? ” suggested Digby.

Bunter decided not to hear that remark.

“ Have you told your Housemaster I’m here, Gussy ? ” he asked.

“ I have not mentioned the mattah to Mr. Wailton yet, Buntah.”

“ Well, better let him know in time, so that a bed can be fixed up for me, you know,” said Bunter. “ I don’t mind having a bed in your dormitory with you chaps. I’m not particular.”

“ Oh ! ”

“ I suppose you don’t mind if I take the arm-chair ? ” asked Bunter. “ I’m rather tired.”

Arthur Augustus D’Arcy was adorning the study arm-chair with his elegant person. He rose without a word, and took another chair.

Bunter settled down comfortably.

“ That’s better ! Now, what about supper ? I can’t very well have a supper of bread and cheese, after what I’m accustomed to. I don’t want to put you fellows to a lot of trouble, of course.”

“ That’s all right: you won’t ! ” said Blake grimly.

“ Not at all ! ” said Herries.

“ Not in the very least ! ” said Digby.

Arthur Augustus coughed.

“ As a mattah of fact, Buntah is a guest, in a way,” he said. “ We are bound to look

after him a little. Unfortunately, the tuckshop is closed at this houah, Buntah, and we have nothing in the studay, owin’ to—ahem ! But pewwaps I can find somethin’ in anotheah studay.”

“ Hardly fair to plant the fat boulder on another study,” said Herries.

“ Weally, Hewwies——”

“ I want to have a chat with you, Gussy, about the immediate future,” said Bunter. “ Perhaps these fellows wouldn’t mind leaving us alone for a bit.”

“ You’d like us to clear out of our own study ? ” said Blake.

“ That’s it.”

“ Well, you can like ! ” said Blake curtly.

“ Pway go on, Buntah ; you needn’t mind my friends bein’ present,” said Arthur Augustus gently.

Bunter blinked at him rather doubtfully. He was not so sure about that. His opinion of Arthur Augustus was, that that noble youth was “ soft ” ; but he did not suspect Blake & Co. of being soft. He would have preferred to deal with Arthur Augustus “ on his own.” Probably Blake & Co. suspected as much, for they obviously did not intend to leave the study.

“ Well, about putting up here,” said Bunter, at last. “ I’m thinking of staying a few days, while I think things out. You see, I can’t go back to Greyfriars till the question of the flogging is settled. I’m not going to be flogged.”

“ But——”

“ After a few days I fancy that Quelchly will see reason. It will dawn on him that he’s running the risk of losing me entirely,” explained Bunter.

“ Oh, my hat ! ”

“ So I shall have to stick it out somewhere for a few days at least. No good going home—my pater would send me back to Greyfriars.”

“ I should jolly well think he would ! ”

“ So that’s no good. In this emergency,” said Bunter, “ I thought of my old pal Gussy ! I knew Gussy would stand by me.”

“ Weally, Buntah ! ” murmured Arthur Augustus feebly.

“ You frabjous ass ! ” said Blake, in measured tones.

“Eh?”

“Frabjous ass! You frabjous ass, do you think you can put up at a school you don’t belong to? You’ll have to have a bed for the night, unless Railton puts you into the wood-shed; I jolly well would! But you’ll be bundled off first thing in the morning, back to your own school.”

“You see, Buntah, deah boy——” murmured Arthur Augustus.

“Is that what you call hospitality?” sneered Bunter.

“You see, we’re not allowed to entahtain visitahs in term-time, deah boy. It’s weally out of the question.”

“Special circumstance, and all that,” said Bunter. “I’ll go with you to see your Housemaster, and you rely on me to stuff him all right. I’m an old hand at it.”

“I dare say you are, Buntah, but I should certainly not be a party to stuffin’ my Housemastah,” said D’Arcy sternly. “If you tell Mr. Wailton anythin’ in my pwesence, Buntah, you must tell him the twuth.”

“Oh, don’t be a silly fathead!”

“Wh-a-t?”

“Silly fathead!”

“Bai Jove!”

“I expected something better than this,” said Bunter. “Look here, D’Arcy, I’m relying on you. I jolly well wish now that I’d gone to Rookwood instead—Jimmy Silver would have stood by me like a brick. Still, as the matter stands, I’m here, and it’s up to you.”

“Oh, deah!”

“Put it to your Housemaster how you like, if you’re so jolly particular. Tell him I’m too ill to travel for a few days; that will do.”

“Weally, Buntah——”

“I leave it to you, Gussy; I know you won’t let me down,” said Bunter cheerily. “Now about supper. That’s important.”

Blake & Co. looked grim. They did not attach the slightest importance to that important matter, and their looks said as much. But the long-suffering Arthur Augustus played up.

“Pway come with me, Buntah! I believe there is somethin’ goin’ on in Tom Mewwy’s study, and I will do my best for you.”

“Good man.”

Bunter rose from his chair with alacrity. He rolled out of No. 6 after Arthur Augustus D’Arcy, leaving Blake & Co. staring. Jack Blake drew a deep breath.

“Well!” he said.

“Well!” said Dig.

“Well!” said Herries.

Really, it was all they could say. The fat and fatuous Owl of Greyfriars was too much for them.

Arthur Augustus piloted the fat junior along to the Shell passage. At the corner Bunter stopped him.

“Hold on a minute, Gussy.”

“Yaas, deah boy.”

“It’s happened very unfortunately that I left my money behind; I left Greyfriars in rather a hurry, you know,” said Bunter. “If you could lend me a fiver for a few days——”

“Bai Jove!”

“A couple of pounds would do,” said Bunter, who was an adept in reading signs in a countenance—especially such an expressive and guileless countenance as Arthur Augustus D’Arcy’s.

Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

“I could lend you ten shillings, Buntah, if that is any use.”

“Thanks, old chap! It’s not much; but, of course, you St. Jim’s fellows are not wealthy. I forgot that.”

Breathing harder than ever, the swell of St. Jim’s handed over a ten-shilling note. Then, with feelings really too deep for words, he led Bunter on to Tom Merry’s study in the Shell.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

A Spread in Tom Merry’s Study.

“Now, who’s it to be?” said Tom Merry. No. 10 Study in the Shell presented rather a festive appearance.

There had been a remittance that day, and it did not matter to which member of the study the renittance came. Like the Early Christians, the Terrible Three of St. Jim’s had their cash largely in common. Funds for one were funds for all; and there was a handsome supper that evening in No. 10, and now the three chums were debating the



"Not a bad spread, you fellows!" said Bunter, gazing round at the Terrible Three. "Of course, it's not anything like the feeds I get in my study at Greyfriars! But, dash it all, I'm not the sort to complain of fellows who're doing their best!" (See Chapter 11.)

question of guests. With overflowing good things for supper, naturally they did not want to enjoy them all by themselves; it was a time for their friends to rally round.

"Let's have Study No. 6," said Monty Lowther. "They had all their tuck scoffed this afternoon by that fat animal from Greyfriars, I hear."

"Good! That's four. And Talbot," said Tom.

"That's five! What about Study No. 9?" asked Manners. "Levison, Clive, and Cardew. It will be rather a crowd, but we've got lots."

"Good egg! The more the merrier."

Tap!

"Come in!" sang out Tom Merry, cheerily.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy opened the door, and his eyeglass gleamed into the study. By it gleamed the big spectacles of William George Bunter of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Bunter!" exclaimed the chums of the Shell, together.

The Owl of Greyfriars nodded and grinned.

"Little me!" said he, brightly.

"Well, my hat! You're still here, then?" said Lowther.

"Certainly, old chap. I'm staying for a few days as the guest of my old pal D'Arcy," explained Bunter.

"Great pip! Railton will have something to say about that!" exclaimed Manners.

"Gussy's going to fix it with him."

"I—I—I will twy, Buntah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"That's all right—I rely on you, old fellow," said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, that looks a decent spread you've got there. Not quite up to our spreads at Greyfriars, perhaps; but any port in a storm, what?"

"Oh, deah! You fellahs, Buntah is landed heah, and he wants some suppah!" said Arthur Augustus, dismally. "I—I was wonderin' whethah you fellows would play up, as I knew you had somethin' goin'."

"Of course they will," said Bunter. "We've been friends a long time, you fellows, what?"

"Have we?" said Manners. "First I've heard of it!"

"Oh, really, you know——"

"Glad you've told us, Bunter," said Monty

Lowther, politely. "It's never too late to learn."

"Look here——"

"Weally, you fellahs!" murmured Arthur Augustus, in distress. "Buntah is a—a sort of guest, you know——"

"A guest of sorts!" said Lowther.

"Oh, roll him in!" said Tom Merry, resignedly. "I suppose it's up to us. We were going to ask a little party to supper."

"I don't mind a party," said Bunter. "In fact, I should like to meet my old friends round your table, Tom Merry. Only make sure there's enough to go round, before you ask a crowd. That's important."

"We shan't ask anybody else, if you're supping here," said Tom. "Unless you'd care to stay, Gussy?"

"Thank you vewy much, Tom Mewwy; but if you can weally stand Buntah—I—I mean, if you will give Buntah a feed, I will wetire."

"Leave him to us."

"Thank you vewy much, deah boy. Aftah all, we are bound to keep up our weputation for hospitality, even in these vewy peculiah circumstances. I twust you will excuse me for landin' Buntah on you?"

"Oh, don't mench, old chap."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy retired, greatly relieved at having got clear of his remarkable guest.

Bunter sat down at the table.

The idea of asking a party to supper in No. 10 was quite given up. Ample as the supplies were, they were none too ample for four, when one of the four was William George Bunter.

"Well, this is a go!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Oh, play up!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

The Terrible Three felt that it was up to them. Hospitality to the stranger within the gates came before all other considerations. They took the situation good-humouredly and cheerfully; not that Bunter cared very much how they took it. He was already deep in tuck, and going deeper. For a quarter of an hour the chums of the Shell were not troubled with any conversation from Billy Bunter. His jaws were too busily occupied in another way.

But after that space of time even Bunter slacked down a little, and the delights of his conversation were added to the pleasure of his company.

"Not a bad spread, you fellows," he said.

"Glad you like it," said Tom Merry politely.

"Of course, it's not like the spreads I get in my study at Greyfriars. But, dash it all, I'm not the fellow to complain of fellows who are doing their best," said Bunter.

"Oh!"

"Pass the cake, old chap."

Tom Merry passed the cake.

It was quite a large cake, but it vanished at a wonderful speed. Bunter blinked round the table.

"Pass the dough-nuts! Thanks. I'll take the lot if you fellows don't want any?"

"Oh!"

"You chaps give me a look in, if you're ever over Greyfriars way," said Bunter, in the intervals of bolting dough-nuts at record speed. "I'll do the same for you—something a bit more handsome, in fact."

"Oh!"

"I hope we shall see a bit of one another, while I'm staying here," went on the Owl of the Remove. "If you've got a football match on for Saturday, I'll play for you, if you like. After what I've seen to-day, I imagine you'd be glad to get one really good man in your team, what?"

"Oh!"

"I shall be jolly glad to win a football match for you, while I'm here," went on Bunter, with his mouth full. "Sort of pay for my keep, what? He, he, he! Don't say a word—I'll do it!"

"So you're not going back to Greyfriars?" asked Manners, staring at the fat junior across the table.

"No! Not till it's settled about the flogging. If the Head wants me back, he's got to be jolly civil about it, I can tell him. Of course, he knows as well as I do that Greyfriars can't afford to lose a fellow like me."

"Oh!"

"Quelch will have to mind his eye, too," said Bunter, brightly. "I've stood too much cheek from Quelch! I don't believe in giving these dashed schoolmasters their head,

you know. I daresay he'll benefit by what he got to-day. 'Tain't every chap who's got the nerve to knock down his Form-master."

"What?"

"You knocked down your Form-master?" asked Manners.

Bunter nodded.

"Yes, he was cheeky, and I floored him. I'm about the only chap at Greyfriars that would have had the nerve to do it. I just let him have it, you know, and he went down like a skittle."

"Oh, my hat!"

Bunter blinked round the table.

It was bare.

The Terrible Three had not done much in the way of supper. But Billy Bunter was a host in himself in that line.

Where he had put it all was a mystery to the Shell fellows. But he had stacked it away somewhere inside his wide circumference.

"Anything more in the cupboard?" asked Bunter.

"Oh, crumbs! No!"

