

THE GREAT BARRING-OUT STILL GOING STRONG, BOYS!

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AT GRIPS WITH THE ENEMY!

(Sergeant Stuckey's Unsuccessful Attempt to Take the Rebels of St. Jim's by Surprise. An Amusing Incident in the Grand Barring-Out Story Inside.)



My Readers' Own Corner

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A LETTER FROM UNCLE!

"Dear Nephew,—I haven't sent you a letter since the last time I wrote because we have removed to another place, and I didn't know where a letter would find you. But I now take up my pen to inform you of the death of your only living uncle, Fitzpatrick, who died very suddenly after a lingering illness of six weeks. He was in violent convulsions during the whole time of his illness, lying perfectly quiet, and entirely speechless—all the while talking, and crying for water. When he breathed his last the doctor gave up all hope of recovery. I fear his death was caused by his last illness. I beg you not to break the black seal of this letter until two or three days after you receive it, as the shock may be too great for you. Your old sweetheart sends her love unknown to you. Hoping you feel as good as I am, I'll stop writing, remaining your uncle, Fitzpatrick."—Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. J. Coelho, 13c, Brooking Street, Rangoon, Burma.

THE EXPLANATION!

Policeman: "Now, boy, what are you doing up there? Stealing apples—eh?" Boy: "Oh dear, no, sir. I just found these apples on the ground, and I'm only putting them back again!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Allan, Grassholm, West Crescent, Darlington, Durham.

MISUNDERSTOOD!

Mrs. Jones was entertaining some of her son's young friends. "Willie," she said, addressing a six-year-old boy who was enjoying a plate of cold beef, "are you sure you can cut your own meat?" "Yes, thanks!" replied the child, who was making desperate efforts with his knife and fork. "I've often had it as tough as this at home!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Airy, 191, Lord Street, Perth, Western Australia.

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CUTE DAD!

Billy had heard the joke at school, but he found that he could not catch his father with it. "Do nuts grow on trees, dad?" he asked. "Why, yes, Billy!" "Then what tree does the dough-nut grow on?" "Why, on the pantry, of course!" replied dad.—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Kenneth Holmes, 22, Hill Road, Chelmsford, Essex.

THIS WINS OUR TUCK HAMPER.

THAT CAPPED IT!

A smart young fellow entered a hatter's shop and asked if he could try on some caps. The shopkeeper showed him quite a lot; in fact, the counter was filled with them. The fellow could not get one to suit him, however. "What sort of a cap is it you



want?" asked the man behind the counter. "Well, I've got a new motor-bike," said the young man, "so I want a cap with the peak at the back!"—A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious tuck has been awarded to Joe Dawson, 224, Woodhorn Road, Ashington, Northumberland.

TRUE ENOUGH!

He was a more genteel-looking specimen of his class than one usually meets, and when he made his appeal at the kitchen door for something to eat, the cook, who had a kind heart, invited him to come in and sit by the fire. "You don't look as though you've always been a tramp," said the cook. "I haven't, either," replied the tramp. "I came from a very good family." "A good family?" queried the cook. "May I ask the name?" "It was Brownjohns," responded the tramp, with a sad air. "Why," said the cook in surprise, "that's the name of the people next door!" "Yes," came the reply, "I noticed it on the doorplate. That's where I came from. They set the dog on me!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Master A. V. Eismore, 5, Lindley Avenue, Southsea, Portsmouth.

SAFETY FIRST!

In spite of repeated warnings from his father, little Bobby persisted in driving nails into blocks and boards. One morning his father heard the familiar pounding, and, looking out, he saw Bobby banging away, whilst his little sister was sitting beside him. "Haven't I told you that you will smash your fingers driving in these nails?" the father asked. "Yes, I know, dad; but you see, Mary's holding the nails!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Master H. Purvis, 28, Warton Street, Bootle, Liverpool.

WHAT HE FEARED!

One evening a man driving his trap across a level-crossing was knocked down by a passing train. Consequently the old signalman in charge had to appear in court. After a grueling cross-examination he was still unshaken. He said that he had waved his lantern, but to no avail. The following day the superintendent of the line called him into his office. "You did wonderfully well yesterday, Tom," he said. "I thought at first you might waver." "No, sir," replied Tom; "but I was afraid the old lawyer was going to ask me if my lantern was lit!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Harry Brown, 35, Station Road, Langley Mill, Notts.

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CHAPTER 2.

Bunter Arrives.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY stood with the receiver in his hand and a rather blank expression on his face.

He put up the receiver at last, and turned round to the juniors who were breakfasting in the study.

"The coffee's getting cold, Gussy," remarked Blake.

"Buntah is comin' heah, deah boys."

"Bunter coming here?" exclaimed Tom Merry in astonishment.

"Yaas."

"What on earth for?"

"I weally do not know. He seems to have an ideah that I gave him a pweessin' invitation for Christmas. I do not remembah doin' so!" but I suppose I must have, as Buntah says so!" said Arthur Augustus, rubbing his noble nose thoughtfully. "So he is appawvently comin' heah to spend the west of the vacation. I have warned him that he will not be able to get in, but he is comin', all the same."

"What rot!" grunted Jack Blake. "Bunter's no good in a scrap, from what I remember of him. The grub's getting scarce—"

"Did you tell Bunter that?" asked Lowther.

"I nevah thought of that, deah boy."

"That would have kept him off!" grinned Blake. "Just like Gussy not to tell him."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Well, he won't be able to get in," remarked Tom Merry. "Mr. Railton's giddy army is on the watch. They'll turn Bunter back."

"Yaas, wnthah!"

Arthur Augustus sat down to his coffee. His noble mind seemed a little relieved by the assurance that Bunter would be turned back at the gates by the enemy. Certainly Mr. Railton was not likely to allow reinforcements to join the garrison of the School House; even so inconsiderable a reinforcement as William George Bunter of the Greyfriars Remove.

Possibly it was kind of Billy Bunter to wish to lend his old pal Gussy a hand, in the present emergency. But it was more probable that Billy Bunter pictured the rebels as having the run of a well-stocked larder.

It was scarcely probable that he would have volunteered to join the beleaguered garrison had he guessed that provisions were running seriously short.

But that was the fact; and it was a serious one for Tom Merry & Co. to deal with.

There had been spirited attacks on the rebels' position, and hard knocks had been given and received; but so far Tom Merry & Co. had held their own victoriously. They

had put up a gallant resistance behind their defences; and they had beaten off all attacks.

But a foray in search of provisions was scarcely feasible; the enemy were too keenly on the watch for that.

The garrison were on rations, and even Fatty Wynn took it with cheerful fortitude. But it was not probable that Billy Bunter would take it cheerfully.

Later in the morning a good many of the St. Jim's juniors were on the look-out for the arrival of Billy Bunter. They did not expect that he would get anywhere near the School House when he arrived. The school gates were closed and locked, and most of Mr. Railton's men were to be seen in the quadrangle. Occasionally a snowball, scraped from a window-sill, was hurled, but it generally fell short; the enemy keeping out of effective range.

"Hallo! There's your giddy old pal, Gussy!" exclaimed Blake at last.

The juniors were watching from a window that gave a view of the gates. Outside the bars of the gate, a fat figure came into sight. It stopped; and blinked in through the bars, and the winter sunlight glimmered on a pair of large spectacles.

It was the Owl of Greyfriars at last.

"He is not weally an old pal of mine, Blake," Arthur Augustus observed mildly. "It is vevy kind of him to be so fiewicly, but—"

"There goes Taggles!"

Bunter had rung the bell, and old Taggles, the porter, trudded down to the gates. He did not open them.

"Silly ass!" commented Levison of the Fourth. "He might have had a chance if he'd got over the wall and made a run for it. Taggles won't let him in."

"Not likely!" said Tom Merry.

"Wathah not!"

But to the surprise of the juniors, after exchanging some words with Bunter, Taggles opened the gate. The fat junior of Greyfriars rolled in.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Monty Lowther, in astonishment. "He must have said, 'Open, sesame!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Sergeant Stuckey, the leader of Mr. Railton's military contingent, came down to the gates, and was seen to speak to Bunter. He led the fat junior away towards the New House.

"Not coming here!" said Manners.

"Not likely to let him in," said Tom. "But I suppose it's up to us to let him in, if he gets a chance—as he's come."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll get a window open, anyhow, ready for him."

"Rot!" said Blake. "Better tell him to cut."

"Weally, Blake, that would be hardly polite to a chap who has come to help us in the bawwin'-out."

"Bow-wow!" said Blake.

Blake remembered Billy Bunter very well indeed; and he did not admire what he remembered of him.

Tom Merry & Co. descended to the ground floor. Nobody was specially anxious to see William George Bunter added to the garrison; especially as the number of mouths to be fed was growing a serious problem; and Bunter's mouth was a very capacious one. But the juniors agreed that it was up to them to let him in if he came.

The hall window was unbarred, a crowd of juniors gathering there on guard, in case the enemy should make a rush. Meanwhile Billy Bunter had disappeared into the New House, the headquarters of the enemy.

CHAPTER 3.

Strategic I

BUNTER!" said the Head. Dr. Holmes was in Mr. Ratcliff's study in the New House. The Head did not look as if he had been enjoying the vacation. It had been a busy and exciting one for him, as well as for the juniors of St. Jim's; and the Head did not enjoy bustle and excitement as the Third, the Fourth, and the Shell enjoyed it.

"Bunter," said Mr. Railton, "a Greyfriars boy—I remember that he has visited some of the juniors here before. He wishes to speak to you, sir."

"I will see him, certainly."

Mr. Railton stepped to the door.

"You may come in, Bunter."

Billy Bunter rolled in.

His fat face was very merry and bright. William George Bunter seemed to be in very cheery spirits.

"Well, Bunter?" said the Head, looking at him. "If you have come to visit any of the juniors at this school, I am afraid it will be impossible. Matters are not—ahem—as usual here."

"I know, sir," said Bunter cheerily. "There's a barring-out on, and the chaps have given you the order of the boot—what?"

"Bunter!" said Mr. Railton sternly.

The Head coughed.

