

# BILLY BUNTER'S BUST UP!

By  
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*There's nothing Billy Bunter enjoys better than a really good "tuck-in"—if someone will stand him treat, which is seldom or never! But the Owl of Greyfriars is a pastmaster at bagging feeds, as he proves once again in this sparkling long story.*

## THE FIRST CHAPTER REGARDLESS OF EXPENSE

"CHRISTMAS——"

"Eh?"

"Christmas is coming," said Billy Bunter.

He was standing in the doorway of No. 1 Study, in the Remove passage, and blinking in through his big spectacles. Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and Johnny Bull occupied easy-chairs, on either side of the hearth, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh was sitting on the table between them, with his feet on another chair. The chums of the Remove had simply turned their heads and looked at Bunter when he opened the door—merely that, and nothing more! They did not ask him in to

sit down; they did not even remark that it was cold. They stared at him.

"Christmas——" Bunter recommenced.

"Is coming," agreed Frank Nugent. "Where did you hear the news?"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"You're sure you've got it quite correct—quite sure there won't be any oversight this year, and that Christmas won't get missed out of the calendar?"

"Look here——"

"Well, then, Christmas is coming," said Frank; "admitted unanimously. Would you mind shutting the door after you?"

"There's a draught," remarked Harry Wharton, and Hurree Singh

added his opinion that the draughtfulness was terrific.

Bunter blinked wrathfully at the four juniors.

"Look here," he exclaimed, "I didn't come here to be funny. I wanted to mention to you fellows that as Christmas was coming——"

Frank Nugent poked the fire, and in the clatter of the poker and the coals, the rest of Bunter's speech was lost.

"Do you hear me?" roared Bunter angrily. "I should think that even you chaps might be thinking about peace and goodwill and things, just now."

"But Christmas isn't here yet," said Harry Wharton. "As a matter of fact, it's a jolly long time off, Bunty."

"But we break up before Christmas," said Bunter, "and if we're going to give that Christmas feed——"

"What Christmas feed?"

"I was thinking of a big Christmas feed, to—to celebrate Christmas, you know," said Billy Bunter. "It ought to be a time of plenty, and good cheer, and so on. I'm thinking of standing a big feed—a real bust-up, you know—entirely at my own expense. You fellows needn't be afraid of being asked to contribute, if that's what you're thinking of. The thing will be done entirely by me, regardless of expense."

"Good!" said Frank Nugent heartily. "Go and arrange it, Bunter, and—and shut the door after you, will you?"

Bunter snorted.

"I was going to ask you chaps your opinion about the idea."

"Jolly good," said Nugent.

"Ripping," said Wharton and Johnny Bull.

"The rippingfulness is terrific."

Yet Bunter did not seem satisfied.

He was edging his way into the study. Billy Bunter was no longer a tenant of No. 1 Study, and since he had changed into No. 14, he had felt the lean years set in, so to speak. He had been accustomed to living on the fat of the land, and when he became his own provider, the difference was striking.

"I—I can't very well discuss it standing here," he remarked. "You might ask a fellow to sit down, at all events."

"Sit down at all events," said Nugent.

"Oh, really, you know!"

Bunter came in and closed the door. He came towards the fire, and coolly placed himself in front of Hurree Singh, shutting all the fire off from him. Then he blinked at Wharton and Nugent and Bull.

"I never could be really comfy unless I had an armchair," he said.

"Go hon!" said Nugent, stretching out his legs lazily.

"Same here," said Wharton.

Bunter blinked at them again, and then, with a grunt, sat on the fender. There was an ominous creak from the fender under the weight of the Owl of the Remove.

"Well, speaking about that Christmas feed," he said. "You see, we shall have to give it before we break up, so we can't wait till Christmas. My idea is the sooner the better. Why shouldn't a Christmas feed be had as early as a Christmas number? I think the chief question about it is, how to raise the funds."

"Yes, rather," said Wharton, laughing.

"Well, I'm attending to that," said Bunter grandly. "I'm standing this feed regardless of expense."

"To whom?"

"Eh?"

"Regardless of expense to whom?"

" Oh, really, Nugent ! To myself, of course ! "

" Rats ! "

" If you are going to cast doubt upon my word, I think this whole discussion had better cease," said Billy Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

" Much better. Shut up, then. "

" Oh, really, you know ! My idea is to issue cards of invitation to all the fellows who ought to come to the feed," explained Bunter. " Nothing like doing the thing in style, especially as it is possible that some of my titled friends may look in. Now, I want you fellows to come. "

" Thanks awfully. "

" The thankfulness is terrific. "

" Not at all. I used to be in this study," said Bunter. " I wasn't very well treated here ; but bygones can be bygones at a time of the year like this. I'm not the chap to bear malice at Christmas time. "

" Noble Bunter ! " murmured Nugent.

" Well, yes, I am rather a noble chap," agreed Bunter fatuously. " I don't get justice done me as a rule. "

" My hat ! You'd have an awful time if you did get it ! "

" Oh, really, Nugent ! "

" The awfulness would be terrific. "

" Look here," said Bunter. " To come back to bizney, I want you chaps to come to the Christmas feed. I want to show the whole school that bygones are bygones, and that I'm not the chap to remember any little unpleasantness at Christmas time. Will you come ? "

" Oh, we'll come ! "

" Then I'll put your names down in the list ? "

" Put 'em down. "

" I'll send you the cards of invitation a little later," said Bunter. " The whole thing is going to be handsomely

done, regardless of expense. I'm expecting a postal-order—in fact, several postal-orders, and I shall be in funds, and shall not have to ask anybody for financial help. "

The chums of the Remove looked at Bunter. He spoke so seriously that they almost believed him. Up to this moment they had deemed the Christmas feed merely an excuse for raising money for a feed for himself. His statement that he didn't want any money was generally a preliminary to borrowing. But of borrowing Bunter said not a word.

" Well, that's about all," said Bunter, taking out a notebook, and writing the names in it. " Wharton, Nugent, Bull, Inky. Good. I can depend on you ? "

" Oh, yes ! " said Nugent. " Look here, out with it, Billy. "

" Eh ? "

" How much do you want ? "

" How much what ? "

" Cash. "

Bunter blinked at him indignantly.

" If you think I've come here to borrow money, Nugent——" he began.

" You don't mean to say that you haven't ! " exclaimed Frank, in astonishment.

" Oh, really——" "

" Well, wonders will never cease ! "

" The wonderfulness is terrific. "

" I say, you fellows, draw it mild," said Bunter. " This isn't a nice way to treat fellows who are getting up Christmas feeds, more for your sake than anything else. I'm doing this thing entirely at my own expense. "

" Well, my only Aunt Selina ! "

" I want Bob Cherry to come, too," Bunter went on. " I can't quite forget that we all used to be in this study together, and we were very comfy, except that I never had quite enough

to eat. I can't see Cherry just now, as he's being ragged in Bulstrode's study——"

Wharton jumped up.

"What's that? Bob Cherry's being ragged in Bulstrode's study?"

"I think they're singeing his hair with a red-hot poker," said Bunter. "I noticed a smell of burning. I don't suppose they'll really hurt him. I say, you fellows, where are you going?"

But the fellows did not reply. Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh were tearing at top speed out of the study to the rescue of their chum.

Billy Bunter blinked after them with a grin on his face. He crossed quickly to the door, and locked it, and then turned to the cupboard.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER

BUNTER CAPTURES THE PUDDING.

"BUCK up!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

With excited faces the Greyfriars chums dashed towards Bulstrode's study. Bulstrode was the bully of the Remove, and though he was terrible to small boys, he generally let Harry Wharton & Co. alone. But there was no doubt that he would always have liked to rag the chums of the Remove, if opportunity offered.

The juniors did not doubt for a moment that Bob Cherry had been inveigled into Bulstrode's study, and that the Remove bully and his friends were ragging the unfortunate Bob.

They did not stand upon ceremony.

If the ragers learned that rescue was coming, they would doubtless lock the door; and Harry Wharton did not mean to give them a chance to do that.

He dashed up to Bulstrode's door, threw it open without thinking of knocking, and rushed in with Nugent, Hurree Singh and Johnny Bull.

So quick and fierce was the rush that the four juniors dashed right up to the study table, and crashed against it before they could stop themselves.

Bulstrode was seated at the table, writing. Hazeldene was standing beside him, handing him some blotting-paper. There was no sign of Bob Cherry, or of either ragers or ragging in the study.

The collision with the table sent it reeling.

The four chums clutched at it to save themselves, and threw their weight upon it, and the table shot along the floor, crashing into Bulstrode and Hazeldene, and hurling them into the fender.

Then the table reeled over towards them, shooting down upon them books and papers and pens and ink.

Bulstrode roared.

"You mad idiots! W-w-what are you up to?"

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Hazeldene.

Wharton let go the table, and stood up gasping. Hurree Singh had rolled over, and was sitting rather dazedly on the carpet. Nugent had stumbled upon the waste-paper basket, and sat down upon it. The waste-paper basket was tall and narrow, and Nugent had sat in it with considerable force; with the result that he could not unseat himself. His feet shot up into the air, and he sat wedged in helplessly.

Bulstrode and Johnny Bull scrambled out of the fender.

Bulstrode's face was red with fury, and black with ink in fairly equal proportions of colour.



So fierce was the rush of Harry Wharton & Co. as they dashed into Bulstrode's study that they crashed into the table before they could stop themselves. "You mad idiots!" roared Bulstrode as the table knocked him and Hazeldene flying. "W-w-what are you up to?"

"You dangerous asses!" he yelled.

"Is this a silly rag?"

"My hat!" gasped Wharton.

"Where's Bob?"

"Bob! What Bob, idiot?"

"Bob Cherry! I—I thought he was here."

"And if he was here, do you generally come in like a mob of Red Indians to look for a chap?" roared Bulstrode.

"No— Ha, ha, ha! I'm sorry!"

"You—you—"

"Help!" groaned Nugent. "I can't get out! Lend me a hand, somebody!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, lend a hand!"

Wharton grasped Nugent's hands,

and drew him to his feet. The wastepaper basket still remained stuck on to him, Nugent being bent in the middle at an obtuse angle. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh obligingly kicked the basket off, and a yell from Nugent showed that it was not only the basket that suffered from the kick.

"Yaroooh! You ass!"

"The sorrowfulness is great if the esteemed kickfulness was too terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"You chumps!" said Bulstrode.

"You frabjous burblers! Look what you've done to my study!"

"B-b-but Bunter said you were ragging Bob Cherry here!" exclaimed Harry, in bewilderment. "We came in here to rescue him."

"He hasn't been in here, idiot."

"Then that young rascal was taking us in. It's a jape," said Harry ruefully. "Still, you've only got yourself to thank, Bulstrode. If you weren't such a beastly bully, you know, I shouldn't have been taken in."

"Get out of my study!" roared Bulstrode.

Hazeldene was rubbing his limbs, and looking far from pleasant, but he did not speak.

"I'm sorry," said Harry. "Ha, ha—I mean, I'm very sorry. So long!"

And the chums of No. 1 Study cleared out. Bulstrode growled furiously as he mopped the ink off his face, and Hazeldene scowled as he picked up the fallen books. Neither of them was in a sweet temper.

"What did that young villain take us in like that for?" said Nugent, as they went into the passage. "I suppose it was his idea of humour."

Harry Wharton frowned.

"Then we'll jolly well teach him not to tell lies for fun," he said, as he strode to the door of No. 1 Study. "Hallo, here's Bob Cherry!"

Bob Cherry and Mark Linley were just coming down the Remove passage. They looked in surprise at the excited and dishevelled juniors.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob. "What's the row?"

"You are!" grunted Nugent.

"Eh?"

"Have you been ragged by Bulstrode?"

"Bulstrode! Ragged! Certainly not."

"Then why haven't you?" demanded Nugent indignantly. "We went in to rescue you, and the least you could have done was to be rescued."

"What the dickens——"

Wharton explained, and Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Bunter wanted to clear you out of your study for something," he said. "Have you got anything in the cupboard?"

Harry Wharton looked alarmed.

"My hat! The Christmas pudding!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob. "That's what Bunter's after!"

"But—but he mustn't eat it; it'll make him ill!" gasped Wharton.

"It's a doctored pudding—for a jape, you know. If he eats it—my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob again. "He's bound to eat it."

