

Billy Bunter's

BY

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Booby-trap

"**S**AY, YOU FELLOWS!"

Billy Bunter blinked into No. 1 Study, in the Remove passage at Greyfriars School, through his big spectacles.

Harry Wharton and Co. glanced round at the fat face and ample figure in the study doorway.

"Too late!" said Bob Cherry, shaking his head.

"Eh? Too late for what?" asked Bunter.

"We've finished tea! Not a crumb or a plum left."

"Oh, really, Cherry——!"

"Try Smithy's study!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Smithy had a hamper from home today, old fat man."

"I haven't come here to tea!" hooted Bunter.

"You haven't?" ejaculated the chums of the Remove, all together, in astonishment.

"No!" roared Bunter, "I want you to lend me——!"

"Stony!" said Bob, with another shake of the head.

"I want you to lend me——!"

"Nothing doing!"

"I want you to lend me your coal-bucket!" roared Billy Bunter, getting it out at last. "That old leather bucket you use for a coal-scuttle. Can I have it?"

"What?"

The juniors in No. 1 Study stared

blankly at the fat Owl of the Remove. Billy Bunter might have wanted to borrow anything in the way of cash, from twopence to a ten-shilling note. But why he should want to borrow their coal-bucket was a great mystery.

"Will you lend me your coal-bucket?" yapped Bunter.

"There's no coal in it," said Frank Nugent.

"That's all right! I can put a couple of bricks in it. You see, what I want it for is a booby-trap!" explained Bunter. "It's for that beast Smithy! He's gone out now—and I want it ready when he comes back. I'm going to fix it up over his study door. I fancy he will be sorry for kicking a chap, when it comes down on his napper! What?"

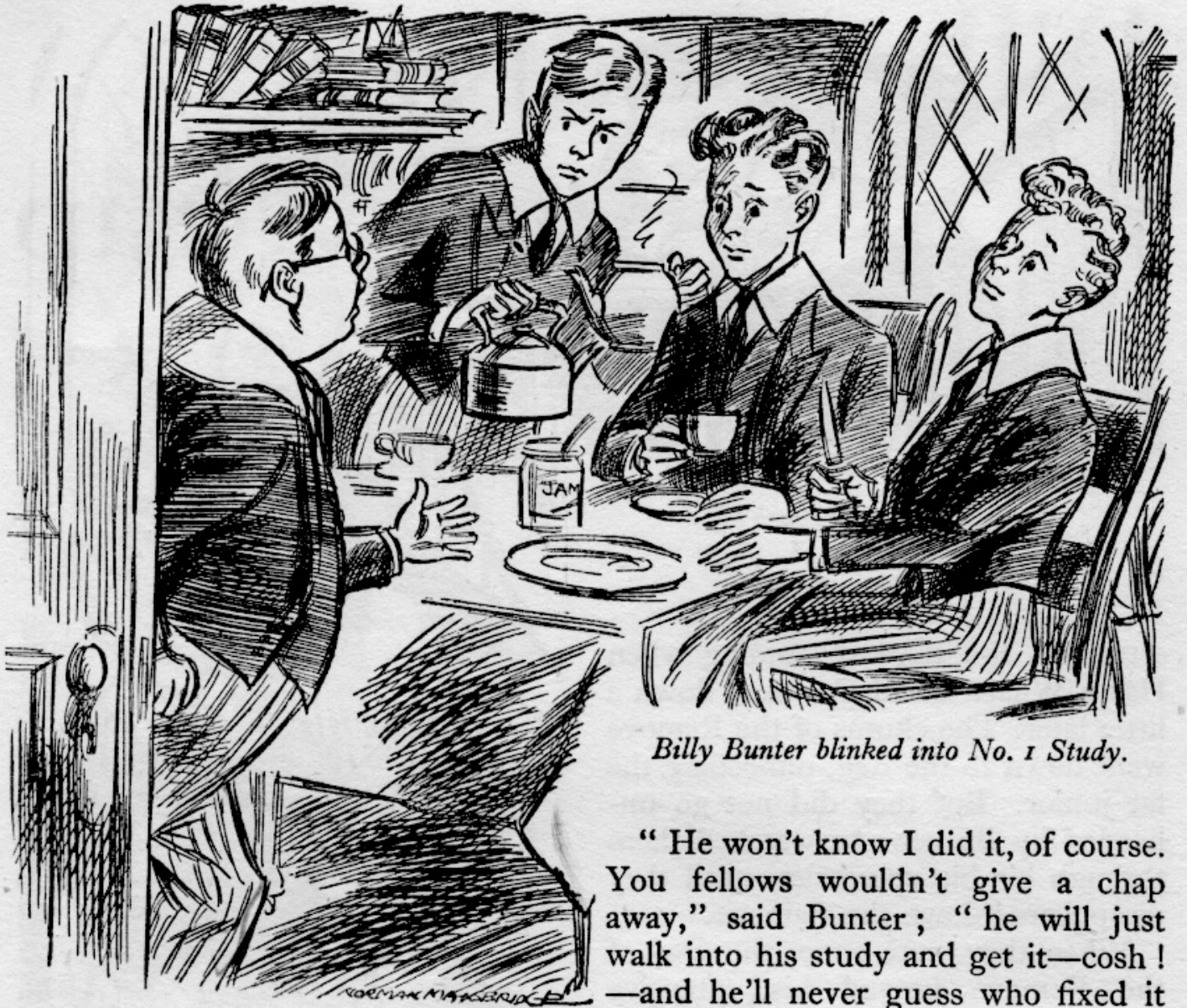
And Bunter chuckled.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "You unspeakable fathead, are you thinking of dropping a coal-bucket with a couple of bricks in it on a chap's napper?"