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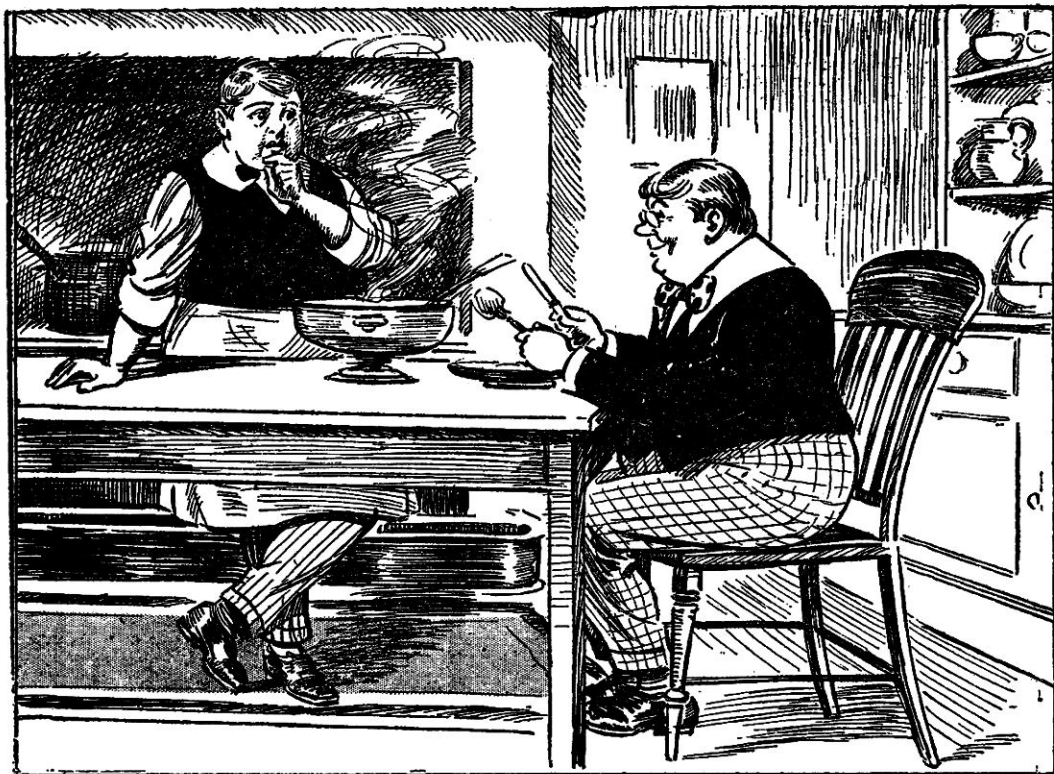
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Billy Bunter sat down to an enormous helping of stew with a pleased expression on his podgy face. "I say, Wynn, this is something like I!" he said. "I can cook, you know; but I own up I couldn't beat this!" "Glad you like it, old chap!" said the gratified Wynn. "I'll help myself to some more, though," said Bunter, "if you don't mind!" (See page 7.)

"No offence, sir," said Bunter. "But that's how it stands, isn't it? I've been on the phone, and D'Arcy's told me all about it."

"Well," said the Head curtly. "What is your business here, Master Bunter? Pray be brief."

"The fact is, sir, I'm shocked at this state of affairs," said Billy Bunter, blinking at the Head through his big spectacles. "It's awfully shocking! I've come here to put a stop to it."

"What?"

"You see, sir, I've got a lot of friends among the chaps here, and a good deal of influence," explained Bunter. "I'm sure, sir, that I could put a stop to it if you'd let me speak to them."

"That is certainly a very creditable desire on your part, Master Bunter," said the Head, thawing a little. "I think, however, that it is very improbable—"

"Let me try, sir," said Bunter eagerly. "Just let me get a few words with them. I'd bring them round."

Dr. Holmes glanced at Mr. Railton. That gentleman certainly did not look much impressed. He had learned very clearly in what a determined mood the rebels were; and he did not regard it as likely in the least that Billy Bunter's eloquence would have any effect on them.

"It could do no harm, Mr. Railton," said the Head.

"That is so, sir," assented the Housemaster. "I cannot believe that anything will come of it, but—as you say, it can do no harm."

"I should be willing to catch at any straw to prevent further lawlessness," said the Head, with a sigh. "Bunter's intentions are good. There can be no harm in allowing him to speak to these misguided boys."

"Not at all," said Mr. Railton.

"Then you will allow him to go to the School House, and speak to them at one of the windows. Master Bunter, I shall be very much obliged to you if you can produce any effect upon these obstinate boys."

"Leave it to me, sir!" said Bunter airily.

And the fat junior of Greyfriars followed Mr. Railton from the New House.

Across the quad a score of pairs of eyes were fixed on him as he came out with the Housemaster.

"Order of the boot for Bunter!" remarked Blake.

"Bai Jove! Waiton's lettin' him come ovah heah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in astonishment.

"Great Scott!"

Billy Bunter, leaving the Housemaster, came across the quad with a grin on his fat face.

The St. Jim's juniors watched him in amazement. Unmolested by the "army" in the quadrangle, the Owl of Greyfriars rolled up to the besieged School House.

Tom Merry waved his hand from the open hall window.

"This way, Bunter!"

"Good!"

Bunter tramped up the steps of the House. He grinned at the juniors at the little window.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Bai Jove! So you've come, Buntah!"

"Looks like it!" grinned Bunter. "I say, you fellows, help me in, before old Railton smells a rat."

"Here you are!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

Bunter clambered in at the window. Three or four pairs of hands helped him, and he landed inside.

"Hallo, here comes Railton!"

Mr. Railton was hurrying towards the School House. Bunter had been given permission to speak to the rebels at the window. The Housemaster had watched his entrance into the House in amazement. He came striding across the quad at a great rate.

Cardew of the Fourth took aim with a Greek lexicon. Tom Merry caught his wrist in time, and Liddell and Scott went with a crash to the floor.

"Chuck that!" said Tom curtly.

"I was goin' to chuck it," said Cardew meekly.

"Weally, Cardew—"

"Order!" said Tom.

"What rot!" said Billy Bunter. "Why not biff him on the boko? I'll chuck the die at him, if you like."

"You won't!" said Tom.
 "Wathah not," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "There is such a thing as respect for a House-mastah. I am surprised at you, Cardew. I regard you—"
 "Bunter!" Mr. Railton's deep voice broke in, "Bunter, you were not to enter the House—"

"Bow-wow!" answered Bunter cheerily.
 "What?"
 "You see, I was pulling your leg, old scout," said the fat junior. "I only wanted to get in. Fooled you, you know. He, he, he!"

"Bless my soul!"
 "You're a bit soft, old fellow," said Bunter. "I've come here to join these chaps—in fact, to take the lead and see them through. You can look out for squalls now I'm here. Catch on? I say, you fellows, give me something to chuck at him!"

Mr. Railton's face became purple.
 "You unscrupulous young rascal!" he exclaimed.
 "Oh, can it!" said Bunter derisively.
 "I shall give you a severe thrashing for this, Bunter, when you come into my hands!" exclaimed the angry Housemaster.
 "Go and eat coke!"

"Upon my word! I—I—" gasped Mr. Railton.
 "Why don't you fellows chuck something at him?" inquired Bunter.

Mr. Railton strode away, his brow very dark. Certainly his leg had been very thoroughly pulled by the cunning Owl of Greyfriars; he had not had the remotest suspicion of Bunter's real intentions.

Tom Merry barred the window again.
 "Fooled him a treat, what?" grinned Bunter. "I'm pretty deep, you know. He, he, he!"
 "Bai Jove! I weally fail to see how you induced Mr. Waitton to allow you to come heah, Buntah."

The Owl of Greyfriars gave a fat chuckle.
 "He thought I was coming here to talk to you fellows like a Dutch uncle, and persuade you to chuck up," he explained.

"Did you tell him so, Buntah?" asked Arthur Augustus, his brow growing very stern.
 "Of course! That was the only way of getting in. Diplomatic, you know."

"You told him an untwuh—"
 "Oh, really, D'Arcy—"
 "I regard you as an unscrupulous young wascal, Buntah!" said Arthur Augustus sternly.

"Oh, come off!" said Bunter. "If this is what you call politeness to a visitor, Gussy, I can't say I think much of St. Jim's manners."
 Arthur Augustus coloured.

"Bai Jove! I had forgotten for a moment that you were a visitah, Buntah. But pway undahstand that if you were not a visitah, I should regard you as an unscrupulous young wascal."

"Look here, Gussy—"
 "Oh, wats?"
 And Arthur Augustus turned his back on his old pal Bunter and walked away. Apparently his old pal had not much cordiality to look for from the swell of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 4. Roughing It!

BILLY BUNTER blinked round through his big spectacles, rather surprised and annoyed to see disapproval in so many faces. Tom Merry, indeed, was debating in his mind whether to drop Billy Bunter out of the window again. But that would have been rather a drastic proceeding, and Bunter certainly would have received the thrashing Mr. Railton had promised him. Tom Merry had made up his mind now that Bunter was there, it was up to the garrison to put up with him. That was not the view Bunter had expected them to take. In his own eyes he was a very valuable recruit.

"Well, now you're here, here you are!" said Tom Merry, as cordially as he could. "I suppose you're hungry after your journey, Bunter?"

"What-ho!" said Bunter, with feeling. "I've had nothing since brekker, except a few sandwiches and a cake and some cold beef and ham!"

"Then you must be starving!" said Monty Lowther sympathetically.

"Jolly near!" said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you can put me in charge of the grub department, if you like. That's in my line."

"There isn't very much grub—"

"What?"

"Grub's running short, you know."

"Wha-a-a-at?"

"We're on rations!" said Levison.

"Rations!" said Bunter faintly.

"Just that!" said Tom. "You see, the barring-out has been going on for weeks now, and nothing can come into the House."

Bunter gasped.

"Didn't you lay in a supply of grub?"

"We cleared out the tuck-shop," said Tom, "but there's a big crowd of us, you know."

"Well, my hat!" said Bunter blankly.

"Still, we can fix you up a good lunch to begin with," said Tom consolingly, "but if you'd rather not stay—"

"How can I get out now?" demanded Bunter hotly.
 "After what I said to old Railton, I shall get the licking of my life if they catch me."

"Not much doubt about that!" agreed Tom.

"I've got to stay. Besides, I've arranged to put in a week here," said Bunter, deeply aggrieved. "How was I to guess that you would be such a silly idiot—"

"What?"

"Such a crass dunny as to be short of grub. Call yourself a leader?"

"Look here, Bunter—"

"Oh, don't jaw!" said Bunter crossly. "You ought to have let me know. I consider that you've got me here on false pretences."

"Got you here?" gasped Tom Merry. "Why, you fat dunny—"

"As for rations," said Bunter, "I want it understood first of all, that I'm not taking any. It's a good idea for the rest of you. But I shall expect enough to eat. Pretty hospitality, I must say."

"If a fellow shoves himself in where he isn't wanted—"
 began Herries of the Fourth. George Herries was a painfully plain speaker sometimes.

"Oh, really, Herries—"

"Fatty," called out Tom Merry, "take Bunter down and feed him! He'll feel better when he's fed."

"This waw, Bunter," said Fatty Wynn cheerily.

He led Bunter away to the kitchen; the department over which Fatty Wynn presided. Fatty's manner was quite friendly. He did not exactly like Bunter; he couldn't. But there were several things about Bunter that Fatty rather liked—such as his keen appreciation of good food. Bunter knew how to cook, and how to appreciate another fellow's cooking; and those qualities recommended him to Fatty Wynn.

Bunter's face cleared a little when he found himself in the kitchen. A big fire was going, and a huge saucepan was simmuring on it; a stew of gigantic proportions was preparing, under the skilful supervision of Fatty Wynn. Food was growing scarce; but Fatty was really wonderful in the length he made it go—not a morsel of anything was wasted; and Figgins of the Fourth had declared that Fatty could make an appetising dinner out of a dry crust and half an onion.

"Just on done," said Fatty Wynn. "Wait about ten minutes, Bunter—"

"Right-ho, old fellow!" said Bunter. "I'll just take a snack while I wait. I'll try those tarts."

There was a great array of tarts, made with Fatty Wynn's own fair hands. The supply of jams was still considerable, and there was flour in good quantities.

