

The LAST LAUGH!



A Christmas Play in Verse for Amateur Actors By the GREYFRIARS RHYMESTER

SCENE :

(Study No. 7 in the Remove Passage.
PETER TODD is whistling " Good King Wenceslas " and staring at a pile of school books on the table.)

TODD (*jubilantly*) :

No more prep at all this year,
No more pain and sorrow ;
Good old Christmastime is here
And we break up to-morrow !
That's something worth a song—
about,

So—(*sings*) :
Good King
Wenceslas
looked out
(*He picks up
a book and
shies it across
the study.*)

CHARACTERS.
Harry Wharton Captain of the Remove
Bob Cherry
Johnny Bull } Of the Remove
Frank Nugent }
Peter Todd }
Billy Bunter The Fat Boy of Greyfriars
William Gosling The School Porter

(NOTE.—This play may be performed by readers of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL without fee or licence on condition that the words " By permission of the Editor of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL " appear on every programme.)

That's for Virgil—serve him right !
(*Picks up another.*)

Euclid ! Ugh ! (*Shies it.*) Get out
of sight ! (*Picks up another.*)

Dr. Arnold's Latin Prose !

Lot of piffle. (*Shies it.*) There it
goes ! (*Picks up another.*)

Galt's Advanced Arithmetic—
The look of it makes me feel sick !
(*He hurls it towards the door just as*

BOB CHERRY comes in. *The book
crashes on his
waistcoat.*)

CHERRY (*roaring*):
Ow ! Wha-at
was that, you
lunatic ?

TODD (*grinning*):
Oh, Galt's
Advanced
Arithmetic.

It seems to have advanced too quick!

CHERRY :

You burbling, babbling bandersnatch!

You ought to be in Colney Hatch!
Now listen! This is Christmas-tide,

And we've a gift for you outside.
We've got it waiting for you, Toddy,
With kind regards from everybody

In the Remove! You needn't grin!
(Calls off stage.)

All right, you fellows! Bring it in!

(WHARTON, NUGENT and BULL enter, leading in BILLY BUNTER by the nose. BUNTER'S hands are tied together behind him and he is gagged with an old duster. Round his neck is hung, by string, a large piece of cardboard bearing the words in black ink, "WHO WANTS BUNTER?")

TODD (jumping) :

Ye gods! It's Bunter! Oh, my hat!

But why's he gagged and bound like that?

WHARTON :

He's trying to get, as you may bet,
An invite for the Vac.,

He won't take, "No!" for answer,
so

We've kindly brought him back!

NUGENT :

He's tried to dodge in Wharton Lodge,

We said, "It can't be done!"

He rolled on then to Mauly's den
And set him on the run!

CHERRY :

And then he thought Brown might be caught

To spend the Christmas with;

But Brown rose and pulled his nose,

So he tried Vernon-Smith.

BULL :

But Smithy's boot helped him to scoot,

And Hazel made a fuss

When he blew in, so with a grin

He wandered back to us.

WHARTON :

We didn't wait to hear him state
The nature of his biz.,

We simply bagged him and we gagged

The Porpoise—here he is!

TODD (laughing) :

Ha, ha! So that's the trouble is it?

Thuswise the gagging stunts!

Well, who wants Bunter for a visit?

Don't all speak at once!

(TODD unties and ungags BUNTER, and the fat junior gives an indignant roar.)

BUNTER :

Beasts! Rotters! Villains! Yah!

You rotters!—

ALL (laughing) :

Ha, ha, ha!

BUNTER (wrenching off his label) :

There's nothing at all to cackle at!

I won't go with you now—that's flat!

To treat a chap this way, you beast,

Who comes to ask you to a feast!

ALL (staggered) :

You what? Great Scott!

Don't talk such rot!

BUNTER :

I came to ask you to a feed!

You collared me with such a speed

I couldn't say a word of it—

WHARTON (grinning) :

That famous feed! We've heard of it!

BULL :

We've often heard him tell of it,

But never got a smell of it!

CHERRY :

You've chosen the wrong day for it
If you want us to pay for it.

(All laugh.)

BUNTER (*yelling*):

I tell you there'll be tons to eat;
I'm standing you a Christmas treat!

TODD:

Where's the grub, you fat
defrauder?

Coming with your postal-order?

BUNTER (*with dignity*):

That's quite all right! You'll see it
soon!

My hamper comes this afternoon;
Sausages, sardines and salmon,
Cake and chocolate and——

ALL (*grinning*):

Gammon!

BUNTER:

I wrote last Saturday, you see,
To my maternal grandpa,
And asked him if he'd send to me
This Christmas-time a hamper.
My granddad is a ripping sort;
He lives with us at Bunter's Court.



