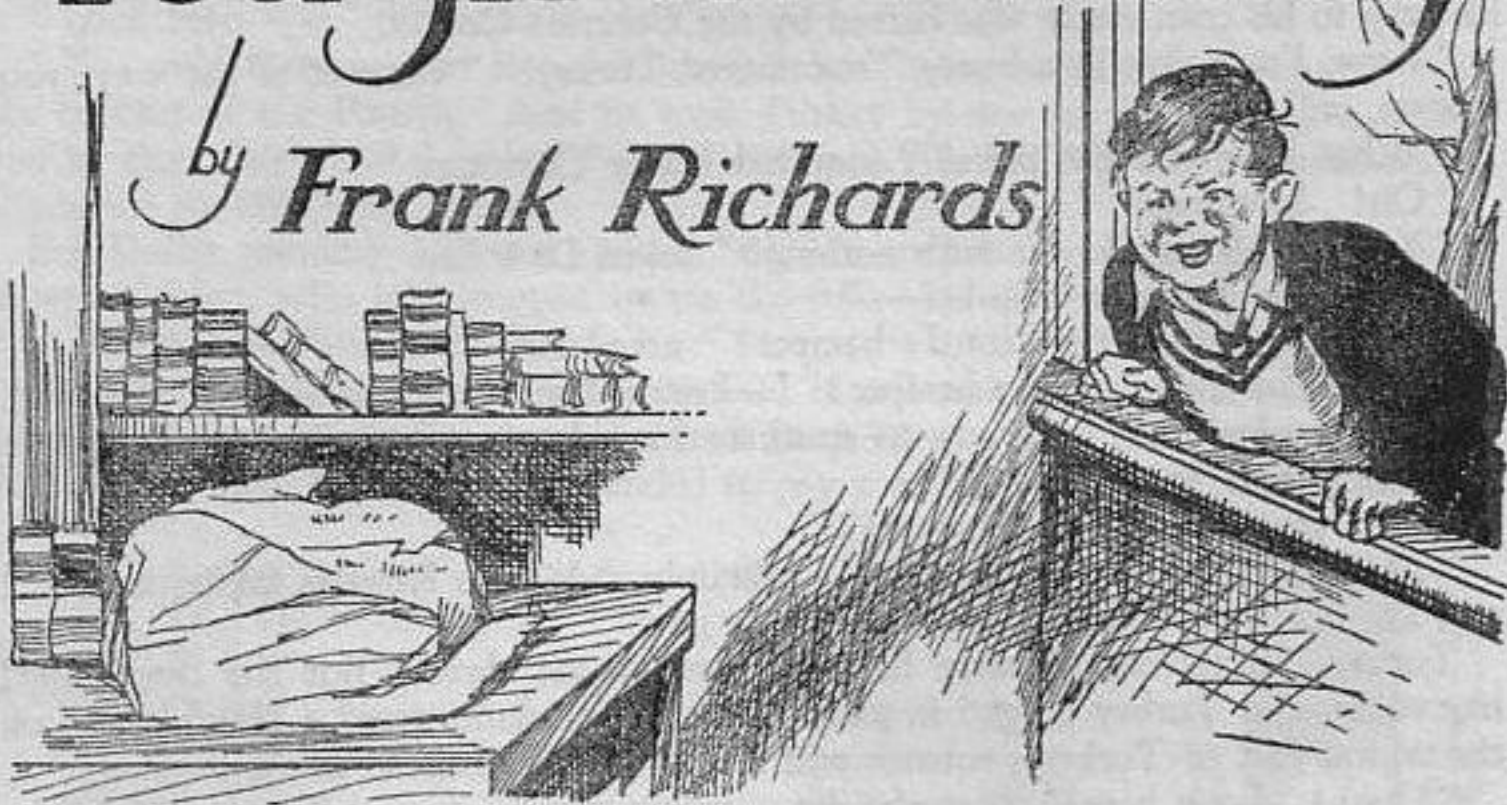


Tough on Turkey

by Frank Richards



CHAPTER I

A TIP FOR TURKEY

"HALT!" rapped Bob Drake.

"Oh!" ejaculated Turkey Tuck.

Turkey halted.

He had no choice about that, with three fellows lined up across the Fourth-form passage to bar his way.

James Smyth Tuck, who was generally called 'Turkey' in the Carcroft Fourth, was emerging from No. 11 Study, when Harry Compton and Co. came up the passage.

No. 11 Study belonged to Lord Talboys, who, at the moment, was interviewing his form-master, Mr. Roger Ducas, downstairs, on the subject of a hamper of rather unusual proportions which had arrived for his lordship.

Harry Compton, Bob Drake, and Dick Lee did not need telling why Turkey had called in at No. 11 while Talboys was absent.

Turkey was bulging. Every pocket in his garments bulged. Under each arm he had a package. Even his waistcoat bulged. There was not much room under the

fat Turkey's waistcoat for anything but Turkey's circumference, but he had contrived to pack something there for transit.

Turkey was heavy-laden: and his plump visage registered alarm and dismay as his way to his own study was barred by the Carcroft Co.

"I say, I'm rather in a hurry," stammered Turkey. "Gerrout of the way, you fellows, will you?"

"What have you got there?" inquired Harry Compton.

"Oh! Nothing."

"You're bulging all over with nothing?" asked Dick Lee.

"Yes—no—I—mean—I—I——"

"Anything left in the Lizard's hamper?" asked Bob.

"Oh! Has Talboys had a hamper? I—I never knew anything about it, if he had. I—I just looked into his study to speak to him about—about the goal he got in the match with St. Jim's——"

"And you didn't see the hamper?"

"No! Never knew he had one—I certainly didn't see Ruggles taking it up. I say, I'm in a hurry. Look here, let a fellow pass."