"My hat! Is that the lot?"

"That's the lot!" said Tom Merry.

"That's what you St. Jim's fellows call a study spread?" asked Bunter derisively.

Tom Merry & Co. did not answer that question. Really, they did not quite know how to deal with this remarkable guest.

Tap!

"Come in!" called out Tom.

The juniors jumped up as the study door opened. It was Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, who stood in the doorway. Bunter blinked round without rising—he was too deeply laden to move with ease. The guest in No. 10 was, in fact, loaded far beyond the Plimsoll line.

The School Housemaster glanced in.

"I think Bunter is here, is he not?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

"Bunter, I have just heard that you have been left behind here," said Mr. Railton. "The Headmaster desires to see you. Kindly come with me at once."

"Oh, very well, sir!" said Bunter.

And he detached himself, with an effort, from his chair, and followed the Housemaster.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther looked at one another when he was gone.

"It beats me, and I have to give it up," said Lowther. "Why don't they lynch him at Greyfriars? What?"

Tom Merry and Manners shook their heads. They gave it up, too.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

Not to be Stuffed.

DR. HOLMES, the Headmaster of St. Jim's, peered at Billy Bunter over his glasses. The Owl of Greyfriars rolled into the Headmaster's study quite confidently. He had no doubt of his ability to "stuff" the Head of St. Jim's. There was quite a peculiar expression on Mr. Railton's face; but Bunter did not observe it.

"Ah! This is—er—Bunter?" said Dr. Holmes.

"This is Bunter, sir," said the Housemaster.

"It seems that you have been left behind here, Bunter, by the Greyfriars boys who came here to-day to play a football match," said Dr. Holmes. "I have just heard——"

"The fact is, sir, I've stayed on," said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"I really came over, sir, to see my old friend, D'Arcy of the Fourth," said Bunter.

Dr. Holmes peered at him attentively.

"Dear me! I do not quite see how that can be, Bunter. Surely Greyfriars boys are not allowed to pay visits so far out of school bounds."

"Oh, yes, sir, with special leave!" said Bunter.

"Do you mean that you had special leave from your Headmaster?"

"Exactly, sir!"

"Bless my soul!"

Dr. Holmes seemed astonished, and Mr. Railton coughed expressively. Bunter could see no cause for surprise.

It was unusual, no doubt, but it was not unprecedented for a fellow to get an extended exeat. Bunter, for instance, might have had leave to go home for a few days. Why not leave to visit a friend? If his Headmaster chose to give him leave, it need not have astonished another Headmaster.

True, Dr. Locke had not given him leave. But that was a detail for Bunter to settle with his fat conscience.

Bunter, in fact, was scarcely aware that he was telling falsehoods. Leave from his Headmaster was the only reasonable yarn he could spin; and Bunter had decided to spin it. Whether it was true or not was a secondary consideration—with Bunter. He was accustomed to drawing upon his imagination whenever required; but his podgy intellect was quite unaccustomed to sifting truth from falsehood.

"The fact is, sir, D'Arcy wants me to stay with him a few days, and is going to ask permission," said Bunter. "As I have a few days' holiday from my school, sir, he thought it a good idea."

"Bless my soul!"

"I hope there is no objection, sir," said Bunter.

"I am afraid, Bunter, that there would be considerable objection to so very unusual a proceeding," said Dr. Holmes. "But without your Headmaster's leave it would, in any case, be impossible."

"But, sir——"

"If you have intentionally remained behind, Bunter, when your friends left, I am afraid that you have done it with the object of playing the truant from your own school."

"Oh, no, sir! I——"

"Kindly speak the truth, Bunter," said Dr. Holmes, with some asperity.

Bunter blinked at him.

"I always do, sir. If you should ask Mr. Quelch, my Form-master at Greyfriars, sir, he would tell you that I am the soul of honour, and have never been guilty of untruthfulness. Mr. Quelch thinks very highly of me, sir."

"Indeed!"

"Oh, yes, sir. I'm his favourite pupil, really," said Bunter. "Head of the class, and an example to my Form, sir, really. It's because I'm so much ahead of all the other fellows in Form work that my Headmaster thinks I may have a few days' holiday, sir."

"Bunter!"

"That's how it stands, sir. I don't need the cramming the other fellows do. As it is, I shall leave them all behind at the exams. I hope to be able to give my friend D'Arcy some



“Oh, yes, sir. I’m Mr. Quelch’s favourite pupil,” said Bunter to Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim’s. “Head of the class and an example to my Form. It’s because I’m so much ahead of all the other fellows in my Form work that my Headmaster thinks I may have a few days’ holiday, sir.” (See Chapter 12.)

Greyfriars Champions



BILLY BUNTER

(Champion Feeder)

Of all the folks who feast and feed
And love the "flesh-pots" dearly,
The portly Bunter takes the lead:
The champion feeder, clearly!
His appetite is keen and good,
His study-mates inform us;
In fact, we've always understood
That it is quite enormous!

He often lacks the wherewithal
To satisfy his cravings;
He scans the post rack in the hall
With ragings and with ravings.
No postal-order ever comes
From Auntie Maud or Mabel;
And Bunter has to seek the crumbs
Shed from the rich man's table!

But if, by some amazing luck,
He finds himself with money,
He revels in a realm of tuck—
A land of milk and honey!
"In life, there's nothing half so fine,"
Said Billy once to Sammy,
"As Mrs. Mibble's tarts divine,
And doughnuts, sweet and jammy!"

"Eat not to live, but live to eat,"
Is Bunter's favourite maxim;
Whether it's muffins, rolls or meat,
No food can overtax him!
Perched high upon the tuckshop stool
We see his ample person;
The greatest gorgier in the school,
Bard ever vented verse on!

coaching while I'm here, sir—he's rather backward, I think. There are very few subjects that I haven't got at my finger-tips."

"If you have leave from your school, Bunter, there seems to exist some very strange misapprehension. Your Form-master, Mr. Quelch, cannot be aware of it."

"Oh, yes, sir! Mr. Quelch congratulated me on getting leave, and told me it was because I was a shining example to my Form, sir."

"Mr. Quelch did?" exclaimed Dr. Holmes, while the Housemaster stared at Bunter as if the fat junior fascinated him.

"Certainly, sir," said the Owl of Greyfriars cheerily. "He patted me on my head when I left, sir, and said, 'Bless you, Bunter! You are a comfort to me.'"

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"If this is true, Bunter, I am glad to hear that you stand so high in your Form-master's estimation," said Dr. Holmes drily. "But it does not agree with what Mr. Quelch has said to me."

"What?" stuttered Bunter.

He blinked at the Head in amazement.

As St. Jim's was in Sussex, and Greyfriars in Kent, he could not imagine how Mr. Quelch had said anything to Dr. Holmes. And then he noticed the telephone at the St. Jim's headmaster's elbow, and comprehended.

"I have received a telephone message from Greyfriars," said Dr. Holmes grimly. "Your Form-master, Mr. Quelch, has informed me that you left your school without permission this afternoon."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"That you are sentenced to a severe flogging for the extremely serious offence of raising your hand against your Form-master," went on Dr. Holmes, with great sternness, "and that you have left your school apparently to escape your punishment for a time."

"Oh, dear!"

"He states that you remained behind here, when your friends left, probably intentionally," said Dr. Holmes.

"Oh, no, sir! It was quite unintentional."

"What! You have just told me that you designed to stay here for a few days," exclaimed Dr. Holmes.

"Oh, yes! Yes, sir! That—that's what I—I meant to say."

"Bless my soul! You seem to be a very foolish and untruthful boy, Bunter."

"I, sir!" exclaimed Bunter.

"Yes, you, Bunter! I have seldom encountered such reckless untruthfulness," said Dr. Holmes sternly. "Mr. Quelch has requested me to send you to the station in the morning, in charge of a prefect, to put you in the express for Lantham. That I shall do."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bunter, in dismay.

"Mr. Railton, doubtless you will see that this boy is accommodated with a bed in the Fourth-form dormitory for to-night."

"I will speak to the house-dame, sir."

"Very good. You may go, Bunter. You may breakfast in Hall to-morrow morning, and you will be taken to the station at half-past eight."

"Oh, sir! I—I—I—the fact is, sir——"

"That is enough, Bunter."

"If you'll let me explain, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"There is nothing to explain. If you were a boy belonging to this school, I should cane you for speaking to me untruthfully. As it is, you may go."

"But, sir, about old Quelchy——"

"About whom?" ejaculated Dr. Holmes.

"I—I mean Mr. Quelch, sir," stammered Bunter. "You—you mustn't take any notice of what he says, sir. It's all gammon, sir."

"What?"

"The fact is, sir, that old Quelchy—I mean Mr. Quelch—is—is rather liable to take a little too much, sir."

"Wha-a-at?"

"I hate to mention such a thing, sir, about a Greyfriars master, but the truth is, sir, he drinks," said Bunter.

"Good heavens!"

"That accounts for it all, sir," rattled on Bunter happily. "I've no doubt he was a little squiffy when he telephoned to you, sir——"

"Squiffy?" gasped Dr. Holmes. This was a new word to the headmaster of St. Jim's.

"That's it, sir—tipsy, you know," said Bunter. "When he's like that, Quelchy

is liable to say anything, sir. That's how it is."

"Is this boy in his right senses?" asked Dr. Holmes, addressing space. "How dare you make such a scandalous accusation against a gentleman in Mr. Quelch's position, Bunter? How dare you, I say?"

"I—I mean——"

"You are a young rascal, sir!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes.

"I didn't mean——"

"Silence!"

"The—the fact is, sir, I—I meant——" gasped Bunter, in alarm, "I—I—I meant that Quelchy doesn't drink, sir! He's a strict teetotaller—I mean teetotaller, sir! That's what I really meant to say? But the fact is, sir—the actual fact is, sir—that Quelchy wanders in his mind a little—not always, you know, sir—but occasionally—and that's how he came to telephone to you what he did, sir. I—I hope you can take my word, sir."

"Take your word!" stuttered Dr. Holmes.

"Yes, sir! It's rather ungentlemanly to doubt a fellow's word, isn't it, sir?"

Dr. Holmes did not answer that question. He looked at Mr. Railton, who was still gazing at Bunter in a fascinated sort of way.

"Mr. Railton! Kindly remove this boy."

"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Railton's heavy hand dropped on Bunter's collar.

"I—I say, sir——"

"Come!"

The fat junior was propelled towards the door. As he swung into the passage, he blinked round at Dr. Holmes.

"I—I say, sir, I—I suppose it's all right about my staying here a few days with my friend D'Arcy, isn't it?"

"No!" thundered Dr. Holmes, rising to his feet in stately wrath. "No, Bunter, it is not! If D'Arcy really is a friend of yours, which I doubt, I shall speak to him on the subject! I would not allow you to remain even one night under this roof, were it not too late, sir, to cast you forth!"

"Oh, lor'!" gasped Bunter.

"Take him away, Mr. Railton."

The strong hand on Bunter's collar propelled him along the corridor. William George

A TRAGIC EPISODE OF CHARLES II's REIGN.

THE night of February 1st, 1665, was a memorable one in the history of Greyfriars School.

All day a terrible storm had raged, which increased towards nightfall to hurricane force. About eight o'clock in the evening two Greyfriars boys, Redmayne and Swaine, both of the Sixth Form, were lying on the top of the cliff overlooking Pegg Bay, watching the roaring sea, when they suddenly made out the dark mass of a large ship quite close in to the shore. As they sprang to their feet, the ship struck upon the dreaded Shoulder with a crash that sounded above the roar of the storm.

Redmayne, who was at that time the captain of Greyfriars, acted with commendable promptness. Running to the nearest farmhouse, not a quarter of a mile away, he seized a horse from the stables and galloped off full speed to Greyfriars. In an incredibly short time Redmayne reappeared, still on his horse, at the head of the whole school, the boys having raced across country in the darkness, taking hedges and ditches in their stride.

By the time the school reached the shore the clouds had parted and a bright moon made the scene as light as day. The great ship, fast on the Shoulder, was recognised by the fishermen as the "Royal Charles," one of the finest vessels of her day. She was breaking up rapidly, and it was impossible to launch a boat in the mountainous seas.

Many of her crew jumped overboard, and attempted to struggle to the shore. Again and again the Greyfriars boys formed human chains and dashed into the surf in the endeavour to rescue the unfortunate mariners struggling in the water.