ANOTHER

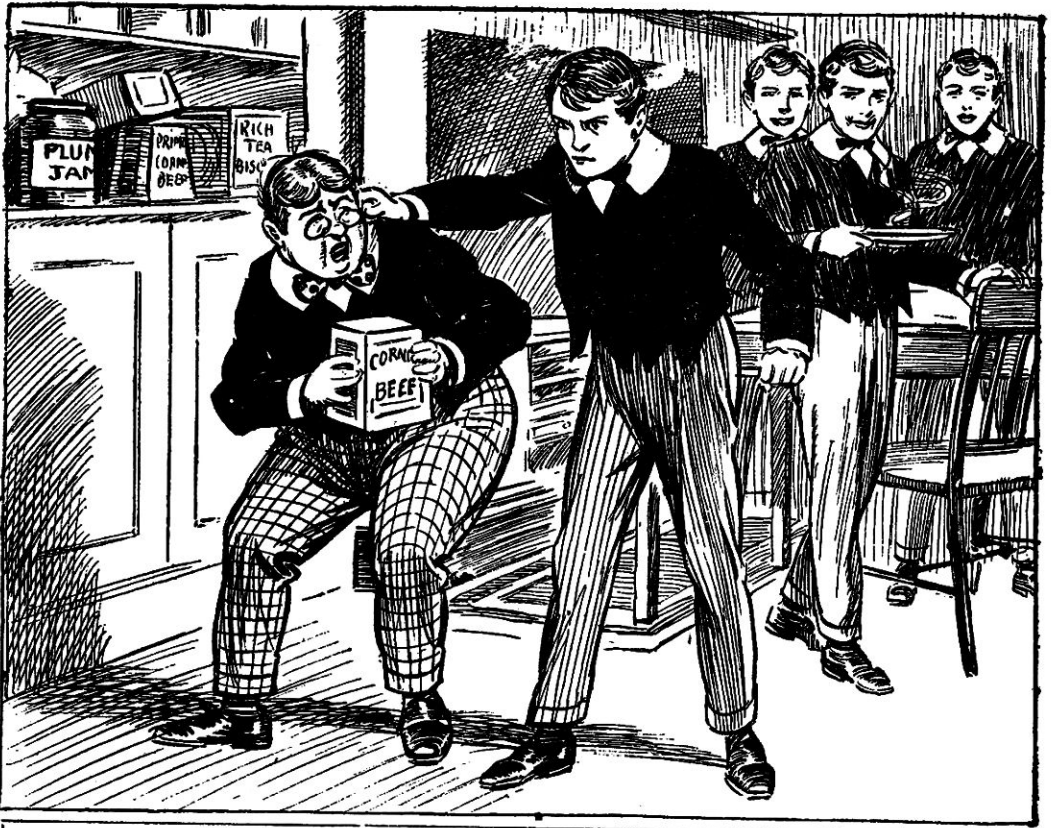
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Billy Bunter was cheerfully helping himself to the tins of beef when a grip of iron suddenly fell upon his fat neck, and he blinked round into the face of Grundy, of the Shell. Grundy jerked the tin away, and replaced it on the shelf without a word, but his look spoke volumes. "Look here—" began Bunter hotly. "Shut up!" said Grundy. "If I hit you, you'll know it!" (See page 10.)

"Do!" said Fatty Wynn hospitably. And Bunter did. Doubtless the keen January air had sharpened Bunter's appetite—never feeble.

He started on the jam-tarts with gusto, while he waited for the stew. One after another they vanished.

Fatty Wynn eyed him with a rather peculiar expression. In any other circumstances, Fatty Wynn would have been heartily pleased by this keen and practical appreciation of his excellent pastry-cookery.

In the present circumstances, however, the St. Jim's chef had to remember that supplies were limited, and that a hungry army of fellows were waiting for their lunch.

But he said nothing. Bunter had made quite a difference to the supply of tarts when the stew was finished at last.

But his snack had not affected his Gargantuan appetite, apparently. He sat down to an enormous helping of stew with a pleased expression on his podgy face.

"I say, Wynn, this is something like!" he said. "I can cook, you know; but I own up that I couldn't beat this!"

"Glad you like it, old chap!" said the gratified Wynn. "I'll help myself to some beef, though."

Bunter took a large ladle, and ladled out all the beef he could find in the big turcon.

Fatty Wynn suppressed his feelings. The meat supply was short—very short; and all there was of it came out of tins. Fatty's cookery had a wonderful effect on American canned meat; it made it not only edible, but quite nice. But all Fatty's skill was required to make a very little go a long way.

There was little enough now; but there was enough for Bunter. Fatty's expression grew extraordinary as Bunter fished out all the pieces, and helped himself to them.

Then the Owl of Greyfriars sat down to enjoy himself. A crowd of fellows came down to the kitchen to dinner,

and sat round the big table to feed. To those that were on duty to keep watch, dinner was carried by the other fellows.

Bunter started first of the garrison. He finished last. Relays of fellows came down to feed; but Billy Bunter saw them all out. He was still going strong on the tarts when the last diner departed.

"Jolly good!" said Bunter, at last. "Anything more?" The last tart had vanished.

"N-n-no!" stammered Fatty.

"Well, I'm satisfied," said Bunter. "Nothing greedy about me. Bless you, I can rough it, and go short on occasion."

"Oh!" gasped Fatty.

Billy Bunter did not stay to lend a hand with the wash-up. He rolled away in search of a quiet corner to take a nap after his feed. He could have eaten more; but his slow and heavy motions, and his stertorous breathing, seemed to indicate that he had eaten enough.

He settled down to a nap in the armchair in the Head's study, with his feet to the fire. And in a few minutes his deep and sonorous snore was echoing down the corridor.

CHAPTER 5.

The Light That Failed!

"GWEAT Scott!"

"What's the row now, Gussy? Why don't you turn on the light?"

"It won't turn on, deah boy."

"Bosh!"

"Weally, Blake—"

Jack Blake came along the corridor, and jerked at the electric switch. The early January dusk was setting in; and the rebels made it a custom to keep the electric lights going to full force from sunset to sunrise. It made them more secure against a sudden attack, which would have been

favoured by darkness; and they did not have to worry about the bills. Little considerations of that kind were for older heads to worry about.

Blake jerked the switch most emphatically. But the light did not come on in the corridor.

"Bother it!" grunted Blake.

"May I mention that I told you so, deah boy?" inquired Arthur Augustus, with gentle sarcasm.

"Don't jaw, old chap!" implored Blake. "Something's gone wrong with the blessed fuses. That's Glyn's job. Where's Glyn?"

"Glyn!" bawled a dozen voices. Other fellows, in other quarters, had made the discovery that the electric light was off.

Bernard Glyn of the Shell was chief engineer to the garrison. Glyn of the Shell knew all about electricity and its weird ways; he was an amateur mechanic of great gifts.

"Glyn! Where's Glyn?"

Glyn was discovered in his study in the Shell passage. He

IT'S A NEAR THING FOR THE REBELS NEXT WEEK.

was routed out and despatched to examine the electric meter.

He returned with the news that the fuses were all right, so far as that went.

"Wubbish, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "How can the fuses be all wight when the light is off?"

"Talk sense!" suggested Digby.

"Cut off!" said Glyn.

"Bai Jove! You've cut it off at the meter?"

"Ass! It's been cut off outside the house."

"Gweat Scott!"

"My only hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "The giddy enemy!"

"Phew!"

"Oh cwumbs!"

Something like dismay fell upon the garrison of the School House. The light that once had blazed away so cheerily in the beleaguered House was cut off, and gone for ever! It was the light that failed!

"I wonder the Head didn't think of that before!" remarked Levison of the Fourth, after a pause.

"Probably he did," said Glyn. "But he's had to send for a man from the works to do it. That's the rotten part of having it laid on. If we had an independent installation, I could keep it going. As it is, they've tapped the wire outside the house. We're done!"

"Rotten trick!" said Grundy indignantly.

"Yaas, wathah! I have a stwong objection to bein' left in the dark like this, you know," said Arthur Augustus warmly.

"It would not be so bad in the summah. In the wintah, I weally considah that the Head might be a little more considewate."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I suppose we can't expect the enemy to take care of our comfort," he said. "It won't make any difference; we're going to hold out. We've got some candles, anyhow; and we shall have to make them last."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And keep an extra specially careful watch," added Talbot of the Shell.

There was a search for candles and bike lanterns, in the dusky light that still remained. Plenty of lanterns were found; but the supply of oil was limited. And there were only a few dozen candles.

"Lots of coal, anyhow," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "We'll keep up big fires, and that will show some light."

"Yaas, that's a good ideah; and a good thing for the coal twade, too," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

It was obviously necessary to husband the lighting resources, which could not be renewed so long as the siege lasted; and that evening there was only a glimmer of light in the besieged House, instead of the usual flare. The change was extremely uncomfortable; fellows blundered into one another in the dark passages; games on the big staircase were "off"; and reading to pass the time came almost to an end. Fellows with books crowded round the few lights.

But it could not be helped, and the garrison did not falter. Shortage of illumination was not going to make them give in.

But undoubtedly the stress of the siege was growing heavier; the outlook much more serious.

When Billy Bunter awakened from his long nap in the

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Head's study he found himself in the dark. The fire had died out, and it was cold. Not a glimmer of light came in at the barricaded window. Outside the School House, a dim, winter mist brooded over St. Jim's.

Bunter sat up and shivered.

"Groogh! Selfish beasts! Might have kept the fire in while a fellow was asleep!" he murmured. "Blow!"

Bunter struggled out of the chair and groped for the lighting switch. He bumped into the barricade at the window, and yelped. He sheered off towards the door, bumped into a chair, and yelped again. Then he gave an indignant howl for aid.

"I say, you fellows!"

"Bai Jove, that's Buntah yellin'!"

Arthur Augustus kindly went along to see what Bunter wanted—or to inquire, at least; he could not see anything in the darkness. He peered into the gloomy interior of the Head's study.

"You there, Buntah?"

"Yes!" growled Bunter. "What the thump is it all dark for? Turn on the light, for goodness' sake, and don't stand there like a frozen jackass!"

"Weally, Buntah—"

"Turn on the light!" roared Bunter.

"Imposs, deah boy; it is cut off."

"Mean to say there isn't any light in the House?" roared Bunter.

"Yaas."

"Well, of all the dummies!" ejaculated Bunter. "If this is the way you manage a barring-out, the sooner you give in the better!"

"Weally, Buntah, if you can suggest a way of lightin' the House, we shall be vevy glad to adopt it," said Arthur Augustus mildly.

Snort from Bunter.

"Well, I'm jolly well not going to be in the dark!" he said. "I suppose you've got a lamp or something somewhere, and a fire? Show me the way!"

"Follow me, Buntah!"

"How can I follow you when I can't see you, you dummy? Wait till I grab hold of your silly arm!"

"Bai Jove! All wight; heah I am!"

Bunter groped to the door, following the sound of D'Arcy's voice. Then he groped for Gussy's arm, and grabbed.

"Yawwooh!" roared Arthur Augustus. In the dark, Bunter had grabbed his nose, and the swell of St. Jim's was startled.

"That your nose?" said Bunter, tweaking it—perhaps to make sure that it was Gussy's nose. "Oh, all right!"

"Ow! Leggo, you fat duffah! Wow!"

Bunter shifted his grasp to D'Arcy's arm.

"Now, lead a fellow along!" he growled. "My hat, I wouldn't have come here if I'd known I had this to expect! Precious sort of reception for a fellow who's come to see you through!"

"We should manage things better than this at Greyfriars, I can tell you!"

"Wats!"

"If that's what you call civility, D'Arcy—"

"Oh, pway dwy up, Buntah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, even his Chesterfieldian manners failing him at last—perhaps owing to the pain in his noble nose. "Weally, you know, a fellow gets fed-up with gwousin'!"

"That's enough!" snapped Bunter.

Arthur Augustus breathed deeply, but he made no rejoinder. He led Billy Bunter along the dark corridor to the hall, where a bright fire was blazing, and the greater part of the garrison were assembled.

