

TURKEY'S GUEST



by
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I

"Oh, haddocks!"

James Smyth Tuck, of the Fourth Form at Carcroft, uttered that ejaculation.

Turkey looked troubled.

He was standing in the Burrow—the junior day-room at Carcroft—going through a performance that caused a dozen other fellows to look at him with grinning faces.

Turkey was shoving one sticky hand after the other into various pockets, as if in search of something. Every pocket that Turkey possessed was explored, twice or thrice: and every time, Turkey's fat and sticky hand came out empty.

The Carcroft juniors who were watching Turkey Tuck's performance did not need telling of what he was in search of. Turkey was exploring those dusty and sticky recesses in search of coin of the realm—in the delusive hope of discovering something in the nature of legal tender, which he might have overlooked.

And the result was nil.

"Oh, haddocks!" repeated Turkey, "Not a bob! Not a tanner! Not a brown! And my visitor coming this afternoon! I say, V.C.—"

"Ask next door!" said Vane-Carter.

"I say, Drake—"

"Ask next door but one!" said Bob Drake.

"I say, Compton——"

"Ask next door but two!" said Harry Compton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you chaps," said Turkey, persuasively, "This is a special case. I've got a relation coming to see me this afternoon, and I simply must stand him tea in the study. He's coming a jolly long way—from Greyfriars, in Kent. It's the first time he's come over to see me, too. There's such a thing as hospitality, you know. You could lend me a quid if you liked, V.C."

"Only I don't happen to like!"

"Some of you fellows might play up," said Turkey, reproachfully. "Pretty thick if I have to walk my Cousin Bunter into hall for dish-water and door-steps. It's rather letting the school down, you know. The fact is, that chap Bunter has a pretty good appetite——"

"Runs in the family, what?" asked Bob Drake.

"I only had his letter this morning, or I'd have written home," said Turkey. "As the matter stands, I'm just stony. I say, you wouldn't like a chap to go back to Greyfriars and say that Carcroft couldn't stand him a tea. I expect him along in about an hour. He'll be hungry after coming all that way. Look here, you chaps, rally round, I'd like to stand him rather a spread."

"One word for your relation, and two for yourself, what?" asked Vane-Carter, "You won't leave much for Punter—did you say his name was Punter?"

"Bunter," said Turkey, "Billy Bunter—cousin of mine. Rather like me, except that he's not very good-looking——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"You fellows don't want a Greyfriars man to think we're inhospitable," urged Turkey, "Credit of the school, and all that. I could do it on a pound. I say, Lizard, old chap——"

"Oh, dear!" said Lord Talboys.

"I say, Compton——"

Harry Compton laughed. He was not insensible to Turkey's appeal. If a man was coming all the way from Greyfriars to visit Carcroft, there was such a thing as hospitality. It was very probable that Turkey was putting in one word for Bunter and two for himself, as Vane-Carter suggested: nevertheless, it was not fitting for a guest to be sent empty away!

"Play up, you fellows," said the captain of the Fourth, "We must see Turkey through this—can't let a Greyfriars man think that Carcroft can't cough up a spread. Take round the hat, Turkey."

"What-ho!" said Turkey, eagerly.

A fat, sticky, grubby paw answered the purpose of a hat. Turkey took it round. Harry Compton started the ball rolling with a half-crown: Bob Drake and Dick Lee added a shilling each. Lord Talboys contributed five shillings: and Vane-Carter, not to be outdone, added three half-crowns to his lordship's two. Drummond, Scott, and Carr added a shilling each.

Turkey's gooseberry eyes popped in his tomato countenance with satisfaction, as he made the collection.

"What about you, Levett?" he asked.

"Nothing!" answered Levett.

"You, Leath——?"

"Same as Levett!" grinned Leath.

"I say, Babbers——?"

"Here's a tanner," said Babbie.

"And here's another," said Licke.

Turkey counted up the wealth in his fat paw, with a beaming fat face. There was a total of twenty-one shillings.

"Good!" said Turkey, "Thanks all round! Jolly good of you to put up seven-and-six V.C."

"O.K." said Vane-Carter.

"Like to make it a level ten bob?" suggested Turkey.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fat bloater——!"

"Well, you needn't call a fellow names because you're close about a measly half-crown, V.C.——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors, quite entertained by the expression on Dudley Vane-Carter's face.

"I say, Lizard——"

"No; don't say anything to me, Turkey," said Lord Talboys.

"Eh! Why not?"

"Because I shall kick you, if you do."

"Well, I mean to say, if you'd like to put up as much as V.C.——. Yaroooh!" roared Turkey, as Lord Talboys suited the action to the word, "Whoop! Wharrer you kicking me for? Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Turkey Tuck faded out of the junior day-room.

II

"THAT'S him!" murmured Turkey, with his usual independence of grammar. Turkey stood in the gateway, looking up the road towards Ridgate.

In the distance, on the road, a fat figure, not unlike Turkey's own, could be discerned, rolling slowly towards Carcroft. A pair of big spectacles flashed back the rays of the sun.

Billy Bunter of Greyfriars was walking from the station. He walked slowly, having as much weight as Turkey to carry.