In all seventeen people were rescued out of a total of 105 souls on board. Shortly after midnight the "Royal Charles" broke up and sank, and all hope of further rescue work had to be abandoned. A full account of this tragic episode, written soon after the event, is still preserved in the Library at Greyfriars.

H.A.

Continued from page 120).

Bunter blinked up at the St. Jim's House-master.

"I—I say, sir, the Head seems to be in rather a wax," he gasped. "I—I hope I didn't say anything to offend him, sir."

"Bless my soul!" was all Mr. Railton could say.

"Perhaps, sir, if you would put in a word for me, he would let me stay a few days, sir."

"I should certainly not dream of putting in a word for you, as you express it, Bunter."

"It will be a great disappointment for D'Arcy, sir."

"I hardly think so, Bunter; but if it should prove so, D'Arcy must bear that disappointment."

"But, sir——"

"Kindly say no more, Bunter."

"Oh, lor'!"

Bunter said no more. He had to suppress his indignation—with a discouraging feeling that he was as much misunderstood at St. Jim's as he was at Greyfriars. Really, it seemed that nowhere in the wide world was William George Bunter likely to be appraised at his true value.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

Bunter's Farewell!

BILLY BUNTER slept that night in the Fourth-form dormitory, in the School-House of St. Jim's. He slept soundly enough.

The morrow was uncertain; but Bunter did not believe in meeting troubles half-way. He had had a good supper—and he had a comfortable bed. That was all right; and the morrow could take care of itself.

So he slept peacefully; and his snore reverberated through the St. Jim's dormitory, as it had been wont to reverberate through the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars.

When the rising-bell rang out in the morning, Bunter was still snoring. He snored on after the Fourth had turned out.

"Bai Jove! What a feahful wov, you know," murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "I suppose we had bettah wake him! He will want some bweakkah befoah he goes for his twain."

The swell of St. Jim's shook the sleeping

beauty by the shoulder. There was a grunt from Bunter.

"Grooogh!"

"Buntah, deah boy——"

"Leggo!"

"The wisin'-bell has gone, Buntah——"

Bunter opened his eyes, and blinked irritably at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Blow the rising-bell," he snapped. "Lemme alone."

"But the whole school is up, Buntah——"

"Blow the school!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I don't belong to this rotten school, do I?" snapped Bunter.

"This—this what?"

"This rotten school! Lemme alone! Mind your own business."

"Oh, gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus retired quite precipitately, and Bunter turned his head on his pillow, and settled down for another snooze. But he did not snooze long. Jack Blake dipped a sponge in a jug of water.

"I'll try next!" he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake's attempt at waking Bunter was more successful than D'Arcy's. The Owl of Greyfriars started up with a wild yell, as the cold water splashed over his fat face.

"Yarooooh!"

"That all right?" asked Blake cheerily, "I've got some more——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yooop! Beast! Oh, my hat! Yarooooh!"

Bunter rolled out of bed, on the further side. Blake was still squeezing the sponge over him, and it was not nice.

"You cheeky cad!" roared Bunter, across the bed. "If these are St. Jim's manners, I can tell you I don't think much of them."

"Your own bein' so highly polished!" drawled Cardew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Buntah, you weally must turn out, you know——"

"Oh, shut up."

"Wha-a-at did you say, Buntah?"

"Shut up!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Billy Bunter dressed himself sulkily. As he

was not, after all, to stay on at St. Jim's, he did not see any reason for wasting civility on St. Jim's fellows. So he did not waste any.

"Jolly glad when I get out of this show," he told the dormitory generally, "I was a fool to come here instead of going to Rookwood. They know how to treat a chap decently at Rookwood. I was a silly ass to come here."

"You were a silly ass, and still are; no mistake about that," agreed Blake. "Not to mention that you are a meas. 7 worm and a frabjous fat rotter, too."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snapped Bunter.

"What a nice youth!" murmured Cardew. "How they must prize him at Greyfriars—and how nice it will be when they get him back."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter's washing was soon over; it was not extensive. He was the last out of bed, but he was the first out of the dormitory. In the lower hall, Kildare of the Sixth came up to him.

"You're Bunter, I suppose?" he said.

"Yes, I am!" grunted Bunter.

"Then you're the kid I'm to take to the station at half-past eight. Be ready on time," said the captain of St. Jim's.

"I'll please myself about that!" retorted Bunter.

"What?"

"I'll do as I jolly well like."

Kildare looked at him.

"Is that how you talk to a Sixth-form prefect at Greyfriars?" he asked. "It won't do for St. Jim's." Kildare had his official ashplant under his arm, and he let it slip down into his hand. "Bend over."

"What?" roared Bunter.

"Bend over!" said Kildare crisply.

Bunter blinked at him with an infuriated blink.

"You can't cane me! Think you're a Greyfriars prefect! I don't belong to this rotten school!"

"You should have remembered that a little earlier, and gone where you belonged," said Kildare genially. "I'm waiting."

The look on the St. Jim's captain's face



"Cut off!" ordered Kildare, and Bunter promptly made himself scarce, still feeling the stinging lashes of the prefect's cane. This wasn't at all the sort of treatment Bunter had expected at St. Jim's! (See Chapter 13.)

decided Bunter that he would, after all, "bend over" as ordered. And he did.

Whack!

"Ow-wow-ow wo-wow!"

"Cut!" said Kildare.

Bunter cut, thrilling with indignation. Somehow or other, he had expected to be treated as an honoured guest at St. Jim's—knowing his own value, which nobody else knew at Greyfriars. But his expectations had certainly not been realised. Really, he might as well have taken a licking from Walker of the Sixth at Greyfriars as from Kildare at St. Jim's. He began to look forward to the moment when he would shake the dust of St. Jim's from his feet—though he had no intention of going back to Greyfriars. With the question of the flogging still unsettled that was, in Bunter's opinion, impossible.

He breakfasted with the Fourth, many curious glances being turned upon him. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made it a point to show him all the attention he could: his Chesterfieldian politeness holding out to the end.

After breakfast, Kildare came for him.

Bunter gave him a morose blink.

"I don't want anybody to come to the station with me," he said. "You can jolly well save yourself the trouble."

"Head's orders," said Kildare. "Get a move on."

"Look here, you can give me the money for my ticket——"

"That's enough! Get on."

A defiant answer trembled on Bunter's lips: but he remembered the asphalt, and did not utter it. With a frowning brow, he rolled down to the gates beside the St. Jim's Six h-former.

Arthur Augustus cut across the quad for a last word.

"Buntah, deah boy——"

"Yah!"

"Sowwy it was quite imposs for you to stop, Buntah!" said Arthur Augustus, stretching a point, as it were, in the cause of politeness.

Bunter sneered.

"I jolly well wouldn't stop if you asked me on your beided knees!" he said. "This place is scarcely up to my standard."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"I'm not a snob, I hope," said Bunter. "But a fellow has to draw the line somewhere."

"Weally, Buntah——"

"I draw it at this sort of a show!" said Bunter, with a disparaging blink round at St. Jim's generally. "Rotten hole, if you ask me! Jolly glad to see the last of it, and of you, too, D'Arcy! You're a milksop."

"A—a—a what?"

"A milksop! I despise you."

"Oh, cwikey!"

Bunter rolled on after Kildare, leaving the swell of St. Jim's quite overcome. Arthur Augustus could only stare after him, with his mouth open, like a fish out of water.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were near the gates, and they called cheerily to the Owl of Greyfriars as he came along.

"Hallo, going, Bunter? Good-bye, kid."

"Rats!"

"Eh, what?"

"Go and eat coke."

"Is that how you say good-bye?" asked Tom Merry staring.

"Yah!"

Bunter rolled out of the gates after Kildare. Probably, but for Kildare's presence, he would not have escaped from the precincts of St. Jim's without a bumping. He blinked discontentedly up the road.

"Are we walking to the station?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"Look here, I'd rather telephone for a taxi."

"I daresay you would; but as it happens, we are walking. Get on."

"I'm jolly well not going to walk."

Kildare made a motion with his foot, and Bunter decided that he was going to walk. He grunted discontentedly as he plodded up the road. Not another word was spoken till they reached Rylcombe station, and there Kildare took two tickets. He was to see Bunter safe into the express at Wayland Junction. After that, he was to wash his hands of him, which would be a considerable relief.

Bunter sat and glowered in the local train. Kildare sat with a book on his knee, reading Livy, and taking no heed of the Greyfriars junior.

"Here we are!" he said at last.

They got out at Wayland. There, Kildare took the ticket for Lantham, Bunter eyeing him surlily.

"There's your ticket—take care of it," said the St. Jim's prefect. "This way to the train."

"I don't want you to see me into the train."

"Head's orders."

"I'm not going back to Greyfriars, so there!" howled Bunter.

"You can go to Greyfriars, or go to Jericho; but you're going into the Lantham express," said Kildare. "That's Head's orders. Come on."

Bunter was landed safely into the express. Kildare closed the door on him, and stepped back. But he did not go.

The Owl of Greyfriars blinked at him morosely from the window. So long as the St. Jim's prefect stood there he could not get out of the train. Rookwood was in the opposite direction: and Rookwood was Bunter's intended destination.

"Look here, you needn't wait!" he snapped from the carriage window.

Kildare did not heed.

"Deaf?" howled Bunter.

No answer.

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "Get out of it! Go and eat coke! Call yourself a Sixth-form prefect! Yah!"

Kildare's face flushed a little. He made a motion towards the carriage, but it was too late to get in and deal with Bunter as he deserved. There would have been no time to get out again.

Bunter was booked for Lantham. But he had the solace of telling Kildare what he thought of him, at least.

"I've a jolly good mind to get out and mop up the platform with you," he said. "Precious sort of an ass, aren't you? For two pins I'd get out of this carriage and kick you along the platform! Yah!"

Kildare breathed hard and deep. But the train was starting now, and Bunter was safe from vengeance.

The Owl of Greyfriars leaned from the window.

"Go and eat coke!" he shouted. "Fat-head! Do you hear—fathead! Silly ass! Next time I see you, I'll pull your ears! Tell D'Arcy, from me, that he's a milksop: and tell Tom Merry he's a rank outsider! As for you, you're the limit, you are—fathead!"

And Bunter was gone.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

A Talk on the Telephone

"MIND your eye, you fellows!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Quelch's wild."

The warning was scarcely needed.

As Mr. Quelch came into the Remove room, to take his Form in third lesson, the expression on his face was sufficient to warn all the Remove that they had better be very, very good.

Mr. Quelch was a just man and he would not have thought of visiting Bunter's delinquencies upon the unoffending heads of Bunter's Form-fellows. But it was quite possible that he might do it without thinking so! His gleaming eye and knit brow told plainly enough that it behoved his Form to be very careful. Little delinquencies that, at other times, might have passed unnoticed, were very likely now to bring down the vials of wrath.

Mr. Quelch's steely eyes roved over his class, and met only a view of quiet, respectful, sedulous faces. The Remove were on their guard.

Really, there was no fault to be found with that collection of extremely and unusually good boys. Third lesson commenced.

"Cherry!"

"Yes, sir."

"Kindly do not shuffle your feet."

"Oh! No, sir!"

"I have spoken to you before, Cherry, about shuffling your feet noisily in the form-room."

"Yes, sir!" murmured Bob.

"Mauleverer!"

"Oh! Yaas, sir!" gasped Lord Mauleverer, in alarm.

"Do you think it proper form to yawn in the form-room, Mauleverer?"

"Oh! No, sir."

"Take fifty lines."

"Oh! Certainly, sir."

Mr. Quelch's gimlet-eyes roved over the class again. Nobody yawned, and nobody shuffled his feet. Not for untold wealth would any Removeite have shuffled his feet or yawned just then.

The lesson proceeded, with the Remove more than ever on their guard, and wondering inwardly who was going to be the next victim.

There was a vacant place in the form-room. That was the cause of all the trouble.

From St. Jim's that morning had come a trunk call. Dr. Holmes had informed Dr. Locke that William George Bunter had been placed in the Lantham express by a St. Jim's prefect, with his fare paid. Dr. Locke had thanked Dr. Holmes for the information, arranged to reimburse him for the cost of the ticket, and passed the information on to Mr. Quelch.

That should have settled the matter.

But it hadn't.

Bunter, speeding across country by express, should have arrived at Greyfriars by third lesson. But he hadn't arrived.