Turkey pushed on, to barge his way through the three. But the three stood like rocks, and Turkey barged in vain. Bob Drake administered a playful poke on the widest part of Turkey's equator and the fat Turkey backed away, gasping.

"Oooh! Look here, you swobs, let a fellow pass!" gasped Turkey. "I keep on telling you I'm in a hurry."

"What have you been up to in the Lizard's study?"

"Nothing!" hooted Turkey. "I just dropped in to tell him about Gunter of the Sixth rowing with Packe. We had a little chat——"

"Oh, suffering snakes!" ejaculated Bob. As the three were aware that Lord Talboys was downstairs in Mr. Ducas's study, they were not likely to believe that statement.

"Now let a fellow pass," urged Turkey. "I say, Vane-Carter's waiting——"

"V.C. can wait," said Bob. "You're not walking off with the Lizard's tuck, you fat cormorant. What's in those packets under your arms?"

"Nothing, I—I mean, some books the Lizard lent me. You see, I—I dropped into his study to borrow some books——"

"As well as to talk Soccer, and to tell him about Gunter of the Sixth?" asked Bob. "Let's see the books."

Bob Drake grasped a fat arm and jerked it up. The package under it fell on the passage floor, and burst open. The contents rolled out—half a dozen red ripe apples.

"Oh, haddocks!" gasped Turkey. "I—I meant to say apples, not books. The fact is, Talboys gave me those apples in his study a minute ago——"

"You fat villain, the Lizard is down in Roger's study, getting a jaw about that very hamper."

"Oh! Is he? I—I mean——"

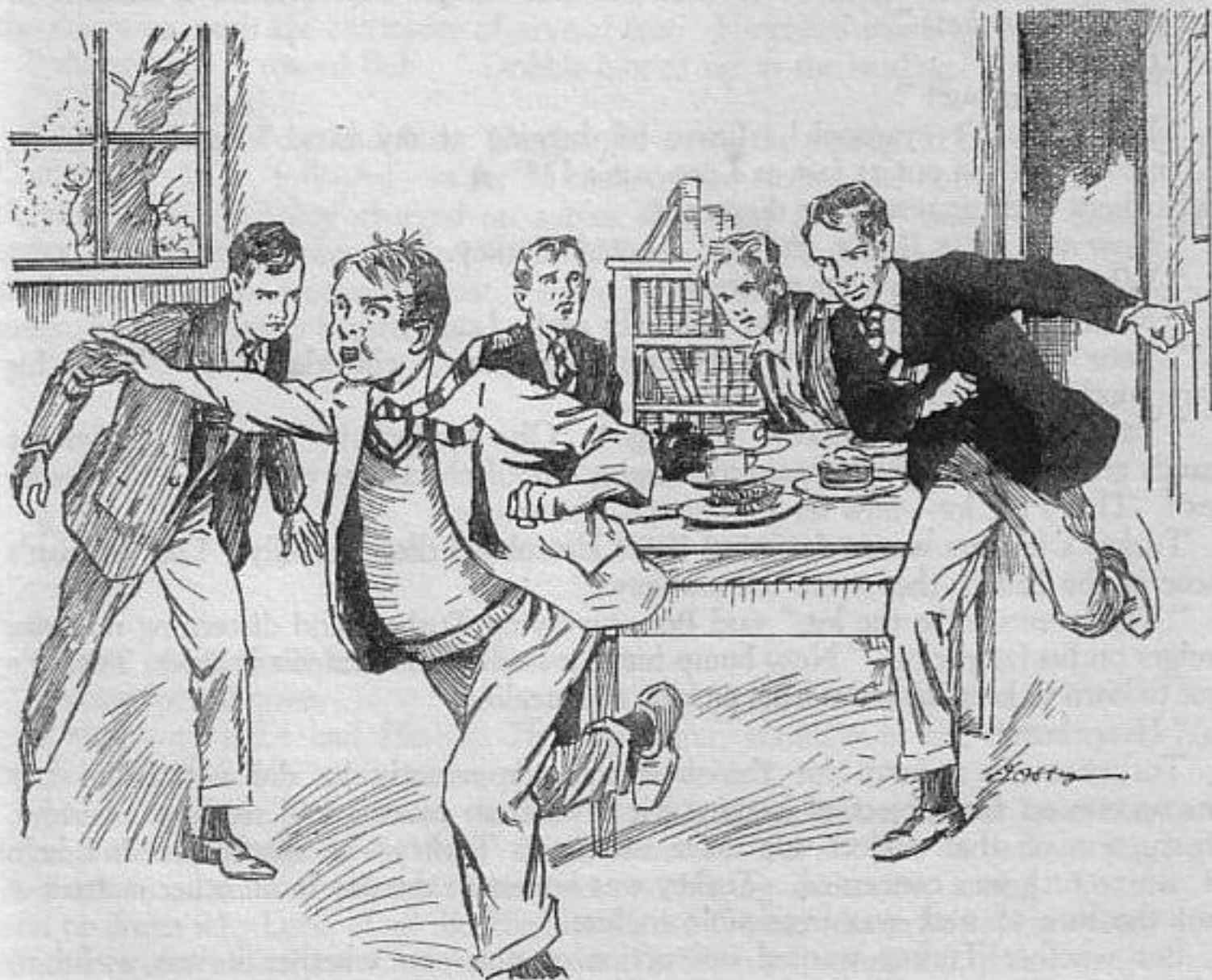
"We know what you mean," said Harry Compton. "Now walk back into that study, and unload. Go to it!"

"Look here——" protested Turkey.

"You field those apples, Bob, while we help Turkey back into the study," said the captain of the Fourth. And he took Turkey by one fat ear, Dick Lee taking him by the other: and they led Turkey back into No. 11, to an accompaniment of anguished squeaks from Turkey.

Bob Drake, grinning, followed them in, with an armful of apples. With him came Jimmy Conlon, who had stopped to see the fun. In order to enjoy the spectacle they seated themselves at the table.