Wharton hastily turned the handle of the door, and tried to open it. It was locked on the inside.

He knocked at the upper panels with his knuckles.

"Bunter! Bunt! Bunt!"

There was no reply from within. But the juniors, listening outside the door, could hear the click of a knife on a plate.

"He's gorging already," said Nugent.

"It must be the pudding," said Harry Wharton. "That's what he must have come for. It was sent in by Mrs. Mible, who boiled it for us, a quarter of an hour ago. Bunter must have seen it sent in, and——"

"And laid this little scheme to scoff it," grinned Bob Cherry. "Well, he's scoffing more than he bargained for, this time. Ha, ha, ha!"

"What is there in the pudding?" asked Mark Linley.

"Liquorice powder," said Harry Wharton. "We mixed it in, you know, and put in lots of spices and things to disguise the flavour."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If Bunter bolts a lot of that pudding, he'll have some first-class pains under the waistcoat, that's all."

"He'll bolt the lot!" roared Bob

Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha! He won't leave a morsel of it, old man!"

Harry Wharton looked alarmed.

"We must stop him somehow!" he exclaimed. "He'll be ill!"

He kicked at the door. There was no reply from within the study. Billy Bunter was too busy. The noise in the corridor drew many juniors out of their studies, and there were loud inquiries as to what was on.

"Faith, and phwat is the disturbance about?" demanded Micky Desmond. "Sure, it's interruptin' me prep. ye are!"

"Can't be helped. Bunter's locked up in my study——"

"Well, I said a long time ago that Bunter ought to be locked up," said Ogilvy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's got on the track of the Christmas pudding that Mrs. Mimble was boiling for us," said Nugent. "He's bolting it now."

"Ha, ha! You'll never see it again," grinned Morgan. "Bunter won't leave a trace of it to stain the dish, look you?"

"But the pudding's been doctored."

"What!"

"My hat!"

"It was for a jape on the Highcliffe fellows," said Wharton ruefully.

"You see, those rotters got up a dodge the other day to doctor some stuff for us—I needn't go into particulars, but that was their game—they wanted to put us off colour just before a football match, so that they could lick us."

"The cads!" said Ogilvy. "I



"Bunter!" shouted Harry Wharton, knocking on the door. A voice, muffled as if it came from a mouth full of pudding, replied: "Hallo! Go away!" "Open the door!" roared Wharton. "Rats!" retorted Bunter. "This is jolly nice Christmas pudding."

never heard this. How did you find out?"

"One of the Courtfield chaps found it out, and warned us. But this Christmas pudding was a Roland for an Oliver, you see. We were going to send it to the cads by post, without any name or address on it, and of course they would have scoffed it at once. It was a nice pudding—jolly nice—and the liquorice powder we mixed in it was disguised by the spices. As they had tried to give us a dose of stuff, we thought they might as well have a tummy-ache themselves, to see how they liked it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And now that young villain's scoffing the pudding, and spoiling the jape!" said Nugent wrathfully.

"He'll rope in the tummy-ache!" roared Bob Cherry. "He'll eat six times as much as any of the Highcliffe fellows would."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The ha-ha-ha-fulness is terrific!"

Harry Wharton knocked at the door again.

"Bunter!" he shouted through the keyhole.

A voice, muffled as if it came from a mouth full of pudding, replied:

"Hallo! Go away!"

"Open the door!"

"Rats!"

"Are you eating the pudding?"

"Yes."

There was a roar of laughter from the Removites. Harry Wharton kicked at the door again. There was no sound from within the study save the click of a fork upon a plate, and a low, steady murmur of champing jaws. Billy Bunter was very busy.

The crowd in the Remove passage was thickening. The banging on the door had attracted attention from all quarters. Shell fellows and Fifth-

Formers were coming along as well as Removites, and there was a whisper that a prefect would be on the scene soon to see what the row was about.

So far as the jape on Highcliffe was concerned, Harry Wharton had given that up—Billy Bunter had wrecked the pudding by this time. His concern was now for the fat junior. The Highcliffe fellows would have eaten the pudding in normal helpings, and would have experienced a considerable ache inwardly, which would have been a just punishment for their attempt upon the Greyfriars footballers. But Bunter was never normal when it came to eating. He was certain to stuff in the pudding till he could hold no more. The result would be decidedly painful for Bunter.

Harry knocked at the door again.

"Bunter—I say, Bunter!"

"Hallo!" came from a mouth full of pudding again. "It's all right, you fellows; I'll leave you some. I can't eat all this!"

"My hat! I should think not!" gasped Nugent. "Why, there's enough for twelve fellows to grow fat on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter, let that pudding alone!" shouted Wharton through the keyhole. "It will make you ill."

"Rats! It's a jolly nice pudding. I had my eye on you fellows all the time," said Bunter, pausing in his eating. "I knew you were making a Christmas pudding. I knew you had taken it to Mrs. Mible's to be boiled for you. You couldn't take me in. I had an eye on you all the time. Yah!"

"Look here——"

"Decent chaps would have asked an old study-mate to come in and have a snack," said Bunter; "especi-



ally a chap with a delicate appetite like mine, who wouldn't be likely to eat a lot. You know I've got a delicate constitution, and can only keep going by taking constant nourishment. I think you're selfish. Yah!"

"Bunter——"

"Oh, go and eat coke! I'm on this pudding. Blessed if I ever thought

of the door, and shouted through the keyhole again.

"Look here, Bunter, I'm speaking for your own good. That pudding has been doctored."

"Rats!"

"We made it for a jape on the Highcliffe chaps, and were going to send it to them, to pay them out for a rotten trick they played us."



As Harry Wharton & Co. entered the room, a deep groan greeted them. Bunter was sitting on the floor, leaning against the wall, his fat hands pressed to his waistcoat. "Groo!" moaned Bunter. "What's the matter, Billy?" asked Bob Cherry. "Feeling bad?" "O-o-o-oh!"

that you fellows could make a pudding like this! It's simply all right. I haven't eaten half of it yet. Go and eat coke! Yah!"

"Open the door, old man."

"Yah!"

That expressive monosyllable seemed to express Bunter's sentiments exactly. Wharton rattled the handle

"Yah!"

"There's a lot of liquorice-powder mixed in it."

"Bosh! I should taste it."

"We put in a lot of spices and things to cover the flavour. Look here, Bunter, if you eat much of that pudding you'll be ill!"

"Rats!"

"You'll get some awful pains."

"Yah!"

"Do you mean to say you don't believe me?" roared Wharton furiously.

"Of course I don't!"

"What!"

"Oh, go and chop chips!" said Billy Bunter. "Yah!"

"Bunter! Look here, I give you my word——"

"Yah!"

"You can't doubt my word, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! You've often doubted mine."

There was a chuckle in the passage. Harry Wharton might be anxious for Billy Bunter's health, but the other fellows were thoroughly enjoying the fun.

"That's a different matter, you young ass!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Look here, Bunter, let that pudding alone or you'll be ill, I tell you!"

"Rats!"

"Bunter——"

"Yah!"

Harry Wharton ceased. The fork was still clicking on the dish in the study as Billy Bunter shovelled the pudding into his capacious mouth.

"My hat!" exclaimed Wharton. "What on earth's to be done? It isn't as if the young pig would be moderate! He'll make himself ill! I——"

"Ha, ha, ha! Let him alone."

"Cave!"

Loder the prefect, with a frown on his face and a cane in his hand, was coming up the stairs three at a time. The noise in the Remove passage had evidently reached the senior studies.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER

### NEMESIS!

L ODER looked surprised as he saw the extent of the crowd in the junior passage. He had expected to

find a crowd of juniors there in the throes of a passage row, and had meant to lay about them impartially with the cane. But the crowd was too thick for that, and there were Shell fellows and some of the Fifth in it, and Loder did not care to take the risk of laying the cane about big fellows like Coker of the Fifth, or Hobson of the Shell. So he "slanged" instead of hitting out.

"What's all this row about?" he demanded. "I suppose you're at the bottom of it, as usual, Wharton?"

"I can't get my study door open, Loder," said Harry.

"Why not?"

"It's locked."

"Well, I don't see that there's any reason to cram half the school in the Remove passage, on that account," said Loder. "What do you mean—is somebody locked up in your study?"

"Well—yes."

"Who is it?"

"A Remove chap."

"Name?"

There was no withholding the name from the prefect, of course.

"Bunter."

"He's locked you out of your study?"

"Yes."

"Very well, lick him when he opens the door," said Loder. "Don't make a row to alarm the whole school. Keep quiet here."

"But he's bolting a Christmas pudding——"

"More fool you for giving him the chance."

Harry Wharton coloured.

"I don't mean I mind the pudding going," he exclaimed. "But it was a doctored pudding, doctored for a jape, and it will make him ill if he eats much of it."

Loder's frowning face melted into a grin.

"Serve him right!"

"But——"

"That's enough, Wharton. If Bunter chooses to steal a pudding and make himself ill, that's his own look-out. Not another sound in this passage, mind, or I'll give you a hundred lines each all round."

And with that threat Loder departed, chuckling. The juniors looked at one another.

"Well, it's all up now," said Wharton. "Bunter will have to take his chance."

"The chancefulness is terrific."

"Well, it's his own look-out," said Bob Cherry. "He won't open the door, any way, and I'm not inclined to get a hundred lines trying to make him."

"Not much!"

The juniors dispersed, most of them laughing. The reckoning was coming for Billy Bunter, and the Remove were anxious to see it when it came. Bunter was a deadly raider whenever he got scent of anything really tasty in another fellow's study, and it was only fair that Nemesis should get on his track sometimes.

The chums of the Remove did not return to their study until it was time to do their preparation, and by that time they had almost forgotten Billy Bunter and the Christmas pudding. When they reached the study it was clear that Bunter had been gone a long time. The room was in darkness and the fire was nearly out.

"Well, Bunter's not here," grinned Nugent, as he switched on the light. "I wonder how he's negotiating that pudding."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I fancy he must be beginning to feel the effects of it by this time."

"He's getting his Christmas bust-up a little sooner than he intended, that's all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums dismissed Bunter from their minds, and sat down to their preparation. They finished it, and they went down for a chat in the common-room before going to bed. They looked round for Bunter when they came into the junior room, but the Owl of the Remove was not to be seen.

"My hat, I hope he isn't really ill!" Harry Wharton exclaimed, seriously. "I say, Bob, have you seen Bunter?"

"Not a sign of him," said Bob Cherry.

"Where can he be?"

"Might be in his study."

"Well, I'll go and look," said Harry.

Four or five juniors went with him to look for Bunter. And as they approached the study a deep groan from within warned them that Billy was indeed there.

"I can hear sweet music stealing," murmured Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Another groan.

The juniors entered the study. Wharton switched on the light. Billy Bunter was sitting on the floor in a corner against the wall. His fat face was thick with perspiration, and he had both his large, fat hands pressed to his waistcoat.

He blinked up at the chums of the Remove over his spectacles. The glasses had slid down his fat little nose, but Bunter had not sufficient energy left to replace them.

The juniors crowded in the doorway staring at him.

"Ow!" groaned Bunter. "Ow!"

"What's the matter, Billy?"

"Ow!"

"Feeling bad?"

"Yow!"

"Is it the pudding?"

"Groo!"

"What sort of pain is it?"

"Yowp!"

"Does it hurt?"

"O-o-o-o-oh!"

Bunter finished with a hair-raising groan. The juniors grinned. Bunter always made out his pains to be much greater than they were, and exactly how much pain he was suffering at the present moment they could not tell. But it was pretty clear that it was not all "spoo" this time.

"Well, I warned you about the pudding," said Harry Wharton. "I told you exactly how it would be, Bunter."

"Ow!"

"If you hadn't bolted so much, too——"

"Yaroo!"

"Does it hurt very much?"

"Groo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"Ow!"

There was evidently nothing to be done for Bunter. Harry Wharton & Co. departed, with his deep groans following them. Juniors came, and juniors went, looking in at Billy Bunter, still sitting in the corner of the study groaning in the throes of a stomach-ache which Hurree Singh justly described as terrific.

Half the school came to look at Bunter, but Bunter did not care. He was past caring.

When bedtime arrived at last, Billy Bunter did not come to the dormitory. Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, had to put out the lights for the Remove that evening, and he looked round for the missing junior.