What did it mean?

Would the wretched boy—the unpardonable delinquent—have the audacity, the effrontery, to cause his Form-master more trouble, after all that he had already caused? Mr. Quelch could not help feeling that he would. He could not help a lingering doubt that Bunter might leave the train at some station not very far from Wayland, and keep away from Greyfriars after all. If he chose to do so, there was nothing to stop him. And really there was no telling what so fatuous a fellow might or might not do.

Third lesson ended in a thunderous atmosphere.

The Remove were glad to get out.

"Where on earth's Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton, as the Famous Five walked into the quad. "He ought to have been here long ago."

"The wherefulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Bunter is not turning upfully."

"He can't be coming," said Bob Cherry. "The silly owl is keeping away till they let him off the flogging."

"The awful ass! I suppose that's it!" said Harry. "It will be a record licking when he does get it."

At dinner, Mr. Quelch, at the head of the Remove table, had a brow of thunder. The Remove were very circumspect.

After dinner, the Remove master walked in the quad, and not a single member of his Form wandered anywhere near where Mr. Quelch was walking. Really, the Removites were beginning to look upon their Form-master as fellows might have looked on a dog given to biting.

The angry master went to his study at last.

He was quite at a loss.

By this time it was amply clear that William George Bunter was not returning to Greyfriars.

Where was he?

Mr. Quelch was debating in his mind whether to ring up Mr. Bunter, and ascertain whether that gentleman's hopeful son had gone home, when the telephone bell rang. Mr. Quelch snatched the receiver off the hooks with a grab that very nearly up-ended the instrument.

"Who—what—"

"Is that Greyfriars?" came a fat and familiar voice along the wires.

"Bunter!"

"Is that Mr. Quelch?"

"Mr. Quelch speaking!" said the Remove-master in a grinding voice.

"Good! I've rung you up, sir, to ask you if it's all right!" said the fat voice. "I want to explain, sir, that it was an accident flooring you in the box-room with Mauly's bag. I took you for Walker of the Sixth."



"You see I don't want to be flogged," explained Bunter. "I should prefer to let the whole matter drop! In fact, unless the matter is entirely overlooked, I may decide not to return to Greyfriars at all, sir!" At the other end of the wire—

"Bunter—"

"In the circumstances, sir, I hope you will let me off the flogging."

"I shall do nothing of the kind, Bunter," hooted Mr. Quelch. "Your explanation that you intended to assault a Sixth-form prefect, and not your Form-master, lessens your offence very little. I command you to come back to school at once, and I promise you, sir, that you will receive the most condign punishment."

"No jolly fear!"

"What? What?"

"I'm not coming back till it's settled about the flogging, sir," said Bunter.

"You young rascal!"

"You see, sir, I don't want to be flogged! I should prefer to let the whole matter drop."

"You—you—"

"It would never have happened, sir, if Walker of the Sixth hadn't been after me. He's a bully, sir! Making out that a fellow bagged his cake—as if I'd touch his cake! I never even knew he had a cake. It was a rotten small one, too, with hardly any plums



—Mr. Quelch was gasping with rage and indignation. "Bunter! I—I—I—" The telephone clicked as the exchange cut Bunter off, and the master of the Remove remained glaring and stuttering at the instrument. There seemed to be no limit to Bunter's impudence. (See Chapter 14.)

in it. I hope you can take my word about this, Mr. Quelch, and that you'll speak to Walker, and tell him that he's got to let the matter drop."

"Bunter! This impudence—this insolence—"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"How dare you bandy words with me, Bunter? I have never heard of such unexampled insolence! You seem to be absolutely devoid of any sense of propriety—in fact, even of common understanding. I command you to return to Greyfriars instantly, and most certainly you shall not escape the punishment due for your unprecedented audacity. Do you hear me, Bunter?"

"I didn't catch that, sir."

"What?"

"Would you mind saying it over again?"

"I—I—I—" gasped Mr. Quelch.

He did not say it over again; he was a little short of breath. He glared at the telephone,

as if the unoffending instrument had given him deep offence.

"Are you still there, sir?" went on the cheery, fat voice. "I hope we shall be able to settle this matter all right, sir."

"Return to Greyfriars at once—"

"You're interrupting me, sir. We've got only three minutes, you know. Now, I've explained how it all happened, can I take it that the matter is to be entirely overlooked, sir?"

"No!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"Then I'm sorry to say I can't come back, sir. It's your own fault, Mr. Quelch. I'm sure you'll see that."

"Bless my soul!"

"I feel that I ought to warn you, sir, that you are running the risk of losing me altogether."

"What?"

"I may decide never to return to Greyfriars at all, sir. Think of that!"

"Upon my word!"

"I'm prepared to come back, sir, and—and overlook everything. I can't say fairer than that. But if you don't agree, I'm bound to point out the risk you're running of losing me. It won't be any good coming round, when it's too late! Better consider that in time, sir."

"Bunter! I—I—"

No answer.

Bunter had cut off, or had been cut off at the exchange. Mr. Quelch stood with the receiver in his hand, and an expression on his face that would have put his Form on their very best behaviour, had they seen it. For some minutes, the Remove master was at a loss. Only one thing could have comforted him—Bunter and a cane, in juxtaposition. And Bunter was far away.

But Mr. Quelch, calming himself with an effort, rang up the exchange.

"I have just had a trunk call, and was cut off suddenly," he said, in his calmest voice. "Can you give the number from which I was rung up? It is very important, and I shall be deeply obliged."

Bunter had not thought of that!

Of course, a fellow couldn't think of everything!

At least, Bunter couldn't!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

A Visitor at Rookwood !

JIMMY SILVER, of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, looked, and looked again.

"I've seen that fat chap before somewhere," he remarked.

"Same here," said Arthur Edward Lovell.

"It's Bunter," said Raby.

"That fat Greyfriars chap!" remarked Newcome.

And Jimmy Silver nodded.

"I remember him! He's been here before—I remember! What the thump is he doing here now?"

"Can't be a holiday at Greyfriars," said Lovell.

The chums of the Classical Fourth, of Rookwood School, looked with some interest and curiosity at the fat figure that had rolled in at the gates.

It was William George Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had seen something of him before, and they had not much admired what they had seen. They were on the extensive list of Bunter's friends, but were in blissful ignorance of the fact.

The Rookwood fellows were taking a walk in the Big Quad before dinner, which was nearly due. They were thinking of anything but Billy Bunter of Greyfriars, when that fat and fatuous youth appeared in the offing.

Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles, blinking at the fellows he saw in the quad, as if in search of someone.

There were a good many fellows there, and many of them glanced at Bunter, a second time, and a third. Bunter flattered himself that he was a distinguished-looking fellow; and undoubtedly he drew many glances wherever he appeared. It was, as a matter of fact, his circumference that did it.

"Hallo, Bunter!" called out Jimmy Silver.

Bunter blinked round again.

He sighted the Fistical Four, and an expansive smile overspread his fat countenance. He rolled over to them at once.

"Looking for you chaps," he said.

"Well, here we are," said Jimmy, with a smile.

"What on earth are you doing away from your school, in term?" asked Arthur Edward Lovell, puzzled. "It isn't a holiday, is it?"

"Not exactly a holiday," assented Bunter.

"Special exeat?" asked Raby.

Bunter nodded.

"That's it."

"Lucky bargee!" said Newcome.

Bunter grinned complacently. As he was away from school in term, the Rookwooders could only suppose that he had been granted a special exeat; really, it was all they could suppose. That Bunter had deliberately absented himself from school, because a flogging impended over him there like the sword of Damocles, they were not likely to guess.

Bunter had done some thinking during his journey from St. Jim's.

At St. Jim's he had been disappointed. It had dawned upon his fat brain that any fellow, howsoever well-disposed, really could not help him in his extraordinary escapade of playing truant from his school. It was a thing that could not be done. So Bunter had prepared an entirely new version of the state of affairs, on his way to Rookwood. St. Jim's having been drawn blank, and home being out of the question, Rookwood was his only resource—and he realised that it behoved him to be very careful, in order to prevent that last refuge being closed to him.

So he was no longer the fugitive schoolboy who had knocked over his Form-master, and was dodging a flogging. He was a specially-considered schoolboy who had been granted a special holiday by his headmaster, on account of the high esteem in which that headmaster held him. On these terms, he felt that Jimmy Silver & Co. could have no reluctance to stand by him. After his experience with D'Arcy he did not design to persuade Jimmy Silver & Co. to "stuff" their headmaster on the subject. But if they believed his new version of the story, they would "stuff" their headmaster unconsciously. That was what Bunter called strategy.

His task was really easy; for, knowing nothing of the amazing circumstances of the case, the Rookwooders had guessed that he had special leave. Bunter had only to leave them in their error.

But the Rookwood chums seemed a little perplexed, all the same. They did not doubt that Bunter had special leave from school—since he was away from Greyfriars. But they wondered why he had wandered to Rookwood. They did not know yet that they were his dear friends and old pals.

A bell began to ring; really, Bunter had timed his visit well.

"That's tiffin," said Lovell.

"Oh, good!" said Bunter.

"Hem!"

"I suppose you fellows can stand me some dinner here," said Bunter, blinking at them. "You see, I've got special leave from school, extending over the week-end, and I'm making a round of my friends before—before going home. See?"

"Oh!"

"You fellows being old pals, I thought I'd give you a look-in!" explained Bunter.

"Oh! I—I see!" said Jimmy Silver.

He was enlightened now. "I—I daresay we could get you into dinner, Bunter—at least, I'll speak to Mr. Dalton, and ask his permission."

"Do, old chap," said Bunter.

The Rookwood crowd were going into the House to dinner, and Jimmy Silver & Co. joined them, with Bunter. They piloted him into the dining-hall, where Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth, glanced at him. Jimmy Silver hurried to explain matters to his Form-

master. And Mr. Dalton, although he gave Bunter a very curious look, nodded assent.

"Here's room for you, Bunter," said Jimmy. "It's all right."

"Good, old chap."

Bunter sat down cheerily.

He was feeling quite bucked. It was quite a good dinner, and Bunter did it justice. His fat face was very cheery when he rolled out

of the dining-room with Jimmy Silver & Co.

"Like us to walk to the station with you?" asked Jimmy. "We can get leave to go down to Coombe."

Bunter blinked at him.

"I'm not going yet."

"Oh!"

"Stay on till classes—that's all right," said Buby.

"You fellows will have to go in to classes this afternoon, of course," said Bunter. "That's all right—I'll take a nap in your study."

"Eh?"

"Your Form-master seems a good-natured sort of chap—"

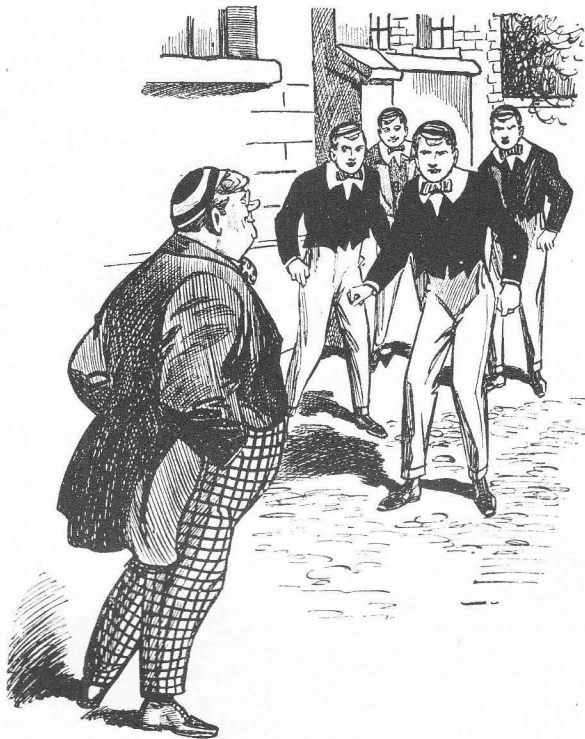
"One of the best," said Jimmy.

"I suppose you could fix it with him for me to stay over the night?"

"Wha-a-t?"

"The fact is, that's the arrangement I've made," said Bunter. "I knew you fellows would be glad to put me up, for the sake of auld lang syne, and so on."

"Oh!"



As Bunter sighted the Fistical Four, an expansive smile spread over his fat countenance. He rolled over towards them at once. "I was looking for you chaps," he said. (See Chapter 15).

