

BILLY BUNTER'S COOKERY CLASS

By FRANK RICHARDS

I.

"COURTFIELD double-six, please!" Billy Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove, halted in the Close, beneath the Head's study window, and pricked up his ears.

Dr. Locke was speaking on the telephone, and as his window was open, the sound of his voice came distinctly to Billy Bunter's ears. "Courtfield double-six," mused the fat junior. "That's the Elysian Café. Wonder why the Head's ringing them up?"

It was a little habit of Billy Bunter's to listen to conversations which were not intended for his ears. He picked up a deal of information in this way, and then passed it on, in a greatly exaggerated form, to his school-fellows, who generally bumped him for his pains. It would have gone hard with the Owl of the Remove had the Head stepped to his window and looked out.

But Dr. Locke was too engrossed on the telephone to keep a look-out for possible eavesdroppers.

"Are you there? Is that the Elysian Café, Courtfield? I wish to speak to the proprietor. Oh, you are the proprietor? I am Dr. Locke, of Greyfriars. Something of a calamity has occurred here, and I desire your assistance."

"My hat!" murmured Billy Bunter.

And he edged closer to the window.

"An epidemic of influenza has broken out among my kitchen staff," continued the Head. "The cook and her assistants are too ill to be able to pursue their duties. It is appalling. I am well-nigh distracted! What is that? You say you see no reason for my distraction? My dear man, it is now twelve o'clock. In an hour's time three hundred hungry boys will flock into the dining-hall. And there is nothing cooked or prepared for them—nothing!"

There was a pause.

Billy Bunter's face wore a woebegone look. No dinner for Greyfriars! It was a tragedy,

especially to the fat junior whose motto was, "Eat not to live, but live to eat."

The Head went on talking to the proprietor of the Elysian Café.

"I have called you up to ask if you could spare me the services of one of your chefs," he said. "You are having rather a slack time just now, and if one of your chefs is standing idle— What do you say? You have a good man whom you can spare for a few days? Splendid! I trust he is an Englishman? He is? Excellent! Send him to Greyfriars post haste, will you? I am afraid this is very short notice, but doubtless he will be able to serve up some sort of a meal. What is the chef's name? Robinson? Very well. Kindly ask him to report to me on his arrival."

The Head rang off, and Billy Bunter rolled away, with a very thoughtful expression on his face.

"Fancy the cooks being down with the 'flu!" he muttered. "It puts the Head in rather a fix. But why didn't he send for me? He knows what a jolly good cook I am. It wouldn't take me long to dish up three hundred dinners, provided I had about a dozen fellows under my command to do all the hack work, such as peeling potatoes and shelling peas."

Billy Bunter was annoyed to think that Dr. Locke had overlooked him.

As a culinary expert, the fat junior stood supreme. What he didn't know about cooking wasn't worth knowing.

And yet the Head had ignored Bunter's existence, and sent for a common or garden chef called Robinson.

"I dare say the fellow would poison the whole school if he turned up," murmured Billy Bunter. "But he's not going to turn up. I'll see to that."

The fat junior rolled out of gates, and proceeded in the direction of Courtfield.

Before he had gone very far, he encountered



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BILLY BUNTER TAKES COMMAND IN THE KITCHEN!

The Greyfriars Juniors prove that too many cooks spoil the broth!

a young man in a hurry. Bunter planted himself in the man's path.

"I say, Robinson——"

The man gave a start.

"How did you know my name?" he demanded.

"I happened to hear the Head making arrangements for you to come to Greyfriars," said Billy Bunter. "And my advice to you is—keep off the grass!"

"Why?"

Bunter lowered his voice and spoke confidentially.

"You'll be let down badly if you go to Greyfriars," he said. "The Head isn't going to study you a little bit. You'll have to cook for seven hundred fellows——"

"My boss said three hundred——"

"That was a slip of the tongue. There are seven hundred of us at Greyfriars, and in the ordinary way it takes a dozen cooks to look after the meals. Well, the whole of the kitchen staff's down with 'flu, and you'll have to run the entire show yourself—if you're ass enough to go. Even if you work day and night without stopping, you won't be able to keep pace with the job. The meals will be served badly or late—or both—and the fellows will mob you."