"Where's Bunter?" he asked.

"I don't think he's quite well, Wingate," said Wharton.

"Well, he will have to go to bed, anyway. I suppose he is malingering again. Where is he?"

"In his study, I think."

"Fetch him up."

"All right."

Harry Wharton went down to No. 14. Billy Bunter was not there. But there was a light in No. 1 Study, and Wharton looked into his own quarters, to find the fat junior in the armchair before a roaring fire.

Wharton stared at him.

Bunter groaned.

"Ow! I'm so ill!"

"Well, you young spoofer!" exclaimed Wharton indignantly. "What do you mean by burning up my coal like that? I was going to make that scuttle last over to-morrow, and now you've scoffed nearly the lot!"

"Yow, I'm ill!"

"Well, you've got to come to bed now!"

"I'm too ill to move!"

"Come on!"

"Oh, these fearful pains——"

"I'll help you. Wingate's waiting to turn the light out, and you'd better not keep him waiting."

Bunter thought so, too. He staggered from the armchair, and, leaning heavily on Wharton's arm, left the study. Harry supported him manfully up to the Remove dormitory.

Wingate stared at them as they came in. The twisting and perspiring face of Billy Bunter showed that it was not wholly humbug this time.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Wingate.

"Groo! I'm ill—fearfully ill!"

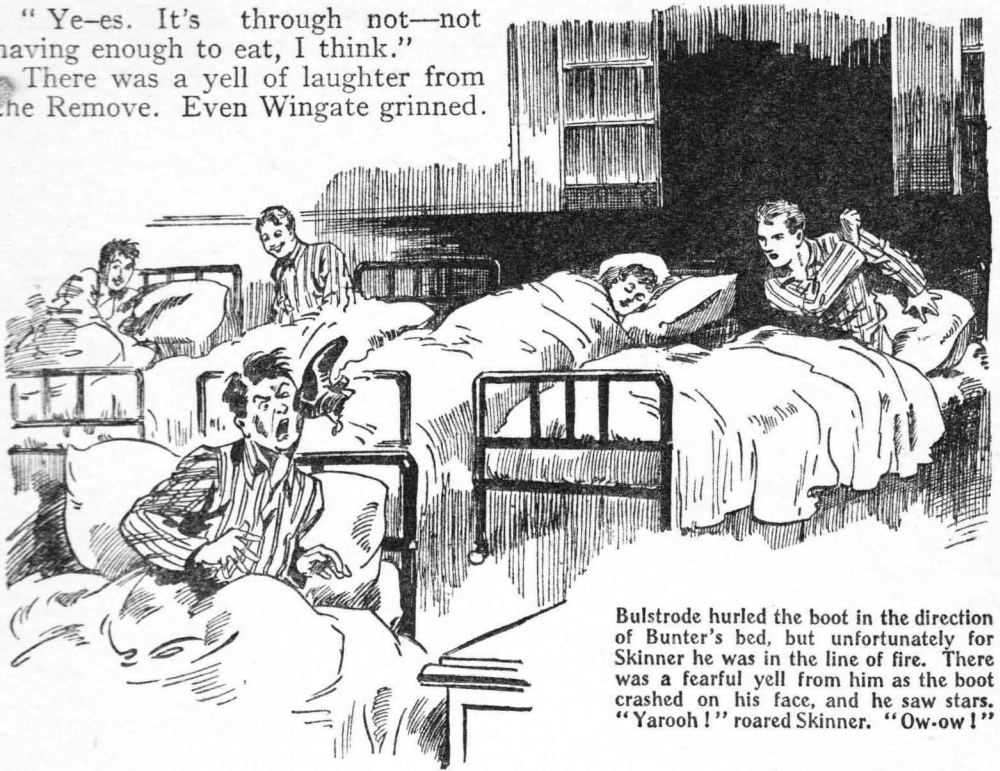
"What is it?"

"An awful pain!"

"But what's the cause of it?" said Wingate. "I suppose it has a cause."

"Ye-es. It's through not—not having enough to eat, I think."

There was a yell of laughter from the Remove. Even Wingate grinned.



Bulstrode hurled the boot in the direction of Bunter's bed, but unfortunately for Skinner he was in the line of fire. There was a fearful yell from him as the boot crashed on his face, and he saw stars. "Yaroo!" roared Skinner. "Ow-ow!"

"Out with the truth, you young spoofer!" he exclaimed. "I suppose you've been gorging, as usual, and eaten something that doesn't agree with you."

Bunter groaned.

"Do you chaps know?" asked Wingate, looking round. "He's a ghastly young pig, I know, but if he's really ill a doctor ought to be sent for."

"He's been scoffing a Christmas pudding," said Wharton.

"Oh, I see!"

"Yow!" groaned Bunter.

"It was a doctored pudding," said Harry. "There was—was liquorice powder in it. You see, it was meant for a jape, and—and it would have given a bit of a twist to anybody who ate a normal amount. But Bunter

bolted nearly the whole of the pudding, so——"

Wingate burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter gave a deep groan.

"Get into bed, you young porker!" said Wingate. "You'll be all right in the morning. If you've got a pain, serve you right. Bundle in!"

Bunter bundled in, and Wingate turned the light out and retired. But it was not easy to settle down to sleep, for from Bunter's bed came deep groans, all the more deep and deadly because Bunter was determined that nobody else should sleep if he couldn't.

"Shut up [that row, Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry, at last. "You're keeping me awake."

"Groo!"

"Dry up!"

"Ow!"

"Will you cheese it?" yelled Skinner.

"Ow! I'm in awful pain!" groaned Bunter. "I'm suffering fearfully!"

"Well, suffer in silence, then, can't you?"

Apparently, Bunter couldn't—at all events, he didn't. Groan after groan came from the fat junior's bed, till the Remove were in a state of almost ferocious exasperation.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER

VERY PAINFUL

GROAN!  
Groan!

"My only hat," said Bob Cherry, sitting up in bed, "I'm getting fed up with this! Bunter, will you stop that row?"

Groan!

"Stop it!" shrieked Bulstrode. "I'll get out to you soon."

Groan!

"Swamp his bed with water," suggested Vernon-Smith. "If the beast will groan, give him something to groan about."

"Hear, hear!" said Skinner.

Groan!

"Bunter! Shut up!"

Groan!

"Bunter, you ass, draw it mild!" said Harry Wharton impatiently. "I dare say you're in pain, but you know it's not necessary to keep up a row like that. Shut up! Make a little less row, and let us go to sleep."

But that was just what Billy Bunter did not intend to do. If he couldn't sleep, why should anybody else? That was the way Bunter looked at it. And in response to Harry's appeal, he delivered a more hair-raising groan than ever. If he had been a ghost in a melodrama, he could not have groaned more terribly.

Bulstrode gave a snort of rage.

"I'll jolly soon stop that!" he exclaimed.

He groped beside his bed for something to throw. His hand encountered a boot, and he picked it up.

He knew where Bunter's bed was. For the moment he forgot that most of the fellows were sitting up in bed now. He hurled the boot in the direction of Bunter's bed, and it whizzed through the darkness.

There was a fearful yell from Skinner. If Skinner had been lying down, the boot would have passed over him. But Skinner was sitting up. The boot crashed on his left ear, and Skinner saw stars.

"Yaroo!"

"My hat, there's another one beginning!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Have you been bolting a Christmas pudding, too, Skinny?"

"Ow!" roared Skinner. "Somebody's buzzed a boot at my head. Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat, I'm sorry!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "I meant it for Bunter."

"Ow! You silly ass! Ow!"

"Well, you shouldn't have been in the way, you know."

"You chump!"

"Oh, dry up! Gimme my boot back."

Skinner had already determined to do that. He grasped the boot in the darkness, and hurled it with deadly aim in the direction of Bulstrode's voice. But, as before, somebody sitting up was in the way of the boot. Bob Cherry gave a yell that rang through the dormitory.

"Gerrooh!"

"Oh, my hat! Cherry——"

"Who chucked that boot?" roared Bob Cherry. "Look here, Bulstrode——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bulstrode. He guessed that Skinner had flung the boot back, and that Bob Cherry had had the benefit of it.

But the laugh was ill-timed. It made Bob think that Bulstrode had thrown the boot.

He scrambled out of bed, and rushed to Bulstrode's, and clawed the bed-clothes off him.

"Hallo!" roared Bulstrode. "Stop that! Oh!"

Spank! spank!

"Yaroo!" roared Bulstrode, as Bob Cherry's large-sized hands came spanking on his lightly clad limbs. "Ow! Chuck it! I didn't throw that boot, you ass!"

Bob Cherry paused.

"Oh, didn't you!" he exclaimed. "Who did, then?"

"Skinner, you fool!" yelled Bulstrode. "By George, I'll——"

"Oh, I'm sorry, then," said Bob; "but it serves you right for starting chucking boots about in the dark!"

"You—you frabjous ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

Bulstrode rubbed his tingling limbs, and Bob Cherry and Skinner rubbed their heads. All three of them were hurt.

The laughter died away, and then Bunter thought it was time for him to appear on the scene again. There was a deep groan once more.

This time a yell of exasperation rose.

"Stop that row, Bunter."

Groan!

"Will you shut up?"

Groan!

"My dear Bunter," said Alonzo Todd, "it is really terrible to hear you groaning in this manner! Would it relieve you if I were to sit by your bedside and hold your hand?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Remove. "My dear fellows——"

Groan!

"It is really terrible to hear Bunter. My Uncle Benjamin would feel it very much. I wish I could do something to relieve you, Bunter."

Groan!

"I'll do something to relieve him!" exclaimed Bulstrode, jumping out of bed.

He took his braces, and groped his way to Bunter's bed.

Swish!

Slash!

"Yaroo!" roared Bunter.

Swish! slash! swash!

"Ow! Yow! Help! Murder! Fire! Yaroo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Does that relieve you?" demanded Bulstrode.

"Ow! No! Yow!"

Slash! swish! slash!

"Help! Yaroo! Yah!"

"Are you feeling better?"

"Yow! No! Yes! Whoop!"

"Good. Do you think you will groan any more?"

"Yes—no! No!"

"Good," said Bulstrode. "If you do, and I have to get out of bed again I'll give you a real licking, and not joke with you like that."

"Ow!"

"Hallo! Are you beginning again?"

"Yow! No. I—I'm all right."

"Better keep all right, then."

And Bulstrode went back to bed.

Billy Bunter gasped and snorted. But he did not groan any more. The juniors chuckled over the cure Bulstrode had administered.

Alonzo Todd was astonished. He had never heard of pain being cured by an application of braces through the bed-clothes. But that application seemed to have cured Bunter.

The Remove was able to get to sleep at last.

In the middle of the night, however, Harry Wharton awoke. There was a sound of a groan in the darkness. Starlight was glimmering in through the high windows of the dormitory, and he could see Billy Bunter sitting up in bed, rocking to and fro.

"Hallo, Bunter!" he said sleepily. "At it again?"

"Ow! I feel awfully bad!" groaned Billy Bunter.

"Where's the pain?"

"Inside."

"It's Nemesis, old man."

"Taint!" groaned Bunter. "It's the tummy ache."

Wharton chuckled.

"I mean it's Nemesis—justice—on your track," he said. "Nemesis was the lady of ancient times who used to give people beans when they got offside. I knew Nemesis would be on your track when you scoffed the pudding, Bunty. Go to sleep."

"I—I c-c-can't!"

"Better not wake Bulstrode up."

Billy Bunter thought so, too, for he ceased groaning. But Nemesis gave him very little rest that night. In the morning, Bunter was looking very pale and ill. He astounded the Remove by having only a slight appetite for breakfast. And then even Bulstrode agreed that he must be suffering terribly.

But during the morning the effects of the Christmas pudding wore off, and Billy Bunter became himself again. At dinner-time he more than made up for any little deficiencies at the breakfast-table.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER

NOT A CHEQUE!

"LETTER for Bunter!"

Billy Bunter was coming downstairs in the morning a few days

later—last down, as usual—when Ogilvy spoke. Bunter made a rush.

"Where is it? Hand it over!"

Ogilvy took the letter down and tossed it to Bunter. The fat junior caught it eagerly.

