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BUNTER IN SEARCH OF A STUDY.



BUNTER GETS THE O.B.E. (Order of the Boot Everywhere).

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A MAGNIFICENT NEW, LONG, COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO. AT ST JIM'S.

BUNTER IN SEARCH OF A STUDY.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Notice to Quit!

"BAI Jove! That is wathah wuff!"

"Serve him jolly well right!" said Jack Blake.

"Yaas, pewwaps so! But it is wathah wuff," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a shake of the head.

Blake & Co. of the Fourth were on their way to Study No. 6 when their attention was attracted by a notice pinned on the door of the second study in the Fourth Form passage.

It was a large sheet of cardboard, apparently the lid of an old box, and a rather surprising inscription was daubed upon it in capital letters with a brush.

Blake and Herries and Digby grinned as they looked at it. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked rather serious.

The notice ran, in sprawling capitals:

"NOTICE!!!!

TO BUNTER!

KEEP AWAY FROM THIS STUDY!

NO FAT PIGS WANTED!

KEEP OUT OR BE

SLAUGHTERED!

(Signed)

PERCY MELLISH.

BAGLEY TRIMBLE."

Perhaps it was rather rough, as D'Arcy remarked. But Mellish and Trimble, of Study No. 2, were not the only fellows in the School House who were "fed-up" with Bunter, the new junior of the Fourth Form. Blake & Co. had succeeded in getting rid of the fat junior from Study No. 6. Now, apparently, Study No. 2 was on the same tack.

"Serve him right!" said Herries. "We couldn't stand the rotter! Why should they stand him?"

"Yaas, but—"

"Bunter must roost somewhere," remarked Dig, with a grin.

"Yaas, wathah! And, aftah all, this is his studay," said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard this pweccedin' as wathah high-handed. What do you fellows think of this?" added the swell of St. Jim's, as Tom Merry & Co. came along from the staircase.

The Terrible Three halted, and grinned as they read the notice.

"Not surprised," remarked Tom Merry.

"Not at all," said Manners. "Of course, Mellish and Trimble ain't much better than Bunter, if you come to that. Still, they're not quite such worms."

"They asked the Housemistah to have Buntah in their studay, deah boy."

"That was when they thought he was wealthy," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Wealth covers a multitude of sins. Now they know he isn't it makes a difference."

"It ought not to make a difference, Lowthah."

"Quite so, old scout. But lots of things that oughtn't to happen do happen. Frinstance, Wally Bunter oughtn't to have turned out such an awful outsider, when we all liked him on a short acquaintance before he came here. But he did."

"Yaas, he certainly did not come up



to expectations," admitted Arthur Augustus. "He disappointed me vewy sewiously. I weally liked the fellow when I met him ovah at Gweyfwars."

"We might have known, though," said Blake sagely. "He's exactly like his cousin, Billy Bunter, to look at, so we might have guessed that he would be like him in other ways."

"Talk of angels!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Here he comes!"

There was a grunt and a heavy tread in the passage.

Bunter of the Fourth came rolling along from the stairs towards his study, and he blinked at the little crowd of smiling juniors over his big glasses.

"I say, you fellows, anything on?" he asked.

"Ahem!"

Bunter blinked at them rather suspiciously. The fat junior had quite worn out the hearty welcome he had received when he came to St. Jim's. Tom Merry & Co. had been patient with him, for they had really liked Wally Bunter, whom they had met while on a visit to Greyfriars. But Bunter had exhausted their patience at last. And they had not the faintest suspicion that the new junior was not Wally Bunter at all, but Billy Bunter of Greyfriars, who had come there in his cousin's place, taking advantage of the likeness between them to make a fresh start at St. Jim's, and to leave on Wally's shoulders a heap of troubles he had collected at his old school.

Bunter had expected to be quite a success at St. Jim's—in Wally's name, and with his own fascinating personality to back up Wally's reputation. But it hadn't worked out like that, and he was growing discontented. Still, he was not tired of St. Jim's yet. He found himself more comfortable there than at Greyfriars—where he was too well known and understood for his comfort.

"I say, Gussy, I was looking for you," he remarked, after a suspicious blink round at the smiling faces.

"Weally, Buntah—"

"I've been disappointed about a postal-order," said Bunter. "More delay in the post, you know. I really think that the postal service ought to buck up a bit now the war's over—don't you?"

"Even then, your postal-order might still be delayed," remarked Monty Lowther, with great gravity.

Bunter was deaf to that remark. "I suppose you could let me have the live boh, D'Arcy, and take the postal-order when it comes?" he said.

Arthur Augustus hesitated.

How many postal-orders he had already cashed in advance for Bunter he really did not know, but the number was considerable.

"Hold on a minute!" said Blake grimly. "Which postal-order are you referring to, Bunter?"

"Eh?"

"Do you mean the one Gussy cashed for you on Saturday, and which never came?"

"Ahem!"

"Or the one Dig cashed for you on Friday, which never came—"

"Oh, really, Blake—"

"Or the one Talbot cashed for you the other evening in the Common-room which—"

"Look here—"

"Or the one—"

"Bai Jove! Upon reflection, Buntah, I think I will wait till that postal-order comes befoah I cash it!"

"I hardly expected this meanness from you, D'Arcy. However, I daro say Tom Merry will cash my postal-order—"

"Certainly, when I see it!" said Tom, laughing.

"If you don't trust me, Tom Merry, you—"

"Not an inch, old scout! Not a quarter of an inch!"

"I decline to accept any favour at your hands, Tom Merry. No; you needn't say anything. I decline, and that's an end of it!"

And Billy Bunter turned haughtily away to his study.

Then he saw the notice on the door.

He halted, blinking at it in amazement, while the juniors watched him with grinning faces, wondering what effect it would have on him. Bunter blinked round at them.

"I say, you fellows, what does this mean? Who put this silly rot here?"

"Pwobably your studay mates, Buntah."

"Cheek!" said Bunter wamly.

"They want to keep me out of my own study. I like that!"

"Well, if you like it, there's nothing to complain of," remarked Blake, with a chuckle.

"Of course, I shall take no notice of it," said Bunter loftily. "This is because I've declined to ask Trimble and Mellish home to Bunter Court, you know."

"Oh, my hat!"

"That was rather hard," said Monty Lowther gravely, "as Trimble, I believe, asked you home to Trimble Hall."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll jolly soon show them whether I'll keep out of the study!" exclaimed Bunter; and he threw open the door and rolled in wrathfully.

"Now for the merry circus!" grinned Blake.

And Tom Merry & Co. stood round the doorway and waited for the "circus."

CHAPTER 2.

Evicted!

"BUNTER!"

"Outside!"

Trimble and Mellish were in the study.

They seemed to be prepared for Bunter's arrival. Baggy Trimble had a wooden foil in his fat hand. Percy Mellish had a cushion handy, which he picked up as the fat junior rolled in.

Billy Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles in great wrath and indignation.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.

"Outside!"

"Do you think I'm going to be turned out of my own study?" bawled Bunter. Mellish nodded coolly.

"Yes, I do! We don't want you here!"

"Why, you asked the Housemaster to let me come here—"

"Because you spoofed us, you fat rotter!" said Baggy Trimble. "You spoofed us with your yarns about—"

"Never mind that," said Mellish hastily. "We don't want the fat bouncer here, and we're not going to have him!"

"We don't want a chap who wolfs all the grub!" said Trimble.

"And snores in the armchair!" said Mellish.