Mr. Robinson looked impressed. He was a dapper, inoffensive little man, and a keen worker. But the prospect which Billy Bunter conjured up was anything but pleasant.

"I also happen to know that the Head doesn't intend to pay you a penny," Bunter went on.

"What!"

"Ah, I knew that would rouse you! The Head's going to pay for your services, of course, but as far as you yourself are concerned you won't get a farthing."

"You're sure of that?" said Mr. Robinson.

"Positive!"

"Then I'm off! I'm not going to work like a galley-slave for nothing!"

So saying, the chef turned on his heel, and started to walk back to Courtfield.

Billy Bunter chuckled as he retraced his steps to Greyfriars.

"I've got that merchant out of the way, anyhow," he chortled. "The Head will have to apply for my services, after all. In a crisis

of this sort, he simply can't do without me!" On his return to the school the fat junior went straight to the kitchen.

He found the place deserted.

There were plenty of foodstuffs on view, but they were in a raw and uncooked state.

Billy Bunter soon got busy.

He peeled a dozen potatoes, and put them in a saucepan, which he placed on the stove. Then he washed and dissected a cabbage, and put that in a saucepan also. After which, he calmly proceeded to fry himself a steak.

Whatever happened to the rest of the Greyfriars fellows, Billy Bunter didn't mean to miss his dinner!

Nobody came near the kitchen whilst the fat junior was thus engaged.

Bunter made an excellent dinner. Then he proceeded to fry another steak. He waited until it was done to perfection; then he served it up on a plate with potatoes and cabbage.

"I'll take this along to old Prout," he muttered. "He'll be awfully bucked!"

The next moment, Billy Bunter threaded his way through the crowded corridor, carrying a laden tray.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What's the little game, Bunter?"

"This is Prout's dinner," explained Bunter. "I got it ready myself."

"But—but what——?"

"The kitchen staff's down with 'flu.'"

"My hat!"

Billy Bunter passed on, leaving his school-fellows in a state of wonder.

Straight to Mr. Prout's study he went. The door was slightly ajar, and he kicked it open, and entered.

The master of the Fifth looked up in astonishment.

"Bless my soul! Bunter! What does this mean?"

"Your dinner, sir," said the fat junior, in the most polished manner of a highly-trained butler.

He set the tray down on the table, and Mr. Prout gasped.

"Rather than see you go without your dinner, sir, I got it ready myself," said Bunter. "I hope you'll like it, sir. The steak's done to a turn."

Mr. Prout was aware of the crisis which had arisen, and he had despaired of getting any dinner. To tell the truth, he was feeling very hungry, and the sight and smell of the steak appealed to him strongly.

"This is very good of you, Bunter," he said, picking up the knife and fork. "Though I fail to see why I should be singled out for special consideration."

"You're my favourite master, sir," said Bunter promptly. "You're not a beastly tyrant, like some masters I could name——"

"Hush, Bunter! You must not speak in that way," mumbled Mr. Prout, who had already started operations on his dinner. "Dear me, this steak is good—very good, indeed!"

Billy Bunter grinned.

"I'm a topping cook, sir," he said modestly.

"M-m-m-m!" mumbled Mr. Prout, by way of endorsing this statement.

The fat junior withdrew.

It was nearly one o'clock by this time, and all roads led to the dining-hall.

But there was a shock for the Greyfriars fellows when they got there. No steaming joints, or baked meat pies, greeted their hungry glances.

"Where's the grub?" growled Bolsover major. "We can't eat plates and knives and forks!"

"Guess a cannibal like you could eat anything!" said Fisher T. Fish, the Yankee junior.

Bolsover scowled.

"If you're not careful, I'll start on fried Fish!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fellows waited with growing impatience for dinner to arrive. But there was no sign of it.

There was a stamping of feet, and a loud murmur of protest—a murmur which rapidly swelled into a roar.

"Buck up!"

"Dinner this way!"

"What's happened to the merry cooks?"

The main door of the dining-hall opened, and Dr. Locke entered. He was looking very worried and agitated.