It was a large, square envelope of thick white paper, and on the flap at the back were three initials in gold, in old English type.

"C. D. A."

Bunter took the letter and turned it over in his fat hands. A good many fellows looked at it, too, wondering who could have written to Bunter in that imposing envelope.

"One of your titled friends, Billy, I suppose?" Bob Cherry remarked, with a grin.

Bunter blinked at him.

"I expect it's from Sir William," he said.

Bob Cherry staggered back, and caught at the wall as if to support him—apparently quite overcome.

"Sir William! My only maiden Aunt Matilda! Uncle of yours?"

"Old friend of the family," said Bunter indifferently.

"They're his initials on the back, of course," Ogilvy remarked sarcastically. "Which of them stands for William—C. D. or A.?"

"Oh, really, Ogilvy——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo! What's the joke?" asked Temple of the Upper Fourth, coming along with Dabney and Fry. "Bunter got a postal-order at last?"

"No. Letter from a titled friend," said Bob Cherry. "Sir William Walker."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"Or is it Sir William Spoofo, or Lord Knowswho, or Duke Humphrey?" asked Skinner, with heavy sarcasm.

"Ha, ha, ha!"



"Oh, really, you fellows, it's from Sir William Thorne," said Bunter. "He's the head of the Christmas Dinners Association."

"Well, that sounds like a jolly good association," said Snoop. "Have you been writing him a begging letter for a Christmas dinner?"

Bunter disdained to reply to that question. He opened the envelope by the simple expedient of slitting it with his thumb, and took out the letter. He opened that with the expectation of finding something inside, but there was nothing. The look of disappointment on his fat face made the Removites roar again.

"Sir William hasn't dubbed up!" roared Bob Cherry. "I'm sure his name is William Walker, after all."

"Mean of him," said Ogilvy. "I should sack my titled friends, if I were you, Bunty, and get some common or garden untitled ones."

Bunter read the letter and snorted.

"Well, of all the rot!" he exclaimed.

"What's the matter?"

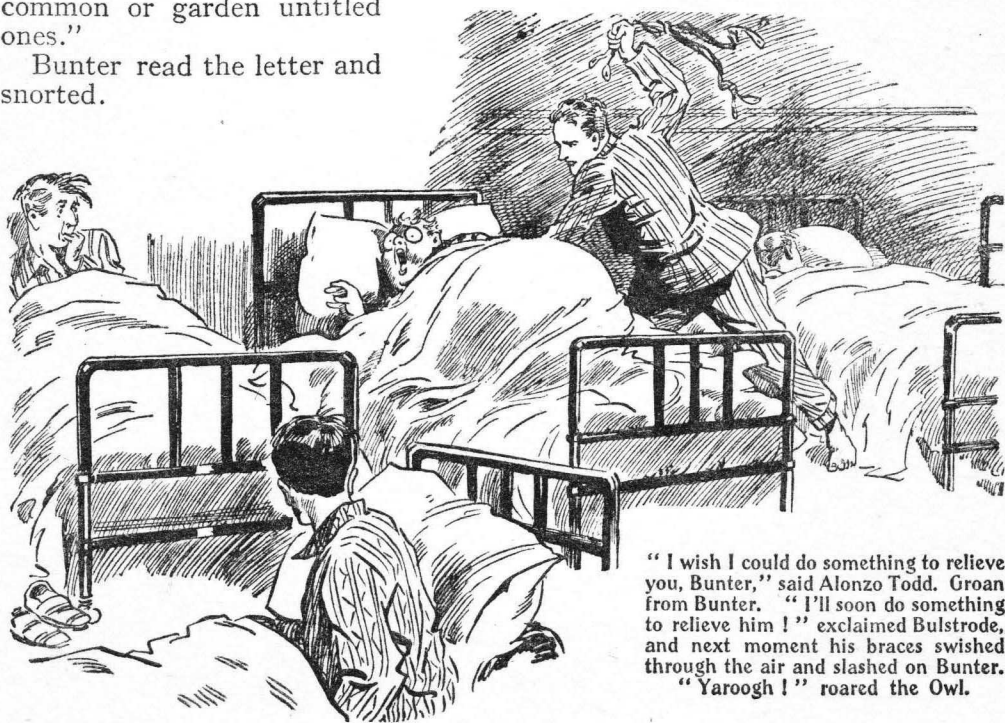
"Oh, it's rotten!" said Bunter, in great disgust. "I wrote to this chap, and explained my wheeze of—of standing a big bust-up for the special benefit of fellows who couldn't afford to buy a Christmas dinner. That's my real object, of course, in standing this Christmas feed."

"First I've heard of that," grinned Bob Cherry. "I thought your object was to get a big feed yourself, regardless of expense to the chaps who found the tin."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Faith, and go on with the letter!" said Micky Desmond.

"You see, this rotten association looks after poor people at Christmas and provides them with dinner, and things," Bunter explained, "so, of



"I wish I could do something to relieve you, Bunter," said Alonzo Todd. Groan from Bunter. "I'll soon do something to relieve him!" exclaimed Bulstrode, and next moment his braces swished through the air and slashed on Bunter.

"Yarough!" roared the Owl.

course, when I wrote to the president of it and explained my great idea of—of feeding the poor at Christmas, I expected he would send a decent contribution."

"My hat! So you've started writing begging letters, have you?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent, I wish you wouldn't put a bad construction on everything I do," said Bunter peevishly. "Blessed if it isn't enough to make a chap stop sacrificing himself for others. I never get any thanks for it, I know that. Well, instead of sending me a contribution, the beast—I mean Sir William——"

"An old friend of the family, you know," said Ogilvy.

"Well, my father knew him, I mean," said Bunter hastily. "That is——"

"Oh, I know all about it!" said Skinner. "Bunter senior supplies Sir William's household with butter and eggs, and cheats him in the quality of the eggs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As I was saying," said Bunter hastily. "The beast——"

"Look here, Bunter, you're not to speak of your father that way. If he's anything like you, he may deserve it—but it's bad form."

"I was speaking of Sir William, you ass! Sir William has written me a rotten letter instead of sending me a contribution."

"Let's hear the letter," grinned Ogilvy.

Bunter, glowering with indignation, read out the letter.

"*Sir,—In reply to your request claiming a contribution from the funds of the society for charitable objects in Friardale, I beg to inform you that our Mr. Sharpe will call upon you on Thursday morning to inquire into the*

*circumstances. If the same be found satisfactory, your request will be placed before the Donations Committee at the next meeting.—Yours faithfully,*

"H. JONES, Secretary."

"Not even a letter from Sir Bill!" exclaimed Skinner. "Why, anybody could have a letter from a common or garden secretary. Rats!"

"And no remittance!" said Bob Cherry sympathetically. "Curious how these people know when you're trying to spoof 'em."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I regard this letter as an insult!" said Bunter. "It's jolly near expressing a doubt of my personal honour."

The juniors gasped.

"His personal honour!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Where do you keep it, Bunter? You've never let us see anything of it!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Well, if you succeed in spoofing 'our Mr. Sharpe,' you'll be clever!" grinned Skinner. "Why, the man will turn you inside out, you duffer!"

"I shall treat him very sharply, I can tell you!" said Bunter. "I'm not going to have my bona fides doubted in this rotten way."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter thrust the letter into his pocket and rolled away. He doubted very much now whether he would succeed in extracting anything from the Christmas Dinners Association. They were not likely to provide a Christmas dinner for him. He would have to look elsewhere for the funds for the great bust-up.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER

### A SUDDEN RECOVERY.

"RAISED the wind yet, Billy?" asked Bulstrode, with a grin, as he came upon the fat junior in the doorway of the schoolhouse.

Billy Bunter blinked at him despondently.

"Not yet, Bulstrode. I'm expecting some postal-orders this evening. But just at the present moment I'm short of money. Did you say you were going to advance me something towards the bust-up?"

"No, I didn't!"

"H'm! It would really be like putting your money in the bank, you know, to have it back with interest at Christmas," said Bunter persuasively. "As a business chap you ought to see the advantage of that, Bulstrode."

Bulstrode grinned.

"Besides, the feed is really being stood in your honour," Bunter explained.

"Mine!" exclaimed Bulstrode.

"Yes. You see my real object is to show the Remove that they ought to look up to you, and not make so much of Wharton, you know. You will, of course, be the guest of honour at the feed, and the whole thing will be intended to mark our respect for you."

"Not good enough, Bunty!" grinned Bulstrode.

And he walked away.

"Beast!" muttered Bunter. "Rotter! Mean bounder! I wonder whether I could——" He paused, as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came in.

"I say, Inky, stop a moment."

The nabob was always polite. He paused, with a graceful inclination of his head to the fat junior.

"Certainly, my worthy and esteemed fat chum. I am in a somewhat hurry."

"I won't keep you a minute. It's about that bust-up, you know."

"The knowfulness is great."

"My real object in standing this feed," went on Bunter, "is to show

the fellows that it's all rot to talk about you being a nigger, or anything of that sort. You, of course, will be the guest of honour, and the whole thing will be got up regardless of expense to mark our respect for you. I think that at Christmas time something ought to be done to promote peace and good feeling, and so on, and to show that we're all brothers—I mean, brethren—in spite of differences of colour. What do you think, Inky?"

"I think the honourable Bunter is an esteemed and terrific ass!"

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"I think also that his rottenness is great."

"Look here, Inky, I think you might be decently grateful when a chap gets up a celebration, regardless of expense, to do you honour!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "Some chaps would bar a nigger. I don't."

"The graciousness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific."

"Well, I mean to be gracious, on an occasion like this," Bunter explained. "I don't see why you're not as good as I am myself, for that matter, though you're darker. And you're not so very dark, either. If you could stand me a fiver——"

"I fear that I cannot stand the honourable Bunter at all."

"Look here, Inky, make it a pound."

"The ratfulness is terrific."

"You blessed nigger——"

"The esteemed Bunter has stated that my worthy self is not so very dark!" the nabob exclaimed with a grin.

"You—you ace of spades!" grunted Bunter. "Look here, I think you might make a contribution like a decent chap. I——"

"The good-byefulness is great."

"Hold on a minute, Inky. Look

here, I think you might make some slight contribution. I'd take ten bob."

"Not from me, my worthy chum."

"Well, say, half a crown."

"The esteemed Bunter may say it if he wishes."

Bunter snorted.

"Look here, you black beast, are you going to make a contribution or are you not?" he roared.

"The notfulness is terrific."

"You—you black bounder!"

"There is one thing I shall have great pleasurefulness in presenting to the esteemed and ludicrous Bunter."

"What's that?" asked Bunter eagerly.

"The kickfulness of my august foot."

"Ow! Leggo!"

Bunter was spun round, and the nabob's foot was planted behind him.

The fat junior went sprawling, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh walked on his way with a soft and placid smile.

"Ow!" groaned Bunter. "The black beast! Yah!"

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

### MR. SHARPE CALLS

TROTTER, the House page, put his head into the Remove Form-room the next morning during lessons. Mr. Quelch was guiding the Lower Fourth through the labyrinths of deponent verbs, and in the thrilling interest of that pursuit he did not notice Trotter. He was tackling Billy Bunter, and Bunter, whose knowledge was not what Hurree Singh would have called terrific, had just given him the extraordinary information that a deponent verb was normal in form and abnormal in meaning. Mr. Quelch had taken up his pointer, with the idea of pointing out to Bunter that his definition was not quite correct—through the

medium of the palm of the hand—when Trotter's voice was heard:

"If you please, sir, Master Bunter's wanted, sir!"

Mr. Quelch looked round.

"Master Bunter's wanted, sir."

"Indeed? What is it?"

"A visitor, sir."

Bunter blinked round.

"If you please, sir, I expect it's one of my titled friends, sir, come to give me a Christmas tip!" he exclaimed.

"Who is it, Trotter?"

"A Mr. Sharpe, sir."

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter.

He had forgotten the promised visit of the representative of the Christmas Dinners Association.

"Which the 'Ead sent me for Master Bunter, sir," said Trotter.

"You may go, Bunter."

"Ye-es, sir."

Billy Bunter left the Form-room. He left the Remove grinning. They did not think that he would get very much change out of the representative of the Christmas Dinners Association.

Bunter followed Trotter down the wide, flagged passage.

"Where is he?" he asked.