"And tell lies!" said Trimble, with virtuous indignation.

"And uses other fellows' books to light the fire!"

"Outside!"

"You cheeky rotters!" howled Bunter. "I've a jolly good mind to lick the pair of you!"

"Go ahead!"

"I regard you with contempt! You're not worth touching!"

"Well, you're not worth touching!" said Mellish. "But we're going to touch you hard if you don't keep outside this study!"

"He, he, he!"

"Hallo! What are you he-he-heing about?"

"He, he! I can take a joke," said Bunter. "Now, what about tea? I can't stand anything to-day, as I've been disappointed about a postal-order, and D'Arcy has treated me with disgusting meanness."

"Bai Jove!" came from the passage.

"You can take a joke, can you?" said Mellish. "Well, you'll take this cushion, too, if you don't clear!"

"Oh, really Mellish—"

"And this foil!" said Trimble. "Now, where will you have it?"

"Oh, really, Trimble— Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as he got the foil and the cushion together.

Bump!

Billy Bunter sat down in the doorway, and roared.

Mellish fielded the cushion.

"Now, watch me bowl him fairly over," he said, posing it in the air.

The Owl of Greyfriars did not wait to be bowled fairly over. He squirmed wildly out into the passage, and the cushion missed him by an inch.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Slam!

"Ow-ow! I'm hurt!" he gasped. "You fellows— Yoop! Can't you give a chap a hand up, you cackling dummies? Ow!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy kindly gave Bunter a hand up. The fat junior was landed on his feet, gasping for breath.

"Ow! Ow! I'm hurt!" he gasped

"My backbone's broken!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean, sprained! Ow! I say, you fellows, come in and back me up, and

see me mop up those cheeky rotters!" gasped Bunter.

"My dear porpoise, it isn't our business!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "You shouldn't scoff their grub, you know!"

"A few sardines, and some tarts, and a cake!" said Bunter scornfully. "Just like them to make a fuss over a trifle like that! Ow! I'm not going to stand it!"

"I wouldn't!" chuckled Blake. "Go in and win, Bunter! We'll see fair play while you tackle 'em one at a time!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I could lick the pair of them!" gasped Bunter.

"Pile in, then!" said Lowther encouragingly. "Chuck them out of the study! We'll wait here and count 'em as they drop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They're both funks, you know!" said Manners. "Pile in!"

"Well, I shall help Bunter if you chip in! That's a tip!" said Tom. "You can pile in when he's done with Trimble!"

And Tom Merry stepped back into the passage.

His warning was enough. Mellish laid down the cushion. He did not want to tackle the captain of the Shell, who could have made rings round three or four Mellishes.

"Go it, Trimble!" he said. "You can handle that fat funk!"

"Yah!" said Bunter, in a very warlike tone. He was encouraged by the fact that Trimble was backing away instead of advancing.

"Go for him, I tell you!" exclaimed Mellish. "Do you want me to start on you, Trimble?"

"The—the fact it—" gasped Trimble.

"Yah!" hooted Bunter, more than ever warlike. "You're afraid! Yah! I'll jolly



Bunter Gets It Hot.

Bunter hesitated for a moment. But he was hurt, and he was wrathful; and he screwed up his courage to the sticking-point.

"I'll jolly well do it!" he exclaimed. "You fellows keep Mellish off while I throw Trimble out!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Done!"

Billy Bunter drew a deep breath, set his glasses straight on his fat little nose, and hurled open the door of the study.

"Now, then, you rotters!" he gasped.

"Hallo, here he is again!" exclaimed Mellish. "Jump on him!"

Tom Merry looked in, and raised his hand.

"Fair play!" he said. "One at a time! Bunter's going to slaughter Trimble first. Hands off, Mellish!"

"Mind your own business!" hooted Mellish.

"Do you want me to help Bunter?" asked the captain of the Shell.

"I want you to mind your own business!" snapped Mellish.

well mop up the study with you, Trimble!"

And the Owl of Greyfriars advanced with his fat fists up; and Baggy Trimble retreated farther. Mellish stopped his retreat, however, by seizing him by the shoulders and spinning him at Bunter.

"Now go it!" he snapped.

Crash!"

The two fat juniors collided, and both reeled back, gasping. Mellish gave Trimble another shove, and he sprawled at Bunter. One of his fat fists, sweeping the air wildly, landed on Bunter's nose, and there was a howl from the Owl of Greyfriars.

"Yaroooh!"

"Give him another!" shouted Mellish.

Billy Bunter jumped back. He did not want another. And Trimble, encouraged in his turn, came on with a rush, hitting out valiantly. Billy Bunter dodged hurriedly into the passage.

"Hallo! That's Bunter, not Trimble!"

exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Have you chucked yourself out, Bunter?"

"Ow!"

"Let him come in again, that's all!" roared Baggy Trimble victoriously.

"Go in and win, Bunter!"

"Ow-ow! I—I forgot that—that Kil-dare's asked me to tea!" gasped Bunter. "Can't keep a Sixth Form chap waiting!"

And Bunter rolled away hurriedly to the stairs. Baggy Trimble, victorious and triumphant, and brave as a lion now, blocked the doorway of the study with his podgy form, and roared:

"Yah! Funk! Come back! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter vanished down the staircase.

"Well done, Trimble!" chortled Blake.

"I'm a pretty good fighting-man, you know!" said Baggy, puffing. "I could make rings round that fat duffer! Let him come back, that's all! I'm just spoiling for a fight!"

"My dear man, you sha'n't be disappointed then!" said Blake. "I'll fight you, if you like!"

Slam!

The study door closed.

Tom Merry & Co. went their way chuckling.

CHAPTER 3

A Kind Offer Declined.

TAP!

An interesting discussion was going on in Tom Merry's study, and the juniors did not heed the tap at the door.

"We want to beat them," said Tom Merry. "We beat them on their own ground, and we want to beat them here!"

"We do—we does!" agreed Monty Lowther.

"Oh, we'll beat them all right," said Manners. "That is, if you put me in the eleven, Tommy! I'll undertake to bag goals for you!"

"Hum!" said Tom.

"They're a good team, though," remarked Talbot of the Shell. "They've got some good men, especially Wharton, Cherry, and Vernon-Smith, I remember."

The Terrible Three were discussing the return match with Greyfriars School, which was due shortly. Talbot had come in to discuss tea and football at the same time. The door opened while Talbot was speaking, and a fat face and a large pair of spectacles glimmered in.

"I say, you fellows! Just in time!" said Bunter cheerfully.

"Just in time to buzz off," said Manners pointedly. "Shut the door after you, Bunter!"

Bunter shut the door, but he remained on the inside of it. There was an ingratiating smile on his face, but a very wary look in his eyes.

"He, he, he!"

"My hat! Is the alarm-clock going off?" exclaimed Monty Lowther.

"Oh, really, Lowthah—"

"Was it you, Bunter?"

"You know it was!" hooted Bunter.

"Is this an entertainment, then? Have you come here to give us an imitation of an alarm-clock on active service?"

"He, he, he!"

"There he goes again!"

"I can take a little joke," said Bunter. "He, he, he! If you fellows haven't finished tea, I don't mind joining you."

"We've finished!" said the Terrible Three, with one voice.

"Then you won't want this cake. I'll sample it, if you've finished," said Bunter; and he took a large sample.

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The Terrible Three fixed their eyes upon him. Talbot smiled.

"I say, you fellows, this is jolly good cake!" said Bunter, with his mouth full.