Peter Todd: Galt's Advanced Arithmetic. The look of it makes me feel sick! (He hurls the book towards the door and it crashes on Bob Cherry's waistcoat just as he is entering the room.)
Cherry: Ow! Wha-at was that, you lunatic?

WHARTON:

My dear old Porpoise, that's all
bosh!

You know by now that yarn won't
wash!

BUNTER:

I tell you it's the truth, you beast!

WHARTON:

All right! If you produce this
feast——

Enough for four or five, at least——
Then I'll put paid to all your worry
And ask you to my place in Surrey,
Where you can gorge and eat your
fill

And guzzle till you're taken ill;
But should it turn out otherwise
And your spread *not* materialise,
You'll give your word that you'll
abstain

From ever asking me again.

NUGENT (*grinning*):

Hear, hear! Now that's a bargain,
Billy!

BULL (*grunting*):

But he won't keep his promise,
will he?

BUNTER:

I say, old fellow, I agree!
The spread is bound to come, you
see!

CHERRY (*grimly*):

He thinks we're spoofing him, per-
haps;
We'll keep him up to it, you chaps!

NUGENT:

Yes; if this yarn about the feed
Is just another dodge,
You give your word you will not
plead

To come to Wharton Lodge?

BULL:

If he mentions it, we'll bump him!

TODD:

Poor old Bunter! This will stump
him!

BUNTER:

Yes, I agree! I'm not afraid!

The hamper's
bound to
come, old
sport!

But if it should
have been
delayed—

WHARTON :

Then you'll go
home to Bun-
ter Court!
(All chuckle.)

BUNTER :

All right! With
you I'll spend
Christmas like
a bird!

WHARTON :

Right-ho, my
podgy friend;
And mind you
keep your
word.

BULL :

Well, wheres
the feed? I'm
hungry as a
hunter!

(A tap on the door
and GOSLING
enters, bowed
down under

the weight of a large hamper on his
shoulders. He is grunting and
gasping as he comes in.)

GOSLING :

'Scuse me! (Puff.) This 'ere's for
Master Bunter!

(With frightful exertion, he lowers
it gently to the floor and stands
mopping his brow. The juniors
dumbfounded.)

CHERRY :

Well, my only summer bonnet!
This fairly puts a stopper on it!

TODD :

I can't believe my eyes—I can't!
I can't speak! I've gone dumb!



Todd (as Wharton, Nugent and Bull enter, leading
Bunter by the nose): Ye gods! It's Bunter!
Oh, my hat! But why's he gagged and bound like
that? Wharton: He's been trying to get, as you
may bet, an invite for the vac. He won't take
"No!" for an answer, so we've kindly brought
him back!

BULL :

My only sainted maiden aunt!
It's actually come!

GOSLING (panting hard,—and with a
curious grin on his face):

My word! That's 'eavy for a bloke!
My bloomin' shoulder's nearly brokel!

BUNTER (beaming):

He, he! This takes you down a peg!
He, he! You thought you'd pull
my leg!

But there's the hamper, hard and
fast,
And he laughs longest who laughs
last!

He, he, he!



Bull : Well, where's the feed? I'm hungry as a hunter! (Gosling enters the room, bowed down under the weight of a large hamper.) Gosling : 'Scuse me! This 'ere's for Master Bunter!

WHARTON (ruefully) :

We were wrong; that's very clear!
We can't dispute this evidence.

GOSLING :

What I ses, gents, is this 'ere,
That 'amper's mortal 'eavy, gents!

BUNTER (feeling in his pockets) :

I'm out of change; this is a fix!
Say, Wharton, lend me two-and-six!

WHARTON (producing some money) :

One-and-six! That's all I've got!
(Gives it to BUNTER, who gives it to
GOSLING.)

BUNTER :

Thanks! Here, Gossy! Take the lot!

GOSLING (with a lurking grin) :

Master Bunter, you're a toff!
If I'd a 'at, I'd take it off!

WHARTON :

Why do you keep grinning like a
cat?

GOSLING :

Oh, nothing, sir—there's nothing to
grin at!

(GOSLING shuffles out, grinning.)

NUGENT :

Oh, dear! This is a nasty smack!
We're booked with Bunter for the
Vac.

WHARTON :

Yes, it appears
That we must keep our vow.

TODD (rather entertained) :

If you have tears,
Prepare to shed them now.

(BUNTER begins to lay a cloth on the
table.)

BUNTER :

I say, you chaps, you must admit
You've fairly put your foot in
it!

I'm coming with you—he, he,
he!

We'll talk it over during tea.

I say, that is a ripping hamper.

Don't you fellows try to tamper

With it—bring it over here;

I'll unpack it now—and cheer!