On the study table was an open hamper. It still contained several packages, for which there had been no room in Turkey's pockets or under his fat arms. Perhaps the Cormorant of Carcroft had intended to pay a second visit after landing his first



Turkey Tuck made a jump for the doorway.

cargo in his own study. But Turkey's luck was out—he was not destined to get away even with his first cargo.

Bob pitched the apples into the hamper. Then jerked the other package from under the other fat arm and pitched that in.

"Now turn out your pockets!" he said.

"Look here, you swobs— Wow! Will you leggo my ears?" yelled Turkey.

"Not till you've turned out your pockets, you fat burglar," said Harry Compton. "Sharp's the word. So long as you've got anything in your pockets, we're going to pull your ears—like that!"

"Yow—ow!"

"And like that!" said Dick Lee.

"Yaroooh!"

Turkey unwillingly turned out a pocket. A jar of jam was pitched into the hamper. From another pocket came a jar of pickles.

"Now let a fellow go!" he yelled. "I haven't got any sardines or biscuits in my trousers' pockets."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Turn them out!"

"But I haven't—yaroooh! Leave off lugging at my ears!" howled Turkey. "I'm turning them out as fast as I can, ain't I?"

Sardines and biscuits were disgorged.

"Now you let a fellow go——" hooted Turkey.

"What's that under your waistcoat?"

"Nothing! Only my tummy, you silly ass! Leago!"

"Your tummy's got a very suspicious bulge on it," chuckled Bob. "Give his ears another lug, you fellows."

"Yarooop!" yelled Turkey. "Leggo! Oh, haddocks! Wow!" Two fat hands groped under a tight waistcoat and a box of chocolates emerged. "Yow-ow-ow! That's the lot—now let a fellow go, you swobs."

Turkey's fat ears were released at last. He rubbed them ruefully. Like Marian's nose in the ballad, they were red and raw.

"That seems to be the lot," said Bob, surveying Turkey, and discerning no more bulges on his fat person. "Now bump him for raiding the Lizard's hamper. Turkey's got to learn to keep his paws from picking and stealing."

"Hear, hear!"

Turkey made a jump for the doorway. Apparently he did not desire any instruction on the subject of keeping his paws from picking and stealing. Besides, instruction on that subject was quite useless to Turkey—he simply couldn't help it, where tuck was concerned. Turkey was honest as the day in all other matters—but the lure of tuck was irresistible to him.

But whether Turkey wanted instruction or not, and whether it was useful to him or not, he was going to have it. Three pairs of hands grasped Turkey as he

jumped for the door, and hooked him back again. No. 11 Study whirled round Turkey, as he was swept off the floor in the grasp of those six hands.

Bump!

"Oh, haddocks!"

Bump!

"Wow! Leggo! Help!"

Bump!

"Ooooooooooh!"

Turkey sat and roared. Bob Drake shook a warning finger at him.

"That's a tip!" he said. "Now, listen to this, you fat brigand—if we hear that anything's missing from this study, we'll bump you again, till you burst all over Carcroft. Got that?"

"Yaroooh!"

"Now boot him out!" said Bob.

"Ow! ow! Keep off! I say—oh, haddocks!" Turkey scrambled wildly for the doorway, with the assistance of several feet. He rolled roaring into the passage.

"After him!" roared Bob. "Dribble him as far as the landing."

"Oh, haddocks!"

Turkey bounded up, and fled. He charged down the passage at top speed. Harry Compton and Co. followed—as far as their own quarters, the corner study, where they went in. Turkey charged on across the study landing, and flew down the stairs, crashed into Bray of the Third and left him sprawling, and hurtled out into the quad, where he stopped, at last, leaning on one of the old oaks by the Sixth-Form green, and pumped in breath.

CHAPTER 2

ALL RIGHT FOR BRAY!

"Boy!"

Gunter of the Sixth Form fairly roared.

Gunter looked cross.

Twice and thrice had Herbert Henry Gunter, standing in the doorway of his study, called 'Boy': but answer there came none.

At the call of 'Boy' from the Sixth-form studies, there should have been an immediate scurry among the fags. Sixth-form men did not like to be kept waiting. A Sixth-form man at Carcroft spoke as one having authority, saying 'Do this!' and he doeth it! Least of all did Herbert Henry Gunter like to be kept waiting: for Gunter was a most important man—indeed in his own estimation, if not in that of others, his importance was practically unlimited. At Gunter's first call of 'Boy!'

Bray of the Third should have appeared as if by magic, prompt as the Slave of the Lamp at the behest of Aladdin.

Instead of which there was no scamper of feet in the passage. No breathless fag arrived to inquire what Gunter wanted. Nothing, in fact, happened, except that the echoes of Carcroft School boomed to the sound of Gunter's powerful voice.

"Boy!" roared Gunter, for the fourth time.

Then, at last, came the expected scamper. A fag, crimson with haste, came bolting up the passage.

"Here!" gasped Bray.

Gunter of the Sixth looked at him. He glared at him. Four times had Gunter had to bawl 'Boy' before Bray materialised. If that did not justify the use of the fives bat on a fag's trousers, Gunter would have liked to know what did.

Gunter was in a hurry, too. His pal Wilson was waiting for him in the quad, and they were going over to Ridgate before tea. Gunter had told Wilson that he wouldn't be a minute. Now he had been several minutes—owing to the delay of a miserable microbe in the Third Form in answering his call. It was no wonder that Gunter was wrathful.

"You lazy young sweep——" began Gunter.

Gunter, big and burly and beefy, towered over Bray. Bray backed hastily away across the passage.

"I say, I couldn't help it, Gunter," he squeaked. "A Fourth-form man barged me over on the stairs, and——"

"I've called you four times!" said Gunter, in an awful voice.