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at Bunter. They wanted to be civil and hospitable. But really they did not want Bunter.

"I hardly think we could fix that up," said Jimmy Silver gravely. "You really shouldn't have arranged that without asking us before, Bunter."

"I was relying on our old friendship," explained Bunter.

"Oh!"

It was the first Jimmy Silver & Co. had heard of the old friendship; but they did not like to say so. Lovell opened his mouth, but closed it again, and strolled away. Raby and Newcome gave Jimmy a rather comical glance, and strolled after Lovell.

Quite willingly Jimmy Silver would have strolled away also. But he felt that he could not leave the guest from Greyfriars entirely to his own devices. The Co. were already fed up with Bunter's cool cheek; but Uncle James of Rookwood had a great gift of patience.

"You can fix it all right," said Bunter, cheerily. "You see, I want to see my old friends while I've got this special holiday—a fellow doesn't get a special holiday in term time every day, you know. I've been to St. Jim's already to see my friends there, and they gave me a rousing reception."

"Did they?" murmured Jimmy.

"Yes. D'Arcy—you know D'Arcy of St. Jim's—"

"I know him."

"Well, D'Arcy begged me to stay longer—almost with tears in his eyes. I told him it couldn't be done, as I had to give you fellows here some of my time. They were sorry to lose me. A Sixth-form prefect came to see me off at the station," said Bunter—"the captain of the school himself! That rather shows what they think of me at St. Jim's—what?"

"Oh!"

"If you can't put me up," went on Bunter, "it will be all right. I shall put up at the inn in Coombe. I noticed a rather decent inn there. Then I can spend all my time with you fellows, just the same—see?"

Jimmy Silver might have been expected to brighten up at this. But he didn't. He looked as if he found it difficult, somehow, to

live up to his own cheery maxim of "Keep Smiling!"

The prospect of Bunter spending all his time with his Rookwood friends did not seem to enliven this Rookwooder, somehow.

Jimmy Silver cast a longing glance after his chums, who were punting about a footer in the distance, with Mornington and Oswald, and some other Fourth-form fellows. But he did not go.

"Now, that being settled," said Bunter, brightly, "I'll tell you what—I want to telephone. I suppose I can use one of the school telephones. You see, my Form-master at Greyfriars expects me to keep him posted while I'm away. I'm rather a favourite of his, you know—I might say, the apple of his eye. I don't think I ought to neglect him."

"You could telephone from Coombe——"

Bunter grinned.

"Yes; but I should have to pay for that."

"Oh!"

There was a pause.

"I'll ask Mr. Dalton to let you use his 'phone," said Jimmy Silver, at last. "Come on."

"Right-ho, old chap."

Mr. Dalton was walking in the quad, and Jimmy Silver went up to him to ask permission. Again Mr. Dalton gave Bunter a very curious look, but he assented, and Jimmy led his remarkable guest into the Form-master's study.

"Don't wait," said Bunter. "My talk with Quelch is rather private, you know."

Jimmy Silver had no intention of waiting. He was only too glad to land Bunter in Mr. Dalton's study and leave him there.

"I'll see you later!" called out Bunter

"Will you?" murmured Jimmy. The captain of the Rookwood Fourth had his own ideas about that.

He closed the door and retired, and Bunter proceeded to ring up Mr. Quelch at Greyfriars.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

Friends in Need!

BILLY BUNTER rolled out of Mr. Dalton's study a little later.

His talk on the telephone with Mr. Quelch had made it clear that his "holiday" was not to come to an end.

Bunter had, in his own opinion, done all that he could.

He had offered to let the whole matter drop; and he had warned Mr. Quelch that, if he persisted in his unamiable attitude, he ran the risk of losing this valuable pupil.

Mr. Quelch had not chosen to listen to reason. That was his own look-out. Bunter had done all he could, and he had to let it go at that.

Rookwood hospitality was his resource now—as long as that might last. In a couple of days he would ring up Mr. Quelch again, when doubtless the Remove master would have come to a better frame of mind. At least, Bunter hoped so.

In the meantime, Bunter was “sticking it out.”

He wondered, a little bitterly, how the Remove was getting on without him. They had never prized him at his true value at Greyfriars, while he was there. Now that he was gone they would realise their error. Serve them right! Bunter felt that they deserved it.

He rolled out in search of Jimmy Silver. That youth, however, was not to be found.

The delights of Bunter's company had palled on him; and Jimmy Silver had gone for a walk with his chums, with the intention of returning just in time for class.

Perhaps he expected, or hoped, that this would solve the difficulty of his extraordinary guest. If so, he did not know Bunter. Bunter was a sticker.

A big Sixth-former tapped Bunter on the shoulder as he was rolling round the quad in search of the elusive Jimmy. It was Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood.

Bunter blinked up at him,

“Who may you happen to be?” asked Bulkeley. “You don't belong to Rookwood.”

“I'm Bunter.”

“And who may Bunter happen to be?”

“I belong to Greyfriars.”

“Then what the thump are you doing so far from your school?”

“Special exeat,” said Bunter airily. “I've looked in here to see my old friends in the Fourth Form.”

“Oh!” said Bulkeley, with a stare. “And

who may your old friends in the Fourth Form happen to be, Bunter?”

“Jimmy Silver and his pals!” answered Bunter. “I'm looking for them now—they seem to have missed me.”

“I noticed Jimmy Silver and his friends go out of gates about ten minutes ago.”

“Oh, my hat! The rotters——”

“What!”

“They jolly well knew that I should look for them as soon as I'd finished telephoning!” exclaimed Bunter indignantly. “This is letting a fellow down!”

Bulkeley smiled.

“Your friends here don't seem very keen,” he said. “Have you leave from a master to hang about a school you don't belong to?”

“Oh, really, you know——”

“If you haven't——”

“That's all right,” said Bunter hastily.

“Mr. Dalton knows I'm here—I'm staying to tea with Jimmy Silver.” Bunter felt it judicious not to mention that he was staying for the night.

“Oh! Very well!” said Bulkeley. “I can't understand a junior kid being allowed to wander away from his school like this in term. But if Mr. Dalton knows, all right.”

Bunter grunted and walked away.

It was not till the bell was ringing for class that Jimmy Silver & Co. reappeared. Then they came in, in a great hurry, and rushed for their form-room. Bunter sighted them and shouted after them in vain.

“I say, Jimmy! Jimmy Silver! I say, you fellows!”

But the fellows seemed deaf.

Bunter rolled after them in great irritation and annoyance, but the Fistical Four disappeared into the form-room with the rest of the Fourth, and Bunter could not follow them there.

He had to give them up till after class.

He rolled into the quad in a mood of great dissatisfaction. It began to look as if Rookwood hospitality would fail, as it had failed at St. Jim's—in fact, more rapidly. This was not what Bunter felt that he had a right to expect. A sensitive fellow might have felt wounded. Fortunately, Bunter was not thin skinned.

While the Classical Fourth were in class with Mr. Dalton, Bunter rolled discontentedly in the quad. He could not even drop into the school shop, for D'Arcy's ten-shilling note had been expended on the journey to Rookwood, and Bunter was "stony" once more. And a couple of hours after dinner he was, of course, ready for tea, or at least for a substantial snack to keep him going.

Three juniors came out of Manders' House, and sighted Bunter. The Owl of Greyfriars knew them by sight—he had seen them playing football in Jimmy Silver's team. They were Dodd and Cook and Doyle, of the Modern Fourth Form at Rookwood. While the Classicals were in form, the Modern Fourth had been in a chemistry class with Mr. Manders, and now they were free for ten minutes before going over to Mr. Bull's room for mathematics.

The three Moderns bore down on Bunter. Having nothing special to do for ten minutes they were prepared to extract a little harmless and necessary entertainment from the fat junior of Greyfriars.

"Bunter, isn't it?" asked Tommy Dodd, genially. "I saw you with those Classical chaps."

The Owl of Greyfriars nodded.

"Rotters!" he said.

"Eh? Who are rotters?"

"Silver and that lot," growled Bunter. "They've let me down! I don't think much of Rookwood."

Tommy Dodd stared at him.

"You don't?" he asked.

"No, I don't! Rotten show, if you ask me," grunted Bunter. Bunter evidently was not in a good temper.

"So jolly tactful to tell a Rookwood man so!" murmured Tommy Dodd. "Do you always ask for it like this, Bunter?"

"Eh?"

"Bump the cheeky porpoise!" growled Tommy Doyle.

Bunter backed away in alarm.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Bump him!" said Tommy Cook.

Tommy Dodd held up a commanding hand.

"Chuck it! These Classical chaps seem to have left you stranded, Bunter—of course,

they ought to have told Dicky Dalton that they couldn't bother about class this afternoon, having an important guest to look after."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Cook.

"Still, we'll look after you," said Tommy Dodd, magnanimously. "Come into Manders' House, Bunter. It's rather cold about here; you'd like a comfortable armchair by a fire——"

"Good!"

"And an early tea——"

"Yes, rather."

"It will keep you going till the Classicals come out of form," said Tommy Dodd. "This way, Bunter."

Cook and Doyle stared blankly at their leader. But Dodd was the unquestioned leader of the three Tommies of Rookwood, and they made no remark. They walked Bunter into Mr. Manders' House.

The Modern Sixth had not yet finished mathematics with Mr. Bull, and the Sixth-form passage was deserted. It was to that quarter that Tommy Dodd led the Greyfriars fellow.

He opened the door of a Sixth-form study.

Cook and Doyle almost gasped. That study belonged to Knowles of the Sixth, the captain of the House—and one of the worst-tempered prefects at Rookwood.

"Doddy——!" murmured Cook.

Tommy Dodd gave him a warning glance.

"Trot in, Bunter."

Bunter rolled in.

Certainly, it was a very comfortable study. There was a bright fire, and a comfortable armchair near it. Knowles of the Sixth had plenty of money, and he "did" himself very well indeed.

Tommy Dodd opened a cupboard in a recess.

"Sorry we can't stop," he said. "But you'll find no end of stuff here, Bunter, and all you've got to do is to make yourself at home."

"Leave it to me," said Bunter.

And the three Tommies did.

They retired from the study and closed the door. In the corridor, Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle stared hard at Tommy Dodd, who was smiling serenely.

"I—I say, Doddy!" ejaculated Cook.

"Knowles has been getting in a feed for his friends at tea—"

"I know! That's why I put Bunter in his study."

"If that fat idiot scoffs Knowles's tuck—" murmured Doyle.

"No "if" about it—he will! I know him of old!" chuckled Tommy Dodd. "He doesn't think much of Rookwood—and says so at Rookwood to a Rookwood man! Perhaps he will think still less of it when he sees Knowles."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the three Tommies strolled cheerily away, leaving Billy Bunter to enjoy himself at a feast which was to be followed by a reckoning.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER

Knowles Gets Excited!

"PRIME!"

That was Billy Bunter's only remark.

After that, his jaws were too busily occupied for any remarks of any kind.

It was a feast of the gods.

Knowles of the Sixth often stood a handsome spread in his study. On such occasions supplies were laid in on a lavish scale. There was enough for Knowles and his friends Frampton and Catesby—more than enough, in fact, for three Sixth-formers. So there was nearly enough for Bunter.

It was the duty of Tomkins of the Third, Knowles's fag, to come to the study and prepare tea, at the time fixed by the great man. That time had not yet arrived; but tea was being prepared, and disposed of, at a great rate. When Tomkins of the Third should arrive, he was likely to find, like the celebrated Mrs. Hubbard, that the cupboard was bare.

Good things of all kinds graced the study table—Bunter did not leave a single article that was eatable in the cupboard. He did not believe in wasting anything.

He sat down to enjoy himself.

Undoubtedly, it was "prime." Bunter's fat face beamed over the feed. His thoughts ran on happy lines.

This was something like hospitality. He had been right, after all, in coming to Rookwood.

Those rotters, Jimmy Silver & Co., he could afford to disregard. He would throw them over without the slightest compunction. They could go and eat coke, and he would jolly well tell them so as soon as he saw them again. It was on the Modern side of Rookwood that he had found this lavish hospitality—and he would stick to the Modern side. It would be quite a pleasure to tell the Classical fellows that he was done with them.

Any fellow but Bunter might have seen something suspicious in the circumstances of this lavish hospitality. He hardly knew the three Tommies, and the way he had spoken to them could scarcely be called engaging. Yet they had rallied round him like this.