Firelight played over the wide hall and the great oaken door and the barred window. It was all the light there was.

"Well, what about tea?" asked Bunter.

ALTHOUGH BATTERED, THEY ARE BY NO MEANS BEATEN!

"Nothing about tea," answered Tom Merry. "We're on rations, you know. You can cut down to the kitchen and ask Fatty if there's anything going."

There was a very emphatic snort from Bunter.

"I want my tea, of course," he said. "I don't want much—I'm a light eater. A few rounds of toast, and half a dozen eggs—new laid, of course; I can't eat any other—and a slice or two of ham, and perhaps a cake to finish with. Next to nothing. But the little I want I do want."

There was a chuckle from the juniors. Little as Bunter wanted, he was not likely to get it in the besieged House.

"Toast is off," said Tom Merry. "You see, there isn't any bread. Even Fatty Wynn can't make toast with flour."

"And the supply of new-laid eggs has run out," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "If we had known you were coming, Bunter, we'd have telegraphed for a special supply to be delivered by aeroplane. But you didn't give us a long enough notice."

"Oh, don't rot!" snapped Bunter. "What about some ham?"

"I suggest letting Bunter have the whole supply of ham," said Lowther, looking round. "Dash it all, he's a giddy visitor, and he's got a delicate appetite that needs tempting! Let him have the lot!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"Agreed!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

Billy Bunter brightened up a little.

"Well, that's decent!" he said. "Where is it?"

"Where is what?"

"The ham, of course, said Lowther!"

"Oh, the ham!" said Bunter. "I don't know exactly where it is. But you can have the lot. All you've got to do is to find it!"

"But where do you keep it?" demanded Bunter, perplexed.

"We don't keep it."

"What?"

"How can we keep it when we haven't any?" asked Monty Lowther, with an air of surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you silly idiot!" howled Bunter. "If there isn't any, how can I have it all?"

"Don't ask me conundrums," answered Monty. "I never was good at conundrums."

"What about a cake?" asked Bunter.

"Oh, now you're talking!" said Lowther. "If you think that a cake would satisfy you—"

"Well, if there was enough of it—"

"A three-pound cake!" asked Monty.

"Good!" Bunter's eyes glistened behind his big spectacles.

"A decent one, I hope?"

"Well, what do you call decent? Plenty of plums, with sugar on top?" said Monty.

"Good! I'll have it."

"You really think you could be satisfied, just for the one occasion, with a cake like that?" asked Lowther.

"Yes, yes!"

"Then I'm awfully sorry there isn't one!" said Lowther sadly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors, quite entertained by the expression on William George Bunter's face.

"You—you—you funny idiot!" gasped Bunter. "You—you—you burbling ass! You fathead! I've a jolly good mind to punch you on the head! Look here, you fellows, you've simply got to give me something to eat, after getting me here like this. I want some tea!"

"Tea's run out," said Tom Merry, laughing. "There's still some coffee—but it will be a bit weak. Lots of porridge, though. Kerr says that porridge is better than beefsteaks. I hope it is—we get more of it these days."

"Rot!" snarled Bunter. "But it's better than nothing, I suppose. I'll have my tea here, as there's a fire. Some of you fetch up the porridge—and remember, I like plenty of milk and sugar!"

"Milk's off!" grinned Blaké. "If we'd known you were coming, we'd have asked the Head to let us fetch in a special Jersey cow. But—"

"And sugar's rationed!" chuckled Kangaroo. "Precious little left."

"Kerr says salt with porridge is the proper thing," said Manners. "He ought to know—he's Scotch."

"Kerr's a silly idiot, and you're another!" howled Bunter. "I'm not going to eat porridge with salt—I know that! Yah!"

And Bunter rolled away to the kitchen, like a lion seeking what he might devour. He left the St. Jim's juniors chuckling.

CHAPTER 6.

A Kiek for Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER looked a little more contented when he reappeared above-stairs once more. No doubt he had found something in the culinary regions to fill the aching void that had troubled him. He joined the St. Jim's juniors round the fire, and blinked expressively at Arthur Augustus, who was seated in an armchair that had been rolled out of Mr. Railton's study. Arthur Augustus quietly rose and handed over the chair to Bunter.

The Owl of Greyfriars sat down and crossed his little fat legs. He seemed almost in a contented mood.

"Feeling better?" asked Tom Merry, with a smile.

"A little," admitted Bunter. "I found a tin of beef.

Don't care for tinned stuff, as a rule, but I can rough it all right. There were some tins of peaches and apricots, too. I found them all right."

"Oh!" gasped Tom. "I—I'm glad you found them all right, Bunter."

"Not what I'm used to at Bunter Court, of course," said the fat junior. "But, dash it all, I can rough it. Now, I'd like to know just how matters stand here. I've come over to help with the—"

"With the grub?" asked Lowther.

"With the barring-out, because I'm Gussy's old pal—"

"Woally, Buntah—"

"So long as I'm treated well, you'll find me all right," said Bunter. "I'm prepared to help you with advice. In any case of difficulty just come to me and I'll tell you exactly what to do."

"Thanks awfully," said Tom Merry, with a deep sarcasm that was totally wasted on William George Bunter.

"Not at all. As the only fellow here with any brains to speak of, it's up to me. You don't mind my putting it plainly?"

"Oh, no! Not a bit! Do!"

"I will," said Bunter. "Now, I'd like to know what the row's about. I'm not sure that I can approve of this kind of going-on, you know."

"We might possibly struggle along somehow without your approval!" suggested Cardew. "It would come hard, of course. But we might."

Bunter did not heed that remark.

"Now, you can tell me all about it," he said. "I'll hear your version, and then decide what I think of it."

Considering that Bunter was so important a personage—at least, in his own eyes—there was not an eager rush to enlighten him: Tom Merry whistled, and Manners and Lowther resumed a game of chess by firelight. Arthur Augustus, as usual, came to the rescue.

"It's about Tom Mewwy, Buntah," he explained. "Just befoah the date of bweaking up for Christmas there was a wobbey in Mr. Watchful's study in the New House—"

"Tom Merry robbed him?" asked Bunter.

"Certainly not, you ass! But for reasons that probably seemed good to himself, the Head found Tom Mewwy guilty, and decided to expel him. So we all wallied wound to stand by him."

"I dare say the Head knew what he was about."

"What?"

"I can't say I approve of this," said Bunter, shaking his head. "If Tom Merry has robbed somebody—"

Tom fixed his eyes on the fat junior.

"All these fellows are standing by me, Bunter, because they believe me innocent," he said quietly. "If you haven't the same belief you have no business here, and the sooner you clear out the better."

Bunter coughed. This was unusually plain-speaking on the part of Tom Merry, and he left no doubt as to what he meant.

"Oh, of course, I take your word, if you assure me—" began Bunter.

"I don't take the trouble to assure you of anything," answered the captain of the Shell; and he walked away, apparently having had enough of Bunter's fascinating society for the present.

Billy Bunter blinked round at the juniors, with an expression of owl-like seriousness on his fat face.

"I don't like the look of this!" he said.

"Woally, Buntah—"

"What don't you like the look of, Bunter?" asked Monty Lowther in a dangerously quiet tone.

"All this," said Bunter. "Looks to me as if you fellows are playing the goat. Tom Merry's way of speaking about the affair seems to me very suspicious—very suspicious indeed!"

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Lowther—"

"Do you want me to take you by the back of the neck and rub your silly nose in the cinders?" asked Monty, much incensed.

"Look here—"

"If not, you'd better shut up!" said Monty Lowther. "Another word about Tom, and you'll get it—hard!"

And Monty Lowther turned back to his chess, with a black brow. Billy Bunter did not utter the other word. Bunter was not a bright youth, but he had an instinct that warned him when danger was nigh. Whatever his valuable opinion may have been upon the subject of Tom Merry's guilt or innocence, he decided to keep it to himself—at least in the presence of Tom Merry's devoted chums.

He snoozed with some contentment in the armchair till supper-time; but he was prompt to move when the word was given for supper. He cast a disparaging blink over the table. Fatty Wynn and his assistants had turned out a thin soup—which Fatty declared was nourishing—and there was plenty of it; and there were oatmeal cakes with rather a salty flavour—undoubtedly good food, but not what William George Bunter had expected when he turned up at St. Jim's as a recruit.

Bunter had pictured to himself a well-stocked larder a

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land flowing with milk and honey, as it were. The reality was very different from the picture in his fat mind.

But Bunter did not mean to stand on ceremony. He was there, and he had to be fed—that was important. So he cheerfully helped himself to one of the few remaining tins of beef. A grip of iron fell upon his fat neck as he did so, and he blinked round into the face of Grundy of the Shell.

Grundy jerked the tin away, and replaced it on the shelf without a word; but his look spoke volumes.

"Look here——" began Bunter hotly.
"Shut up!" said Grundy.
"What?"

"I haven't hit you yet," said George Alfred Grundy.
"I'm not going to if I can help it, as you're a visitor. If I do, you'll know it!"
"You cheeky cad!" roared Bunter. "Oh! Ah! Yaroooh!"

Grundy took the fat junior by the shoulders, and sat him down on the floor—hard! Bunter bumped there, with a gasp and a yell.

"Draw it mild, Grundy, old chap," murmured Tom Merry.
"I think I'd better kick him a little," said Grundy. "He's been asking for it all day."
"Yaroooh!"

Tom Merry pulled Grundy back.
"That will do! You see, Bunter——"

Billy Bunter scrambled to his feet, his face red with wrath.

"I've a jolly good mind to lick the pair of you!" he roared.

"Do!" said Grundy imploringly. "Lick me! I want you to give me the chance of landing you one good one right on the nose."

Billy Bunter decided not to give Grundy that chance. He turned up his fat little nose, and rolled away.

His looks at supper were discontented, but nobody, fortunately, was worried by Billy Bunter's looks. After supper he went to bed.

"Are you taking your turn on sentry-go, Bunter?" called out Blake as the fat junior went upstairs with a candle.

"No!" snapped Bunter.
And he disappeared.

"What a dear, nice boy!" commented Monty Lowther.
"How his people must love him at home; and how I wish they had him there!"

"He does appear to be wathah a corkah!" remarked Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Still, it was very good of him to join up to help us, and we must try to stand him somehow, dear boys."

A few minutes later Bunter's deep snore was heard, and Tom Merry & Co. were glad to know that they had done with their valuable recruit, at all events, until the following day.

CHAPTER 7.
Sooty!

"BUNTER!"
"What?"
"Where's Bunter——?"
"What the——?"
"Where's the fat villain?" roared Fatty Wynn.

The School House chef had rushed up from the regions below, with a toasting-fork in his hand, and purple wrath in his visage. The toasting-fork, apparently, was intended for Bunter. Perhaps it was fortunate for the Owl of Greyfriars that he was out of view.

"What's Bunter done?" asked Cardew.

Fatty Wynn spluttered with wrath.

"I left him in the kitchen!" he gasped. "He's scoffed the stuff—taken a bagful—the pie I made for supper, and all the tarts, and some of the jars of jam, and no end of

stuff! He's packed a bagful and bunked. Where is he? I'm going to slaughter him!"

"Bai Jove! That is wolly the limit!"
Tom Merry knitted his brows.

In the present state of the food supplies, a greedy raid by the Owl of Greyfriars was rather a serious matter.

"Hunt for him!" exclaimed Tom. "By Jove! We'll jolly well kick him out for this!"