Turkey watched the fat figure in the distance.

He was eager for Billy Bunter's arrival: not so much from the affectionate feelings of a relative, as from a keen desire to join him in the spread in No. 9 Study. With great and unusual self-control, Turkey had resisted the temptation to sample that spread in advance. The sum of twenty-one shillings, expended with care—Turkey was an expert in such matters—had produced

tempting foodstuffs for a really stuning study spread. There was cake, there was jam, there were biscuits, scones, buns, eclairs, and other attractive things. It was indeed going to be a feast of the gods; and it was all ready on the study table, ready for Turkey and Turkey's guest to tuck in as soon as Billy Bunter of Greyfriars arrived at Carcroft. And here he was, coming.

"Tuck!"

A sharp voice behind Turkey fell on his fat ears.

The fat junior spun round, and squinted at Mr. Roger Ducas, his form-master. In his happy anticipation of sharing a feast of the gods with his Cousin Bunter, Turkey had forgotten the existence of such unpleasant things as beads. Now he was reminded of the same.

"Oh! Yes, sir! stammered Turkey.

"Have you done your lines, Tuck?"

"My—my—my lines, sir?" Turkey could have groaned. How could a fellow remember that he had lines on hand, when his whole attention was taken up in preparing a spread for an expected guest—and himself!

"Well?" rapped Roger.

"Oh! No, sir."

"I told you, Tuck, that if I had to ask you for your lines again, you would be sent into Extra School."

"Oh! Yes, sir! But—"

"You have not done your lines, Tuck?"

"Nunno, sir."

"Very well. You will go at once to Monsieur Pons' class-room, and remain in Extra School till half-past four."

"B-b-but, sir—!"

"You may go, Tuck."

"Oh, haddock!" moaned Turkey.

He went!

There was no help for it! There was no arguing with Roger! Roger was like unto the gentleman of olden time who said "Do this" and he doeth it! Turkey rolled away dismally to the House.

Bob Drake was coming out, as Turkey rolled in; and the fat junior grabbed him by the sleeve.

"I say, Bob, old chap, that beastly swob Roger's caild me for Extra—"

"Rough luck, old fat man," said Bob, sympathetically.

"Yes, but I say, Bunter's just ciming!" groaned Turkey, "I saw him on the road! I say, will you meet him at the gate, and take him to my study? Tell him I'll be there at half-past four, and wait tea till then, see? There's a 'Jack of all Trades' book in the study he can look at till I come. See?"

"O.K." answered Bob, cheerily.

Bob Drake went down to the gates to meet the Greyfriars junior as he rolled in; and Turkey, somewhat relieved in his mind, went into Extra.

TURKEY TUCK wondered whether half-past four would ever chime.

A half-holiday in Extra was never enjoyable. But with a study spread ready and waiting, and a hungry guest ready and waiting over and above, it really was excruciating. Never had James Smyth Turk cared less for French moods and tenses.

The hand of the clock seemed to crawl, or rather, it seemed not to move at all. Turkey thought of the good things piled on the study table in No. 9. He thought of the Greyfriars guest eyeing them, anxious to begin! He thought still more of his own anxiety to begin! Moods and tenses, especially French ones, were sheer purgatory at such a time!

But all things end at last! At long, long last, the half-hour did chime forth from the clock-tower. Monsieur Pons did actually utter, at long, long last, the welcome word of dismissal. And Extra School streamed out, and



Billy Bunter was gone! So was the spread!

scampered joyfully into the sunny quad, free at last—and Turkey Tuck bolted for the stairs, and almost flew up them.

He raced up the Fourth-Form passage, and arrived breathless at No. 9 Study. He pitched open the study door, and hurtled in.

"Sorry, old chap!" he gasped, "Sorry to keep you waiting! My beast of a beak copped me for Extra, as I suppose Drake told you. Now——," Turkey had got that much off his plump chest, before he perceived that the study was vacant.

The Greyfriars guest was not there.

Turkey squinted round the study. There was no sign of Billy Bunter. He wondered, for a moment, whether Bunter had tired of waiting in the study, and gone for a walk round Carcroft.

But that was only for a moment! The next, Turkey's eyes fixed on the study table, which he had left piled with good things.

All that remained on that table was crockery, some of it sticky. Not a jam tart, not a scone, not a bun, not an éclair, not a crumb or a plum of cake, was to be seen! A swarm of locusts could not have cleaned up that spread more effectually than it had been cleaned up.

"Oh, haddocks!" gasped Turkey.

For a dizzy moment, he did not understand. Then, amid sticky plates, he discerned a note, written on a fragment of impot paper. He looked at it, and read:

"Deer Cuzzin Tuck,

Thanks for the spread. Sorrey I can't stop longer, as I have to katch my train.

Yores allways,

W. G. Bunter."

Billy Bunter was gone! So was the spread—inside Bunter! Not a spot of jam, not a speck of cake, remained for Turkey Tuck. There was nothing for Turkey but the washing-up! And with feelings that could have been expressed in no language known to man, Turkey went down to hall to tea on "doorsteps and dish-water." It was the first—and also the last—time, that Billy Bunter of Greyfriars was Turkey's Guest!