"I'm glad you like it!" said Tom sarcastically.

"Well, of course, it's not like the cakes I get from home. Still, it's fairly good, and since you're so pressing, old chap, I'll finish it."

"My hat!"

Bunter finished the cake, while the Terrible Three sat and regarded him, not quite knowing whether to laugh or to sling Bunter into the passage for his cheek.

"Not at all bad," said Bunter patronisingly. "Did you get that cake from home, Tom Merry?"

"Yes," said Tom shortly.

"You should see the cakes I get from home," said Bunter, blinking at him.

"Much better than this."

"Oh!"

"You see, we've got a French chef," said Bunter. "You only find these really first-rate cooks in really wealthy establishments, of course. That's how it is."

"Oh!"

"I hope I'm not interrupting you fellows—"

"You are!" said Manners grimly.

"We were talking footer when you came in, and we want to go on, Bunter."

"Go on, old chap—don't mind me," said Bunter affably. "If you're in doubt about any point in connection with the game, put it before me. I'll give you my advice. If there's one thing I know inside-out it's footer."

"Oh!" gasped Manners.

"In fact, you'll find me useful in this study," said Bunter.

"Useful!" repeated Tom Merry.

"Yes, very. You see, I'm a jolly good cook—a dab at it. Then we've got tastes in common, too—my being a footballer, you know. I should be willing to give you fellows some coaching at the game—"

"Kik-kik-coaching?"

"Yes. I can give you no end of tips, too, to improve your form."

The Terrible Three were beginning to glare. Bunter had played in one match since he had been at St. Jim's, and in that match he had kicked the ball through his own goal. The Shell fellows did not want to learn that kind of footer.

"This study is bigger than my old one, too," pursued Bunter. "There will be room for me here."

"Room for you?"

"Yes. The only condition I make is that I have the armchair whenever I want it."

"The—the armchair?"

"But, of course, there'd be no objection to you fellows buying a second armchair if you wanted to. It would crowd the room a little, no doubt, but I never was selfish."

"Would you mind telling us what you happen to be burling about, Bunter?" asked Tom Merry, with great politeness.

"The fact is, old chap—"

"Not too much of your old chap, please!"

"The fact is, I'm going to dig in this study," said Bunter. "I can't stand those chaps Mellish and Trimble. I'm surprised to find such fellows at this school. In fact, they're low. Low is the word."

"You're going to—to—to—" stuttered Lowther.

"Exactly. I've decided to have nothing whatever to do with Mellish and Trimble. On reflection, I've decided, too, not to go back to Study No. 6—"

"Blake's boot rather heavy?" asked Lowther sympathetically.

"Ahem! And so, you see, I've come

here," rattled on Bunter. "This study will suit me! Not a word, old chap—I've decided."

"You—you—you've decided to dig in this study?" gasped Tom Merry.

"That's it! Where shall I put my books? I dare say you chaps will help me bring them along?"

"Well, my hat!" murmured Talbot.

The Terrible Three stared at Bunter as if frozen to their seats by his astounding cheek. They could hardly realise the nerve of it at first. Evidently the fat junior intended to "plant" himself there by sheer cheek—if he could.

The question was, whether he could! The probability was that he couldn't!

Tom Merry found his voice at last.

"Fourth Form doesn't dig with the Shell, Bunter," he said. "The Forms are never mixed in the studies. So it wouldn't do, you see."

Tom Merry thought that that was a politer form of refusal than pitching Bunter out on his neck. But it was evidently not plain enough for the Owl.

"My dear chap, that doesn't matter," said Bunter affably. "If you ask the Housemaster as a special favour, I'm sure he'll agree."

"Ask Railton as—as a special favour to—to have YOU in this study?" stuttered Tom Merry.

"That's the idea! I'm sure he'll say 'Yes.' You can point out what pals we are—"

"Pip-pip-pals!"

"Yes, and how splendidly we pull together, and all that. Then I'm sure Railton will say 'Yes,'" said Bunter. "In fact, you can consider it as settled. Now, who's going to help me bring my things here? Don't all speak at once."

The Terrible Three did not speak at all.

They exchanged a look, and rose to their feet. Speaking to Bunter, they felt, would not meet the situation; he wanted something plainer than words, and he was going to get it.

"No need for all of you," said Bunter, misunderstanding their motive. "You can come and help me with my books, Tom Merry, if you like. You other chaps can clear a place for them. I—Oh! Ah! Yah! Wharrer you at? Leggo!"

Bunter roared, in surprise and wrath, as three pairs of hands were laid on him. Weighty as he was, the fat junior was swept off his feet.

"Oh, my hat! He weighs something!" gasped Manners. "Lend a hand, Talbot!"

"Certainly!" said Talbot, laughing.

Another pair of hands was added. With the four of them grasping his fat person, the Owl of Greyfriars was rushed to the door, with his arms and legs flying wildly in the air.

"Yaroooh! Help! Fire! Murder!" roared Bunter. "Wharrer you up to? I won't come into this study if you play these silly tricks! Yoooooop!"

Tom Merry released one hand to open the door. Then Bunter was rushed into the passage.

"Help! Yoooooop! Yah! Oh!"

"Hallo! You fellows killing a pig?" called out Cardew, of the Fourth from the corner of the passage.

"Yoooooop! Help!"

"Take him home!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yaroooh!"

Down the passage went Bunter, with a rush, with arms and legs still flying. Tom Merry kicked open the door of No. 2 in the Fourth, and Bunter was rushed in.

Mellish and Trimble jumped up from their tea-table in surprise.

"What the thump—"

Bump!

Bunter landed on the hearthrug with a considerable concussion. He rolled over there and roared.

"There!" gasped Merry. "There, you fat bounder! There, you podgy porpoise! Next time you roll into our study we'll rub your head in the coal-licker where we roll you out!"

"Yaroooh!"

The Shell fellows retreated, breathless from their exertions. And as they returned to the Shell quarters they were followed by sounds of woe. Mellish and Trimble were rolling Bunter out of No. 2. The door of that study slammed on him, and Bunter was left sitting in the passage, gasping for breath—and still homeless.

CHAPTER 4.

A Chance for No. 9.

LEVISON and Clive of the Fourth were at prep in Study No. 9 when Cardew came in, with a grin on his face. The two looked up.

"What's the joke?" asked Levison.

"Bunter!" said Cardew, with a chuckle. "That fellow is a corker! He's been booted out of his study, and he tried to plant himself on 'Tom Merry.'"

"My hat!"

"And now he's tried No. 5," grinned Cardew. "He started making himself agreeable to Julian. He told him he hadn't any prejudice against Jews, and could overlook Julian being a blessed Sheeny."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Levison and Clive.

Cardew chortled.

"It was so tactful," he said, "Bunter seemed to expect it to please Julian, and he seemed quite surprised when Julian knocked his head against the wall. I left him rubbing his head."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now for prep," said Cardew, with a sigh. "I'd much rather watch Bunter in search of a study. He's no end entertainin'. I wonder if he'll give us a look in here?"

"He'll get the business end of a boot if he does!" grunted Clive.

"More than one boot," remarked Levison.

Tap!

"Well, by gad!" ejaculated Cardew, as the door opened and revealed a fat face and big glasses. "Who said I wasn't a prophet? Hallo, Bunter! Roll in, old tub!"

"Roll out!" snapped Levison.

"And sharp!" added Clive.