But it was quite all right in Bunter's eyes. These three fellows saw what Greyfriars fellows could not see, nor St. Jim's fellows, nor Jimmy Silver & Co.—they saw, at a glance, what a really splendid chap Bunter was, and they were keen to make much of him. That was how it was. For once, at long last, Bunter was getting justice, he was appraised at his true value. That was how it was, and that was all there was about it.

That was what Bunter thought, so far as he thought at all. But he was too busy to put in much thinking. He was more accustomed to using his jaws than his intellect; and now his jaws were going strong.

Ample as Knowles's supplies were, they vanished at a record speed under Bunter's hefty attack. The feed in Study No. 6 at St. Jim's, the supper with Tom Merry, faded into insignificance beside this feed. Really it was a royal spread.

Bunter was getting towards the end, and breathing a little spasmodically after his exertions, when the door opened, and a diminutive Rookwooder came in.

It was Tomkins of the Third, though Bunter did not know him. Tomkins seemed to expect to find the study vacant; and he stared at Billy Bunter in great surprise.

"Hallo! what—what!" ejaculated Tomkins.

Bunter blinked at him.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"Eh! I'm Tomkins."

"Well, get out, Tomkins, and shut the door after you," said Bunter.

Tomkins stared at him blankly. His glance went to the study cupboard, and returned, in a horrified way, to the table.

"You're feeding here!" he gasped.

"Can't you see I am?"

"Who are you, then?" demanded Tomkins. "You don't belong to this school. I've never seen you before."

Bunter helped himself to the last wedge of a large cake.

With his mouth full, he blinked loftily and superciliously at Tomkins.

"You get out!" he said.

"You'd better jolly well get out, I think," said Tomkins.

"I don't want any cheek from a twopenny-ha'penny fag!" said Bunter. "Shut the door after you."

"You've scoffed all that tuck——"

"Mind your own business, you cheeky young ass! Look here, shut that door after you, and get out! I don't want fags' company."

"You've scoffed all that tuck!" repeated Tomkins, in a dazed voice. "My only aunt Selina! Why, you silly idiot——"

"That's enough! Clear."

"I tell you——"

Bunter jumped up. He was not a great fighting-man; but even Bunter was not to be cheeked with impunity by a Third-form fag.

He grabbed Tomkins of the Third by the shoulders.

"Out you go!" he snapped.

"Ow! I tell you——" roared Tomkins.

"Shut up, and clear!"

Bump!

The amazed and enraged Tomkins was swung into the doorway, and Bunter's boot helped him into the passage. Tomkins sprawled with a roar.



Bunter sent Tomkins of the Third sprawling in the passage. "Now clear off—and don't come back again!" warned Bunter. "There's some more of that, if you want it, you young cad!"
(See Chapter 17.)

"Now cut, and don't come back again," said Bunter, grinning after him. "There's some more of that, if you want it, you young cad."

Bunter slammed the door, and returned to the table, to dispose of the remnants of the great feed. Tomkins picked himself up, in a dazed frame of mind, and went in search of Knowles of the Sixth. He had been ordered to get the great man's tea ready; but obviously he could not now get Knowles's tea—the tea had been got!

Bunter sat down contentedly to finish his feed. There was not much left, now; but little as it was, Bunter was not destined to finish it.

Five minutes after the fag had gone the study door re-opened, with a crash.

Bunter blinked round irritably.

But it was not a fag this time; it was a towering Sixth-former who strode into the study.

Bunter jumped up in alarm. This was not

a fellow whom he could kick out of the study if he was cheeky. If there was any kicking done this time, it was pretty certain that Bunter would be the recipient thereof.

Knowles of the Sixth stared at the table, and stared at Bunter, as if he could hardly believe his eyes. He had been hardly able to believe Tomkins's report that some fellow, who did not even belong to Rookwood, was in his study, scoffing his tuck. It seemed quite incredible; but Knowles had to believe the evidence of his astonished eyes.

"Great gad!" he ejaculated.

"Hallo! C-c-c-come in!" stammered Bunter.

"What?" roared Knowles.

"Come in, you know," said Bunter. "Fuf-fuf-fine afternoon, isn't it?"

Knowles glared.

Bunter could see that the big senior was in a rage, though he did not know or guess the cause. He hoped to placate him by politeness.

His hope was ill-founded.

Knowles strode up to the table, stared at the remnants—few and small—of the great feed, and then turned on Bunter with a deadly look. The Owl of Greyfriars backed away further. He realised that there was something wrong—something very wrong indeed; though what it was, was beyond his fat imagination.

"You—you—you——" stuttered Knowles, so enraged that he spoke with difficulty. "You've done this——"

"Eh?"

"You've had a feed here?"

"Yes—a ripping feed, old chap," said Bunter. "I say, if I'd known you were coming I'd have left you some of the cake, I would really."

Knowles gurgled.

"You'd have left me some of my own cake!"

"Wha-a-t! Whose cake?"

"Mine!" roared Knowles.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh, really, you know—if those fellows raided your cake—I didn't know—I never thought—I wasn't—I—here, wharrer you at?" yelled Bunter.

The question was really superfluous.

Knowles of the Rookwood Sixth was "at" Bunter.

He bore down on him with a rush, and grasped him by his collar. Bunter swung helplessly, like a fat jelly, in the powerful grasp of the Rookwood prefect.

"I—I say—leggo!" howled Bunter.

"You young rascal!" bawled Knowles. "Scoffing



Knowles spread Bunter across what was left of the feed, and he laid the cane on with a willing hand. "Oh! Oh! Ooooh!" roared Bunter, as the crockery went flying under his struggles. "Oh! Oooooh!" (See Chapter 17.)

my feed! Who are you? Where did you come from? What—where's my cane? Where have you shoved my cane? What? Where is it?"

Shake, shake, shake!

"Groooooogh! Oooooogh!"

"Where's my cane?" roared Knowles.

"Ooooooch!"

Shake! Shake!

"I say, chuck it—yaroooh! If you make my gug—gug-glasses fall off—ow! If they get bub-bub-broken—you-ow—you'll have to pay for them—yaroop!"

Shake!

Knowles glared round for the cane. There was a cane somewhere in the study, but if Bunter had known precisely where he would not have been likely to tell Knowles. Tomkins stared in at the door with a scared face.

"Find my cane, Tomkins!" roared Knowles, still shaking Bunter.

"Oh, dear! Yow-ow-ow-ow! Help!"

"Here it is, Knowles!" gasped Tomkins, fishing the cane out of a corner and handing it over.

Knowles grasped it savagely.

"Now, you cheeky young scoundrel——"

"Oh!" roared Bunter, in anticipation.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Knowles sprawled Bunter across the table, in the midst of what was left of the feed, face down. The cane rose and fell rhythmically on William George Bunter's tight trousers. The dust rose from Bunter's trousers, and fiendish yells from Billy Bunter.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Bunter kicked out desperately. This was worse than Walker of the Greyfriars Sixth—almost as bad as a Head's flogging. Bunter kicked, and his heel landed under Knowles's chin.

"Oh! Ah! Ugh!"

Knowles staggered back, clasping his chin, and involuntarily releasing Bunter for the moment. Bunter needed only one moment; to the very full he realised the value of time. He squirmed off the table, and fairly flew to the door. Tomkins was in the way, and Bunter cannoned him. Tomkins had about as much chance of stopping a rush with Bunter's weight behind it, as of stopping a motor-lorry in full

career. He fairly crumpled up, and Bunter left him strewn on the study floor as he rushed out of the study.

Knowles whirled round after him in a few seconds. He stumbled over the sprawling, breathless Tomkins, as he rushed doorward. Staying only to give the hapless fag a cut with the cane Knowles tore out of the study.

"Stop!" he shouted, as he sighted a fat figure fleeing in the distance.

Bunter was generally considered, at Greyfriars, a dense fellow. But he was not dense enough to obey that order.

He raced out of Manders' House, with a speed that was amazing, allowing for the weight he had to carry.

Knowles rushed in pursuit. But he rushed in vain. Billy Bunter had vanished beyond the beeches by the time Knowles reached the door. Exactly what the matter was, Bunter did not know; but he knew that Manders' House at Rookwood was no safe place for him, and he concentrated all his energies upon covering the longest possible distance in the shortest possible time.

It was not till most of the school buildings lay between him and Knowles that Bunter stopped, quite pumped out, and sank upon an old oaken bench under the library windows in Little Quad. There—listening like a startled rabbit for the sounds of pursuit—he pumped in breath, and gasped, and gasped, and gasped, as if he were gasping for a wager.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER

Mr. Quelch Looks In!

"GONE, I suppose."

"Thank goodness!"

"Well, yes," said Jimmy Silver, "I really think Bunter's too much of a good thing, you know. Too thick—in every way."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I didn't want to kick him, as he's a sort of visitor of sorts," said Arthur Edward Lovell. "But I never saw a fellow who wanted kicking so much as Bunter."

"Thank goodness he's gone," said Raby.

"Yes, rather."

Jimmy Silver & Co. were in their quarters—the end study in the Classical Fourth passage. They had come in to tea—and they had had a

lingering fear of finding Bunter there. But Bunter was not there; and as they had seen nothing of him since classes, they concluded that he was gone. From a Modern fellow they had heard something of his adventures in Manders' House, and it was natural to conclude that he was fed up with Rookwood. So they felt that they had much to be thankful for.

"A fellow wants to be hospitable," remarked Jimmy Silver. "But we don't know much of Bunter, we don't like what we know, and he's the limit, anyhow. Really, it's too thick. I'd rather not tell him so—but it is, you know; and I'm glad he's taken the hint and gone."

"It was a pretty strong hint Knowles gave him, from what I heard from Towle," remarked Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four sat down contentedly to tea.

Tap!

Mornington of the Classical Fourth opened the study door, and looked in with a grin.

"Friend of yours here," he said.

"Eh?"

"He asked me to bring him to your study."

"Oh!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, dear!"

Billy Bunter rolled into the end study, and Mornington walked away grinning. Probably he guessed just how keen Jimmy Silver & Co. were to see that friend of theirs.

"Oh! You're still here, Bunter!" exclaimed Lovell blankly.

"Oh, really, Lovell——"

"I—I thought you'd gone!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"I shouldn't be likely to let down my old friends like that, old chap," said Bunter affectionately.

"Hem!"

Bunter's intention, formed in Knowles's study, of telling the Fistical Four that he was done with them, and that they could go and eat coke, was quite abandoned now. Even upon Bunter's obtuse brain it had dawned that those very friendly Modern fellows had been pulling his fat leg, and japing him when they planted him in a prefect's study in Manders

House. It was Tommy Dodd & Co. with whom Bunter was "done."

As Jimmy Silver & Co. were his only resource at Rookwood, Bunter was very far from done with them—if he could help it.

"Just in time for tea, what?" he remarked, with a blink at the study table.

"Oh! Yes."

Raby silently pulled another chair up to the table. It was difficult to put on welcoming smiles for Bunter; but hospitality was hospitality. The chums of Rookwood could only hope that when he had fed he would go.

Bunter sat down.

It was a couple of hours since he had devoured Knowles's spread, and he had eaten only enough for four or five fellows. So naturally he was hungry again.

"Poached eggs, what?" he said, eyeing the dish upon which Lovell had turned out four eggs. "Good! I like them, you know!" Bunter turned the dish out into his plate. "Aren't you fellows having any?"

"Oh! Hem! Um! No."

"I say, you fellows, I've been treated rottenly while you were in the class," said Bunter, with his mouth full. "There seem to be a lot of rotten cads at Rookwood."

"Oh!"

"I've had my leg pulled," said Bunter. "A senior chap pitched into me, too. From what I gather, I was spoofed into going to his study. I didn't know it was his study, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. He had the cheek to pitch into me," said Bunter. "I'd have jolly well licked him, senior as he was, only—I disdained to soil my hands on him."

"Soiled enough already, perhaps?" suggested Lovell, with a glance at Bunter's hands; which had been lightly washed at St. Jim's that morning—and not since.

"Oh, really, Lovell——"

"Shush!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"I suppose that's Rookwood manners," said Bunter. "It wouldn't do for Greyfriars, I can tell you."

Lovell opened his lips and closed them again. Bunter helped himself to the ham,

LAST-BUT NOT LEAST!



taking a good two-thirds of it at one helping. After his recent performances in Knowles's study it was a great mystery where it went. But it went.