You lift it, Cherry, and you, Harry
—it

Needs the two of you to carry it.

(CHERRY and WHARTON seize the
hamper and with a mighty effort,
heave it into the air. As, however,
the hamper appears to contain
nothing more solid than fresh air,
they shoot backwards on to the
floor, with the hamper on top of
them. Two wild yells ascend. The
others stare blankly.)

TODD :

Why, what the dickens made you
fall?

CHERRY (roaring) :

The hamper's no dashed weight at
all!

WHARTON :

There's nothing in it, I should say.
Great pip!

Old Gossy spoofed us, just to get a
tip!

That's why he was grinning!—
Eighteenpence!

(JOHNNY BULL, *with one hand, raises the hamper above his head.*)
BULL (sarcastically):

What I ses is this, it's 'eavy, gents!
(*Drops it down.*)

BUNTER (*blankly*):

Here! Wh-what is this, you men?
If there's nothing in it, then
What does it mean? Look here, I
say—
Wh-what is—Here, geddout the
way!

(*He wrenches it open, and looks inside.*)
Empty!(*Roars.*) Rotters! Villains!
Cads!

This hamper isn't my granddad's,
This is a joke between you lot—

NUGENT:

No; honour bright, old bean, it's
not!

TODD:

Once more the thing is very plain:
It's Bunter Court for Bill again!
That hamper—that's an ancient
dodge;
A feed's required for Wharton
Lodge!

BUNTER:

You rotters planned this some time
past!

CHERRY:

Oh, he laughs longest who laughs
last!
But we've not done it; you know
better—

(*BUNTER suddenly dives into the
hamper and brings out an envelope.*)

BUNTER:

Why, what's this? Oh, it's a letter!
(*He opens it and reads it out.*)

"Dear William,—Just a wish I
send:

A Merry Christmas may you spend!
You ask me for a hamper, and
Although I do not understand
The reason why you should require
it,

I send it since you so desire it.

I meant to send a silver pencil,
And not this basketwork utensil,
But you shall have it, as you'd
rather,
From your affectionate—
Grandfather."

(*There is an astonished pause.*)

CHERRY (*roaring*):

Oh, crikey! I shall burst in half a
minute!
He didn't know you wanted some-
thing in it!

WHARTON (*wiping his eyes*):

Poor old grandpa, he would never
spot it!
You asked him for a hamper—

BULL:

And you've got it!

(*All shriek.*)

BUNTER (*gasping*):

Oh, crumbs! Oh, lor'! Oh, crikey!
My sainted sister Psyche!
(*HARRY WHARTON & Co., roaring,
stagger out of the room.*)

TODD (*grinning*):

You made a bargain and you meant
it!



Bunter (feeling in his pockets): I'm out of change:
this is a fix! Say, Wharton, lend me two-and-six!

Now it's too late—you can't repent it!

No more cadging after Wharton ;
If you do, I'll try to shorten
Your fat nose, my podgy barrel!

BUNTER :

Oh, really, Toddy ; don't let's quarrel!

As I can't go with Wharton—well,

I'm sticking to my dear old pal!

All right, old chap, I'll come with you!

TODD :

My dear old bloated buzzard—do!

I'm quite prepared to make you welcome ;

And if you want to come, you *shall* come.

BUNTER :

My dear old fellow, like a bird!

Your place is not much class,

I've heard ;

Your pa's a poor solicitor—

He'll like me for a visitor!

TODD :

Now make your mind up whether

We shall stick together!

BUNTER :

I have, old fellow! There's my hand!

TODD :

Now that's a bargain! Understand?

(They shake hands. TODD goes over to the door.)

There's one thing I forgot to say :

That both my parents are away ;

They sail to-day for Mandalay

From good old Liverpool!

My Christmas won't be very gay ;

No home, no fun, no feast, no play!

For they will pay for me to stay

This Christmas at the school!

BUNTER *(furiously)* :

You spoofing rotter! Yah!

You bony freak!

TODD :

Ta-ta!

I'll go and get some tuck for tea ;
Those chaps shall have their feed with me.

At spoofing, Bunter, you're out-classed—

He laughs longest who laughs last!

(Exit TODD.)

(BUNTER remains deep in thought, and then suddenly cackles.)

BUNTER :

He, he! So this is spoof! My hat!

Well, two of us can play at that!

(Enter WHARTON, grinning.)

WHARTON :

Hallo, old nut! Got over it!

I want my duster—

(He picks up BUNTER's late gag.)

BUNTER :

Wait a bit!

About the holidays, old scout!

I'd like to ask you—

WHARTON :

Cut that out!

You promised me you wouldn't speak

Of that again, you podgy freak!