"In 'ere, sir," said Trotter, opening the door of the library. "I took in 'is card to the 'Ead, Master Bunter, and he sent me to tell you there was a visitor for you."

"The Head's not there?" exclaimed Bunter, startled.

"Oh, no, Master Bunter!"

Billy Bunter drew a breath of relief.

He went into the library, and a tall, thin gentleman rose from a chair. The gentleman was so thin and so tall that it seemed to Bunter as if he would never leave off rising up, to so great a height did he go. He was certainly over six feet, and his thin form was



Bunter blinked in surprise at the tall, thin gentleman who rose from a chair as he entered. "Mr. S-s-sharpe?" he asked. "Certainly," said the tall gentleman. "I expected to see Mr. Bunter." "I'm Bunter, sir," said the fat junior.

clad in a tightly-buttoned frock-coat, which made him look longer and thinner, and, in fact, almost telescopic.

Bunter blinked up at him, with almost a crick in the neck.

"Mr. S-s-sharpe?" he asked.

"Certainly!" said the towering gentleman, in a deep bass voice. "I expected to see Mr. Bunter—Mr. William Bunter."

"I'm Bunter, sir."

The stranger adjusted a pair of gold-rimmed glasses upon a prominent thin nose, and looked at Bunter in surprise.

"You are Bunter?" he repeated.

"Certainly."

"But—but the application which was received by our committee,"

said Mr. Sharpe. "It was—er—it was sent in for a contribution to a scheme for feeding the—er—in fact, the poor."

"Exactly, sir. I sent it in."

"But you are—er—in fact, a boy," said Mr. Sharpe.

"Well, I'm a bit older in most things than the other fellows," said Bunter. "I'm rather a clever chap, you know, and very experienced. And, besides, I like helping the poor, sir. That's really what I live for."

"Indeed!"

"Certainly, sir. If this contribution is sent by the Christmas Dinners Association, sir, they can rest assured that it will be well spent—entirely on grub, sir."

"Ahem!"

"My object in standing the bust-up—I mean the feed—is to help the poor over Christmas, sir," said Bunter. "I have already written invitations to a number of poor Council-school boys in the neighbourhood, sir, and they're all coming."

"That is certainly a very worthy object," said Mr. Sharpe, scanning the fat junior very closely.

"Yes, sir. My real object is to promote peace and good feeling between the fellows here and the County Council School chaps," Bunter explained. "I'm getting up a feed, regardless of expense, for that reason solely."

"Very good. You are, however, very young to be entrusted with the spending of money," said Mr. Sharpe, "and I should have, of course, to be satisfied of your bona fides before I could recommend your claim to the committee."

"I should give you my word of honour, Mr. Sharpe," said Bunter grandly.

"Ahem! I think I should prefer a word or two with your headmaster, first," Mr. Sharpe observed.

"I—I hardly think it's necessary, sir. If you hand the money over to me the whole thing will be quite satisfactory."

"I am afraid I could not do so. Perhaps you will wait while I have a few words with your headmaster?"

"Please don't trouble, sir. Dr. Locke is a very busy man, and—and he—he gets very bad-tempered when he's interrupted, especially in the mornings."

"Ahem——"

"He might even be violent, sir," said Bunter desperately. "There—there was a chap he nearly brained once for interrupting him in the morning."

"Dear me!"

"I'm standing this Christmas bust-up entirely at my own expense, except for any little help I get from your committee, sir. I am being perfectly lavish—the whole thing is being got up regardless of expense."

"I think I had better see your headmaster."

"Quite unnecessary, sir."

Mr. Sharpe appeared to have his own ideas about that. He touched the bell and Trotter reappeared, and conducted him to the Head's study, leaving Billy Bunter waiting, in a far from enviable frame of mind, in the library.

Bunter waited with a dismal face.

That the headmaster would allow him to receive any contribution from the Christmas Dinners Association, if they were willing to send one, was doubtful.

"It's rotten!" muttered Bunter. "I call it rotten! The suspiciousness of some people is simply fearful. It's just as if they couldn't trust their money into my hands."

Trotter came in with a grin on his face, and Bunter blinked at him.

"Is that gentleman with the Head?" he asked.

"Yes, Master Bunter. The 'Ead wants you to go to his study."

"Oh! Are you sure?"

"Yes," grinned Trotter. "He sent me to fetch you, sir."

"I—I suppose I'd better go," murmured Bunter.

And he took his way to the Head's study.

He did not like the prospect of facing Mr. Sharpe and the Head together. He was greatly inclined to bolt instead of obeying the summons. But, after all, where could he bolt to? He was in for it now, and with slow and unwilling steps

he made his way to Dr. Locke's room.

His hand trembled as he tapped at the door.

"Come in!" said a deep voice.

The voice was familiar enough, but it made Bunter jump. He pushed the door open, and went into the study.

Mr. Sharpe was sitting by the window, the Head at his desk. Dr. Locke turned a severe glance upon the Owl of the Remove as he came in.

"Bunter!"

"Ye-e-es, sir?"

"I hear that you have written to this gentleman for money," said the Head sternly. "Will you kindly explain yourself, Bunter?"

The Owl of the Remove blinked.

"Well?" snapped the Head. "I am waiting for an explanation. I may mention that unless it is a perfectly satisfactory one I shall cane you severely, Bunter."

"Oh, really, sir——"

"I am waiting, Bunter!"

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

### THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR!

**B**ILLY BUNTER'S knees knocked together.

The dark frown upon the doctor's face terrified him, and put to flight whatever little wit he might have had.

"Well, Bunter," said the Head, in a voice that seemed to the fat junior like the rumble of thunder, though it really was not very loud. "Well?"

"If you please, sir——"

"Go on, Bunter!"

"I—I—I——"

"You have written a begging letter, Bunter."

"Oh, no, sir! I—I hope you wouldn't think that I should do anything of that sort, sir! I despise a

chap who wants money. You see, sir, the idea really was to stand a Christmas feed to the poor, and I was getting it up regardless of expense. I thought the Christmas Dinners Association would like to send in a bit of a contribution to so—so noble an object, sir."

"Ah! And who are the poor you are thinking of feeding at Christmas, Bunter?" asked the Head grimly.

"Oh, the poor, sir!" said Bunter vaguely. "There are lots of poor, sir."

"The poor of Friardale, perhaps?"

"Yes, exactly, sir."

"And how will you be able to feed them at Christmas, Bunter, when you will not be here? The school breaks up before Christmas, and you will be gone home."

"I—I meant the bust-up to take place before we broke up, sir. I—I've already invited some poor Council-school boys, sir—the Courtfield fellows."

"Have they accepted?"

"Not yet, sir. I'm expecting to hear from them to-day. I thought you might approve of my trying to— to put things on a better footing between the two schools, sir, by means of a Christmas bust-up, regardless of expense."

"You tell Mr. Sharpe that you are providing most of the funds yourself."

"Practically the whole, sir," said Bunter, recovering his confidence a little. "Two-thirds, at least, sir, regardless of——"

"Indeed! You have purchased the provisions?"

"N-n-not yet, sir."

"Then you still have the money in hand?"

"In a way, sir."

"Can you show it to me, Bunter?"

"I—I—I——"

"Please show me the money!" thundered the Head.

"I—I c-c-can't, sir!" stammered Bunter. "It hasn't come yet, sir. I—I'm expecting a large number of postal-orders, from some rich relations and from some titled friends of mine, and——"

"Don't talk nonsense, Bunter!"

"Oh, sir!"

"You have no money, and your talking of feeding the poor at Christmas is all empty nonsense," said the Head sternly. "You have attempted to obtain money from the very worthy society this gentleman represents, but I fear very much that it would not be devoted to the promised object if you succeeded in obtaining it."

"Oh, really, sir——"

"I apologise to this gentleman," said the Head, with an inclination towards Mr. Sharpe, "for the trouble he has been put to, and assure him that you will be punished for having given him this unnecessary journey."

"Not at all, sir!" said Mr. Sharpe politely.

And he took his silk hat and his leave.

Bunter remained all alone with the Head.

He blinked after the tall gentleman till he disappeared, taking with him, as it were, Bunter's last hope of a free contribution of funds for the Christmas bust-up. But Billy Bunter had little time to think about that. The voice of the Head called his attention back.

"Bunter," said Dr. Locke sternly, "you have acted in a disgraceful manner."

"Oh, really, sir——"

"I fear very much that you hoped to obtain a contribution from this

charitable society, for the purpose of keeping it for your own uses."

"Oh, really——"

"You have not, I suppose, considered how dishonest that would be," the Head continued. "But perhaps a caning might impress that consideration upon your mind, and induce you to reflect upon your conduct."

"If—if you please, sir, I—I'd rather reflect without being caned, sir," ventured the fat junior nervously.

"Probably you would, Bunter, but that would not meet my views. You will kindly hold out your hand," said the Head, rising from his seat.

He took up his cane, Bunter received two swipes on each hand, and they doubled Bunter up like a pocket-knife. The Head eyed him grimly.

"There, Bunter! I think that will perhaps be a lesson to you. If it fails to prove so I must see what a further application of the same kind of correction will effect. You must learn, Bunter, that the way of the transgressor is hard. You may go."

Bunter tucked his hands under his arms in the passage, and went along groaning dismally.

The classes were being dismissed now for the morning recess, and Bunter ran into Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, in the passage.

"Hallo!" said Temple. "Here's Bunter in trouble again! What was it this time, Bunter?"

"Nothing," groaned Bunter. "All through my desire to do good to the poor at Christmas-time, that's all. Ow!"

"Good old Bunter!" chuckled Temple. "Always some spanking whopper, and each one bigger than the last."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.



Bunter blinked at them.

"I say, you fellows, speaking of Christmas feeds——"

"Who's speaking of Christmas feeds?" said Temple.

"I am," said Bunter. "Speaking of Christmas feeds, look here, suppose you chaps were to make a contribution towards the bust-up."

"What bust-up?"

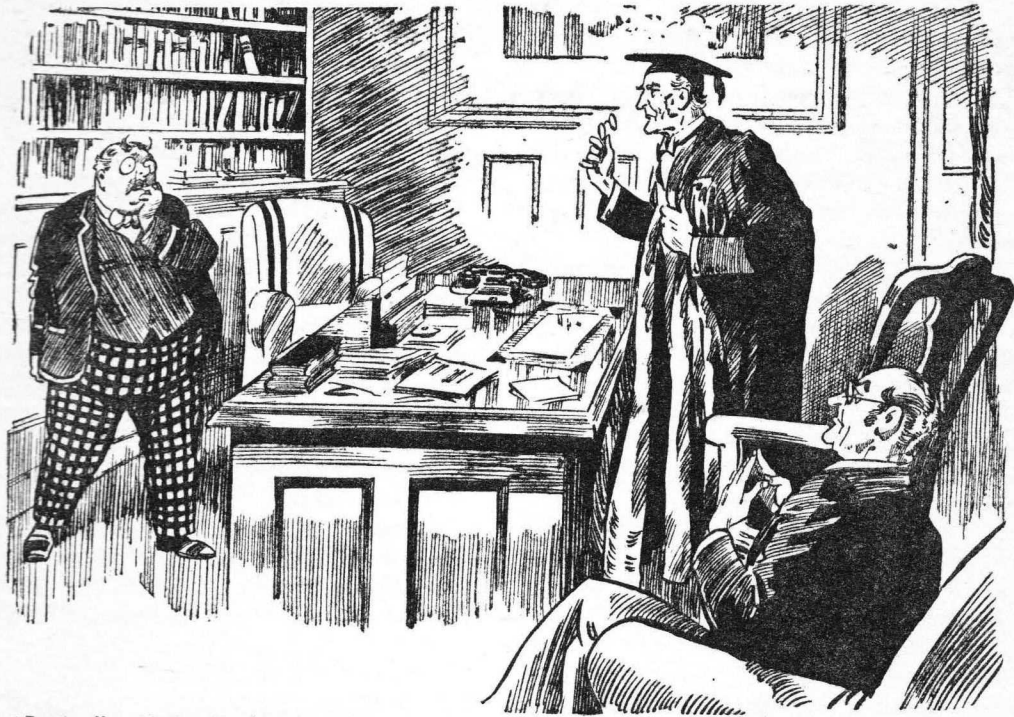
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. I——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—— Look here, don't walk away while I'm talking to you. I tell you—— Look here—— Beasts!"