"I've been lying low," he went on. "I didn't want a row with that fellow what's his name—being a guest here. I preferred to treat him with the contempt he deserved. So I've kept out of his way. Kicking up a shindy may be all very well for Rookwood: we don't do it at Greyfriars."

"Oh!"

"I suppose you've spoken to somebody about my staying with you a day or two, Silver, old chap?"

"No. It can't be done, Bunter," said Jimmy, gently but firmly.

"On second thoughts, I shouldn't care to stay here," said Bunter. "I'm afraid the accommodation wouldn't be quite up to my standard. No offence, you know; but I'm accustomed to rather decent things

"Oh!"

"I'll put up at the inn in Coombe," went on Bunter. "Sorry, and all that; but a fellow who's accustomed to the decencies of life can't be expected to rough it as you Rookwood fellows do. You see that?"

Bunter helped himself to the cake. It was not a large cake; which was perhaps the reason why Bunter helped himself to the whole of it.

"The only difficulty is," he went on, "that leaving Greyfriars rather suddenly, in the circumstances——"

"What circumstances?"

"Well, with that beast Walker after me, and Quelchy——"

"What?"

"I—I mean——" stammered Bunter.

"Well, what do you mean, Bunter?" inquired Jimmy Silver, looking very keenly at the Owl of Greyfriars.

"I—I mean, I—I didn't leave Greyfriars in a hurry. As for Walker of the Sixth, he's my best friend. I've friends in the upper forms at Greyfriars, you know—sort of general favourite. As for Quelchy, he's the apple of my eye—I mean, I'm the apple of his eye. I'm afraid he's feeling my absence a lot."

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder," remarked Raby. "I suppose everybody must like you better at a distance, Bunter?"

"Eh? Oh! Yes, exactly," said Bunter. "Quite so. Well, as I was saying, I left Greyfriars in rather a hurry. I mean, I didn't leave Greyfriars in a hurry at all, but I happened to leave my pocket-book behind, with all my banknotes in it."

"Oh, my hat!"

"All your fivers and tenners?" asked Newcome sympathetically.

"Exactly. And—absurd as it may seem, in a fellow of my wealth—I'm actually short of money at the present moment," said Bunter. "I suppose you fellows could lend me a little to see me through? A fiver would do it."

"My hat! Fivers don't grow in junior studies at Rookwood," said Jimmy Silver with a laugh.

Bunter's fat lip curled.

"No: I forgot you were poor here," he said. "You see, I'm accustomed to a wealthy school."

Arthur Edward Lovell seemed on the point of choking. He half-rose, but an imploring look from Jimmy Silver made him sit down again. Uncle James of Rookwood was feeling the strain, but he really did want Bunter to leave the study unknicked, if possible.

"Well, make it a couple of pounds," said Bunter carelessly. "That will see me through to-day, and to-morrow morning I'll telephone to one of my titled relations for a remittance."

"Better telephone to-day," said Raby. "We can get you the use of a school telephone, and I'll look out the number in the directory."

"I'd rather telephone in the morning. I suppose you can lend an old pal a pound to see him over the night?"

"Suppose again!" said Lovell.

"Hem!"

"Look here, Bunter," said Jimmy Silver very quietly, "Is it straight about your having special leave from school? If you bunked with somebody after you, it doesn't look like it; and it's jolly odd for a fellow to start on a holiday without a shilling in his



was behind him—a stranger to Jimmy Silver & Co.

Bunter rattled on unheeding.

“Quelchy’s a bit of an old Tartar, you know—cross-grained and all that—temper of a Hun; but he thinks no end of me. It would be a blow to him to lose me, I can tell you! I—”

“BUNTER!”

“Eh?”

Billy Bunter leaped out of his chair as if the seat thereof had suddenly become red-hot.

Mr. Quelch, passing Mr. Dalton, strode into the study. Bunter stared at him with eyes that nearly bulged through his spectacles. He could scarcely believe that this dreadful vision was real. The ghost of Banquo, starting up at the ancient feast, did not cause so much dismay as the apparition of Mr. Quelch in

“Quelchy’s a bit of an old Tartar,” said Bunter. “He’s cross-grained, and he’s got the temper of a Hun—but he thinks no end of me, I can tell you! He—” It was then that the door opened. “Bunter!” sounded an ominous voice—the voice of Mr. Quelch. (See this page).

pocket. Have you been crass ass enough to run away from school?”

“Oh, really, Silver—”

“My hat!” ejaculated Lovell, staring at Bunter.

“Is that it?” exclaimed Raby.

“Eh? No! Certainly not! Nothing of the kind! It’s a special exeat, and all that, and—and Quelchy patted me on my head when I left, and said ‘Bless you, my children!’ I—I mean, he said, ‘Bless you, Bunter.’ I’m the apple of Quelchy’s eye—”

There was a knock at the door of the end study, and it opened, and Mr. Dalton appeared there. Another gentleman, in an overcoat,

the end study at Rookwood.

“Oh!” gasped Bunter. “Oh! Quelchy! Oh!”

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER

Homeward Bound

MR. QUELCH fixed his gimlet eyes on Bunter.

The fat junior gazed at him, his jaw dropping, his eyes bulging, with a fascinated gaze, like a very fat bird fascinated by a serpent.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stood in silence.

They guessed now how matters stood; that Bunter had run away from Greyfriars

and that his Form-master had followed him to Rookwood to take him back. Bunter had tried their patience severely, but they compassionated him at this moment. The look on Mr. Quelch's face showed clearly enough that it was a case for compassion.

"This is the boy of whom you are in search, sir?" asked Mr. Dalton.

"This is the boy," answered Mr. Quelch.

"His coming here is a most extraordinary freak," said the Rookwood master, "I was given to understand that he had a special holiday from school."

He glanced severely at Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy coloured.

"We thought—we believed——!" he stammered.

"I am not surprised that Bunter has deceived these boys, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "He is the most untruthful boy at Greyfriars; indeed, I have sometimes thought that he is too stupid to realise the difference between truth and falsehood."

"Oh, really, sir——!" gasped Bunter.

"He is the very worst boy in my Form," said Mr. Quelch. "But for the fact that allowance is made for his extraordinary obtuseness, he would certainly be expelled from Greyfriars."

Jimmy Silver & Co. exchanged an involuntary glance. This really did not sound as if William George Bunter were the apple of his Form-master's eye.

"I am sorry that you should have been troubled with the boy, Mr. Dalton," said the Remove master. "I will take him away immediately. He has run away from school to escape a justly-deserved punishment. Bunter, get your coat and hat at once, and come with me."

"Oh, dear!"

"Lose no time!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"The—the fact is, sir——"

"Silence!"

"Oh, really, sir——"

"Enough!" said Mr. Quelch, in a deep voice. "Come."

"Oh, crikey!"

Bunter rolled out of the study. He nourished a faint hope of going downstairs for his hat and coat by himself, and dodging

out of the house. But Mr. Quelch was taking no chances with him.

He dropped a heavy hand on Bunter's shoulder and piloted him to the stairs.

He did not mean to run any risks with that valuable pupil. Only by obtaining the Rookwood number from the telephone exchange had he learned where Bunter was. He had left his class in charge of a prefect for the afternoon to visit Rookwood in person and make sure of Bunter. After that departure from his usual customs, and that extensive waste of his valuable time, he was not likely to give Bunter a chance of bolting again.

Bunter was led downstairs—and a crowd of curious Rookwood fellows gazed at him, with many smiles, as he was marched along with the Greyfriars master's hand on his shoulder.

Outside, a taxi-cab was waiting.

In deep dismay, Bunter donned hat and coat. His fat countenance was the picture of dolorous woe.

What Mr. Quelch's feelings were like, he could guess from the steely glitter in his eyes and the compression of his lips. But Mr. Quelch suppressed his feelings. With great courtesy he apologised to Mr. Dalton for the trouble that had been given, and shook hands with the Rookwood Form-master. Then he led Bunter out to the waiting taxi.

"Step in, Bunter!"

"I—I say, sir——"

"Step in at once."

"After you, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"I shall be sorry, Bunter, to chastise you here——"

Bunter stepped in, in a great hurry.

Mr. Quelch followed him in and sat down, and the taxi rolled away. It rolled out of the gates of Rookwood, and followed the road to Latcham. Billy Bunter squeezed dismally into a corner as far as possible from his incensed Form-master.

Not a word did Mr. Quelch speak as the taxi ate up the miles to Latcham Junction. And Bunter was in no mood for conversation. The drive was made in grim silence.

At Latcham Mr. Quelch paid off the taxi; and compressed his lips hard as he paid.

It was a considerable sum—but that was an item to figure later in the bill for Mr. Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove blinked round him, but Mr. Quelch's heavy hand was on his shoulder, and he was marched into the station.

That heavy hand remained on his fat shoulder until he was seated in a carriage of the express, with Mr. Quelch sitting opposite.

The train rolled out of the station.

Bunter groaned.

The game was up now. The wanderings of the elusive Owl were at an end. Mr. Quelch had a newspaper; but Bunter's only solace was to go to sleep, which he soon did. The deep snore of the Owl of the Remove mingled with the whirr and rattle of the express, as the train rushed on through the dusky evening.

A sudden shake awakened Bunter from a delicious dream of pork-pies.

"Bunter!"

"Eh? Oh! What? Leggo! 'Taint rising-bell!"

"Bunter!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "We are at Lantham. Get up at once!"

The Owl of the Remove realised where he was. He dismally rolled out of the carriage after Mr. Quelch.

Once more his fat shoulder was gripped, and he was walked across the bridge to the local platform, and planted in the local train for Friardale.

He did not sleep on that run. Direful anticipations filled his fat mind, and kept him awake now.

He blinked every now and then at Mr. Quelch's face. But he read no hope there. Never had his Form-master looked grimmer.

"I—I say, sir——" stammered Bunter, at last.

"You need say nothing, Bunter."

"It—it was all a mistake, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I really thought it was Walker of the Sixth, sir, when I biffed you in the box-room."

"I think that is possibly true, Bunter, as I have spoken to Walker of the Sixth, and he tells me that he was searching for you, to punish you for purloining a cake from his study. But that is no excuse for your un-

exampled audacity in absenting yourself from school."

"I—I offered to come back, sir, if——"

"Silence!"

"The fact is, sir, I should prefer the whole matter to drop."

"No doubt!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

"It was all Walker's fault, sir," urged Bunter. "I never had the cake. The fellows who saw me take it from Walker's study were mistaken, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

"In the circumstances, sir, as—as I'm the wronged party, I—I hope you will look over the matter, and—and—I—I don't want to be flogged, sir."

"You will be flogged, Bunter, as an example to all disobedient, reckless, and untruthful boys."

"Oh, lor'!"

"Silence!"

"But, sir, if—if it's necessary to flog a chap as—as an example, sir, couldn't the Head flog Walker, sir——"

"What?"

"As—as an example to me, sir!"

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

The train stopped at Friardale. Mr. Quelch's grip on his shoulder piloted Bunter out of the station and into the dark lane that ran to the gates of Greyfriars.

The Remove master strode along the dusky road. Billy Bunter trailed after him in the lowest of spirits.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER

"Fool's Luck"

"'OLD on!"

"What?"

Mr. Quelch stopped abruptly.

He had reached the dip in the lane, halfway between Friardale and Greyfriars, where the trees almost met across the road, and it was very dark.

From the deep shadows a muscular form suddenly loomed up, and a dim but grim and threatening stubbly face looked into Mr. Quelch's, only a few inches away.

Mr. Quelch felt a sudden shiver.

The hour was late—the lane was lonely at that hour. Mr. Quelch had walked through

that lane so many times that no thought of danger had crossed his mind on this occasion. But it was suddenly borne in upon him that that familiar lane was very lonely late at night, and that it was not quite safe to walk home by it after coming in at Friardale by the last train.

A bulky, threatening form loomed over him in the gloom, a stubbly, ruffianly face glared at him from the shadowy darkness, and he caught a glimpse of a menacing cudgel. He had fairly run into a loafing tramp—a tramp by day and a footpad by night.

Billy Bunter gave a gasp.

He stopped, and stood rooted to the ground with terror, his little round eyes blinking wildly through his big spectacles.