"Yaas, wathah!"
It was the second day of William George Bunter's sojourn at St. Jim's; and Bunter, apparently, was "fed up" with short commons. He had crumpled at breakfast, and he had groused at lunch, and he took the view that he had been induced to join up at St. Jim's by false pretences. From most of the juniors Bunter received remarks that were not flattering, and did not err on the side of politeness, though Arthur Augustus D'Arcy still laboured to be Chesterfieldian.

But the raid on the food supplies was really the limit, and a crowd of fellows started in search of Bunter, with the intention of making the fat junior disgorge.

Bunter was searched for high and low; but no doubt he had anticipated a search as soon as Fatty Wynn missed the supplies. He had retired into some very obscure corner to devour his prey.

"Bai Jove! This door is locked!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, as he turned the handle of the top box-room door.
"Pewwaps Buntah——"

There was a crowd round the door at once, and Tom Merry thumped on it with his knuckles.

"Bunter! Are you here, Bunter?"
No answer.

Thump, thump, thump!
"Bunter, you fat rascal——"
"Oh, really, Merry——"

"Open this door at once!"
"Can't!" answered Bunter. "It's locked, and I've jammed a couple of trunks against it!"

"We'll smash it in!" roared Figgins, in great wrath.
"No good!" answered Bunter calmly. "I'm more than half-way through the grub now. I shall have finished by the time you get in."

"You—you—you cormorant!" yelled Blako.
"Oh, really, Blako——"

"Bai Jove! We shall wag you baldheaded for this, Buntah!"

"If you think you're going to starve me, D'Arcy, you're making a mistake. Don't be so selfish!"

"We'll jolly well kick you out!" roared Herries.
"Yah!"

The juniors thumped at the door, and kicked at it, but finally they left Bunter in peace. Only two or three fellows remained on the landing outside, to catch the Owl of Greyfriars when he emerged. The new recruit had worn out the patience of the garrison, and they intended to mete out some drastic treatment when they could lay hands on him.

Billy Bunter gave no thought to that; he was not accustomed to looking ahead. At present he was busy with his feed, and it absorbed his attention. He sat on a box near the fireplace, with his raided supplies spread on another box. There was no fire, of course, and it was rather cold in the box-room; but Bunter was too busy to notice even that.

Item after item disappeared, and Bunter opened his last jar of jam. Billy Bunter was equal to dealing with whole jars of jam; and he preferred to eat from the jar with a tablespoon.

The Owl of Greyfriars was disposing of the jam in that elegant manner, when there was a trickle of soot from the wide, old-fashioned chimney.

The trickle was followed by a rush.
A black and smothering cloud came flooding out on Bunter and the jam. The fat junior jumped up with a startled howl.

Something, evidently, was going on in the chimney. There was a sound of scraping, and a gasp—a human gasp—loud and prolonged. And soot came in clouds.

"Groooh!" spluttered Bunter.
He staggered back from the fireplace. His last jar of jam was spoiled—even Bunter did not care to eat it with the addition of soot. And there was soot on Bunter's fat face, and in his hair, and on his spectacles, and over his clothes.

He rubbed soot from his eyes and ejected it from his mouth and sniffed it from his nose, and gasped for breath. From the chimney came the sound of a muffled voice.

"Old 'ard with that rope!"
Bunter fairly jumped.

Being a late arrival at St. Jim's, he did not know the voice of Private Brown; but any of the St. Jim's juniors would have known it. It was that active and enterprising young man who was descending the chimney.

"Groooh! Ooooh! Mmmmmmmmm!" spluttered Bunter. "Oh, my hat! I'm smothered! Ooooooooooh!"

He staggered to the door and unlocked it, dragged away the stacked boxes, and staggered out into the passage, spluttering.



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Fatty Wynn collared Bunter and got his head into chancery. Thump! Thump! Thump! "Yow-ow-woooooop!" roared Bunter. "Leggo! Help! Fire! Rescue!" There was a sudden rush of feet as a crowd of juniors came rushing upon the scene. "What the merry dickens!" exclaimed Tom Merry. Fatty Wynn heeded him not, but thumped and thumped as if for a wager! (See page 13.)

There was a shout in the passage.

"Here he is!"

"Collar him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Study No. 6 were on the watch. Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, rushed on the Owl of Greyfriars together.

Blake and Herries and Dig observed the cloudy atmosphere of soot that surrounded Bunter just in time, and paused. But Arthur Augustus did not observe it in time. He rushed on and collared the Owl.

"Wag him, deah boys!"

"Grooooooh!"

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as his grasp on the fat junior jerked out a cloud of soot. "Oh, cwumbs! What the mewvy thump—gwoogh! The howwid wottah is smothabed with soot! I am smothahed! Wow!"

"Groogh! Leggo!" spluttered Bunter.

"Oh, cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus let go fast enough; Billy Bunter was not pleasant to hold on to just then. He tottered away, coughing and spluttering. Bunter reeled against the wall and panted.

"The spoofing rotter!" said Herries wrathfully. "He's smothered himself with soot to keep us off!"

"Groogh! You silly idiot! Groogh! Do you think I got like this on—groogh—purpose!" spluttered Bunter. "Oh! Ow! I'm chook-chook-choked! Wow!"

"What on earth—" said Blake.

He stared into the box-room.

He was in time to see the active form of Private Brown squeeze out of the chimney, in clouds and oceans of soot. A rope rattled after Private Brown. It was fastened under his shoulders. Evidently he had been lowered down the big old chimney from the roof.

Private Brown had penetrated the defences; but he was not in a state for immediate action. He had not, unfortunately, brought a gas-mask to St. Jim's with him, and a handkerchief tied over his mouth had slipped. He was almost suffocated by the ancient soot he had woke up, as it were, in his passage down the chimney.

He sat on the floor and spluttered, unconscious as yet of the fact that he was seen and discovered—conscious only of soot. Blake stared at him blankly as he coughed and sneezed and wiped his eyes.

There was a jerk on the rope from above, and the voice of Sergeant Stuckey hooted down the chimney.

"Are you all right, Brown?"

"Mooocooooommmmm!" was Private Brown's reply.

"Let go the rope!"

"Mummmmmmm!"

Private Brown jerked the rope loose, and it went whisking up the chimney, to assist the descent of the next intruder. Then, as he wiped his eyes clear at last, Private Brown discerned the amazed faces of Jack Blake staring at him from the doorway, and he jumped up.

CHAPTER 8.

Back Up!

"O H, what horrid luck!" groaned Private Brown. Undoubtedly it was cruel luck for the attacking party. The plan had been carefully laid. One by one the assailants were to descend the chimney; the top box-room had been chosen as a spot little likely to be watched by the defenders. One by one the enemy were to gather in that secluded room; and then a rush down the stairs, in full force, would have taken the garrison in the rear, and placed the whole School House in the hands of the "army."

But their luck was out.

Only the vanguard of the "army" had landed in the box-room by way of the chimney; in the person of Private Brown. The rest of the "army" were still on the roof; Private Pilkins at this moment being in the act of inserting himself very carefully into the chimney.

"You!" gasped Blake. "Oh, my hat!"

Private Brown spat out soot, and placed himself in an attitude of defence.

"Buck up, there!" he roared up the chimney. "They're on to it! 'Op it lively!"

With his fists up, Private Brown stood before the chimney, hoping to hold off the enemy and cover the advance of his followers.

But he was not in danger of an immediate attack. There was too much soot on him.

A struggle with Private Brown would have had horrid results to his assailants; he was one of the soot sooty, so to speak; he dropped soot, and shook out soot, and exuded soot, at all points. He looked like a chimney-sweep who had done a very long and arduous day's work.

"Rush him!" exclaimed Digby.

But Robert Arthur Digby did not lead the rush. He did not like soot.

"Yaas, wush him!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

But even Arthur Augustus hung back. He was as brave as a lion, and as a rule keen on being in the forefront of the battle. But soot was soot; and Gussy had had enough

FIGGINS & CO. GET CAPTURED

of that from Bunter already. On the present occasion Arthur Augustus preferred to follow the celebrated example of the Duke of Plaza-Toro, who led his regiment from behind because he found it less exciting.

Blake yelled down the stairs.

"Tumble up, you fellows! They're here!"

"Eh? Who's there?" shouted Tom Merry's voice from the distance.

"The giddy enemy!"

"What?"

"They're coming down the chimneys!" yelled Blake.

"Oh, my hat!"

Tom Merry came up the stairs three at a time. He was followed by a rush of fellows.

"Wush in and collah that boundah, you chaps!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "There's only one so fah—"

"Come on!" shouted Tom.

He dashed into the box-room.

Then he halted suddenly. It was not Private Brown's brandished fists that halted him; it was soot. Tom sneezed and backed to the door.

"Go it!" exclaimed Blake.

"Pile in, deah boys!"

"Rush the rotter!"

"Yes, come on!" grinned Private Brown, realising his advantage. "Some of you will want a wash arter. Come on!"

Fresh clouds of soot came fluttering out of the wide chimney. Private Pilkins was on his suffocating way down.

"We've got to tackle him!" exclaimed Tom Merry desperately. "There's more coming—"

"Yaas, wathah; go it!"

"Bunter!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Bunter's here to help! Bunter, come on! We want a leader!"

"Yaas, wathah! Buntah—"

"This way, Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows—" gasped Bunter.

"Hurry up, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter did not hurry up. He hurried down. He made a rush for the stairs and vanished.

There was a sudden slide in the chimney, an ocean of scattering soot, and Private Pilkins rolled into view, choking and coughing. He threw the rope loose, and it jerked away up the chimney.

"Back up, Pilky!" chuckled Private Brown. "We'll 'old off the young rips till all the boys get in."

"Ooooh!" was Private Pilkins' reply.

Private Brown made a rush towards the swarm of juniors at the door, and there was a hurried backing away. The garrison almost fell over one another in their anxiety to avoid contact with Private Brown.

Mr. Brown slammed the door shut, and grabbed at the key. Once the door was locked on the juniors, there was nothing to stop the invasion from being carried out according to plan.

But Tom Merry realised that, as well as Mr. Brown. Soot or no soot, the invaders had to be tackled. Tom Merry hurled himself at the door, and it went flying open again before Mr. Brown could turn the key.

"'Elp 'ere, Pilkins!" gasped Mr. Brown, jaunting his foot against the door.

Mr. Pilkins joined up gallantly, coughing and sneezing. The door was held, and forced shut again. But there was a

boot in the way now. All the juniors realised that the situation was critical.

"All together!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Shove it open!" gasped Blake. "We've got to handle the sooty beasts! Put your shoulders to it!"

There was a tremendous heave, and the door spun open; two could not hold it against so many. Mr. Brown and Pilkins went staggering back. Then through the open doorway the juniors came swarming in.

"Collar them!" shouted Tom Merry.

He led the rush, regardless of soot. Already the scraping in the chimney announced that a third enemy was on his way down.

Talbot of the Shell followed him, and Manners, and Lowther, heroically facing the soot. Soot spread in suffocating clouds from the two old heroes of Flanders, as they were collared and rushed over. It smothered the juniors, and they coughed and gurgled as they struggled.

Messrs. Brown and Pilkins put up a gallant fight. But they were simply swamped by the garrison.

In a minute or less they were sprawling on the floor, pinned down by a crowd of juniors—as many as could find standing-room on their hapless persons.

The atmosphere was thick with soot; everybody was coughing or sneezing, or both. But the enemy were pinned down; and Tom Merry turned his attention to the chimney.

A pair of feet, of considerable size, swung there in view. They belonged to Private Scuppers.