Temple & Co. walked away, laughing. Bunter tucked his hands under



"Bunter," said the Head sternly, "I hear that you have written to this gentleman for money. If you cannot give me a satisfactory explanation I shall cane you severely." "Oh, really, sir——" gasped Bunter.

"I'm standing a big Christmas bust-up before the school breaks up," Bunter explained. "You, of course, would be the guests of honour. My real object is to——to promote good feeling between the Upper and the Lower Fourth, and——and make the two Forms get on better, by——by showing our respect for the Upper Fourth. Now, if you chaps cared to make a contribution——"

his arms once more, and recommenced groaning.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER

MARJORIE'S REPLY.

"SATURDAY's the day after to-mor-row," Billy Bunter remarked, cornering Harry Wharton & Co. in the tuckshop, where they were discussing gingerpop, and he blinked at the chums of the Remove significantly.

"Dear me!" said Nugent. "To-day's Thursday, so the day after to-morrow is really almost certain to be Saturday. Quite right, Bunter; but did you do that in your head?"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Why don't you go in for higher mathematics, Bunty?" asked Bob Cherry. "A fellow who can work out things like that——"

"Look here, you fellows, I'm talking business. Saturday's the day after to-morrow, and that means that the bust-up has got to come off in two days' time, or not at all."

"Then I fancy it will be not at all," said Wharton, laughing.

"The not-at-allfulness will be terrific."

"Oh, very well; if you fellows want the guests to be disappointed, and Greyfriars to get a name for inhospitality, I don't see why I should care," said Bunter loftily.

"What! What guests?"

"Oh, the Cliff House girls."

"What!" shouted the juniors in chorus.

"Of course, I've invited them," said Bunter. "I shouldn't be likely to leave Marjorie & Co. out of a Christmas feed, I suppose."

"You cheeky young ass! But they won't come," said Harry. "They know you too jolly well for that."

Bunter snorted.

"Then there are the Courtfield fellows."

"The Courtfield fellows?" repeated Harry.

"Yes, I've asked them."

"You've asked Trumper & Co.?"

"Yes. You see, my object is to feed the poor at Christmas, and I don't suppose those Council-school chaps have any Christmas dinners," said Bunter. "They are coming to the feed, and I should think you

fellows would stand by me, in case anything goes wrong and I don't get a remittance in time."

The chums of the Remove stared at Billy Bunter. They had had some samples of the fat junior's coolness before, but this really seemed to beat all previous records.

"My only hat!" said Bob Cherry at last.

"You've asked them to come, Bunter?"

"Of course. And I should think you fellows would——"

"Have they accepted the invitation?"

"I'm expecting their reply to-day. Under the circumstances, I should think you fellows would shell out. I suppose you don't want those Council-school chaps to go away saying that they were asked to a feed here, and when they came there wasn't anything for them."

"My word!"

"The wordfulness is terrific."

"You see, they're certain to come," Bunter explained. "I put it very tactfully to them in my letter. I pointed out that as they were probably too poor to have a decent feed at Christmas, this was really a good thing for them."

"You—you said that?"

"I wrote it."

"And that's what you call being tactful?"

"Well, it was just as well to speak plainly, you know. I told them we should treat them well, and not take any notice of the fact that they were Council-school bounders, and not our class."

"My hat!"

"They'll be jolly glad to come, I should think," said Bunter. "I mentioned that they would be treated just as if they were on an equality

with me, although I am a gentleman."

"Great Scott!"

"Probably Trumper will call in and tell me he's coming to the bust-up," said Bunter. "Anyway, I'm sure they'll come. They're not likely to miss a chance of a feed, especially with a chap so far above them socially. Marjorie is sure to come, too. Of course, she wouldn't miss——"

"Miss what?" asked Bob Cherry, with a dangerous gleam in his eye.

"Miss seeing us all," said Bunter hastily. "Hallo, there's the postman! I expect he's got Marjorie's reply to me."

And the fat junior dashed out of the tuckshop to intercept the postman. The chums of the Remove followed him. A crowd of juniors gathered round the postman; but he had only one letter to hand out, and it was addressed to Billy Bunter—or, to be more exact, to Master William Bunter.

Bunter grinned as he took it. A dozen fellows observed that it was addressed in a girl's hand, and some of them knew it to be Marjorie's.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "That's the letter, then. I'll bet you a dozen to one in thick ears that Marjorie has refused, Bunter."

"Oh, rats!" said Bunter.

"Well, let's see."

"Oh, I'm not going to open the letter here," said Bunter, with a look of exceeding slyness. "Never show a girl's letter in public, you know. A chap mustn't kiss and tell."

"You young cad!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

Harry Wharton grasped the fat junior by the collar as he was walking away with the letter, and swung him back.

"Hold on," he said grimly.

"Oh, really, you know, I want to read my letter."

"You'll read it here. \* You heard what the young cad said, you fellows," said Harry, looking round at the juniors. "He's trying to make out that Marjorie has written something he wouldn't show to us—something chummy. Of course, it's his rotten lying; Marjorie can't bear the sight of the beast."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"If Marjorie knew what a cad you were, Bunter, she wouldn't write you a line at all," said Wharton. "As it is, I'm not going to let you make capital out of it. You know very well that the letter is quite a formal one, in answer to your impudent invitation. After what you've implied, you'll open the letter here, and read it out to all the fellows."

"Oh, really, I jolly well shan't. I'm not going to have all my little secrets made public, I can tell you. Ow, ow, ow!"

Wharton shook the fat junior till his arm ached.

"Yow!" roared Billy Bunter. "Yow! Chuck it! You'll make my glasses fall off, and if they get broken you'll have to pay for them."

"Open that letter! After what you've said, every chap here is going to know what's in it, so that you will be convicted of being a lying, bragging cad."

With Wharton's knuckles grinding into the back of his neck, Bunter was not in a position to refuse. He sulkily split the envelope with a fat thumb.

"I—I don't object to reading out the letter," he mumbled. "Of course, what I just said was a—a figure of speech."

"Read out the letter, you worm!"

Bunter read it out. With three or four fellows looking at it, too, he

could not falsify it in the reading. It was short if not sweet.

*"We are sorry we cannot accept your invitation.*

"M. HAZELDENE."

That was all.

A more direct snub had probably never been administered even to Billy Bunter, who seemed to spend most of his time in asking for snubs and deserving them.

There was a shout of laughter as the contents of the letter were made known. After what Bunter had said and implied, the snub direct from the Cliff House girls was extremely comic.

"Well, if that's a sample of the little secrets, you're welcome to 'em!" grinned Bulstrode.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I should think that could get through the hide of a hippopotamus," Mark Linley remarked. "Even Bunter ought to feel a little smaller."

"I—I—of course, this is only in fun!" said Bunter.

Wharton released the fat junior, with a look of contempt. At that moment there was a shout from the direction of the gates.

"Courtfield cads!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Here come Trumper & Co. with an answer to your invitation, Bunter!"

## THE TENTH CHAPTER

### AN INVITATION NOT ACCEPTED.

**T**RUMPER & Co. marched into the Close with grim faces. They certainly did not look as if they had come to accept an invitation in an amicable spirit.

"Here they are!" said Nugent. "Here are your guests, Bunty!"

Bunter grinned.

"I suppose you chaps will stand by me in getting up the feed now," he remarked.

"You'll need somebody to stand by you now, to judge by Trumper's expression," said Wharton, laughing. "Eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Brown. "Trumper looks wrathful! You must have worded the invitation rather crudely, Bunter!"

"Oh, rot! I put it delicately!"

"The delicateness was terrific."

Trumper & Co. had caught sight of Bunter, and were marching straight towards him. The fat junior was too short-sighted to make out the expressions upon their faces till they came very near.

Greyfriars fellows were gathering round, none too well pleased by this invasion of the Close by the Courtfield fellows. Trumper & Co. were in great danger of a general ragging. But the Removites waited for Harry Wharton to take the lead, and Wharton showed no sign of hostility towards the Council School fellows.

"Bunter! Bunter there!" roared Trumper, in his big, bass voice.

"Yes, here I am, Trumper!"

"You wrote me this letter?"

Trumper held out a letter, scrawled and blotted and smeared in Bunter's well-known style. Bunter blinked at it.

"Yes, that looks like my letter, Trumper."

"My hat, it does!" gasped Nugent.

"Look at it!" roared Trumper. "Listen while I read it out, and then tell me what you think of it, you fellows!"

"Go ahead!" said Nugent. "Coming from Bunter, it's bound to be written in a really decent and gentlemanly spirit. And I bet the spelling is original, too!"

“ Ha, ha, ha ! ”  
Trumper read out the letter.

“ Dear Trumper,—I am standing a Christmas feed, a regular bust-up regardless of eggspense, and I want you and your friends to come. Although you are all Council-school chaps, and kannot as a rule eggspect to mix with fellows of my klass, we shall treat you quite well, just as if there were no distinkshun between us sochially. At Christmas time, I really think that even fellows like you ought to be treeted with friendliness, and so I hope you will come to the bust-up. Of corse, you will see that your friends wash their hands and put on klean kollars, and that sort of thing, and don't wear down-at-heel boots, or anything of that sort, so as not to

*disgrase me. It will be a splendid feed, and as I don't suppose you fellows get any Christmas diners to speak of, it will be a treet for you.*  
Yours, WILLIAM G. BUNTER.”

The Greyfriars fellows roared as the letter was read aloud. The Courtfielders were red with wrath.

“ Well,” roared Trumper, “ is that the sort of letter they teach you to write here? You'd learn better manners at a Council-school, I can tell you ! ”

Wharton flushed.

“ Look here, don't put it down to us ! ” he exclaimed. “ It was that fat cad who wrote the letter, and none of us knew anything about it. We shouldn't have allowed him to send it if we'd known.”



As Trumper made a grab at him, Bunter dodged behind Harry Wharton. “ Ow ! Keep off ! ” “ You fat cad ! ” exclaimed Trumper. “ Get from in front of him, Wharton ! I'm going to lick him ! ”

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

Trumper tore the letter into pieces.

"Look here, I don't see anything wrong with that letter," said Bunter. "If a blessed Council-school bounder is coming here to teach me, why, I think——"

Bunter paused to dodge behind Wharton as Trumper made a grab at him.

"Ow! Keep off!"

"You fat cad!"

"Oh, really——"

"Get from in front of him, Wharton. I'm going to lick him!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Bulstrode aggressively. "You can't come here and swank on our ground, you know."

Trumper turned on the Remove bully.

"The fat little rotter isn't worth licking!" he exclaimed. "But if you like to take the matter up for him, I'll lick you instead!"

"Yeth, rather!" said Solly Lazarus. "Lick the thilly ass, Trumpy!"

Bulstrode looked warlike at once. It was not so long ago since he had stood up to Trumper and had been soundly licked. But Bulstrode had heaps of dogged courage, and he was quite ready to fight again.

"Come on, then!" he exclaimed.

Wharton interposed.

"Hold on, Bulstrode——"

"Oh, keep out of it, Wharton! What will you always be shoving your oar in for?" the burly Removite exclaimed angrily.

"Do you want the Head to see you?" said Harry angrily. "Do you think you can fight here almost under his study windows?"

Bulstrode paused.

"Well, there's something in that!" he admitted.

"The somethingfulness is terrific," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "I

also think that the causefulness of the fight is terrifically small."

"I'm going to lick that fat bounder!" said Trumper doggedly. "If you think I'm too big for him, the smallest chap here will take him on. He's bigger than Solly—and Solly will take him in hand."

"Yeth, rather!" said Solly.

"Oh, Bunter can't fight!" said Harry. "He can't fight in glasses, and he can't see without them."

"Well, I'm jolly well going to lick somebody!" roared Trumper. "Do you think I'm jolly well going to be insulted for nothing?"

"Come into the gym.," said Bulstrode.

"I'm ready! I——"

"Stop it!" said Wharton. "If you don't shut up, Bulstrode, you'll fight me instead of Trumper. Bunter has acted in a disgraceful way, and I'm as ashamed of it as anybody could be——"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Anybody who stands up for Bunter now, and takes his part, is as bad as he is," said Harry. "I suppose nobody here will say that letter ought to have been written, or that any decent chap could have written it?"