BUNTER :

Well, I'm not going to, you beast!

Or, not about myself, at least!

I want to say that poor old Toddy

Is not booked up with anybody

For the Vac. His parents aren't

At home, and poor old Toddy can't

Fix up for Christmas anywhere.

He's staying here! At Greyfriars!

There!

I'd ask him home to Bunter Court,
But—

WHARTON *(grinning)* :

When the holidays begin

You always have the brokers in.

I know! But is this really so,

That Toddy has nowhere to go?

BUNTER :

Yes! Honour bright, it's really true!

Why don't you ask him home with you?

WHARTON :

I will, by Jove, with pleasure !
Old Barrel, you're a treasure !
But, dash it, this is very strange—
You're being decent for a
change !

BUNTER :

Oh, really, Wharton—
(TODD enters with some food and
ginger pop, followed by CHERRY,
NUGENT and BULL)

TODD :

Follow me !
There's eggs and sausages for tea !

NUGENT :

This seems to be the sort of spread
That makes a fellow feel well fed.

BULL :

These sausages and apple pies
Beat Bunter's banquets hollow !

CHERRY :

We'll swallow them, but Bunter's lies
We simply cannot swallow !

WHARTON (*awkwardly*) :

Listen, Todd ! We'll be delighted
If your Christmas you will spend
At Wharton Lodge, and you're in-
vited

To the party as my friend.

We're one short, anyhow, by chance,
So you can't leave us in the
stewpot !

For Inky has gone out to France
To join his uncle, Ram-Jam-
Gluepot !

TODD (*drily*) :

You've heard I'm booked for Grey-
friars, what ?

Thanks all the same, I'd rather not !

CHERRY (*encouragingly*) :

Come on, old bean ! Join in the
fun !

TODD :

No, thanks ! Let's get these sosses
done !

BULL :

Pig-headed ass ! You cannot shake
him !



Cherry and Wharton seize the hamper and with a mighty effort, heave it into the air. As the hamper, however, appears to contain nothing more solid than air, they shoot backwards on to the floor.

BUNTER (*cackling*) :

I say, you fellows, you can make
him !

NUGENT (*blankly*) :

Can we ? How, you bloated freak ?

BUNTER :

He, he ! Do let a fellow speak !
The silly ass and I just now
Between us made a solemn vow
That we would stick together
through
This Christmas Vac. All you need
do

Is ask *me* to come home with you,
And Toddy's bound to join up, too.

TODD (*roaring*) :

You spoofing, cunning owl ! My
hat !

BUNTER :

You spoofed me first ; it's tit for
tat !

CHERRY :

Wharton would take Toddy home
If Todd would only let him ;
But if we ask the Owl to come,

Why, then we're *bound* to get him.

TODD :
 Hold on! I'll spoil the rascal's game!
 I'll come, and never mind the weather!

BUNTER (*cackling*) :
 But I'll go with you just the same,
 For we agreed to *stick together*.

WHARTON (*laughing*) :
 That's so! He's caught you on the hop!
 But still, you've got to come, old top!
 If you are feeling rather loath
 To join me—well, I ask you both!
 And as we're bound to get our Billy,
 You'll have to join us, willy-nilly!

TODD (*with a grin*) :
 Oh, I'll come! Many thanks, old top!
 We'll drink a toast of ginger-pop.
 (*TODD pours ginger-pop into glasses and hands them round.*)

BULL :
 Now Bunter's planted on us fast!

BUNTER :
 He laughs longest——

ALL (*grinning*) :
 Who Laughs Last!
 (*They raise their brimming glasses.*)

WHARTON :
 We'll drink a toast, you fellows!
 And wish you all good cheer!
 A Very Happy Christmas——

ALL (*heartily*) :
 And a Bright New Year!

CURTAIN

MAKE-UP HINTS

Gosling should really have a bald head, but those who cannot afford to hire a wig (and home-made wigs are never satisfactory) should give him grey hair by sprinkling starch on the actor's hair and rubbing it well in. It is easily brushed out afterwards. His uniform can easily be made from an old overcoat and pair of long trousers. Get your mother or sister to sew gold braid round the lapels and down the leg of the trousers. This braid is very cheap. Grey side-whiskers made out of crêpe hair add to the effect. You may buy this at many hairdressers' at a charge of threepence a foot, and two inches will be ample!

A Reminder:

Harry Wharton & Co. appear every week in The MAGNET, on sale Saturdays, price 2d. Tom Merry & Co. appear every week in The GEM, on sale Wednesdays, price 2d. Also, Harry Wharton & Co., Tom Merry & Co., and Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, appear in The SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY, on sale the First Thursday of Every Month, price 4d. per volume.

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