"I say, I'm sorry, Gunter, that fat flump Turkey bowled me over——"

"If I wasn't in a hurry," said Gunter, waving explanations aside, "I'd turn you up in my study and give you six of the best."

"I—I—I say, Gunter——"

"Don't jaw!" said Gunter. "I've no time to waste listening to a fag chinning. I've called you four times, and now you're here. If you think I want to listen to your jaw, you're mistaken. I've no time for it, see?"

Gunter had no time to listen to Bray's 'jaw', but apparently time to listen to his own. He went on:

"When I call 'Boy,' I expect you to come. If you don't you'll jolly well get whopped. I've had to wait for you. Precious state Carcroft is coming to, when a Sixth-form man has to wait for a fag! I've a jolly good mind to give you a jolly good batting, and I would if Wilson wasn't waiting for me."

"Yes, Gunter," said Bray, meekly. "I—I say, what did you want, Gunter?"

"I called you to tell you that I shall be back at half-past five, and shall want my tea to be ready then. If my tea isn't ready when I come in, look out for the fives bat, that's all."

"Yes, Gunter."

"Wilson and Crewe will be coming, so see that there's enough for three, and

ready on the dot at five-thirty. That's all—and think yourself lucky that I don't whop you for keeping me waiting."

And with that, Herbert Henry Gunter swung round and stalked down the passage. "But I say, Gunter——" squeaked Bray. "You haven't——"

If Gunter heard him, he did not heed. His long legs took long strides, and he turned a corner and disappeared.

Gunter was gone. Bray of the Third was left standing in the passage, with a dismayed face.

"Oh, crikey!" said Bray, addressing space.

Gunter was, in fact, a little thoughtless. He had bidden his fag prepare tea for three, prompt at five-thirty. But he had overlooked the trifling detail of handing him the necessary cash to make purchases at the school shop, or signed 'chit' which was equivalent to cash in the case of a Sixth-form senior. Without cash or a chit, Bray's own credit at the tuck-shop was not worth a peanut.

"Oh, crikey!" repeated Bray.

He had to have Gunter's tea ready at five-thirty, or take a batting. Gunter had promised him a batting if tea wasn't ready, and Gunter was a man of his word. Tea for three had to be produced somehow within an hour: and how he was going to produce it, in the circumstances, was a problem to Bray.

His own financial resources were not equal to the strain, being limited to twopence. Mrs. Game, at the school shop, would want either cash, or Gunter's signed order—and Bray was provided with neither. There was nothing doing at the school shop.

"Oh, crikey!" said Bray, for the third time.

He turned away—almost feeling the fives bat on his trousers in anticipation. Really, it was very thoughtless of Gunter. But he was in a hurry, and he had had to wait for Bray, and trifling details had escaped his powerful mind. Gunter was already walking out of gates with Wilson, and he was not likely to remember what he had forgotten. Gunter, as he went, was talking, and Wilson was listening: and Gunter found too deep an interest in his own conversation to think of other matters. Indeed he was not likely even to remember Bray's existence till he came in to tea. Then, if tea was not ready, there was the fives bat for Bray.

That tea for three had to be ready.

Bray knew that. He had to have Gunter's tea ready at five-thirty, though the skies fell. Bray had to scrounge that tea by fair means or foul!

The only question was, how?

Gladly he would have expended his own cash, if he had had any. Gunter would have reimbursed him afterwards. Gunter was, indeed, a generous fellow—often there was a can of sardines, or a cake, or a shrimp paste, left for Bray in his fag-master's study. But twopence was of no use: and Bray, after considering for a few moments the possibility of raising the wind among his friends in the Third, Donkin and Coot and the rest, dismissed that idea, as equally useless. He had to *scrounge that tea*.

It was almost a desperate Bray who went to and fro in the House during the next quarter of an hour, like a lion seeking what he might devour, or rather what Gunter of the Sixth might devour. Transformed for the nonce into a bold bad brigand, Bray of the Third was prepared to lift supplies wherever he could find them, with a total and absolute disregard for the rights of property. And it was quite a windfall to Bray when he came on a group of Fourth-form fellows and caught the word 'hamper'.

He eyed that group stealthily, and listened. Harry Compton, Bob Drake, and Dick Lee were talking with Lord Talboys, the 'Lizard' of the Fourth.

"So it's all right about the hamper, Lizard?" Bob Drake was saying.

"Right as rain, old top," said Lord Talboys. "It was rather a whacker, and the jolly old House dame mentioned it to Roger, and I had to see him. But I explained that we were celebrating beating St. Jim's at Soccer, and that a dozen fellows were comin' to the spread, so Roger said O.K."

"Roger's a sportsman," said Bob. "So it's all clear?"

"Quite. Spread at half-past five," said Lord Talboys. "You fellows are comin', and I'll ask Carr and Scott and old Drum and V.C., and a few more. Lots to go round—I asked them at home to make it a good one, and they did. Let's go and look for the fellows."

Without even noticing the fag hovering in the offing, drinking in every word, Lord Talboys and his friends went out into the quad, to gather the guests for the coming spread in No. 11 Study.

"By gum!" breathed Bray.

He watched the four out of the House. When they were gone, he cut up the staircase and scudded up the Fourth-form passage to No. 11 Study. If the hamper was there, his problem was solved. With a batting from Gunter in prospect if he failed, Bray had no more scruples than the boldest, baddest brigand that ever was. He whizzed into No. 11 Study: and his eyes fairly gloated on the hamper on the table, staked with good things.

"Oh, scissors!" said Bray.

He did not waste time. He stared round the study, spotted a newspaper, picked it up, and proceeded to pack it with good things from the hamper.

That hamper had already had one narrow escape from Turkey Tuck. This time it did not escape. There were marvellous things in that hamper from Talboys Hall—a cold chicken, and chocolates, cakes and scones—all sorts and conditions of good things. Bray's eyes gloated, and his mouth watered, as he selected the best, popping a few caramels into his mouth as he packed. But he did not linger. Lord Talboys or any of his friends might come up to the study: and Bray did not want to be caught there—very much indeed he did not. Rapidly he made a bundle in the *Ridgate Gazette*.