Bunter gave the chums of No. 9 an affable blink. He decided that, of the three, he would heed Cardew, and he rolled in.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.

"Dear old chap!" said Cardew affectionately. "What a pleasure to see you! You're looking well, Bunter."

Billy Bunter blinked at him in some surprise and a great deal of satisfaction. More than once he tried to attach himself to Cardew, who was the grandson of a noble lord, and rolling in money. He had been kept at a very severe distance hitherto. Now, all of a sudden, Cardew had changed.

Bunter was not aware of the peculiar disposition of the dandy of the Fourth, or of his exceedingly peculiar sense of humour. If he had been he would not have felt quite so satisfied.

"Look here, Cardew, we're doing prep," said Levison. "You'd better do yours, too, if you don't want Lathom to rag you in the morning."

"My dear man, I like to see Lathom raggin'; he's so entertainin'. Besides,

I can't do prep when I'm talkin' to a distinguished visitor, can I? It's so kind of Bunter to drop in like this, without waitin' for the formality of an invitation. I call it friendly."

"The fact is, old chap, I mean to be friendly," said Bunter.

Levison grunted, and went on with his work; and Clive, grinning, followed his example. If Cardew wanted to pull Bunter's fat leg, and Bunter, apparently, wanted to have it pulled, it was not their concern.

"Dear old thing!" said Cardew. "Won't you sit down, Bunter?"

"Thanks, old fellow, I will!"

"Wait a tick! I'll give you the armchair. I've heard that you like armchairs," said Cardew, jumping up.

He spun the armchair round for Bunter, and dusted the seat very carefully. Bunter watched him with growing satisfaction. These attentions from the grandson of a lord were very gratifying. He was not aware that, while dusting the chair, Cardew had picked up a tube of seccotine, and was squeezing it out in streaks over the leather seat.

"There you are, old chap," said Cardew, concealing the empty tube in the duster as he presented the chair to Bunter.

Billy Bunter sank into the chair with a grunt of satisfaction.

"So awfully kind of you to give us a call, Bunter. I take it as a real favour. Eh—what?"

"Is this chair damp?"

"Damp! My dear chap, do you think I would give you a damp chair?" Cardew reproachfully. "I was sitting in it a minute ago, and it wasn't damp then. I hear you're looking for a study, Bunter."

"Yes, I've decided to cut No. 2," said Bunter, with a nod. "Tom Merry wanted me to dig with him, but I had to tell him it couldn't be done. Can't dig with the Shell, you know."

Levison and Clive looked up for a moment, and looked down again. Cardew's face was very grave.

"That was hard cheese on 'Tom Merry,' he said. "A bitter disappointment to him, in fact."

"Well, I was sorry," said Bunter. "But it really couldn't be done. I told him so plainly. Same with Julian."

"Did Julian want you, too?" asked Cardew sweetly.

"Begged of me, almost with tears in his eyes," said Bunter. "But it couldn't be done. I was sorry, but I had to tell him I couldn't stand Sheenya."

"Oh!" gasped Cardew.

"The fact is, I was thinking of this study," went on Bunter, encouraged by Cardew's friendly manner. "I could get on here, I think."

"Could you?" said Levison, looking up.

"Oh, yes! I shall pull all right with you, Levison. I'm a bit of a sport myself," said Bunter, with a fat wink.

"A what?"

"I hear that you've been turning over a new leaf, Levison," grinned the Owl. "That will do for the masters and prefects; but you can confide in me, you know. I won't give you away. I know what you were at Greyfriars, before you came here. He, he, he!"

"I don't see how you know anything about me at Greyfriars!" snapped Levison.

"Ahem!" Bunter remembered himself. "I—I mean—I've heard—"

"Your cousin, Billy Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove, has been chattering to you, I suppose?" interjected Levison savagely.

"He, he! Exactly."

"The fat rascal!"

"Oh, really, Levison—"

"Well, whatever Billy Bunter may have said to you," said Levison, little dreaming that he was speaking to Billy Bunter—"whatever that fat Owl may have told you, I don't want to hear anything about it. And if you talk to me about being a sport I'll pull your silly nose!"

Bunter winked again.

"All serene, old scout; I'll keep it dark," he said. "In fact, I'll back you up. I'll come with you on your little excursions. I'll see you through, old mau. I'm fly, and a bit torty at times!"

"You silly chump!" roared Levison. "Dry up!"

"I don't mind having a quid or two on the next footer-match, if you care for it," continued Bunter, unheeding.

"Remind you of old times—what?"

Levison half-rose to his feet.

But Cardew gently pushed him back into his chair. He was not done with Bunter yet. He wanted the seccotine to set before the fat junior took his departure—or tried to take it.

"Ernest, old scout, don't bother Bunter," he said. "Bunter's called in as a friend. I'm proud and happy to see him."

"Oh, rats!" snapped Levison; and he resumed his work with a dark brow.

"Just like he used to be at Greyfriars—suspicious and sulky, you know, and always biting a fellow's head off," said Bunter.

"Your cousin Billy seems to have told you a lot about Levison."

"Eh? Oh, yes! Of—of course. I shall get on all right with Levison when he sees it's no use trying to spoof me," said Bunter cheerily. "You'll pull with me all right, Clive."

"Shall I?" said the South African junior grimly.

"Oh, yes! I'll look after you, and bring you out, you know. You're not a bad chap, only a bit dense."

"Oh!" ejaculated Sidney Clive.

"And I hope you'll get on all right with me, Bunter," said Cardew gently.

"Not a doubt about it," said Bunter brightly. "We've got a lot of things in common, you know."

"Have we?"

"Certainly. For instance, we're both highly connected," said Bunter. "I'm not a snob, you know—far from it. But gentle birth is gentle birth, isn't it?"

"I believe it is," assented Cardew.

"There you are!" said Bunter. "It was really for that reason that I stood D'Arcy as long as I could—though, of course, the D'Arcys are not so old a family as the Bunters. There was a Bunter in—"

"Noah's Ark?" suggested Cardew.

"Nunno! I mean—"

"There should have been two Bunters there, though," said Cardew thoughtfully. "I think I remember reading that the animals went in two by two."

Bunter grinned feebly.

"Oh, really, Cardew! I was going to say, there was a Bunter in William the Conqueror's army when he came over—"

"That was before the Undesirable Aliens Act was passed," said Cardew gravely.

"Oh, really, you know! There was a Bunter at the signing of Magna Charta in the reign of Henry the Eighth."

"Of whom?"

"I—I mean Edward the Seventh," said Bunter hastily. "That is to say, Charles the First."

"Not King John, by any chance?" asked Clive sarcastically.

"Certainly not, Clive! You don't know anything about English history," said Bunter. "How could you, living out in Uganda—"

"Cape Colony, fathad!"

"What's the difference?"

"Oh my hat!"

"Fellows like ourselves, Cardew, have a lot in common—high connections, and titled relations, and so on," said the fatuous Owl. "We shall pull together rippingly, I think!"

"I'm sure we shall," said Cardew cordially. "Quite sure of it, Wally! You don't mind if I call you Wally, do you?"

"Do, my dear chap! I'll call you Ralph."

"Do!" said Cardew solemnly.

There was a tap at the door, and Dick Julian looked in. He started a little at the sight of Bunter in the armchair. Bunter waved a fat hand at him in a very lofty way.

"You can get out, Julian," he said. "I don't want your sort in my study. Excuse me speaking plainly!"

"Your study!" ejaculated Julian.