"I must apologise to you, my boys," he

began, "for the fact that dinner has not yet been served. The cook and her assistants have fallen victims to the influenza epidemic, and the chef whom I arranged to engage from Courtfield has not arrived. In the circumstances, I hardly know what course to take."

"There aren't any 'courses' to take at all—not even soup!" grumbled Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Either you must be content to make a frugal meal of bread-and-butter, my boys," continued the Head, "or dinner must be postponed for an hour or more. Which do you prefer?"

It was a case of two evils, and the majority of the fellows voted for the postponement.

"Very well," said the Head. "I will take steps to have a hot dinner prepared as soon as possible, and the gong shall be sounded when it is ready."

A moment later the hungry and dissatisfied crowd streamed out of the hall, wondering why the cooks could not have arranged to contract influenza one at a time, instead of all together.

II.

"I HAVE solved the problem, sir!" said Mr. Prout.

Dr. Locke looked doubtful.

"I repeat, Bunter of the Remove is an expert cook," said the master of the Fifth. "He has already prepared me a most tasty and satisfying meal. If he were given the necessary assistance, I have no doubt that he could prepare dinner for the whole school."

"But, my dear Prout, it is unheard-of that a junior boy should have charge of the cooking arrangements!"

"It is a novel course to take, I grant you," said Mr. Prout. "But it is the only course possible. The man Robinson has not arrived, and there are three hundred mouths waiting to be fed. Something will have to be done at once, or the boys will break out in open revolt!"

"Bless my soul!"

"Hunger breeds desperation," said Mr. Prout. "You cannot allow the whole school to remain unfed. There are ample supplies of meat and vegetables in the kitchen, and if only you will set Bunter to work——"

Gradually the master of the Fifth won the Head over.

Billy Bunter was sent for, and the Head, though he little relished doing so, solicited the fat junior's help.

"Mr. Prout assures me, Bunter," he said, "that the provision of dinner for the whole school is a task which is not beyond your powers."

"No task is beyond my powers, sir!" said Billy Bunter, with a smirk. "You've only to say the word, and I'll jolly soon have dinner served up."

"Very well, Bunter. I leave it to you to select a number of assistants, and to prepare a suitable meal with all the skill and expedition of which you are capable. You may start at once."

Billy Bunter promptly went in search of recruits. He came upon a crowd of Removites in the Close, and rolled up to them.

"I say, you fellows! The Head's implored me, on bended cheeks, and with the tears streaming down his knees—I—I mean——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's entreated me to cook the dinner for the whole school, and I've agreed!" said Bunter.

"My hat!"

"I shall be able to kill two birds with one stone," Bunter went on. "I shall see to the dinner, and hold a cookery class at the same time. Anybody who wants to learn the art of cooking is advised to rally round at once. I can have as many helpers as I like."

"I'm game," said Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"Same here!" said other members of the Famous Five.

"Count me in, Porpoise," said Peter Todd.

"Guess I'm willing," said Fisher T. Fish.

"I'm hot-stuff at cooking. Give me a joint of meat and a few vegetables, and——"

"You'll make a hash of it?" suggested Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Me hendee a handee with cooking!" said Wun Lung eagerly.

"Come on, then!" said Billy Bunter.

"There's no time to be lost!"

A few moments later the Greyfriars kitchen presented a very animated appearance. At

least a dozen fellows had volunteered their services—more for the fun of the thing than from a desire to learn cooking under Billy Bunter's tuition.

The fat junior donned a white chef's garb over his Etons, and started rapping out orders:

"Now, then, Wharton, start peeling those spuds! Give him a hand, Nugent. I haven't got a penknife, but I expect somebody will oblige! Shell those peas, Toddy! Grease the frying-pans, Inky!"

"Please, sir, what can I do for you, sir?" asked Bob Cherry humbly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going to make some apple-turnovers, to follow the first course," said Bunter. "You can get the necessary ingredients ready. It'll be rather a long job, but——"

"Rats! I can make an apple-turnover in a second!" said Bob Cherry.

"Don't be a silly ass!"

"Certainly not!" said Bob. "I don't want to poach on your preserves!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How can you make an apple-turnover in a second?" demanded Bunter.

"Like this!" was the reply.