A relieved and happy Bray, chewing caramels, hurried out of the study, and cut for the stairs. Vane-Carter of the Fourth, going into No. 9, glanced at him as he

passed along the Fourth-form passage. But he gave Bray no special heed. Bray's heart beat fast as he passed the Sportsman of Carcroft: but V.C. went into his study unregarding: and the fag flew across the study landing. With a cheery grinning face he headed for Gunter's study in the Sixth.

It was all right now for Bray—and if it was not all right for Lord Talboys and the guests he was gathering for the Soccer celebration, that could not be helped. In an imperfect universe, everybody couldn't be satisfied: but Gunter would be satisfied, Bray would escape the impending batting, and really that was what mattered. Bray marched cheerily into Gunter's study with his plunder, and an almost empty hamper was left to greet the eyes of Rupert Lord Talboys when he arrived in No. 11 with his Soccer party.

CHAPTER 3

TURKEY'S WINDFALL!

TURKEY TUCK stared.

Turkey was leaning on the old oak by the Sixth-form green, still a little breathless, and still feeling several lingering aches from his experience at the hands of the Carcroft Co.

His fat face was pessimistic.

Life, indeed, seemed rather weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable to James Smyth Tuck at the moment.

It had seemed such a happy opportunity, while Lord Talboys was in Roger's study, to annex the lion's share of the hamper from Talboys Hall. But not only had Turkey failed: but he had been bumped, he had been booted, and he had fled from lunging boots: and keen as he was to sample the good things from the Lizard's stately home, he dared not for his fat life venture near No. 11 Study again. That bountiful hamper was gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream: and Turkey, like Rachel of old, mourned for that which was gone, and could not be comforted.

His only comfort, if any, was that, on the Sixth-form green, those swobs Compton and Drake and Lee could not venture to follow him up and boot him again. Turkey, as he leaned his fat person on the trunk of the ancient oak, had a view of the windows of the Sixth-form studies, and under those windows, juniors had to be circumspect. So long as he remained there, Turkey Tuck was safe from being dribbled like a fat football for his sins. Certainly, any Sixth-form man who had noticed him there would have ordered him off such sacred precincts: but there was a senior Soccer game going on, on Big Side, and the green was deserted except for Turkey—and if any Sixth-form man was in his study, he did not look out and observe that fat figure that adorned the landscape.

But Turkey was thinking of getting a move on, for it was tea-time: and at all meal times the inner Turkey was in the imperative mood. He was not keen to join the scramble in Hall, with his fat thoughts lingering on the Lizard's hamper—but tea in hall was better than no tea: and Turkey was about to shift his weight from the massive trunk of the old oak, when something going on in one of the Sixth-form studies attracted his attention.

It was Gunter's study.

Gunter had left his study window open, and Turkey had a view of the interior of the room, which did not interest him in the least, till he saw a fag come into the study carrying a bundle.

It was Bray, whom he knew to be Gunter's fag: and Turkey frowned. Gunter of the Sixth had heaps of money, and was accustomed to do himself very well at study teas. Turkey had no doubt that Gunter's fag was there to get tea ready for his fag-master, and no doubt that it would be an ample spread, in Gunter's usual style. Hence the frown that corrugated his fat brow. Gunter of the Sixth was a swob, in Turkey's opinion. More than once he had kicked Turkey for frowsting about—as if it was Gunter's business whether Turkey frowsted about or not. Turkey would have liked to punch Gunter's bullet head, had such happy things been practicable. And here was Gunter's fag with a spread for Gunter, while Turkey was thinking of doorsteps and dish-water in Hall.

Turkey, frowning, stared into the study.

Bray did not observe him, at a little distance under the oak. Bray did not even glance towards the open window. Bray had no time to waste, for he had his own affairs to think of, which had been interrupted by the call of his fag-master and his brigandish activities since. He slammed the newspaper bundle down on Gunter's table, and left it there, turning back to the door.

It was not yet five o'clock. Gunter's tea was scheduled for five-thirty. Bray, having solved the problem of supplies, and conveyed them to his fag-master's study, was finished for the present. Not for half an hour yet would it be time for him to return and prepare Gunter's tea.

Bray left the study, shutting the door after him, and disappeared from Turkey Tuck's view.

"Oh, haddocks!" breathed Turkey.

His eyes remained fixed, as if fascinated, on the bundle wrapped in the newspaper on Gunter's table.

That bundle, he was assured, was packed with tuck for Gunter's tea. Gunter was the man to spend money like water on a spread. There it lay—waiting till it was time for the fag to prepare tea for his lord and master.

Turkey's mouth watered.

Irresistibly, as it were, he drew a little nearer to the open window. Soon he was peering over the broad stone sill into the study, at the newspaper bundle on the table. He was tempted.

In the Fourth-form studies, Turkey was often a raider of grub. No fellow's tuck was really safe from Turkey. But even the fat Turkey hesitated at the idea of grub-raiding in the Sixth. It was awfully risky.

But it is well said that he who hesitates is lost.

Gunter, as Turkey knew, had gone out of gates with his pal Wilson—he had seen them go. Bray was not likely to return immediately. The coast was clear.

Gunter, Turkey remembered, was a swob. Had he not kicked Turkey on his fat trousers on several occasions? If ever a swob deserved to have his tuck raided, Herbert Henry Gunter did. But the risk——

Turkey squinted round him stealthily. The Sixth-form green was absolutely deserted. Fellows could be seen in the distance: but nobody was at hand: nobody was interested in Turkey or his proceedings.

For a long, long minute Turkey hesitated. Then he clambered over the sill, and dropped breathlessly into the study.