"Bunter has settled down in this study," explained Cardew airily. "He's made the offer, and we can't resist it—his manners are so charmin'."

"I looked in to see if your minor was here, Levison," said Julian, taking no further notice of the fat junior in the armchair. "I'm going to help him with a busted footer."

"He's in the Form-room, I expect," said Levison. "You can wring that fat cad's neck if you like—he doesn't belong to this study."

"Oh, really, Levison—"

"Thanks! I wouldn't touch his neck with a barge-pole!" answered Julian. "I'll look downstairs for Frank."

He left the study. Bunter had fixed his eyes sternly on Ernest Levison.

"Look here, Levison," he said, "I want none of your rot. I've accepted Cardew's pressing invitation to join this study. I remain here. That's settled. And I expect to be treated with civility!"

"Oh, rats!" grunted Levison.

"My dear Ernest, you might be civil to a chap's pal," said Cardew reproachfully. "Bunter's going to introduce me to his titled relations—isn't that so, Bunter?"

"Certainly, old chap."

"You know what a snob I am, Levison. I'm after Bunter's titled relations like a Chicago millionaire," said Cardew. "I'm goin' home to Bunter Court about the same time that I pay a visit with Trimble to Trimble Hall. I hope you'll be quite comfy in this study, Bunter."

"Well, I shall make myself comfy, you know."

"And you'll stick to that armchair?" said Cardew sweetly.

"I was going to suggest it. I really must have an armchair to myself; otherwise, I don't think I could consent to come into the study at all. Of course, I shouldn't object to you fellows using it when I don't want it."

"You see what a generous chap Bunter is, Levison. Stick to that chair, Bunter—you don't mind?"

"Not at all. I'd like to."

"Well, you will!" said Cardew, smiling. "Do you mind if I get on with my prep for a bit, Bunter? You might care to sample a cake to pass the time while—"

"Where's the cake?"

"Don't get up! I'll get it for you." Cardew placed the cake on Bunter's knees, and then started work. Billy THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 574.

Bunter was happily occupied for some time now. He toasted his toes before the study fire, and devoured the cake to the very last crumb—and it was a large one. All the time the secotine was setting harder and harder between his trousers and the seat of the chair. There was no doubt that Bunter would stick to that chair—in the sense that Cardew intended.

Prep did not take Cardew so long as it took his study-mates. He timed it, in fact, to finish with the cake. When the last crumb had vanished, Cardew turned from his books.

"You're not done?" said Levison.

"Your mistake, old chap—I am," said Cardew. "Like to take a little nap in your armchair, Bunter?"

"Hasn't Bunter any prep to do?" asked Clive.

"I'm not doing any this evening," said the Owl. "I really don't need it as much as you fellows. I shall manage all right in the morning. I don't think I'll take a nap, though, Cardew; I'm thinking of supper."

"Sit where you are, old scout, and we'll wait on you."

"We won't do anything of the sort!" roared Levison. "Look here, Cardew, you've pulled Bunter's leg enough. Chuck it!"

Cardew cocked his eye reflectively at Bunter.

"Well, perhaps it's long enough," he conceded. "The secotine must be well set by this time."

"That what?"

"Secotine."

"What's that?" ejaculated Bunter.

"Sticky stuff, dear boy. Sticks like glue—only more so. I squeezed a whole tube into that chair for you."

"Wha-a-at?"

"You remember you thought it felt a little damp?" said Cardew urbanely. "Well, it was. But it's all right; it's not damp now. You said you didn't mind sticking to the chair, didn't you?"

Bunter's face was a study. There was a howl of laughter from Levison and Clive. The Owl of Greyfriars made a jump to get out of the chair. But he did not rise. He was glued where he sat, and he gasped with the unavailing effort.

"Ow!"

"May as well get down to the Common-room, if you fellows have finished," yawned Cardew. "Stick to it, Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!" spluttered Bunter.

He made a terrific effort to rise. The armchair rose an inch from the floor under him, and then landed on its castors again with a terrific clatter. And Bunter gasped once more.

"Ow! Wow!"

CHAPTER 5.

Sticking to It!

"HA, ha, ha!" Three merry juniors were roaring with laughter in Study No. 9; and the sounds of merriment were not long in drawing attention. The door flew open, and the Terrible Three looked in.

"What's the merry joke?" asked Tom Merry.

"Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Are you fellows waggin' Buntah?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, arriving with Blake and Herries and Dig.

"Not at all!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter. "Lenme out of it! Oh, dear! You beast, Cardew! I refuse to have this study with you now! Yah! Oh!"

"What's the matter with him?" asked Tom Merry, in amazement.

The cause of Bunter's trouble was not visible to the eye, and the juniors did not quite see where the joke came in.

"Ow-ow! I'm stuck!" wailed Bunter. "Come and drag me out, somebody! Oh, dear!"

"Groat Scott!"

"Bunter's idea was to stick to our armchair," explained Cardew. "So I put some nice, sticky stuff in it to help him. He's been sitting in it well over an hour, and it's well set. How he's going to get out I really don't know; I haven't thought that out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! It is really too woff!"

"Stick to it!" roared Blake, in great merriment. "He was always sticking to the armchair in our study, when he was there; but I never thought of this stunt. Go it, Bunter! You always were a stickler!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow! I want to gerrup!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

More and more of the Shell and Fourth were crowding round Study No. 9 now, till the passage outside was crammed, and the study itself well filled. But Bunter was given plenty of room. The hilarious juniors wanted to see how he would negotiate the armchair. Bunter was much given to sticking to things that were not his own, and to see him sticking to Cardew's armchair in this new style was very entertaining. It was probable that by that time Bunter repented of his attempt to plant himself in No. 9. He was now not only planted, but rooted there.

The fat junior glared furiously at the chortling crowd of fellows, with a glare that bade fair to crack his spectacles. But the more he glared the louder they roared.

He made a desperate effort to tear himself from the chair, and again it rose off its castors, and landed with a terrific crash.

"Oh, you rotters!" howled Bunter. "Yah! Beasts! Do you think this is funny?"

"Yes, a little!" gasped Tom Merry, wiping his eyes. "It strikes me as funny. You've got no sense of humour, old scout."

"Stick to it, Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Crash!"

Again a desperate effort to rise was followed by the crash of the castors on the floor. Bunter lay back in the chair and gasped for breath.

"Well, we may as well leave him to it," yawned Cardew. "Make yourself comfy in the study, Bunter. But I'm sure you'll do that. In fact, you said you would."

"Yaroooh! Don't go away and leave me like this!" howled Bunter. "Jalp! Yaroooh! I kik-kik-can't move!"

"You'll have to go like a snail, with your shell behind you!" roared Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, help me out!" shrieked Bunter. "I can't stick here, you know!"

"Looks as if you can, Buntah, bai Jove!"

Dick Julian came along the passage with Frank Levison of the Third. Julian looked into the study as Bunter made another effort to rise, and crashed once more.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Secotine—and Bunter sitting in it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows! I say, Julian, old chap! Lend me a hand, Julian—"

"My dear chap, you don't want a Sheeny to touch you," grinned Julian. "I don't mind your being a Sheeny—I don't, really!" wailed Bunter. In fact, I like Sheenys, old chap!"

"Well, I don't like fat pigs, and I'm not touching you," said Julian, laughing.

"Yow-ow-ow! I say, you fellows, help—"

"Wrestle it out," said Blake. "Keep on long enough and something is bound to go, Bunter. It may be the chair, and it may be your bags. Put your beef into it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors, almost in hysterics, crowded out of the study. Billy Bunter howled to them in vain for help. He was left alone in the study, still struggling with the armchair.