"That's it!" grinned Bunter. "Make him sit up, what? He jolly well kicked me before he went out. Making out that I'd been at his hamper, you know. As if I'd touch his mouldy pineapple. I can get all the pineapples I want from the pineries at Bunter Court——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle



Billy Bunter blinked into No. 1 Study.

at. I told him I never touched his pineapple, and he kicked me all the same. Suspicious beast, you know. It wasn't a good pineapple, either—not really ripe—I couldn't have eaten it at all if I hadn't found some sugar in Ogilvy's study——”

“Oh, crumbs! And you never touched it!” gasped Bob.

“No! I told Smithy so, and he wouldn't take my word! Kicked me, you know,” said Bunter. “Well, perhaps he'll be sorry for himself when he gets that bucket on his napper, with a brick or two in it.”

“Not so sorry as you'd be afterwards!” chuckled Bob.

“He won't know I did it, of course. You fellows wouldn't give a chap away,” said Bunter; “he will just walk into his study and get it—cosh!—and he'll never guess who fixed it up. But I say, you fellows, I can't waste time—Smithy's only gone to see Redwing off in his train—he'll be back soon. Hand me that coal-bucket, will you, Wharton?”

“Will I?” gasped the captain of the Remove. “Not quite! Only a howling ass would do a thing like that. You'd better forget all about it.”

“Look here,” roared Bunter, “will you lend me that coal-bucket or not?”

“Not! Shut the door after you.”

“Beast!”

Billy Bunter shut the door after him—with a bang that woke all the echoes of the Remove passage, as he retired in wrath.

Billy Bunter was sitting on the



He watched them through his big spectacles, until they disappeared down the stairs.

settee on the Remove landing when Harry Wharton and Co. went down a little later. The chums of the Remove went down to the Rag, unheeding the fat junior. But they did not go unheeded by Bunter—he watched them through his big spectacles, until they disappeared down the staircase.

When they were gone, the Owl of the Remove heaved his extensive weight up from the settee, and rolled into the Remove passage. With a cheery grin on his fat face, he rolled into No. 1 Study, picked up the old leather coal-bucket and rolled out with it.

In the passage, Billy Bunter looked this way and that way, like Moses of old. Like Moses, he saw no man! The coast was clear. Bucket in hand, he arrived at Herbert Vernon-Smith's study, No. 4. There was no time to lose now—Smithy would be coming in soon. He loaded the leather bucket with a Latin dictionary, a *Selection of English Verse* and a Hall and Knight, from Vernon-Smith's study table. Those three volumes were

enough—perhaps, indeed, even a little too much!

Then he lifted a chair outside the study door. The door, naturally, opened inwards; but Billy Bunter could not fix up his booby-trap from the inside, or there would have been no egress from the study for him afterwards. He had to fix it from outside the door. Mounting on the chair, he lifted up the leather bucket, and

lodged it on top of the thick oak door, holding it there with one fat hand while he drew the door more closely shut with the other. With the door about six inches ajar, he lodged one side of the bucket on the lintel over the inner top of the doorway. It was quite safe there (until the door was pushed open) and invisible from the passage. Smithy, when he came along to his door, would not see it unless he looked up—and why should he?

Grinning, the fat Owl of the Remove stepped down from the chair. The booby-trap was ready now. He lifted the chair into the next study and left it there.

“He, he, he!” chuckled Bunter. “When Smithy blows in—cosh! He, he, he!”

The deed was done! All that remained was for Bunter to get safely



He lodged it on top of the door.

off the scene before the Bounder of Greyfriars came in. He would have liked to witness the crash; but Bunter, though he was not very bright, was bright enough to realize that it was wiser not to be in the offing when Smithy received the leather bucket, the Latin dictionary, the *Selection of English Verse* and Hall and Knight's *Algebra*, on his devoted head!