A moment more, and he was peering into the newspaper bundle. His gooseberry eyes gloated, as Bray's had gloated in No. 11, as what he saw.

"Oh, haddocks!" gasped Turkey.

His first idea, on entering the study by the window, had been to help himself to a few unconsidered trifles from the bundle, devouring them on the spot. But as he gazed gloatingly at the contents, his ideas expanded.

There was a cold chicken—just like the cold chicken he had seen in Lord Talboys' hamper. There was a plum cake, a twin to one in the hamper. There were two pots of jam, a jar of jelly, a paper bag of scones, a carton of chocolates, and several other attractive things. This was very nearly as good as the hamper in No. 11 which had so narrowly escaped Turkey's fat paws. It was a windfall to a hungry Turkey—well worth a spot of risk.

Turkey, of course, had not the remotest idea of the true source of that handsome supply of foodstuffs. He knew nothing of Bray's adventures as a bold bad brigand. Turkey took it for granted that this was one of Gunter's customary spreads from the school shop, brought in by his fag: only on a rather more lavish scale than usual. Even Gunter did not often have a cold chicken at tea. To leave such a supply there, for a swob like Gunter, would have been, Turkey felt, a sin and a shame.

The fat junior stepped back to the window, and took a cautious survey of the landscape. The coast was still clear. From a distance came a roar, indicative of a goal, telling that the senior Soccer match was still going on. Fate seemed to be playing into Turkey's fat hands.

He made up his mind.

Stepping back to the table he hurriedly wrapped up the bundle in the newspaper again. He landed it on the window-sill, and after one more stealthy squint round, dropped outside.

The next moment he had lifted the bundle from the sill, stacked it under a fat arm, and was walking away with it.

Gunter's table was left as bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard. Bray's bold bad exploits as a bold bad brigand had resulted, not in supplies for his fag-master, but in a windfall for Turkey Tuck. Bray, happily as yet unconscious of his doom, was booked for that batting when Gunter came in to tea! There was to be no spread for Gunter of the Sixth.

Little cared Turkey.

All Turkey cared about was to get off safe with his plunder. Those swobs, the Lizard and his friends, were welcome to keep that hamper from Talboys Hall—now! Turkey had enough of his own—at all events, of somebody's, which had now become his own by nine points of the law. This was quite as good a spread as the Lizard's, if Turkey got it safely to his study.

If eyes fell on him, as he walked off with the bundle under his arm, what was there suspicious in a fellow carrying a bundle into the House? Nobody had seen him enter Gunter's study, or emerge therefrom: that was what mattered. It was safe as houses now.

Bundle under arm, James Smyth Tuck walked in at the House doorway, with a casual air. He passed half a dozen fellows who took no notice of him whatever. He went up the staircase, and passed Carr, Scott, and Drummond on the landing, and they did not even glance at him. He walked up the Fourth-form passage, and passed Levett and Leath, who gave him no attention. He arrived at his own study, No. 9, and the door of that study closed on him.

Turkey chuckled.

It was all serene now. Gunter might kick up a fuss, which he was welcome to do. Nobody would ever know that Turkey had lifted a spread from a Sixth-form study.

Luckily his study-mate, Vane-Carter, had gone out, and Turkey had No. 9 to himself. With a grinning fat face, he unpacked the bundle, and started on the cold chicken without delay. Round him, as he gobbled, were ranged the other good things, awaiting their turn—such an array of comestibles as seldom delighted Turkey's eyes. It was a happy and glorious Turkey that gobbled cold chicken, and then started on a pot of jam with a tablespoon.

CHAPTER 4

FOUND GUILTY!

“WHAT the dooce——” ejaculated Lord Talboys.

His lordship was looking into a hamper on the table in No. 11 Study in the Fourth.

In that hamper the Lizard had, naturally, expected to behold the good things that had arrived from Talboys Hall.

Instead of which, he beheld empty space, save for a few articles that Bray had considerately, or perhaps hurriedly, left therein.

There was quite a crowd of fellows in the study. That spread being designed to celebrate a Soccer victory, all the junior eleven had been asked to the festive board. Compton and Drake and Lee were there: Dudley Vane-Carter, and Scott and Carr and Drummond, Babbie and Licke and Jones. No. 11 was a roomy study, but it was crowded. And the whole party were ready for the spread. It seemed, however, that the spread was not ready for the party!

"Anything up, Lizard?" asked Bob.

"Sort of!" sighed the Lizard. "Looks to me like a frost. Anybody know who's been clearing out this hamper?"

"What?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Phew!"

A crowd of juniors gathered round, staring into the denuded hamper. Bob Drake gave a roar.

"Turkey!"

"That fat villain!" exclaimed Harry Compton.

"By gum! He came back for it!" said Dick Lee. "Turkey—by gum, we'll scrag him—we'll strew him all over Carcroft——"

"Hold on!" said Lord Talboys, as the Carcroft Co. made a move towards the door. "Don't scrag poor old Turkey till we know whether he did it——"

"No doubt about that," said Bob. "We caught him here, walking off with half the stuff stacked about him, and marched him back, and bumped him, and booted him——"

"And we thought that would keep him off the grass!" said Dick Lee. "We didn't boot him enough."

"Not half enough!" said Harry Compton. "But we'll make up for it now. By gum, we'll make him feel like a Soccer ball this time."

"It was Turkey all right," said Drummond. "Who else?"

"Of course it was Turkey."

"Come on—let's go after him," exclaimed Bob. "He can't have scoffed the whole lot yet—even Turkey!"

"We'll give him the ragging of his life, if he has," said Babbie.

"We'll give him the ragging of his life whether he has or not!" said Bob. "Come on and rouse him out."

"If it was Turkey——" said the Lizard.

"No 'if' about it, fathead! It was Turkey."

"Well, we'll make sure first," said Lord Talboys. "Fair play's a giddy jewel, and it might have been somebody else. We'll ask Turkey first, before we scrag him."