"'Old on, old gentleman!" went on the rough, threatening voice. "This 'ere is luck, this 'ere is. 'And it over—sharp!"

"You scoundrel!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch indignantly. "How dare you stop me! I will give you nothing! Not a shilling! Let me pass at once."

There was a hoarse laugh from the bulky tramp.

"Not blinking likely!" he said.

"You rascal—oh!"

The ruffian's grasp was on Mr. Quelch, and he went down in the road, on the very verge of the deep-flowing ditch that bordered the lane.

He gasped spasmodically as he crumpled up in the grasp of the footpad.

"Help!" he spluttered.

"Who's to 'elp you 'ere, old gentleman!" jeered the ruffian. "Don't be a goat! 'And over the stuff before I crack your 'ead! Now, then!"

Bunter woke to action.

There was one thought in Bunter's fat mind, and that was to put a safe distance between his precious person and the ruffianly tramp. While the footpad was occupied with Mr. Quelch was his chance.

Bunter leaped forward, and ran to pass the two struggling figures and tear away in the direction of Greyfriars.

Crash!

Mr. Quelch was by no means a match for the ruffian who had collared him and borne

him to the ground; but he was a gentleman of courage and great determination. Wrath and indignation gave him added strength. He made a terrific effort, and hurled the ruffian back.

Bunter's frantic rush and the staggering back of the footpad synchronized.

The ruffian staggered fairly into Bunter's path as the Owl of the Remove rushed forward.

The crash was terrific.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

There was a howl from the tramp. He had not even seen Bunter, so far, in the gloom; and the sudden shock took him entirely by surprise. All Bunter's avoirdupois crashed upon him, with something like the force of a battering-ram. A charging tank could scarcely have swept the footpad over more completely.

Splash!

The crash of the collision was followed by a heavy splash, as the reeling ruffian pitched over the edge of the ditch.

"Groooooogh! Oh, my eye! Oooch! Gug-gug-gug!"

Mr. Quelch staggered to his feet.

"Bless my soul! Bunter—where are you, Bunter? Splendid, my boy, splendid! Come—quick!"

"Ow!" spluttered Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove was reeling from the shock, and scarcely knew whether he was upon his head or his heels. Mr. Quelch's grasp upon his shoulder steadied him.

"Come!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Do not lose a moment!"

The footpad, gurgling horribly, was struggling in four feet of water and mud. It was likely to be some minutes before he was able to turn his attention again to his intended victim.

Mr. Quelch made the most of those few minutes.

It was not exactly a dignified proceeding for a middle-aged Form-master to run a foot-race, but it was a case of needs must! Holding Bunter by the arm, Mr. Quelch scudded up the road with a speed that did him credit at his age.

Bunter rolled and plunged and ran, in a



in mad panic, Bunter crashed full pelt into the footpad. The impact was terrific, and the man plunged headlong into the ditch. "Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh! I'm hurt!" On the road, Mr. Quelch staggered to his feet. He saw the tramp gurgling in the ditch, with Bunter standing on the bank. "Splendid, my boy!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Well done, Bunter!" (See Chapter 20.)

dazed state, dizzy from the shock he had received—and given—and hardly knowing what had happened. Only the Form-master's grasp kept him from stumbling over a dozen times. But he ran as hard as he could: the thought of the footpad behind spurred him on to wonderful efforts.

"Bless my soul!" Mr. Quelch stopped at last, at the masters' private gate at Greyfriars, and groped for his key hurriedly. "Can—can you hear anyone on the road, Bunter?"

"Ow!"

"Lean on the wall, my boy, while I open the gate. You must be out of breath," said Mr. Quelch kindly.

"Grooogh!"

There was no doubt that Bunter was out of breath! He leaned on the wall, and pumped in air, while Mr. Quelch found his key and unlocked the gate.

"Come on, my dear boy."

Bunter was led in, dazedly wondering how and why he had suddenly become a dear boy instead of a reckless, disobedient, and untruthful young rascal.

The gate closed.

There was no sound of pursuit on the road, but both Mr. Quelch and Bunter were glad to hear the lock click.

"Bless my soul, what a terrible experience!" said Mr. Quelch. "I must telephone to the police station at once. Dear me, I am quite out of breath! You were not hurt, Bunter?"

"Ow! Grooogh! No."

"It was splendid, my boy."

"W-w-w-was it, sir?" gasped Bunter, wondering dizzily what was splendid, and whether he was still in the train from Rookwood and dreaming.

"I should never have expected such presence of mind and such courage from you, Bunter."

"W-w-w-wouldn't you, sir?" stammered Bunter.

"No; I confess that I should not," said Mr. Quelch. "But for your prompt and courageous action, Bunter, I should certainly have been robbed, and very probably severely injured, for I should not have submitted tamely to that ruffian."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Such presence of mind was really very striking," said Mr. Quelch. "A grown man might have hesitated to attack that hulking ruffian. Really, Bunter, I could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw you rush upon him—"

"R-r-rush upon him, sir?"

"And hurl him into the ditch. It was well done, Bunter. I may say it was splendidly done."

"Oh, sir!"

Bunter began to understand.

"You have acted very wrongly, Bunter—the whole circumstances, indeed, are due to your reckless disobedience and disregard of authority. Yet I cannot overlook this—I cannot disregard the fact that you have saved me from robbery and injury, by an act of great courage, and the exhibition of really astonishing presence of mind."

"Oh!" murmured Bunter.

"I shall speak to the Head, Bunter, and say what I can in your favour," said Mr. Quelch. "Come—let us go in now! I think I can safely promise you, Bunter, that—considering what has just occurred—no flogging will be administered. I am sure that Doctor Locke will take my view upon that. Come, my boy."

Bunter rolled after his Form-master. He winked into the darkness, and followed Mr. Quelch to the House. It was one of Bunter's failings that he generally talked too much. On this critical occasion he realised that silence was golden.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER

Bunter Explains

"QUELCHY back yet?"

"No."

"Where on earth is he gone?"

"After Bunter, of course."

"Poor old Bunter!"

It was close on bed-time, and Harry Wharton & Co., in the Rag at Greyfriars, were discussing what was now almost the one topic in the school—the amazing proceedings of William George Bunter.

Wingate of the Sixth had had the pleasure—or otherwise—of taking the Re-

move that afternoon. Mr. Quelch had been absent.

Most of the fellows guessed that he had gone "after Bunter." And though Bunter was not exactly prized by the Remove, most of the fellows felt sorry for him—when Mr. Quelch got him.

"Poor old Bunter!" said Bob Cherry. "Some fellows ask for it—but Bunter begs and prays for it."

"And he will get it!" said the Bounder

"The lickfulness will be terrific, when the esteemed and ludicrous Bunter is bagged," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"But where on earth has he got to?" asked Peter Todd. "He can't be at St. Jim's now." "Goodness knows."

Wingate of the Sixth looked into the Rag.

"Bed!" he said laconically.

"Can't we stay up till our Form-master comes in, Wingate?" asked Bob Cherry. "We—we're—ahem—anxious about him!"

Wingate grinned.

"No, you can't, you young ass! Cut off."

The Remove fellows marched off to their dormitory. Wingate put the lights out, and the Remove were left to slumber.

But they were not in a hurry to slumber.

Interest in the mystery of what had happened to Bunter was almost at boiling-point. Never in all his fat career had Billy Bunter occupied the thoughts of his form-fellows to such an extent.

A buzz of talk ran from bed to bed, all on the subject of Billy Bunter, of what could have happened to him, and of what was certain to happen to him when he fell once more into the vengeful clutches of Mr. Quelch.

But the juniors dropped off to sleep at last.

It was close on half-past ten when the last eye closed in the Remove dormitory, and by that time there had been no sound to indicate that either Bunter or Mr. Quelch had returned. It was near an hour later when the dormitory door opened, and the light flashed on

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes.

"Bunter!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bunter!"

William George Bunter rolled into the

dormitory. He grinned at the Removites, sitting up in bed and staring at him.

"I say, you fellows—"

Mr. Quelch stood in the doorway.

"Go to bed, now, Bunter! I shall come back in a few minutes to turn out the light."

"Yes, sir!" said Bunter cheerfully.

Mr. Quelch retired, and Bunter proceeded to turn in. Every fellow in the dormitory was awake now, and staring at Bunter.

"So you've got back!" said Peter Todd.

"Looks like it," grinned Bunter.

"Has Quelchy scalped you?"

"Does it look like it?" chuckled Bunter.

"Well, it doesn't," said Bob. "But what—"

"Where did he dig you up?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Rookwood!"

"Great Scott!" yelled Bob. "Have you been to Rookwood?"

"I dropped in on my friends there," said Bunter calmly. "They were awfully glad to see me, of course. Jimmy Silver almost cried when I left—but I really had to go, you know. Quelchy was so pressing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've had a pretty good time," said Bunter, peeling off his socks. "They made no end of a fuss of me at St. Jim's—same at Rookwood. It comes in useful at times to be a really popular fellow, you know."

"Oh, my hat!"

"And what about the flogging?" asked Frank Nugent. "Is that coming off in the morning?"

"Certainly not."

"You don't mean to say that Quelchy is letting you off?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in amazement.

"Just that!"

"Gammon!" said Johnny Bull.

Bunter sniffed.

"You'll jolly well see! If you fellows had risked your lives to save Quelchy from a footpad—"

"What?"

"Which?"

"Draw it mild."

"I don't mind telling you fellows what's happened," said Bunter, as he divested him-

self of his well-filled waistcoat, "Quelchy bagged me at Rookwood—I mean, he requested me in a very civil way to come back to Greyfriars, and I didn't care to refuse."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle! We had a rather nice journey back—Quelchy very affable."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Walking from the station, we were suddenly attacked by a gang of footpads."

"Go it!"

"Quelchy was floored, and he called to me for help. Of course, that did it! You can guess what I did at once."

"Bolted?" asked Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I rushed at them," said Bunter calmly. "Knocking them right and left, straight from the shoulder, you know."

"We don't know!" chuckled Bob.

"Well, you know now I've told you, fat-head!"

"No, not even now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, if you fellows can't take my word——"

"Your word! Oh, my hat!"

"I'm accustomed to jealousy," said Bunter. "Just the same in the football—you fellows don't like being put in the shade by a better man. Precious few chaps in this dormitory would have tackled three or four hulking tramps——"

"Precious few!" agreed Johnny Bull, "And you're not one of the few."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Won't you tell us what's really happened, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton. "Quelchy seems good-tempered, somehow. Tell us what's happened."

"I'm telling you! Walking from the station five or six hulking footpads suddenly rushed on us, shouting, 'Your money or your life!'"

"Phew!"

"Three or four?" asked Nugent, "or five or six?"

"Five or six—in fact, six or seven," said Bunter. "I didn't stop to count them. I rushed on them like—like a lion——"

"Great Scott!"

"Knocking them right and left, I fairly strewed them in the road. Then I lifted up Quelchy, and told him to run for it. You see, eight or nine hulking ruffians were a bit too much for me; if it had been only three or four, it would have been a different matter, of course. As it was, I thought we had better clear. So I ran——"

"That sounds like the truth," remarked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, if you don't believe me——"

"Believe you! Oh, crumbs!"

"Yah!"

Bunter plunged into bed.

"But aren't you going to tell us what happened?" asked Wharton.

"You silly ass! Haven't I told you?" hooted Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The dormitory door opened.

"Good-night, my boys," said Mr. Quelch, as he turned out the light. "Good-night, Bunter."

"Good-night, sir."

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry, as the door closed on the Remove master. "Something's happened to make Quelchy jolly amiable. What was it, Bunter?!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You know what I've told you!" shrieked Bunter.

"Yes, we know that; but we want to know what happened."

"Yah!"

Bunter settled down to sleep, and the curiosity of the Removites had to remain unsatisfied. To all further questions Billy Bunter replied only with a deep and resonant snore.

Harry Wharton & Co. knew, the following day, what had happened. Their opinion of the happening did not coincide with Mr. Quelch's.

Still, they were glad that Bunter was to escape the reward of his fatuous proceedings. The flogging was off, and so far as Billy Bunter was concerned, all was calm and bright.

THE END

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE!



There is no doubt in the mind of Billy Bunter that he will be a great man one day. His future is certain to be a glorious one, but in what direction will it lie? In his ambitious dreams, the fat Removite indulges in many flights of fancy, some of which our artist has indicated in the above drawing.