"I say, you fellows! Come back, you rotters! I say, Levison, old chap! Cardew, you beast! Gussy—Gussy, old fellow! Yaroooh!"

Arthur Augustus halted in the doorway. He was good natured to a fault.

"Weally, Buntah, you asked for it," he said. "The way you twy to shove yourselfs into the fellows' studies is wathah powvokin'!"

"Yaroooh! I didn't ask for jaw, you silly ass! Help me out of this blessed armchair, and don't stand there like a goat!" howled Bunter.

"Bai Jove! If that is what you call civil, Buntah—"

"Help me, you idiot!"

"I wefuse to be chawacterised as an idiot, Buntah!"

"You—you—you—chump! Help me!" gasped Bunter. "You blinking, goggle-eyed idiot, lend me a hand!"

"I wogard all those expressions as opprobrious, Buntah, and I wefuse to have anythin' whatever to do with you. Your mannauls are simply wevolutin', Buntah!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked away, with his noble nose in the air.

"Yow! Help! Fire!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came back from the passage. "Stick to it!"

Bunter made a terrific effort, and there was a sound of rending cloth. Something had given at last, but it was not the ascotting.

The fat junior rolled, gasping, out of the chair, with a further sound of rending.

"Oh dear! My bags! My word! Oh dear!" spluttered Bunter. "Oh, crumbs, it's jolly kikk-kik-kik! Ow!"

He was free at last, free, not only of the armchair, but of a considerable portion of his nether garments. He rolled out into the passage, crimson with exertion and fury.

"Hello! Here he is!"

"Not sticking to it, Bunter?"

"Yow! You rotters! I wish I was back at Greyfriars! Ow! Heasts! I—I say, you fellows, get me a coat, or something!" wailed Bunter.

"Bai Jove! What ever do you want a coat for indoors, Buntah!"

"Suppose—suppose I meet the House-dame, or somebody!" wailed Bunter. "Give me a coat, or a blanket, or something—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors shrieked. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, feeling that this was a want that really ought to be supplied, rushed away for a coat. Wrapped in the coat, Bunter bolted up the stairs to the dormitory—for a much-needed change. He was followed by hysterical yells.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as he strolled away to the Common-room with his chums. "Buntah in search of a studay is wathah amusin'!

but I weally don't think he will twy No. 9 again!"

And Gussy was right.

CHAPTER 6.

Dropped!

THE next day Bunter of the Fourth was still without a study.

Tom Merry & Co. were rather interested in the fat junior's search for new quarters. Where he would ultimately land was an interesting question.

The proceedings of Mellish and Trimble in turning Bunter out of Study No. 2 were certainly high-handed, though nobody in the Fourth was inclined to blame them. An appeal to the House-master would have reinstated Bunter at once. But he hesitated to make it, for divers reasons. If he complained about being turned out, probably Mellish would complain in his turn of the raided rations and confiscated cakes. Moreover, Bunter was not at all keen to remain an inmate of No. 2 if he could obtain quarters elsewhere. It was the least desirable study in the Fourth—Mellish and Trimble being the least desirable study-mates.

Bunter had been glad to "dig" there, under the belief that Trimble, of Trimble Hall, was a wealthy fellow whom it was worth while to know. Trimble had welcomed Bunter under an equally erroneous belief. But the two "swankers" had found one another out now—with mutual disgust.

The Owl of Greyfriars would have been very pleased to change his quarters—quite as pleased as Mellish and Trimble would have been to get rid of him. But at present he had nowhere to lay his weary head.

Bunter had expected to be popular at St. Jim's—as Wally Bunter certainly would have been. But Billy Bunter had very quickly worn out Wally's welcome, so to speak.

His fascinating society was not sought after in the least; his presence in any study was not yearned for.

But Bunter was not beaten yet. There were a good many studies in the Fourth Form passage, most of them unried, so far, and all of them preferable to No. 2. And Bunter intended to try them—and "plant" himself in the best he could get—if he was allowed. There was one quality the Owl of Greyfriars possessed in superabundance, and that was "neck."

At morning lessons that day Bunter was in trouble with Mr. Lathorn, the master of the Fourth, who speedily discovered that he had done no preparation the previous evening. Bunter was severely lectured, with a promise of the cane next time; all of which he took philosophically. He was not accustomed to looking ahead, and "next time" did not worry him.

In fact, he really hadn't much time to devote to Mr. Lathorn's instructions that morning, anyway. He had the matter of the study to think out.

When the Fourth were dismissed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy spoke cheerily to the fat junior in the passage.

"I twust you are gettin' on all wight in your studay now, Buntah?"

Bunter blinked at him.

"I'm done with No. 2," he said. "I decline to go back there on any conditions whatever. I've told Mellish and Trimble it's quite useless to ask me. I simply refuse to do it!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "I twust you will find comfy quarters elsewhere, deah boy."

"The fact is, I was thinking of No. 6—"

"Oh deah! I—I think Blake is callin' to me—"

The fat junior glared.

"I was thinking of No. 6," he went on calmly. "But I feel it wouldn't do. I couldn't stand your friends, D'Arcy."

"What?" ejaculated the swell of St. Jim's.

"I'd like to come there, for your sake, but I couldn't stand Blake—he's too much of a pig!" said Bunter calmly. "Herries, too—a regular ruffian!"

"Weally Buntah—"

"If you can get them to change out, Gussy, I'll come. Not otherwise."

"Look here, you fat boundah—"

Bunter waved a fat hand at him.

"It's no use, Gussy; I've said I'm sorry, and so I am. But unless Blake and Herries change out it's no good asking me to come to No. 6!"

"But I was not goin'!"

"My dear chap, urging me's no good! I'd do it if I could, to oblige you; but there's a limit."

"I was not goin' to ask you—"

"I repeat, I'm sorry, Gussy! But there you are!"

"Buntah, I wopeat that I should wefuse to allow you to—"

"Enough said, Gussy! I can't come—simply can't!"

And Billy Bunter turned and rolled away, leaving Arthur Augustus almost breathless with indignation.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "I don't weally believe the fat boundah weally misundahstood me at all. Bai Jove, if he should poke his beastly nose into Studay No. 6, I should be vewy much tempted to stwike it violently!"

Billy Bunter rolled away with a grin on his fat face. He was looking for Hammond of the Fourth—having decided that Study No. 5 would suit him. That study was shared by four juniors—Hammond, Keruish, Reilly, and Dick Julian. Julian had already declined the proposed honour, but Bunter was not a fellow to take no for an answer, if he could help it. He decided to try his luck with Harry Hammond.

He found that youth in the quadrangle, and joined him. Hammond gave him a good-natured grin.

"I've been looking for you, old chap!" said Bunter.

"Ave you?" said Hammond, not very enthusiastically. As he hardly knew Bunter, he did not see any reason for the "old chap."

"Yes, I have, old scout!"

"Well, now you've found me!" remarked Hammond. "Ere I am!"

The heir of the great firm which dealt in Hammond's High-class Hats had not yet conquered the difficulty of the aspirate. Billy Bunter smiled in a patronising way as he noted it.

"The fact is, Hammond, I rather like you!" he said loftily, his manner implying that this was a tremendous honour.

"You're very good," said Hammond. "Not at all! I think we shall get on together!"

"I 'ope so, specially as we ain't likely to see much of each huther," said Hammond, moving on.