The whole crowd poured out of No. 11 Study. Nobody but the Lizard doubted

that it was Turkey Tuck who had lifted the contents of the hamper: Turkey's manners and customs were well known—and had not the Carcroft Co. caught him in the very act hardly an hour ago? Perhaps Lord Talboys did not doubt very much, for really the thing seemed to speak for itself. But even the fat Cormorant of Carcroft was going to have fair play and the benefit of the doubt, if any.

"He won't be in the study," said Vane-Carter, as the crowd thronged to the door of No. 9. "More likely up in a box-room——"

"Off-side!" said Bob. "Listen!"

From No. 9 Study came an unmistakable sound. It was a sound of gobbling. James Smyth Tuck had been nicknamed 'Turkey' because he gobbled when he ate. That familiar sound from No. 9 indicated that James Smyth Tuck was at home.

Bob Drake hurled the door open.

"Oh!" came a startled ejaculation from within.

Turkey Tuck's left hand held a pot of jam. His right wielded a tablespoon. Jam was disappearing at a great rate on the downward path. Turkey's fat face was sticky. His fingers were sticky. He was sticky all over—the stickiest of Turkeys. Startled by that sudden irruption into his study, Turkey's fat hand stopped on its way to his capacious mouth, and the tablespoon, loaded with jam, remained suspended, like Mahomet's coffin, in mid-air.

"Ooogh!" gurgled Turkey. "Wharrer you fellows want! Making a chap jump! Look here, you get out, see?"

The junior eleven did not get out. They got in. They eyed Turkey almost wolfishly.

"Think it was Turkey now, Lizard!" hooted Bob.

"Sort of," assented his lordship. "Turkey, you fat scoundrel, couldn't you leave a fellow enough for tea?"

"Eh!" Turkey squinted at him. "Wharrer you mean? Look here, I ain't asking you fellows to this spread."

"What?" gasped his lordship.

"You never asked me to yours," said Turkey, "and I ain't asking you to mine. You can all jolly well get out, see?"

They gazed at him.

Evidence of Turkey's guilt was visible to all eyes. The remains of a cold chicken lay on a plate. Cakes and scones and pots of jam and jelly adorned the table. Turkey was not half through the feast when the interruption came. Perhaps, indeed, he could not have dealt with the lot at one sitting—even Turkey had his limit.

"Scrag him!" roared Bob Drake.

"Here, you keep off!" exclaimed Turkey, in alarm. "Wharrer you kicking up a row in my study for, I'd like to know. I say, V.C., you turn that mob out of the study. I'll let you have a whack, as you belong here. Not the others—they can all go and eat coke."

"I'm goin' to have a whack, you fat bandit, but not in this study," said Vane-Carter. "Pick up those things, you chaps, and get them back to Lizard's study."

"Here I say, you leave my grub alone!" roared Turkey in alarm and indignation. "Think you're going to walk off with my tuck?"

"Yours!" ejaculated Lord Talboys.

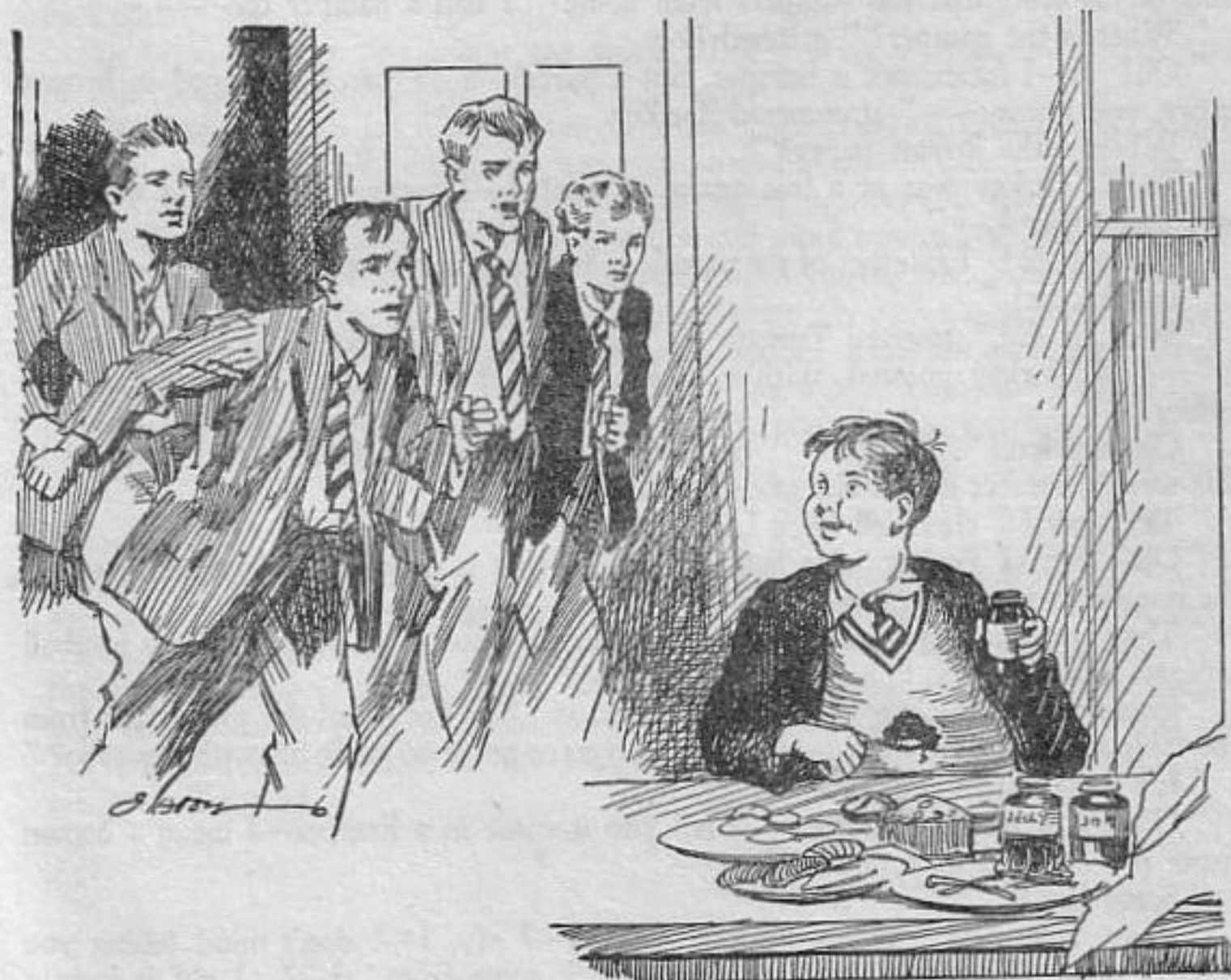
"Yes, mine," snorted Turkey. "You leave it alone, see?"