Whereupon Bob Cherry picked up an apple, and turned it over.

"There you are!" he said triumphantly.

"I've made an apple turn over!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If I have any more of your silly rot, Cherry, I'll brain you with the rolling-pin!" said Bunter wrathfully.

The fat junior then turned his attention to the joints. He placed them in the ovens, and instructed Bulstrode to keep an eye on them.

"Whatever you do, don't let 'em burn, like Oliver Cromwell when he burnt the steaks!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The task of preparing the dinner went on merrily.

Billy Bunter laid down the law the whole time, saying how this should be done, and how that should be done. The fat junior was in his element. He was in a position of power and responsibility, for upon him would depend the success or failure of the school's dinner.

That it would prove an unqualified success

Bunter had no doubt. His schoolfellows, however, were not quite so optimistic.

Bob Cherry produced some flour, some chopped suet, and a basin of water. Then he peeled a number of apples, and handed them round to his chums, who ate while they worked.

Billy Bunter mixed the flour and suet into a dough, and then picked up the rolling-pin. At that precise moment Peter Todd was crossing the kitchen, balancing a huge pyramid of plates.

Billy Bunter brandished the rolling-pin as if it were a cudgel, and accidentally smote Peter Todd on the top of the head.

"Yarooooh!"

Crash!!!

There was a wild yell of anguish from Peter, followed by a deafening series of crashes as the plates were dashed to smithereens on the stone floor.

"Todd, you clumsy ass!" shouted Bunter.

"Wow! It isn't me that's clumsy! It's you—you chopheaded chump! You jolly nearly fractured my skull!"

"It couldn't possibly affect your brain, that's one blessing," said Squiff. "Best of having a napper full of sawdust!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order, please!" said Harry Wharton. "Or to-day's dinner won't be ready till Tuesday week!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter rolled out the dough; then he looked round for the apples. But he looked in vain.

"I say, you fellows, what's become of the apples?" he demanded.

"The Cherry tempted me, and I did eat," said Nugent, remorsefully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cherry, you villain, how can I make apple turnovers without the apples? It's rotten!"

"Rotten to the core!" agreed Bob.

"I votefully suggest that we have Cherry-turnovers," said Hurree Singh.

"Hear, hear!" said Skinner. "But we shall have to stone him first!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter looked round for a substitute for the apples. And at that moment Wun Lung, who had been absent for some time,

came into the kitchen, carrying a dead rat by its tail.

Bunter backed away in alarm.

"Ugh! Take that beastly thing away!" he gasped.

"Lat-pie velly nice," said Wun Lung. "We eattee lat-pie in my native countlee."

"Well, we're not going to eat it here. This is a civilised place."

Wun Lung looked disappointed.

"Me skinee the lat, and chopee him up," he suggested.

"Groo!"

"Won't you lettee me make lat-pie?"

"Rats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nobody seemed to fancy such a novel but gruesome dish as rat-pie. And Wun Lung was obliged to take the rat away, and feed it to the gardener's dog.

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter unearthed a pot of strawberry jam, which he used in place of the apples.

"How are the joints going on, Bulstrode?" inquired the fat junior.

"Eh?" Bulstrode looked up with a start from the copy of "The Boy's Friend" that he had been reading. "Did you speak, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter lifted his nose in the air, and sniffed.

"There's something burning!" he said.

"Pr'aps it's the fire?" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter made a hurried dash for the oven. He seized the handle, and then leapt in the air with a yell like a dervish. The handle was red-hot.

"Ow-ow-ow! Gimme a dishcloth, somebody."

Johnny Bull handed over a cloth, and Bunter inspected the joints. They were burnt almost to cinders!

"Bulstrode, you chump!" yelled the fat junior. "You've done just what Nelson did—or was it William Rufus? You've let the beastly things burn!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"It's a burning shame!" said Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked wrathfully at his hilarious assistants.

"This is what comes of my trying to teach you cooking!" he roared. "I'm fed-up with you! I'll sack the lot! Get out!"

Sobbing with merriment, the juniors staggered out of the kitchen. They weren't sorry to go, for the atmosphere was fairly stifling.