Bunter rolled along with him at once.

"The fact is, we shall see a good bit of each other, Hammond," he said. "I'm going to dig in your study."

"Oh!" ejaculated Hammond, under standing now. "Har you?"

"I ham!" said Bunter, playfully imitating Hammond's weird manner of speaking. "He, he, he!"

"Wot are you cackling at?" demanded Hammond gruffly.

"Ahem! I suppose you'll come and lend me a hand at getting my things to No. 5?"

Hammond stared at him. Whether Bunter was a crass duffer, or whether he was the cheekiest boulder he had ever come across, Hammond did not quite know. But he knew that he did not want Bunter for a study-mate.

"I thought Julian had told you you couldn't plant yourself in our study," he answered.

Bunter sniffed.

"Never mind Julian! I bar that fellow!"

"What!"

"Can't stand Sheenys!" said Bunter, with a shake of the head. "Mind, I'm not a snob. Far from it. For instance, I'm going to be friendly with you, Hammond, but—"

"Are you?" said Hammond grimly.

"Oh, certainly! I don't mind the high-class hats!" grinned Bunter. "Of course, as a sensible chap, you'll bear in mind that there's a difference between us. But I'm not a snob—I don't care if you started life sweeping out the hatshop. In fact, I think it's up to a fellow like me to be kind to the lower classes when they're trying to improve themselves."

The Cockney schoolboy breathed hard. "We shall get on all right," pursued Bunter, mistaking Hammond's silence. "I feel sure of that. Of course, I don't want a lot of dashed familiarity—you will keep your distance, and all that. But I mean to be friendly; and you can see what an advantage it will be to you to have me in the study."

"Ow do you make that out?" gasped Hammond, who seemed to be on the verge of a volcanic explosion. But the short-sighted Owl of Greyfriars did not see the danger-signals, and he rattled on cheerfully.

"You see, it'll be no end of an advantage to you to have a gentleman to associate with. You'll be able to model yourself on me, and improve yourself generally, you know."

"Oh!"

"I'll give you some tips, too, about good manners and the way decent people behave," went on Bunter fatuously. "You can watch me, and do as I do, you know. It'll be no end of use to a fellow like you!"

Hammond gazed at him speechlessly.

"As for Julian, he's a dashed Sheeny, and I shall refuse to speak to him," said Bunter. "He has treated me with impertinence—"

"Julian's my pal!" said Hammond, in a sulphurous voice.

"Then I advise you to drop him, old fellow! In fact, I don't see how I can be friendly with you if you don't drop Julian!" said Bunter firmly.

"Well, I won't drop Julian!" said Hammond. "But I'll jolly well drop you, you fat, shiny, sneaking, grubby rotter—hard!"

"Here, I say— Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter, as the indignant Hammond seized him by the shoulders.

"Sit down, you fat image!"

"Yooop!"

Bunter sat down with a great concussion, roaring. Harry Hammond walked away, and left him sitting there.

"Ow, ow, ow!" roared Bunter. "Yooop! Grooh! Help! Ow!"

"Ha! Ha! Bunter in trouble again!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, as the Terrible Three came along from the School House.

Tom Merry good-naturedly gave the fat junior a hand up. Bunter stood and gasped spasmodically.

"Ow, ow! Beast! I'll jolly well lick him! Where is he?"

"Where is who?" asked Tom, smiling.

"That beast Hammond!"

"Just yonder!" grinned Manners.

"Shall I call him?"

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"Nunno—never mind!" said Bunter hastily. "After all, it's rather beneath my dignity to soil my hands on him. Groooh! Fancy the beast cutting up rough because I—I—I refused to share his study!"

"Eh?"

"He begged me, almost with tears in his eyes, you know, but I told him it couldn't be done—I really couldn't stand a rotter like that— Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to chuckle at! Ow, ow!"

The Terrible Three walked away, chuckling. Bunter rolled off in a disconsolate mood. He had failed once more.

Cadet Notes.

Now the Armistice has been signed and Peace is in prospect there is an idea amongst some boys that it is no use joining a Cadet Corps.

But Cadets are not merely a military corps; on the contrary, they form centres of social organisation, and give opportunities for boys to form friends and have a good time. Boys in factories and offices do not know what to do with their evenings, and find it difficult to get pals. A proper Cadet Corps has a club-room where bagatelle can be played, boxing can be learnt, and should give opportunities for other recreation. The best Cadet Corps have swimming clubs, football clubs, cricket clubs, etc. Classes should be organised for scouting, carpentry, as well as studies in geography, history, etc., where enough boys can be obtained. And uniform gives a smartness to the club that an ordinary club lacks.

If you do not belong to a Cadet unit, write to the Central Association. Letters addressed to the C.A.V.R., Judges' Quadrangle, Law Courts, London, W.C. 2, will find us.

During the War no lad has been unable to get a good job at a decent wage. But with demobilisation the competition for work is likely to be very keen, and the best jobs will go to the most qualified men. Education in the widest sense is likely to be the best testimonial for a boy applying for work. Cadet Corps provide a splendid centre for training. Drill adds inches to a boy's height and width of chest, and employers naturally get their first impression from a boy's appearance. Besides, it smartens him up, and generally quickens his intelligence. New corps are being formed everywhere, and some of the old ones are running recruiting campaigns. No. 7 Company (Stroud Green), 5th Bttn, Middlesex Regiment (Cadets) has vacancies for recruits, but if you do not know of any unit near you, apply to the C.A.V.R., Law Courts, London.

and he was still minus a study. And he was not consoled till dinner-time, when, with the third helping, calm and contentment once more returned to his fat visage.

CHAPTER 7.

A Feast of the Gods!

"PIIWAT is ut intirely?" Mulvaney minor of the Fourth was puzzled.

Dusk was falling, and the juniors who had been on the football-ground were coming in. Mulvaney minor and his study-mate, Clarence York Tompkins, were heading for No. 4 in the Fourth Form passage.

The door of that study was half-open, and from the room came a very appetising scent of cooking. It was a scent that was very grateful and comforting to two hungry juniors; but it was perplexing,

too. For who could be cooking in No. 4, when its owners were both out, was a mystery.

"Somebody's in there!" said Tompkins.

"Bedad, and he's cooking, too!" said Mulvaney minor.

The Irish lad looked into the study in great surprise. Then he uttered an ejaculation.

"Bunter, bedad!"

There was a glowing fire in the grate, and before it Bunter was bending, watching the sausages that sizzled in a frying-pan. He turned a ruddy face to the two astonished juniors.

"Trot in, Mulvaney!" he said cheerily. "Come in, Tompkins, old fellow!"

The two juniors entered. They stared at Bunter blankly. The Owl of Greyfriars did not seem to observe their surprise.

"Like sosses—what?" he asked.

"Yis. But—"

"I thought you fellows would be hungry after footer," said Bunter; "so I thought I'd hop in and get tea ready for you."

"Howley Moses!"

"Well, my hat!" said Tompkins.

"There's plenty of sosses," said Bunter. "I've got some ham, too. And there's some ripping coffee. You fellows care for sultana cake?"

"Eh? Oh, yes! Rather!"

"Well, look at that one!"

"Begorra!" murmured the astounded Mulvaney.

There was a handsome cake on the table, as well as a loaf and several nice little pats of butter. Coffee was brewed, and the sausages were almost done. It was a really elegant spread; and it was being stood, apparently, by Bunter, for two fellows he hardly knew. Benevolence could hardly have gone further.