Tom Merry grasped one ankle, and Talbot the other. There was a startled gasp from the enemy in the chimney.

"Groogh! Oh! Leggo!"

Private Scuppers ceased to descend.

"Come on!" called out Tom Merry. "We've got you, my man!"

"Ow! Leggo!"

"No fear!" chuckled Talbot.

Mr. Scuppers struggled and kicked. Clouds of soot and dust descended; but the two Shell fellows held on.

"Hold him!" exclaimed Levison. "I've got a pin here! Hold him while I run the pin into his giddy calves—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a howl of apprehension from Mr. Scuppers.

"'Ere! You keep off! I'm going up! You leggo, and I'm going up, straight!" He yelled to Sergeant Stuckey above. "Pull on that there rope, sergeant! I'm coming up again!"

"You ain't!" replied the sergeant stolidly. "Do your dooty, my man!"

"Oh gad!" gasped Mr. Scuppers. "Sergeant, if you don't pull me up, I'll smash your nose for you!"

"Carry on!" answered the sergeant.

The rope was paid out from above, and Private Scuppers descended, willy-nilly. He came down with a rush and a crash, his ankles still well held. He was pinned by a dozen hands the next moment.

Cardew, who had dashed away, returned in hot haste with a bundle of old newspapers and a box of matches. He jammed the papers into the grate, and applied the match.

There was a rush of smoke up the chimney.

"I fancy that will stop them!" grinned Cardew.

"Yaas, wathah!"

It did! Private Green, on the roof, had a leg in the chimney. He withdrew it in great haste. Smoke soared out of the chimney, and rolled round the sergeant and his party, and they retreated across the leads. It was evident, even to Mr. Stuckey, that there was "nothing doing" now.

BUT STILL THE BATTLE RAGES! (CAN THE REBELS HOLD OUT?)

"Good!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "That's stopped them."

"Gerroff my neck!" came in anguished tones from Private Brown. "Take your blooming 'oof off my neck, blow yer!"

"Sowwy, deah boy—"

"Take it orf."

"Aw'f'ly sowwy to cause you any inconvenience, Mr. Brown," said Arthur Augustus politely and considerately. "But you are so vewy twicky a customah, you know, that we cannot wun any wisks with you."

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Roll those cheeky bouders downstairs," said Tom Merry. "They've got to be chucked out!"

There were loud yells as Messrs. Brown, Pilkins, and Scuppers were rolled away. A lower window was opened, and they were dropped out one after another; and they limped away, glad to find themselves out of the hands of



Billy Bunter landed outside the window with a bump. His hat and coat were pitched after him. Then two or three juniors turned pea-shooters upon him as he sat and roared. "Travel!" hooted Blake. Whiz! Whiz! Whiz! Bunter fairly howled as the stinging peas rained thick and fast upon him from the window. (See page 17.)

the St. Jim's rebels, but feeling as if life were scarcely worth living. The rebels of St. Jim's had triumphed once more.

CHAPTER 9.
The Limit!

BILLY BUNTER emerged from a bath-room, newly swept and garrisoned. He had cleaned off the soot, and had found a change of clothes somewhere. He was ready for tea; and as the garrison were very busy just then, Bunter descended to the kitchen, and had an ample tea. Provisions were short for a numerous garrison; but supplies were ample for one—even for one with so gargantuan an appetite as Billy Bunter. So the Owl of Greyfriars fairly "spread" himself, while the St. Jim's fellows were engaged elsewhere.

Tom Merry & Co. had plenty to do. The latest attack had been defeated, but it had revealed an unsuspected danger. And the juniors were busy for a long time stopping up the holes, as Blake described it. Every chimney where no fire was burning had to be "plugged"—and all sorts and conditions of things were stuffed in to bar the way of any future attack.

Fatty Wynn was the first to return to the kitchen. It was his duty to see to supper.

He found William George Bunter there. The Owl of Greyfriars was seated in a comfortable chair before the fire, taking a nap, and snoring unmusically.

Round him were many signs of his latest exploits in the gastronomic line. Bunter had "done himself" remarkably well—perhaps a little too well. Now he was sleeping off the effects.

Fatty Wynn gazed at him speechlessly for some moments. Then he rushed at him, grabbed him by the collar, and jerked him out of the chair.

Bump!
Billy Bunter landed on the floor with a loud concussion, and a louder yell.

"Oooooop! Oh, wharrer marrer? 'Tain't rising-bell! Ow! Whoop!"

"You fat villain!" roared Fatty Wynn. Bunter sat up, and set his spectacles straight on his podgy nose. He blinked at Fatty Wynn in great wrath.

"Fat!" he exclaimed. "Well, I like that! You blessed barrel—"

"I—I—I—I'll burst you!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Here, keep off!" yelled Bunter in alarm.

But David Llewellyn Wynn did not keep off. He collared Bunter, and got his head into chancery.

Thump! Thump! Thump!
"Yow-ow-woooooo!" roared Bunter. "Leggo! Help! Fire! Rescue!"

Thump! Thump! Thump!
"Yaroooh! Help!"

"What the merry dickens—" exclaimed Tom Merry, arriving on the scene at a run. "What—"

Bunter's frantic yells brought a crowd to the spot. Fatty Wynn, unheeding, thumped and thumped as if for a wager.

Figgins and Kerr rushed on him at last, and dragged him off his victim by main force. Fatty struggled.

"Lemme get at him! I'm going to pulverise him! I—I—"

"You have!" grinned Figgins. "Yow-ow-ow!" howled Bunter, dabbing at his fat little nose.

"Wow-wow-wow! Oh, my hat! Grooogh! You rotter—ow—beast—wow—"

"He's raided the grub again!" howled Fatty Wynn. "He's finished nearly everything I had ready for supper! I'll spifficate him."

"Bai Jove! Buntah, you gweeday woltah—"
"You cringing worm!" shouted Blake. Bunter gave the juniors a furious blink. "If you think you're jolly well going to starve me, you're jolly well mistakon!" he roared. "I'm fed up with this! After inducing me to come here—"

(Continued on page 16.)
THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 781.

OUR SPECIAL SHORT COMPLETE DETECTIVE STORY!



THE CLUE OF THE THREE STARS!

BY EDMUND BURTON.

Another of the Amazing Exploits of
ANTHONY SHARPE—Investigator.

CHAPTER 1.

The Shot in the Train—A Fool and His Diamonds!

ANTHONY SHARPE rose from a late tea, stretched his wiry arms, and glanced at his watch. He had just concluded a rather tricky series of investigations and was heartily glad of a little breathing space, for even the most energetic of us require occasional spells of real rest.

Just lately Sharpe's whim had been to purchase a small cottage in the country, some fifty miles out of London, in a neighbourhood where good golfing and fishing could be had, for these were his favourite relaxations, and where he intended to retreat for week-ends whenever opportunity offered. He was, in fact, about to start on such an expedition now, and was awaiting the pleasure of his new assistant, Tim O'Carroll, who had taken whatever packing was necessary in hand.

A bump at the door caused the investigator to turn round quickly. First he entered a bag of golf-clubs, then a fishing-rod case, to be followed by a small, lithe figure bearing a couple of compact travelling bags.

"Ready, Tim?" Sharpe smiled. "We haven't too much time, I fear."

"Ready, aye, ready, sir!" the youngster answered, "an' not-exactly wan bundle o' sticks, two bags, an' meself; that's all, I think, sir?"

"All, except your illustrious master!" Anthony Sharpe laughed as he slipped on a light overcoat and cap, and switched off the light.

Some little while later they were comfortably ensconced in a first-class carriage near the end of the long train which presently drew out of the terminus and commenced its regular nightly run of over two hundred miles. Sharpe and Tim, however, would be leaving it at the first stop in order to change over to a branch line which would carry them to their own destination.

The train was unusually empty and they had the compartment to themselves. Tim immediately drew out a copy of the "Gem" from among a sheaf of various periodicals which he had purchased at the bookstall, and was soon immersed in its gripping contents, quite unconscious of the fact that his master was reflectively studying him through a haze of tobacco smoke.

It was scarcely a fortnight since Timothy Dennis Michael O'Carroll had been a ragged gamlin, running wild through the streets and alleyways of Limehouse; but even that short time had made an amazing difference in his appearance. Good food, regular sleep, and comfortable clothing had worked miracles; for Tim's cheeks were now glowing with health and had lost a good deal of that pinched, half-starved look which they bore when Sharpe had first met the youngster in connection with what has since come to be known as "The Fair of the Yellow Cloud."

The investigator had been instantly struck by the lad's intelligent bearing when he accidentally encountered him that memorable night, and, after a long chat together, young O'Carroll had gladly accepted Sharpe's offer of a post as his assistant. Nor had the

detective been disappointed in his choice, for Tim's ensuing conduct proved that his master's previous impressions were more than justified. The boy, indeed, had amply demonstrated his gratitude by giving excellent service which Anthony Sharpe thoroughly appreciated; and now the pair were off to enjoy their first week-end at the little country cottage before mentioned.

The train rumbled on past the outlying suburbs and then gathered speed, plunging through the darkness at a rattling pace on a clear road. Sharpe knocked the ashes from his pipe, and methodically refilled it with the strong tobacco he invariably favoured, ere taking up an evening paper from the seat beside him.

"H'm!" he muttered, between deep draws of the soothing smoke. "So they've let that fellow off, after all? I rather fancied they would, for there wasn't a shred of real evidence against him."

"Who's that, sir?" asked Tim, glancing up. "Norris—the chap who was arrested in connection with the Hackney shooting affair. A curious case, if ever there was one, and a case I should very much have liked to investigate."

"Then why didn't ye, sir?" Sharpe laughed. "I'm only human, boy—not a superman—and, as you know, my hands have been too full, if anything, for weeks past. Indeed, I'm feeling a wee bit stale, and—"

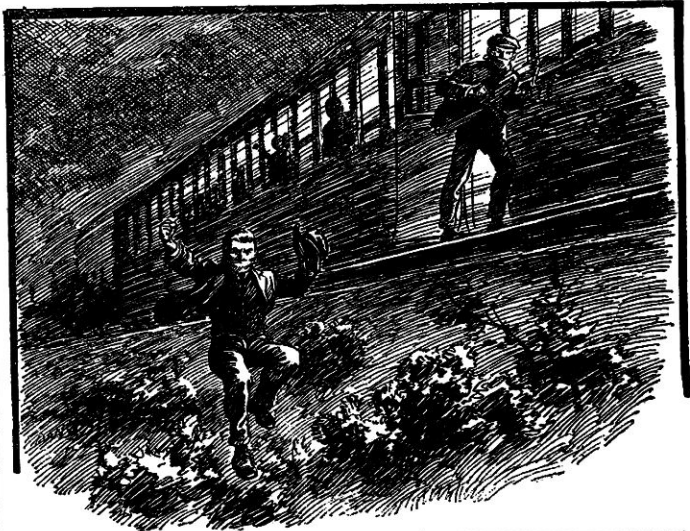
The detective abruptly ceased speaking and sat bolt upright, exchanging a startled glance with his young companion. For, apparently from some other compartment in the rear, a whip-like crack had suddenly sounded above the vibration of the train—the unmistakable report of an automatic.

The pair immediately made for the corridor with the intention of investigating the strange matter, but had scarcely taken half a dozen steps ere they were confronted by a tall man, the lower portion of whose face was concealed by a coloured handkerchief. He barred their passage resolutely, at the same time training an ugly-looking revolver muzzle between Sharpe's eyes.