With a fat grin irradiating his fat face, Billy Bunter rolled down the staircase and disappeared into space.

“Oh!” roared Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Crash! Clatter! Bang!

Life is full of surprises: and Smithy of the Remove may have had his share of them. But never had Smithy been so surprised as he was when he pushed open his study door. For a dizzy moment it seemed to the Bounder of Greyfriars that the whole ancient fabric of the old school was tumbling down on his head.

But it was not so bad as that! Still, it was bad enough. Something banged on his head and settled there like a very large bonnet. Books crashed round him. He staggered in his study doorway, completely bewildered, clutching wildly at the object, whatever it was, that had bonneted him. He dragged it off, and hurled it away—and it rolled across the floor. He rubbed his head—he rubbed his face. His fingers came away black. There had been no coal in the bucket, but a considerable quantity of coal-dust. Smithy's face was streaked like a zebra's. Where it was not black with coal-dust, it was red with rage.

“Oh!” he gasped again.

Vernon-Smith's temper was not



Clutching wildly at the object that had bonneted him.

sweet at the best of times. Now it was the worst ever. As he realized what had happened, he seemed to be understudying the Alpine young man in the poem: his brow was black, his eye beneath flashed like a falchion from its sheath! His look would have made Bunter quake, had Bunter been there! But Bunter, just then, was at a safe distance, in the school shop, disposing of ginger-beer and grinning in anticipation over what was coming to Smithy. Smithy, his face quite a striking picture in red and black, glared up and down the passage. But all the fellows seemed to have gone down after tea: there was no one about. What Smithy wanted, at that moment, was to find out who had fixed up that booby-trap, and deal with him faithfully. And he grabbed up a cricket-stump from his study, put it under his arm, and tramped down to the Rag to inquire.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Smithy!" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

"What's up?"

Harry Wharton and Co. were in the Rag, with half a dozen other Remove fellows, when Herbert Vernon-Smith came tramping into the junior day-room, his face red with wrath and black with coal-dust, and a cricket-stump under his arm. Obviously something was "up"—very much up!

The Bounder glared round over the staring juniors.

"Who did it?" he roared. "Look at me! Who did it? I want to know!"

"Which and what?" inquired Bob.

"A booby-trap at my study door," roared Smithy. "I'm going to break this stump on the fathead who did it, and I want to know who it was!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Harry Wharton.

The chums of the Remove exchanged startled glances. They had forgotten Billy Bunter and his fatuous scheme—but they were reminded now. Only too clearly the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove had carried out that scheme—and Smithy's coal-dusty aspect showed that it had been a success.

"Mum's the word!" whispered Bob.

No doubt the fat Owl had asked for stumping—if Smithy discovered him. But it was not for Harry Wharton and Co. to give him away to the wrathful Bounder. They remained silent.

"Was it you, Cherry?" roared Vernon-Smith.

"Eh! What?" ejaculated Bob.

"You're fathead enough——!"

"Thanks!" grinned Bob. "Not guilty, my lord!"

"Was it you, Skinner?"

Skinner of the Remove looked quite alarmed.

"No fear!" he gasped. "Haven't been up to the studies since tea. How do you know it was a Remove man at all? Might have been anybody."

Herbert Vernon-Smith breathed wrath—and coal-dust! He was just yearning to handle that stump on the fellow who had caught him with a booby-trap. But there was absolutely no clue. As Skinner said, it might have been anybody: any man in the Remove, the Fourth or the Shell. In fact, he had the whole Lower School of Greyfriars to choose from, to find his man.

There was a pause—and then footsteps were heard in the corridor, coming to the doorway of the Rag.

"I say, you fellows."

Billy Bunter rolled in.

The short-sighted Owl of the Remove did not, for the moment, observe Vernon-Smith in the junior day-room. He blinked at Harry Wharton and Co. as he rolled in.

"I say, seen anything of Smithy?" squeaked Bunter. "I say, it's time he was back. If the silly ass doesn't come in soon, somebody else may barge into that booby-trap and I shall have had all my trouble for nothing. I say, know whether Smithy's come in yet?"

Vernon-Smith spun round, clutching the stump.

"You!" he roared.

Bunter jumped almost clear of the floor. His little round eyes almost popped through his big round spectacles at the Bounder.

"Oh!" he gasped, "I—I—I didn't see you, Smithy! I—I—I didn't know you'd come in! I—I say, it wasn't me—I didn't—I never—I wasn't—oh, crumbs! I say, keep that stump away! Yaroooh! I say, you fellows, keep him off! Oh, scissors!"

Billy Bunter bolted out of the Rag. After him shot Vernon-Smith, brandishing the stump. Loud howls floated back, as they disappeared, both going strong—leaving the juniors in the Rag howling with laughter.