Half an hour later, the thunderous boom of the dinner-gong sounded through the building, and the three hundred ravenous fellows surged into the dining-hall.

No words could describe that dinner. It beggared description.

The first course was advertised as roast beef, potatoes, and peas. But the fellows left it severely alone. The meat was burnt beyond recognition; the potatoes seemed to have got mixed up with a salt-mine; and the peas were as hard as bullets.

The second course consisted of jam-turnover. The jam was all right, but the turnover was all wrong.

Skinner had turned out the gas when Billy Bunter was not looking, with the result that the pastry was nothing more than dough. It would have been courting sudden death to have attempted to eat it.

The third course was the only eatable one. It consisted of bread-and-butter and cheese. The Greyfriars fellows ate it with a very bad grace, and immediately after the meal they

looked round for Billy Bunter to mob him. But Bunter was nowhere to be found. As a matter of fact, he had been summoned to the Head's study.

Dr. Locke's brow was like thunder as he addressed the fat junior.

"I have just discovered, Bunter, that you have acted abominably! You intercepted Mr. Robinson, the chef whom I had engaged, and you told him that it would be to his disadvantage to come here."

"Oh, really, sir, I——"

"You acted outrageously, and deprived the whole school of its dinner!"

"But—but they've just had dinner, sir!" said Bunter. "It was a tremendous success from start to finish. It—it fairly melted in the mouth, sir!"

"Silence, wretched boy! You will kindly place yourself in a convenient position to receive castigation!"

So saying, the Head picked up a cane, and proceeded to wield it with great vigour.

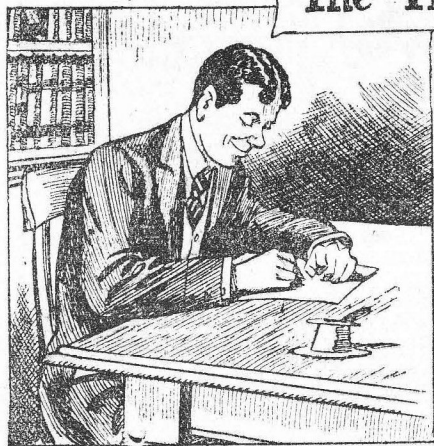
Billy Bunter acknowledged the receipt of each cut by a yell which could be heard all over Greyfriars. He was being taught that the way of the transgressor—and the amateur cook—is hard!

Next day Greyfriars had its dinner as usual. Mr. Robinson proved himself to be a genius at his job, and there were no complaints—save from Billy Bunter, who was refused a fifth helping of steak and kidney pudding.



THE END

The Modern Romeo!



: : A COMEDY IN VERSE : :

Horace Coker's Invitation

FARE FILLIS, of the marbel brow,
I wunder what you're doing now?
With yards of nitting on yore knee,
You dowtless sit and dreem—of ME!

And wile you nitt yore bruther's sox,
No dowt you think, with plezzant shox,
Of that most blissfool eve when, ah!
I took you to the sinnyma!

Deer Fillis, will you come agane
On Tewsdays (if it duzzent rane?).
I love to sit neer you, and chuckle
At Charlie Chaplin, and Arbuckle!

And when we've seen the pickchers through
I'll rambel down the lanes with you,
And tell you what is in my hart
(I'm used to playing Romeo's part!).

One last rekwest, deer girl (don't laugh!),
Please send yore latest fotygraph.
I'll guard it with the studdy poker—
Not $\frac{1}{2}$!—Yores evver, HORACE COKER.

Phyllis Howell's Reply

YOUR verses just to hand, dear Coker;
You are a most amazing joker!
I've more important things to do
Than sit and knit—and dream of YOU!

Yes, I remember that great "treat,"
You led me to a threepenny seat.
We saw the programme through six times;
The films were awful—like your rhymes!

I must decline your invitation
Without the slightest hesitation.
The Weather Clerk, to my delight,
Has promised rain for Tuesday night!

It really gives me quite a start
To know there's something in your heart.
However, it is pretty plain
There can be nothing in your *brain*!

I have no photograph to spare,
But I enclose a lock of hair.
Please guard it with a spade, or trowel
(It's Bessie Bunter's!) — PHYLLIS
HOWELL.