"Is he going to make out that he never burgled the hamper, when we've found him here scoffing the stuff!" exclaimed Harry Compton, blankly.

"Why, I know that cake—I saw it in the hamper," said Dick Lee, "and those pots of jam—the same——"

"He's finished the chicken," said Bob. "You pie-faced, pilfering, porker, are you trying to make out that this tuck didn't come out of the Lizard's hamper?"

"Eh! Of course it didn't!" gasped Turkey. "I haven't been near the hamper——"



He was sticky all over—the stickiest of Turkeys.

"We caught you at it an hour ago——"

"Well, I put everything back, didn't I?" yapped Turkey. "You jolly well know I did. Wharrer you mean?"

"I mean that we didn't boot you enough, and you went back afterwards——"

"I didn't!" yelled Turkey.

"Oh, scrag him!" exclaimed Vane-Carter.

"Bump him!"

"Burst him!"

"I say, I ain't—I didn't—I wasn't," spluttered Turkey. "I tell you this is my tuck—it ain't out of the Lizard's hamper——"

"Collar him!"

"Hold on," Lord Talboys interposed. "Let him speak! Look here, Turkey, if you didn't raid my hamper, where did all this tuck come from?"

"From home, of course," retorted Turkey, promptly. "Think you're the only chap at Carcroft that has hampers from home? I had a hamper too——"

"Where's the hamper?" grinned Bob.

"Oh! I—I mean, not a hamper, but a parcel—a—a parcel wrapped in brown paper, you know——" stammered Turkey.

"Where's the brown paper?"

"Eh!" Turkey was at a loss again. "Oh! I—I mean, it was—was wrapped in a newspaper——"

"Oh, crumbs! I can sort of see parcels of tuck coming wrapped in a newspaper!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it did," asserted Turkey. "There's the newspaper, if you want to see it." And Turkey pointed, with a sticky finger, at a crumpled newspaper in the fender.

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob. "So they send you parcels from home wrapped in this week's number of the *Ridgate Gazette*?"

"Try again!" chuckled Dick Lee.

"Oh" gasped Turkey. He had not noticed that it was the local paper in which the bundle had been wrapped. "I—I—I mean——"

"That newspaper was in my study," said Lord Talboys. "I got it for the football reports. Turkey, you fibbing fathead——"

"Leave that cake alone!" roared Turkey, as Dick Lee lifted the plum cake from the table for transport to No. 11. "Think you're going to walk off with my cake?"

"It's the Lizard's cake, you fat spoofer."

"Tain't!" roared Turkey. "I tell you it came in a hamper—I mean a brown paper parcel—that is, a newspaper——"

"Scrag him!"

"I say, keep off!" yelled Turkey. "I—I—I say, I—I don't mind telling you fellows, if you'll keep it dark, where the tuck come from. I—I—I got it from a Sixth-form study."

"What?" yelled all the juniors together.

"Gunter's study——"

"Oh, holy smoke!" gasped Bob Drake. "And how did the Lizard's tuck get to Gunter's study wrapped in the Lizard's newspaper——"

"Tain't! I tell you it was Gunter's——"

"Collar him!"

"Leago!" yelled Turkey. "I tell you it was in Stunter's guddy—I mean in Gunter's study, and I—yaroooooop!"

Turkey roared as he whirled in many hands.

It was all up with Turkey.

Nobody was likely to believe that Turkey had had a parcel from home so closely resembling the missing contents of the Lizard's hamper. But still less was anybody likely to believe that he had raided the Lizard's tuck from a study in the Sixth! That seemed to all the juniors the very steepest yarn that even the untruthful Turkey had ever spun.

For once, Turkey was telling the truth. But nobody who knew Turkey could be expected to guess that one!

They collared the fat Turkey on all sides. Turkey had finished the chicken, and had been found devouring the jam, surrounded by the plunder. That was more than evidence enough! He whirled in avenging hands, and smote the floor of No. 9 Study with a resounding bump, and a still more resounding yell.

And as he sat and spluttered for breath, Drake shoved the chicken-bones down the back of a fat neck, and Dick Lee followed them up with the jammy tablespoon. Then he was bumped once more, and yet once more. Then the juniors gathered up all that remained on the table, and trooped out of the study, laughing—leaving Turkey sitting on the floor struggling for his second wind, and gurgling horribly.

* * *

QUITE a merry party collected in No. 11 Study. Enough had been rescued from the voracious Turkey to provide a spread, and the celebration of the Soccer victory was duly celebrated—what time the hapless Bray was yelling under a fives-bat in the hand of Gunter of the Sixth, and Turkey Tuck was wriggling frantically in wild endeavours to extract chicken-bones and a jammy tablespoon from his fat neck. All was merry and bright in the Lizard's study—though it was, perhaps, a little tough on Turkey!