So extraordinary was the occurrence that both the detective and his assistant stopped dead in amazement. Had this taken place somewhere in the Wild West, where a train "hold-up" is not unknown, it might have been understandable; but this was free England, and within a few miles of the greatest city in the world.

"Sorry to bother you, gents," the fellow said, "but I must ask you to stay where you are for a few minutes. We've a bit of business to transact which won't take long."

"What the deuce d'you mean—" "No questions, sir, if you please!" the man rapped out, deflecting the pistol-muzzle a shade, "It's got nothing to do with you,



As the speed of the train diminished, the carriage door was thrown open and the two men leaped out on to the steep embankment. Anthony Sharpe watched them from the carriage window.

and you'll be safe so long as you don't attempt to pass me. If you do—"

He broke off meaningly, and Sharpe, not being a horse fool, silently stood his ground. A few minutes later the big man was joined by a second, also disguised in similar fashion, who said something in a low voice to his companion, though not quite low enough to prevent Sharpe distinguishing the words.

"The fool kicked me, an' I pulled the trigger accidental!"

The other's eyes looked startled, though he still kept them riveted on the pair before him, and did not turn his head as he replied:

"That's bad! Is he plugged?"

"No; the shot went into the cushions. Anyway, I've got the things all right."

"Good!" The taller man pulled the communication-cord above his head, and the train began to slow down. "Now, gents; we shan't keep you long. Best get back to your carriage."

Sharpe, nevertheless, still stood resolutely where he was, with Tim just behind him. Unarmed, he knew he would have no chance if it came to an actual fight; but he wanted to see the end of the affair, and be ready to seize any opportunity that might prevent the ruffians getting clear away with whatever they had taken.

That opportunity, however, was not forthcoming: for, as the speed of the train diminished, the second man suddenly opened the door and sprang out, followed by his companion. They landed on a steep embankment, unharmed, and were fading away into the gloom almost before either of the amazed pair realised it, so swift had been the manoeuvre. The express, still moving, but ever more slowly, slid to a standstill a few yards farther on; but the night was dark and the moments had obtained a valuable start, so that an immediate chase would be purely waste of time. Far better to see what had actually occurred and take up the trail afterwards.

The guard came hurrying along the permanent way, inquiring the reason for the alarm-signal having been pulled, and accompanied Sharpe, followed by Tim O'Carroll, to another compartment of the same coach—the last and only other occupied one, indeed, in that part of the train. Here a strange sight met their gaze.

A young man of about thirty was sitting in the far corner, leaning his brow with a silk handkerchief and looking the very picture of fright. A monocle, dangling from his eye and he had made no attempt to replace it, whilst his well-greased hair was all ruffled, and though he had been passing his hands through it in desperation. In fact, so astounded did he still appear to be that he made no effort to move until the guard, rather curtly, flung a question at him.

"What's the matter? Been robbed, or what?"

"Robbed?" echoed the young fool, "Yaas, that's exactly what I have been, my good man! The wuffian—oh, the uttial wuffian—!"

He suddenly broke off, staring at Anthony Sharpe, who also started slightly.

"By James!" the detective exclaimed. "Steady! It's the Honourable Bertie Saas! I fancy we've met before?"

"I—I— Oh, yaas; I should jolly well think we have, Mr. Sharpe," the other replied, with a rather empty grin. "And now, bai Jove, we meet again under peculiar circumstances—what?"

"Sharpe remarked to this young dude as having figured as a witness in a former case he had handled; hence the mutual recognition."

"But what's been stolen, Mr. Saas?" the detective asked. "We heard a shot—"

"Yaas," the Honourable Bertie cut in, pointing to a little hole in the leather upholstery behind him. "The wuffian came in with a pistol, and I kicked him as I jumped up, y'know! He pulled the twigash—nearly shot me, the beast!"

"But what's gone—what's missing?" Sharpe pressed. "Quickly, please, for we've no time to lose! The train can't stand here all night!"

"No, bai Jove!" Saas ceased mopping his brow, and pulled himself together. "Well, Mr. Sharpe, my sister's diamonds have been stolen, and there'll be an awful woe, don't y'know! They're worth thousands!"

The investigator whistled. "The Honourable Bertie's sister was Lady Aline Millington, whose jewels were famous everywhere



Whiz! The great missile flew through the air and struck "Sparkler Ted" full on the temple, causing his grip to relax and his big body to sway wildly. The next instant Tim O'Carroll appeared upon the scene. "Bull first time, chief!" he cried cheerfully.

Society moved, and represented a fabulous sum.

Saas explained that she had commissioned him to bring them from her town house in Mayfair to her country seat in the Midlands, where she was shortly giving a ball, and this was the sequel to her foolhardiness; for, thought Sharpe as he listened, it would take very little cunning to follow the Honourable Bertie's movements, and know his plans, since he was possessed of a most tactless, wagging tongue. Why, the crudest thief in Christendom could shadow the young fool as easily as plucking plums from the lowest branch of the tree!

"Well, I suppose we'd best try to get the stones back," Sharpe said finally, passing his card to the impatient guard, accompanied by a generous tip. "We'll get out here. I know where we are, and there's a little town just across the fields yonder. See the lights? We'll make what inquiries we can, of course; but I don't fancy the birds roosted long in this neighbourhood."

Presently the tail-lamps of the express vanished up the line, and the trio descended the embankment, Tim O'Carroll and Sharpe sharing their luggage between them, whilst the Honourable Bertie plodded along behind, disgruntled and plainly very unhappy.

"Look here, sir!" Tim whispered. "Did ye notice nothin'—nothin' curious about the big chap who barred our way, I mean?"

His master turned swiftly.

"About his face?" he asked. "No, it was impossible to see much of that, as well as the light in the corridor was none too good, and I was really watching out for an opportunity to take him unawares, rather than examine him closely. Why?"

"Then, thank your lucky stars, sir, that I was with ye that's all!" said O'Carroll, who did mention it before the guard or this other gosson—he jerked his head backwards towards the lagging Bertie—"but I'll swear I've met that spalpeen not so very long ago!"

"What? Explain yourself, lad—quickly!"

"If you hadn't been so keen on waiting to spring upon him, sir," pursued Tim, "you'd probably have noticed three little marks on his wrist when he held the shooter out—three little white marks, like stars, which seemed to be the remains of a brand or burn, or something of that kind. Well, a few weeks afore I met you, I carried a bag for a tall fellow whose wrist was marked just the same way, and it's not likely that two men would have—"

"No, of course it's not! Quite a big clue, Tim!" Sharpe interrupted. "And where did all this take place?"

"In Stepney, sir. I was passin' a small shop when the man came hurryin' but grippin' two small handbags. I asked to

carry out—bein' in need of a snack an' havin' no money—an' he passed it over, after heaftin' for a minute. It was a purty heavy bag, an' it clinked."

"Ah! Clinked, did it?" Sharpe commented. "Go on, lad!"

"Well, sir, I carried it as far as Stepney Station, an' that was the last I saw of the chap. He gave me a bob an' hurried up the steps."

"You'd know that shop again?"

Tim winked to himself in the darkness.

"Is there a shop or buildin' in Stepney or Limehouse I don't know, sir?" he said.

"The place is a small second-hand, old-clo's kind of concern, run by a man named Silas. I could take ye there blindfold."

"Then you shall, my boy—though without the blindfold process," Sharpe smiled.

"By Jove! If you're making no mistake, this looks like a promising scent to follow up. We'd best hurry back to town and ask Winton a few questions. He'll be able to find out anything there is to be learnt concerning Silas from the district police-stations, so it may save valuable time. I fear our little holiday is postponed for this week-end; but perhaps it's as well, for here comes the rain!"

CHAPTER 2.

Silas the "Fence"—A Promising Scent!

THE Honourable Bertie Saas, not daring to go on to his sister's place without her valuable jewels, accompanied the pair back to London from the little wayside station, and then drove straight to his own rooms. As a matter of fact, Anthony Sharpe was heartily glad to get rid of him, for such a brainless fool could only be in the way, and probably hinder any operations they had in view.

Detective-Inspector Winton, Sharpe's Scotland Yard friend, willingly lent his car, and early next morning the trio were standing on the pavement of a narrow street in Stepney, thoughtfully regarding the exterior of a mean shop a little farther up on the opposite side.

"Yes, Silas is pretty well known to be a 'fence,'" Winton said; "though he's so darned cute that they find it difficult to get a case together against him here. At least, they're almost built one up—it's they big argal; they—only they don't want to move for the moment, lest the bigger birds fly away; but I— However, we'll see! Come along, Sharpe!"

They crossed the street, and entered the shop. A low-sized, corpulent man appeared from behind a collection of dingy-looking



"You fat fabricatah!"
 "I'm going!" roared Bunter.
 "You jolly well are!" exclaimed Tom Merry wrathfully.
 "You're going to be kicked out, you fat rascal."

"Yaas, watahah!"
 "How will you get on without me, I'd like to know?" snorted Bunter, still dabbing his damaged nose. "You'd have been done in, if I hadn't saved you this afternoon. Keeping watch in the box-room—"

"Bai Jove! You went there to devour your plundah, like a howwid boac-wonstiwat, Buntah."
 "That is what you call gratitude, I suppose!" said Bunter bitterly.

"Gratitude—oh, my hat!"
 "Well, I'm fed up with it," said Bunter. "If you want me to stay here, and see you through, you'll have to treat me differently, I can tell you."

"If we want you to stay!" said Tom Merry dazedly. "Oh crumbs!"

"Yes—I'll stay, but on conditions," said Bunter firmly. "You've got to give that fat rotter Wynn a jolly good bumping—"

"Let me get at him!" roared Fatty Wynn. "I'll give him fat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "And I've got to have plenty of grub," continued Bunter. "That's got to be understood. I want my comfort after a bit, too. You let the fire out while I was taking a nap yesterday. That mustn't happen again."

"Bai Jove!"
 "On those conditions," said Bunter blinking loftily at the amazed juniors. "I'll stay! Otherwise, not!"

"You—you—you fat worm!" gasped Tom Merry. "You won't stay on any conditions at all. You're going to be kicked out. Can you get that into your silly head?"

"What's the good of talking?" snorted Grundy. "I'll kick him out."

"Here, keep off!" roared Bunter, dodging round the table. "I'm going, I tell you."

"Well, go!" growled Grundy.
 "I came here to see you through," said Bunter, "I don't expect gratitude, but I think you might be decent. I'll clear off first thing in the morning, and I'll be jolly glad to see the last of you."

"You'll clear off now!" snorted Grundy.
 "Oh, really, you know—"

"Morning will do," said Tom Merry. "Can't turn out even that fat rotter at night. But if you touch anything outside your rations again, Bunter, you'll be dropped out of the nearest window, on the spot."

"Yah!" was Bunter's reply.
 And he rolled away.

Billy Bunter retired to the Head's study—an apartment that he had to himself, as nobody seemed to have any yearning for his society. Arthur Augustus, impelled by the considerate politeness that was a part of his noble nature, gave him a look-in a little later, and found him bending over the telephone.

Bunter looked round with a startled blink.
 "Wha-a-at—" he stammered.

"Sowwy to intewwupt, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus politely. "Telephonin' home?"

"Eh! Yes, exactly!" gasped Bunter. "I—I'm telephoning to Bunter Court for the car in the morning, you know."

"Oh! When you've finished, deah boy, come wound to the fah—"

"Thank you," said Bunter loftily. "I've been treated badly here, and I don't care for your society."