"Rather not!"

"The notfulness is terrific."

"Well, I don't uphold that letter, of course," said Bulstrode. "But I'm not going to have fellows swanking about here."

"If there's any swanking to be done, Bulstrode is quite equal to it himself," Nugent remarked, and there was a laugh.

"We didn't come here to swank," said Trumper. "But if one of you fellows got a letter like that——"

"We're not Council-school chaps!" said a voice in the crowd, which sounded very like Snoop's.

Trumper turned round with blazing eyes.

"No," he said, "you're not! But if what they say is true, there are some chaps here who go down to the inns in Friardale of a night, and that's a thing we don't do in Courtfield. And if I wrote you a letter of invitation, and said you mustn't come drunk, or with packs of cards in your pockets, how would you like it?"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"Cheese it, you bounder!"

"Chuck them out!"

"Stop that!" said Harry Wharton.

Look here, Bunter has insulted these chaps, and he's such a booby that he can't fight. He'll have to apologise, or take a licking!"

"We're not going to let anybody stalk in here and lick a Greyfriars chap, whatever he's done," said Bulstrode.

"I'll lick him myself, as far as that goes!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"You hear that, Bunter? You'll apologise humbly to these fellows, or you'll take the licking of your life, so you can choose!" exclaimed Wharton.

"I—I—— Oh, really——"

"Take your choice—and quick about it."

Billy Bunter blinked round. But there was no sympathy in any of the faces he blinked at. No one was likely to uphold his action. And Harry Wharton was in a mood few of the fellows cared to cross. His teeth were set, and his brows darkly contracted, and when Wharton had that expression on his face, he was in a dangerous temper.

"I—I—— Of course, I haven't the least objection to apologising," said Bunter. "I—I didn't mean that letter as an insult. I intended it to be delicate and tactful."

Even the Courtfield fellows could

not help grinning at Bunter's idea of delicacy and tact.

"I—I apologise!" went on Bunter. "I'm awfully sorry—sincerely sorry—and I take it all back. Is that all right?"

"Yes," said Trumper, with a snort. "that's all right, you worm! And now look out, you Greyfriars bounders; after this, whenever we meet you, anywhere, there'll be trouble."

"Yeth, rather!"

"Oh," said Bulstrode, "then it may as well begin now! Rush the bounders!"

There was a threatening movement on the part of the Remove. But Harry Wharton stepped in front of the Courtfielders.

"Stop that!" he said curtly. "These chaps will go without being touched. Bunter's to blame all through, and they're not going to be ragged while I can stop it!"

Trumper & Co. turned towards the gates. The juniors looked very unwilling to let them go, but Harry Wharton had his way. Wharton walked with them to the gates.

"Look here," he exclaimed. "I'm sorry this has happened—Bunter is a howling cad, and we're all ashamed of him—I should think you chaps could look over it."

Trumper's face melted a little.

"Well, if you don't stand by him——" he began.

"Of course, we don't," said Harry. "Bunter's a rank outsider—the limit, in fact. He hasn't the faintest idea of decency."

"Well, it's all right!" said Trumper.

"All therene, dear boy!"

"Certainly!" said Grahame. "I suppose it was silly to get ratty about what a worm like that wrote, only——"

"Well, let's shake hands on it," said Harry, cordially.

The Courtfield fellows could not resist that. Wharton's heartiness was infectious.

They shook hands with him in turn, and went down the road from Greyfriars in cheerful spirits.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

### THE ONLY WAY.

"I SAY, you fellows——"

Harry Wharton & Co. were going into the tuckshop after lessons on Friday. It was the day before the day Bunter had fixed for his celebrated bust-up; but the fat junior was no "forrarder."

It began to look as if the bust-up would really never come off at all.

The chums of the Remove looked at Bunter, and walked into the shop. Billy Bunter followed them in at once.

The juniors stopped at the counter, and Mrs. Mimble looked at them all smiles. Mrs. Mimble had more smiles for Harry Wharton than for Bunter. Wharton was a paying customer, Billy Bunter never paid anybody for anything if he could help it. His maxim was apparently that of our old Shakespearian friend—"Base is the slave that pays."

"I say, you fellows——"

No one replied. Harry Wharton & Co. seemed to have made up their minds to ignore Bunter.

Harry Wharton opened his pocket-book, and took out a rustling bank-note. Billy Bunter's eyes almost started from his head at the sight of it. It was a generous Christmas tip sent to Harry by his uncle, Colonel Wharton, and Harry was intending to "blow" it in a feed to the whole Form as a way of celebrating the approaching break-up for the Christmas holidays. It was to be a bust-up, regardless of expense, as Bunter would

have put it, but it was not to be a bust-up for Billy Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was barred.

"I want a really good feed for to-morrow afternoon, Mrs. Mimble," said Harry. "I'm going to order the things now."

"Yes, Master Wharton."

"I'm going to stand a bust-up, you know, regardless of expense," Harry explained, still addressing his remarks to Mrs. Mimble, and taking no notice of Bunter.

"Certainly."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Get out the list, Nugent."

Frank Nugent produced a pencilled list from his pocket.

It was a very long list, and a single blink at it made Bunter's mouth water. The articles mentioned in that list were certainly enough to feed the whole Remove, and a couple of other Removes as well.

Wharton laid the five-pound note on the counter, and Hurree Singh laid a couple of pound notes on it, and Bob Cherry, Nugent and Johnny Bull ten shillings each. Each was contributing to the bust-up according to his means.

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Bunter. "Are you chaps really going to spend all that money on a feed?"

There was no reply. Harry Wharton & Co. seemed to be quite unconscious of Billy Bunter's presence in the tuckshop.

Bunter watched Mrs. Mimble hungrily as she looked over the list. The good dame read out the items, and Bunter almost wept with emotion. There were cold fowls, and ham and tongue, cold beef and game-pies, rabbit-pies, and meat-pies—all sorts and conditions of pies, to say nothing of puddings. There were cakes and biscuits and fruits, fresh fruits and





Billy Bunter watched Mrs. Mimble hungrily as she read out the long list of eatables. "Is that all, Master Wharton?" she asked. "That's all, I think," said Harry. What a feed the Greyfriars Christmas bust-up was going to be. And Bunter wasn't invited!

preserved fruits, and candied fruits, in great variety. There were eatables of all sorts, in fact, galore.

There was no doubt that the Greyfriars Christmas bust-up would be "regardless." Mrs. Mimble opened her eyes in surprise behind her spectacles as she went on with the list. Bunter watched her with his mouth open.

"Is that all, Master Wharton?" asked Mrs. Mimble.

"That's all, I think," said Harry. "We're getting a good many guests here, you know, as well as the Remove chaps—nearly all the Remove; but I think there will be enough to go round."

"Dear me! I should think so."

"We want the lot delivered in the Remove Form-room for teatime tomorrow," said Harry Wharton, "and

they're not to be given to anybody who may come for them."

"I quite understand, Master Wharton."

"There'll be some change out of this cash," said Harry. "You can let me have it when you've made out the bill, Mrs. Mimble."

"Certainly."

"I say, you fellows——"

Harry Wharton & Co. walked out of the shop. They had not spoken a word to the fat junior all the time. Bunter rushed after them excitedly.

"I say, you fellows——"

They walked on.

Bunter grasped Wharton desperately by the coat, and stopped him. Then the captain of the Remove appeared to see him for the first time.

"Hallo, is that you, Bunter?" he said.

"You jolly well know it is!" roared Bunter. "Look here——"

"Well, I'm looking——"

"The lookfulness is terrific."

"Well," said Bunter, in a mollified tone, "it's all right. I want to thank you fellows—to thank you most sincerely."

They stared at him.

"You want to thank us?" echoed Harry Wharton.

"Yes, rather. It's jolly decent of you."

"What is?" demanded Harry.

"Ordering those things for me, for my bust-up," said Bunter, blinking at him. "Of course, you were ordering them for me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

"There's a slight mistake somewhere," said Harry. "We weren't ordering them for you, Bunty; we were ordering them for ourselves."

"Oh, really——"

"Good-bye!"

"I say, you fellows, it was my idea, you know, to stand a bust-up for Christmas," said Billy Bunter, in an aggrieved tone. "I don't think you ought to take the matter out of my hands in this way. Still, I don't mind, so long as I come."

"But you're not coming!"

"What?"

"Porpoises are barred," said Bob Cherry sweetly. "Pigs not admitted! No entrance for porkers! Fat toads need not apply!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"My dear chap, you said that you wouldn't accept the hospitality of No. 1 Study any more," said Wharton. "Stick to it. It's lucky, too, because there isn't any hospitality for you to accept. The fact is we're having the

Cliff House girls, and we can't inflict you upon them."

Bunter glared through his spectacles.

"Well, you blessed rotters——"

"Thank you!"

Bunter stood regarding them with silent wrath and indignation for a minute, and then rushed after them again, and caught them up in the doorway of the School House.

"I say, you fellows, I suppose you're joking?" he exclaimed.

"Not a bit of it!"

"You're going to ask me to the feed?"

"Rats!"

"Well, I shall jolly well come, anyway!"

"You'll be jolly well kicked out if you do!"

"I—I say, you fellows, I want to help you, you know," said Bunter feebly. "What I said the other day was only a—a figure of speech. Look here, I don't really want to come to the feed for my own sake at all, you know. My real object is to help you, and—and wait on the others, and show my friendship for you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, the Courtfield fellows are coming, too," said Harry. "You've pointed out that there's a great difference between you and them, so you can't very well come to the same feed."

"I should be willing to waive that, you know."

"Yes; but they mightn't."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By Jove, I've got a wheeze!" said Bob Cherry. "Bunter says that what he wants to do is to come and look after the other fellows, and help, and so on——"

"Of course!" said Bunter eagerly.

"That—that's just what I've been

looking forward to, you know. I want that more than anything else."

"Good!" said Bob. "And I suppose it's admitted that we can't very well ask the Courtfield chaps to sit down to a feed with a chap like Bunter in the company——"

"Oh, no! They'd feel so insulted."

"Well, then, let Bunter come as a waiter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I'll come as a waiter, or—or——"

"Or anything else, so long as you come!" grinned Nugent. "All serene, then! Bunter can be waiter, and perhaps we may let him finish up some of the grub afterwards—if there's any left over."

"Oh, really, you know——"

"Well, that's settled!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "If you like to come as a waiter, Bunter, you can come. If not, not. Is it a go?"

"Yes," grunted Bunter, "it's a go."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

### BUNTER THE WAITER.

**T**HERE was one yell of laughter in the Lower School when it became generally known that the Remove were standing a Christmas feed and that Billy Bunter was to officiate as a waiter.

Bunter had talked so much about the bust-up, that what was really to happen was screamingly funny. After so many extensive plans for bust-ups regardless of expense, to officiate as a waiter at somebody else's bust-up was a fall for the fat junior.

But Bunter did not seem to care, so long as he got to the feed somehow.

Wharton's invitations were promptly sent out, and were couched a little more tactfully than Bunter's.

The Cliff House girls promised to come, and so did Trumper & Co., of Courtfield Council School. All the Remove fellows who were asked agreed willingly enough, and those who weren't asked declared that they weren't going to stand on ceremony with old Wharton, and that they should come all the same.

Upper Fourth fellows heard of it, and condescendingly remarked that they would drop in, to which some of the Removites retorted that if they did they would very promptly be dropped out again. Hobson, of the Shell, told Wharton that he was coming, and Wharton promised to have his football-boots on ready, at which Hobson smiled in a sickly way and dropped the subject. Even Coker—the great Coker—of the Fifth, mentioned to Harry that he would be glad to come to the Remove Form-room on Saturday afternoon. And Wharton heartily replied that he had no doubt of it, and he had no doubt that Coker would be still more glad to get out of the Form-room again. And Coker gave up the idea of coming.

When, after school on Saturday, Mrs. Mible's supplies were delivered in the Form-room the juniors' eyes opened at the extent of them.

There was a powdery snow falling when the fellows from Courtfield arrived, tramping up the lane in their overcoats. They were given a hearty welcome. Even fellows who were inclined to indulge in a snobbish sniff or two felt that they could not do otherwise than be civil to Wharton's guests when they themselves were at the feed.