"Weally, Buntah—"

"Just leave me alone, that's all I want," said Bunter. "Vewy well, deah boy; if that is all you want, all right," said Arthur Augustus; and he walked out of the study and closed the door after him, rather hard.

Billy Bunter grinned.
 "Beast!" he murmured. "Rotter! I'll show 'em."

The Owl of Greyfriars was in a mood of vengeance. His uncomform services had been repaid with the blackest ingratitude. He had been kicked once, and thumped several

times. His fat little nose still bore signs of the thumping. And he was kept short of food—or, at all events, he would have been kept short, had he not taken matters into his own fat hands. The offences on the part of Tom Merry & Co. were, in fact, too numerous to mention. Bunter had determined to shake the dust of St. Jim's from his feet—but he had not forgotten the thrashing Mr. Railton had promised him, if caught outside the School House.

Arthur Augustus, in his simplicity, had supposed that Bunter was telephoning home. As a matter of fact, Bunter had looked out Mr. Ratcliff's number, in the New House, in the telephone directory; and it was the other House at St. Jim's that he was ringing up. Hence his keen desire to be rid of the unsuspicious Gussy's company.

D'Arcy had departed only in time. Bunter jammed the receiver to his fat ear, and a voice came through.

"Hallo!"
 "Is that Mr. Railton?" asked Bunter.
 "It is Mr. Ratcliff!" came in sour tones.
 "Ask Mr. Railton to come to the phone. It's Bunter speaking—"

"Bless my soul!"
 There was a pause, and then Mr. Railton's voice came through. The Housemaster was evidently surprised at being rung up from across the quadrangle.
 "Bunter?" he said.
 "Yes, sir!"
 "I do not see what you can have to say to me, Bunter. However, I will hear you."
 "I—I hope you didn't misunderstand me yesterday, sir—"
 "I think I did not, Bunter."
 "You see, I—I was keeping up appearances," said Bunter glibly. "I—I just slanged you, sir, so—so—so that Tom Merry and the rest would think I had come to back them up—see?"
 "Well!"
 "Of course, sir, I'm on your side all the time," said Bunter. "Just as I told the Head, sir, I can't approve of this—this rebelliousness and so forth. I'm down on it. I'm going to help you."
 "I do not quite follow."
 "Suppose I get a window open, sir, in the middle of the night," said Bunter, with a fat chuckle.
 "Oh!"
 "You could send your men in and mop up these cads in next to no time, sir. They've treated me scandalously—you'd hardly believe what awful rotters they've been to me—keeping me short of grub, and letting a fire go out while a chap's taking a nap, and all that. I should be jolly glad to see them brought to heel, I can tell you. I'll get a window open on the ground floor while they're asleep to-night—see?"
 "Bless my soul!"
 "Of course, I suppose there would be a reward, sir—"
 "What?"
 "If I hand over the place to you, I should expect some slight recognition of my services."
 "Upon my word!"
 "Well, what do you say, sir?"
 "What do I say?" came Mr. Railton's voice. "You are a young scoundrel, Bunter!"
 "Wha-a-at?"
 "Anxious as I am to see order restored in the school, I should be incapable, I hope, of making use of such treachery."
 "Eh?"
 "As for paying you for such a service—pah! I will waste no further words on you, Bunter. You are an unscrupulous young rascal! You have interfered in a matter that does not concern you, and now apparently you desire to betray your friends. I shall make it a point to cane you very severely at the first opportunity."
 And with that Mr. Railton rang off. Billy Bunter's round eyes fairly gleamed with rage over the transmitter.
 "I say, are you there?" he gasped. "Mr. Railton. hang on! Don't you understand? I'm going to hand the place over to you—leave a window open for your fellows to get in! Oh, the beast, he's rung off! What on earth was he waxy about, I wonder?"
 "Gweat Scott!"
 Billy Bunter fairly jumped as he heard that startled exclamation in the doorway.
 He spun round, to find the cyeless of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy fixed upon him, and behind it the glittering eye of Arthur Augustus.

CHAPTER 10.

Exit Bunter!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY stared at Bunter, and Bunter stared at Arthur Augustus. The Owl of Greyfriars was too taken aback to speak, and Arthur Augustus seemed quite overcome.

His opinion of Bunter certainly had not been high. But he would never have dreamed of anything like this

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, at last. "You—you silly idiot, what do you want?"

"You fat wascal!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I came back heah to speak to you, wottah as you are. It was wathah on my conscience to let you feel neglected heah—"

"You—you dummy!"

It was Gussy's polished politeness that had done it! With the kindest intentions in the world, he had returned to be polite to Bunter—never dreaming that the Owl of Greyfriars had serious reasons for wishing to be left to his own devices. And as he entered the study he had heard every word of Bunter's last speech.

"You utah twaitah—"

"Oh, draw it mild," said Bunter. "You—you're making a mistake. I wasn't telephoning—"

"What?"

"I mean, I wasn't telephoning to Railton—"

"I heard you speak his name!"

"I mean, I—I was simply ringing him up to ask how he was—"

"Bai Jove!"

"I hope you can take my word, D'Arcy!" said William George Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

"Oh cwumbs!" said Arthur Augustus.

He stepped back into the passage and called.

"Pway come heah, deah boys! Bunter is offewin' Waitton by telephone to let him in and hand ovah the show to the enemy."

There was a rush to the spot. That information was quite enough to cause excitement in the garrison of the School House.

Billy Bunter fairly quaked as the juniors crowded into the study. There was amazement as well as disgust in every

for you—none at all. But I'm used to that. I never got any gratitude at Greyfriars."

"What is that chap doing outside a home for idiots?" asked Blake, addressing space.

"And it was all Tom Merry's fault," went on Bunter.

"My fault?" ejaculated Tom.

"Yes, yours!" said Bunter hotly. "You let that beast Grundy kick me! You let that other beast Wynn punch me! Serve you jolly well right if I gave you away, after that, I think!"

"So you did—"

"No, I didn't! Nothing of the sort. The fact is, I haven't used the telephone at all."

"You—you—" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"I haven't even looked out the New House number in the directories," said Bunter firmly. "If you asked me whether it was Wayland two-ought-two, I couldn't tell you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! I'm telling you the exact facts. I don't even really know whether the New House is on the telephone at all."

"Bai Jove!"

"I hope you're satisfied now," said Bunter, with dignity. "I'm not accustomed to having my word doubted like this, I can tell you."

"Satisfied!" gasped Tom Merry. "Oh, yes, we're satisfied! You crawling worm—"

"You howwid toad!"

"You sneaking rotter—"

"Squash him!" roared Grundy.

"Here, I say, hands off!" howled Bunter, as he was collared. "Don't I keep on telling you that I don't know

READ HOW THE REBELS MASTER THE SITUATION, IN SPITE OF DEPLETED NUMBERS, in—

"HARD PRESSED!"

NEXT WEEK'S RATTLING FINE SCHOOL STORY!

face, and there was wrath. The Owl of Greyfriars realised that he was in a scrape. Certainly, he felt quite justified in his proceedings—quite! Bunter never did anything against his conscience. But other fellows never fully understood what an exceedingly accommodating conscience Billy Bunter had.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"The utah wapscaal!" said Arthur Augustus. "He actually wang up Waitton, ovah in the New House, and offahed to give us away."

"Well, if that isn't the giddy limit!" said Blake.

"Squash him!" roared Grundy.

"I say, you fellows, it's all a mistake!" exclaimed Bunter breathlessly. "D'Arcy's got it wrong—you know what an ass he is—"

"Bai Jove!"

"I—I'll explain," gasped Bunter, quite alarmed by the looks of the St. Jim's juniors. "I—I rang up Railton to—to—"

"To what?" asked Tom Merry grimly.

"To—to—to tell him what I thought of him," gasped Bunter. "I—I was—was slanging him, you know. Of course, I never thought of getting you to put me on sentry-go to-night, so that I could open a window for them—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Nothing of the kind, you know," said Bunter eagerly. "As for taking a reward, I should disdain it."

"A reward!" gasped Tom Merry. "You horrid mean little beast—"

"Oh, really, Merry, the labourer's worthy of his hire, you know. Five pounds would not hurt Railton to save him a lot of trouble. Not that I'd have touched it, you know."

"So you did offer to let the enemy in?"

"Certainly not. I—I rang up Railton specially to tell him I wouldn't! See?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"You've treated me badly," said Bunter, blinking at the juniors. "You've shown no gratitude for what I've done

anything about it! Look here, I'll tell you the exact facts—Yaroooh! It was D'Arcy telephoning—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I heard him! He offered Railton to let him in—"

"Gweat Scott!"

"I wasn't going to give Gussy away, as he's a pal. But now I feel bound to tell you fellows the truth—"

"The twuth!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't tell us any more truth!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "We've had enough of your truth, Bunter. Bump him!"

"Oh, jiminy!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Now you're going out!" said Tom Merry. "We can't trust you in the House a minute longer, Bunter."

"Wathah not."

"Yoop! Don't I keep on telling you—you-ow-ow!—it was D'Arcy—you-woop!—leave off kicking me, you beast! It wasn't D'Arcy; it—it was Blake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now outside with the fat rotter!" said Tom.

"I say, you fellows— Yow-ow!"

Billy Bunter howled in protest as he was yanked headlong out of the study. The hall window was unfastened, and the Owl of Greyfriars was rushed to it, still yelling.

"I—I say, leggo! I'm going—"

"Chuck him out!"

"I—I'm going! Lend me my railway fare home, somebody—"

"What!"

"I'll send you a postal-order for it—you-ow-ow! I say, I came without a return ticket—yoop! Oh crumbs!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter landed outside the window. His hat and coat were pitched after him. Then two or three juniors turned pea-shooters upon him as he sat and roared—at which he roared still more strenuously.

"Travel!" hooted Blake.

"Owl! Beast! Wow!"

Whiz, whiz, whiz! With stinging peas raining on him from the window, Billy Bunter staggered up, and plunged under the dark quadrangle.

Tom Merry slammed the window shut.
 "Good-bye to Bunter!" he remarked.
 "Yaas, wathah; a good widdance to bad wubbish!"
 "I wonder if Railton will collar him!" grinned Blake.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 From outside the house there came a sudden wild howl.
 "Leggo! 'Tain't me! Leggo!"
 "They's got him!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You come elonger me!" It was the deep voice of Sergeant Stuckey. "I've got yer! Come on, you young raskin!"
 "Yow-ow! Leggo! I'm going—I tell you, I'm going—"
 "You har!" said the sergeant. "But you're going to 'avo a 'iding before you go, young feller-me-lad. Kim on!"
 And Bunter went. His howls died away across the quadrangle, and the juniors in the School House grinned.

William George Bunter was discovering—as probably he had discovered before—that the way of the transgressor was hard!

A few minutes later terrific yells rang from the distance.
 "That's Railton getting in with the cane!" chuckled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 To judge by the yells, Mr. Railton was putting in some really strenuous work with the cane.

What happened to Bunter after that, the juniors in the School House did not know. Undoubtedly he took his departure—for he was not seen again at St. Jim's. How he negotiated the railway, without a return ticket, and without having succeeded in raising his return fare at St. Jim's, they could not guess, and did not care. Fortunately, it did not matter what happened to Bunter.

Minus Billy Bunter, the barring-out went on, and the rebels of St. Jim's were not likely to miss Tom Merry's recruit!

THE END.
 (Another exciting story of the Rebels of St. Jim's next week entitled: "HARD PRESSED!" By Martin Clifford.)

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