Trumper & Co. had nothing to complain of in the way of lack of courtesy. In fact, Solly remarked, with great satisfaction, that it was "all therene."

"Look here," said Trumper, tap-

ping Wharton on the arm in the Form-room, "you said that Bunter wasn't coming; but—but if you're leaving him out on our account, don't do it. We don't mind him."

"It's all therene!" assured Solly.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It's jolly decent of you to say so," he said; "but it's too late now. He can't come to the feed."

"Why not?"

"He's engaged as waiter."

"As—as what?"

"Waiter!"

The Courtfield fellows roared.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter rolled into the Form-room.

Ever since the compact had been made Billy Bunter had tried to squirm out of it, and to get an assurance that he would be tolerated at the feed in the capacity of guest. He had failed. It was made quite clear that he could come as a waiter, or not at all; and so he had kept to the agreement.

He blinked at the juniors through his spectacles, and a roar of laughter greeted him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here's Bunter!"

"Here's the waiter!"

"Waiter! Waiter!"

"Garçon! Garçon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Now, then, none of your beastly familiarity, waiter!" exclaimed Nugent. "What the dooce do you mean by addressing us as 'fellows'? Kindly remember that there's a social distinction between you and Master Trumper."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you know, I jolly well don't look like a real waiter!" roared the fat junior.

Bob Cherry looked at him critically.

"No, you don't," he agreed; "your figure's not good enough."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"And your manners are too crude."

"Look here——"

"Silence, waiter! Get the things out for the feed, and lay the cloths," said Harry Wharton. "Some of you fellows keep an eye on that waiter. I had him without a character, and he may try to pinch some of the grub."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, I'll watch him!" said Ogilvy. "He won't pinch any grub while I've got my eye on him."

"Oh, really, Ogilvy——"

"Mister Ogilvy, please, you cheeky low-class bouncer!"

"Get on with your work, waiter. There's plenty to do."

Bunter, simmering with rage and indignation, was set to work. There was, indeed, plenty to do, and the Removites made him do it. And sharp eyes saw to it that he did not purloin any of the eatables he handled in the course of his duty. The early dusk was closing in over the Close and the lights were going in the Form-room, and a huge fire blazed and roared away in the grate. Two or three juniors were on the look-out for the girls from Cliff House, and presently there was a shout:

"Here's Marjorie!"

And the chums of the Remove rushed to greet the guest of honour.

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER THE BUST-UP!

MARJORIE HAZELDENE came in with her pretty face pink and her eyes dancing.

Harry Wharton & Co. received the Cliff House girls with enthusiasm. Miss Clara and Wilhemina and Grace were with Marjorie, and all of them

looked cheerful and bright. They had smiles for everybody, Trumper & Co. getting as many as anybody else. Indeed, Miss Clara seemed to be taken with Trumper's rugged, good-natured ways that she showed a disposition to allow him to become her cavalier for the afternoon—a position which half the fellows there would gladly have taken up.

The girls were given seats near the fire, and the tables—made of boards laid across desks, and covered with cloths lent by Mrs. Mimble—were already groaning, as the novelists say, under the viands. Round the walls of the room were coloured paper chains, balloons and bunches of holly, upon which the light sparkled and

gleamed. Marjorie & Co. looked round in great admiration. The juniors had certainly done very well in the way of adornment, considering, as Miss Clara remarked, that they had done it without the assistance of girls.

As the seats were taken, there was an uproar from the improvised side-board, where Bunter, the waiter, was in charge of the provisions not yet set out on the tables.

"The thafe of the world!" rang out the indignant voice of Micky Desmond—"the unholy thafe!"

"What's the matter there?"

"It's the waither."

"Oh, that fellow Bunter again! What has he been doing?"



As Alonzo Todd helped Bunter to place the pie on the table, his fingers slipped on the dish. "Dear me!" he gasped. "Look out!" But the warning came too late. The pie crashed down on the table and the contents shot fairly over Skinner and Bulstrode. "Yow! Yarough!" they roared.

"Faith, and I caught him eating a mince tart!"

There was a roar of laughter.

"Kick him out!" called out Bulstrode.

"I—I say, you fellows, I won't eat any more!" gasped Billy Bunter. "I—I felt that I ought to have a snack, you know, to keep up my strength."

"Silence, waiter!"

"Oh, really——"

"Well, we'll give you another chance," said Harry Wharton severely. "But, mind nothing of that sort occurs again, waiter."

"Oh, really——"

"Silence!"

Billy Bunter was silenced, but the other fellows were making noise enough. There was a cheery steam of tea and coffee, and at the same time corks were popping, and ginger beer and lemonade flowed in abundance.

The only person who wasn't quite happy was William George Bunter.

Bunter was suffering the woes of Tantalus. He was in the midst of plenty, which he could not touch.

The chums of the Remove meant to let him have a feed when the rest were finished; but Bunter was not sure of it, and the doubt was quite sufficient to keep him on tenterhooks all the time.

And he was kept busy, too.

Through all the laughter and talking there was a continual cry:

"Waiter! Waiter!"

"Where's that blessed waiter?"

"Wharton, I'm not satisfied with that man of yours."

"I conthider him a thilly ass."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Bunter ran, and rushed to and fro till his fat face was steaming with perspiration, and his fat legs seemed to bend under him. Only

Alonzo Todd took pity upon him. As Bunter carried up a big pie in a dish from the sideboard, Alonzo rose to help him. There was a shout:

"Sit down, Todd!"

"Let that waiter alone!"

"My dear fellows, my Uncle Benjamin——"

"Order!" yelled Micky Desmond. "Silence for Todd's Uncle Benjamin."

"My dear Desmond, my Uncle Benjamin always impressed upon me to be useful and obliging. Although I candidly acknowledge that the incessant reprehensible actions of Bunter have fully merited the punishment meted out to him, yet, on the other hand, it appears to me that it would only be considerate, and, according to the precepts of my Uncle Benjamin, to accord him a slight assistance in dealing with the heavier portion of his multifarious duties."

"How does he do it?" said Bob Cherry, in great admiration. "Why, he beats a gramophone hollow."

"Go it, Todd! Go on talking."

But even Todd had done talking. He was assisting Bunter. He had hold of one end of the pie, and was assisting Bunter to place it on the table, reaching over the shoulders of Stott and Skinner. It was unfortunate that Alonzo's best-intended efforts ended in disaster. Somehow, his hand slipped on the dish—perhaps because it was hot.

"Dear me!" he gasped. "Look out!"

"The look-outfulness is terrific."

But the warning was too late.

The pie had crashed down, and the dish broke on the edge of the table, and the contents shot fairly over Skinner and Bulstrode. Several other fellows were splashed, but Skinner and Bulstrode were simply smothered.

"Yow!" roared Bulstrode, jump-

ing up. "I'll—I'll kill that duffer!"

"The waiter's to blame!" shouted Ogilvy. "Kick the waiter out. Wharton—Bulstrode's not satisfied with the man you've engaged to wait."

"Oh, dear!" gasped Alonzo. "I'm sorry—so sorry!"

Bulstrode seized hold of Bunter. The fat junior yelled, and two or three fellows dragged the infuriated Bulstrode off.

"Hang it all, not with the girls here," said Morgan. "Behave yourself, Bulstrode."

"Look at what he's done."

"Well, go and change."

Bulstrode coloured under the glance of Marjorie. He stamped from the room to change his clothes, snorting with wrath, and Skinner followed him.

"Be more careful, please, waiter," said Wharton. "Todd, don't you help him again."

"I'm so sorry."

"Yes, I dare say you are, but that won't mend the pie. Sit down."

"But my Uncle Benjamin——"

"Dry up!"

"Always impressed upon me——"

"Cheese it!"

"Always to be obliging and——  
Ooch!"

A jam-tart caught Alonzo in the mouth, and his remarks ceased quite suddenly. Uncle Benjamin was not mentioned again.

A gleam had come into Bunter's eyes, as if a new thought had dawned upon him. Perhaps the accident with Bulstrode, and his escape from punishment because the girls were present, had put it into his mind.

The cries for the waiter were still as incessant as ever. Bunter was being kept very busy.

"Ginger-pop here, waiter!" shouted Russell. "Open it, you chump!"

Pop!

Russell gave a roar as the cork smote him behind the ear, and the ginger-beer bubbled out and poured down the back of his neck. He jumped up, kicking his chair over backwards, and it caught Bunter on the shins and sent him staggering.

The fat junior fell with a bump, and the infuriated Russell seized a water-jug and emptied it over him, and added jam-tarts and fruit-pies with a reckless hand.

"Order!" roared the juniors.

But Russell was too wrathful to listen. Bunter yelled and squirmed.

"Hold on!" he shrieked. "It was an accident. I won't do it again. Yow! It was an accident, and——  
Yow! Gerrooh!"

"There!" panted Russell. "I'll guarantee you won't do it again now."

Bunter didn't. He sat on the floor, a gasping and sticky mass, and it was a long time before he moved.

By the time Billy Bunter had recovered the feast was over, the juniors waiting upon themselves and upon the girls for the rest of the time. Then Wharton proposed an adjournment to the drawing-room, a proposal that caused some surprise, till it turned out that the drawing-room was another Form class-room, which the chums had obtained permission to use for a couple of hours in the evening.

The Cliff House girls and the Court-field fellows and the whole Remove crowded into the next room, where Trotter had kept a bright fire blazing, and where the walls were decorated with holly and mistletoe in a really charming way. Mr. Quelch's piano had been lent for the occasion, and soon the cheerful strains of music were heard, mingled with voices in song. The girls sang, and the juniors sang, and there was part singing, and

a comic dance by Micky Desmond, the fun waxed fast and furious. Solly Lazarus brought down the house with a song delivered in his peculiar accents, and all too soon the time came for the Cliff House girls to depart.

Then there was a putting on of coats and scarves, and Harry Wharton & Co., and Trumper and his friends, walked home with Marjorie to Cliff House.

"It's been an awfully jolly time," said Miss Clara, when they parted at the gate. "Hasn't it, Marjorie?"

"Very jolly!" said Marjorie. "Thank you so much!"

Trumper & Co. and the Greyfriars juniors walked back to Greyfriars in the best of spirits, and on the best possible terms. They parted at the gates of the school, Trumper & Co. going on to Courtfield.

Harry Wharton looked in at the Remove Form-room when he returned. A light was still burning there, and there was a sound of a knife and fork upon a plate.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "He's still at it!"

"Bunter! Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked up at them through his spectacles. The fat junior was busy. He had not troubled to change or clean down after his little affair with Russell. With his face smeared with jam, his hair matted with ginger-beer, the fat junior sat at the table, very busy. Puddings and pies, eatables of all sorts, were going the same way. Billy Bunter just glanced up at the juniors, and then dropped his eyes upon his plate again. He did not speak. He was too busy for words.

Billy Bunter was having his bust-up, after all!

THE END

## Taking The Risk

### *A Thrilling Incident in a Hard-fought Motor Race.*

THROUGH a windscreen white with dust, gathered during lap after lap of the Grand Prix de l'Ouest, the great French road-race, the driver of the green British car peered along the road to where a rival racer, a dancing blurr of red, thundered ahead. Only one more bend now, only that one red car to pass, and then to the finish—and victory!

The red Italian machine swung over to the right, giving room to pass, and, yard by yard, the gap between the two cars closed. They were nose to tail, level—and then apart again, with the British car ahead.

Now for the bend! A stab on the foot-brake, a skitter of tyres on the road, and then into the curve!

It was a desperate piece of driving. The green car was travelling much too fast for normal cornering, but the Britisher knew the risk had to be taken if he was to hold his lead.

The green car shuddered. And then the straining tyres struck a pool of oil on the road and, with a screech, the car shot sideways into the sand-bags!

It was the Italian's chance, and he took it! As the green racer reared up, he pulled his car to the inside of the bend. Fragments flew from the sand-bags as the green car hurtled back on to the road. Then, neck and neck, the rival racers shot from the bend.

On full throttle, they stormed for the finishing line; but it was the Britisher who gained, and the green car was a clear length ahead as the finish was reached. He had taken the risk—and he had won through!





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### TAKING THE RISK!

*Specially painted by H. Radcliffe Wilson*

224 An Alfa-Romeo racer cuts inside a British car on the bend, in the Grand Prix de l'Ouest.