"Well, this is jolly good of you, Bunter!" said Tompkins, puzzled but gratified.

"Not at all, old chap," said Bunter.

Mulvaney minor grinned.

Tompkins was rather a simple youth; but Micky Mulvaney was not at all simple, and he thought he could guess Bunter's object. The fat junior was still in search of a study, and he was trying this as a new method. It was really more tactful than Bunter's methods usually were. Perhaps he was learning a lesson from his many rebuffs.

"Bunter, old top, you're a broth av a boy!" said Mulvaney minor.

"My dear chap, don't mention it," said Bunter, with a wave of his fat hand. "only too pleased!"

"I say, this is really good, you know," remarked Tompkins. "We hadn't anything for tea—nothing to speak of. I'm jolly hungry!"

"Same here, bedad!"

"Well, those sosses are just done," said Bunter. "There's lots of them, too—over a dozen."

"Bunter, me jewel, it's intirely decent for you to be standing a spread like this!" said Micky Mulvaney.

"Not at all! What's the good of a fellow being rich if he doesn't spend it entertaining his friends?" said Bunter.

"Oh!"

"Bat we're not your friends," said Tompkins, perplexed.

"Oh, really, Tompkins—"

"Sure, I'm the frind of any chap who stands me a dish of sosses when I'm as hungry as a Hun," said Mulvaney minor. "Bunter's a broth av a boy!"

The sosses sizzled cheerily as they were dished up. It was really a most appetising spread, especially after football in a keen wind. Clarence York Tompkins and Mulvaney minor sat down to it with

great enjoyment. So did Billy Bunter. And, though Bunter took the lion's share, as usual, his companions at the festive board could not take exception to that under the circumstances. Besides, there was plenty for all.

It was, in fact, a feast of the gods in Study No. 4.

The sosses were disposed of to the very last one, and then the three juniors travelled cheerily through the big cake.

Bunter's fat face beamed over the table.

After this handsome spread, cooked by his own fair hands, so to speak, he felt that Mulvaney minor and Tompkins could scarcely decline the honour of receiving him as a study-mate. Refusal would come very awkwardly after they had partaken of his hospitality in this way.

The cake was finished at last, and Bunter gave a grunt of fat contentment.

"Not so bad—what?" he remarked.

"Topping, me boy!"

"I've got some grapes here," said Bunter.

"Oh, begorra! You must be rolling in tin, Bunter!" ejaculated Mulvaney, as Bunter produced a big bunch of hothouse grapes from a paper bag.

Tompkins opened his eyes wide. There were few juniors in the Fourth who could afford to grace the tea-table with hothouse grapes.

It was a big bunch, but it disappeared in record time. Mulvaney minor and Tompkins were feeling very kindly towards Bunter now. Really, it did look as if the fat Owl had his redeeming qualities.

It was rather puzzling, however, where the good things had come from. Only that morning Bunter had attempted to borrow a half-crown from Mulvaney—in vain—on the security of a postal-order he was expecting shortly. It looked as if the postal-order had come; and it must have been a big one, to judge by the spread in Study No. 4.

But Bunter was not finished yet. He produced a box, under the surprised eyes of his new friends, and opened it.

"You fellows care for choes?" he asked.

"Oh, bedad! Yis, rather!"

"Help yourselves, dear boys!"

The dear boys helped themselves. Billy Bunter blinked at them as the chocolates began to disappear.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Ripping!" said Mulvaney minor.

"I was going to say—"

"Tip-top!" said Mickey heartily.

"You're a jewel, Bunter—a rare jewel!"

"I was thinking—"

"You must come to tea with us to-morrow, Bunter, and we'll stand the spread," said Mulvaney.

Bunter blinked at him suspiciously. It really looked as if Mulvaney was seeking to avoid the topic Bunter was seeking to introduce. But the Owl of Groyfviars was not to be eluded.

"The fact is, how would you fellows like me to dig in this study with you?" he asked.

"Oh!"

"Hem!"

It was point-blank at last, and Tompkins and Mulvaney exchanged a look. It dawned upon the simple mind of Tompkins now why that gorgeous spread had taken place in No. 4.

"Ahem!" he said. "Hum! Ah!"

Which was not very intelligible, but expressed the feelings of Clarence York Tompkins.

"We should get on no end," said Bunter. "I like this study. I don't mind saying that I like you chaps."

"Oh!"

"Ah!"

"Done!" said Bunter, apparently interpreting those dismayed ejaculations as an answer in the affirmative. "It's settled, then."

"But—" began Tompkins.

"Not a word, old fellow; it's settled," said Bunter. "I'll tell you what, you can leave the catering for the study in my hands. I'm a dab at it. Simply place the money in my hands, and leave it to me."

"B-b-b-but—" stammered Mulvaney minor.

"We'll go and fetch my books and things along, when you've done with the choes," said Bunter cheerily.

"Oh!"

"Um!"

"But—" began Tompkins.

Clarence York was interrupted. There was a sudden roar in the passage without—a roar which resembled that of an angry bull, but was only the powerful voice of Grundy of the Shell.

kins!" remarked Grundy pleasantly. "I suppose I'd better come."

And Grundy pushed Wilkins aside, and looked into the cupboard for the supplies he had placed there after unpacking the hamper.

Then his expression changed.

"Well, where are the things, Grundy, now you've come?" inquired Wilkins, in a slightly sarcastic tone.

"My hat!"

"You must have put 'em somewhere else."

"I didn't put 'em anywhere else!" roared Grundy. "I put 'em in this cupboard not an hour ago, and then I came down to get some footer with you chaps. They've been taken away!"

"Oh!"

The faces of Wilkins and Gunn fell.

Grundy's face was assuming an expression that was terrifying. That handsome bundle of sosses, that bunch of grapes, that box of chocolates—where



Bunter "Sticks To It!"
(See Chapter 4.)

CHAPTER 8.

Missing!

"**A**NYTHING for tea?" asked Wilkins.

"I should jolly well say so! I had a hamper this afternoon from my Uncle Grundy."

"Oh, good!" said Gunn.

"A real spread," said George Alfred Grundy, beaming on his study-mates. "I've put the things in the cupboard. Sosses and grapes and choes—and things. Trot 'em out, Wilkins, old fellow, while I bung up the fire."

There was beaming satisfaction in Grundy's study in the Shell passage. A hamper from Uncle Grundy made the Shell fellows realise that the piping times of peace had really come at last.

"Where's the stuff?" asked Wilkins, looking into the cupboard.

"Under your nose," answered Grundy.

"Blessed if I can see it!"

"What an ass you are, George Wil-

were they? And that splendid cake—that cake which was a real corker—whither had it vanished?"

"Some rotter's been here!" gasped Grundy. "Even the butter-pat's gone! Some awful rotter! Trimble, very likely—he's that sort—"

Grundy gasped. His wrath was past words. He seized a cricket-stamp which was fortunately at hand.

"I'm going to see Trimble!" he spluttered.

He dragged open the door, and rushed out of the study. There was a yell in the passage as he came into violent contact with three fellows there.

"Yaroooh!"

"You howling ass!"

"Ow!" gasped Grundy, staggering from the shock. "What are you getting in the way for, Tom Merry, when a chap's in a hurry?"

"You thumping chump!" roared Tom Merry wrathfully. "What are you bolting about like a mad bull for?"

"Bump him!" gasped Lowther, who had been hurled against the opposite wall. "Collar him! Squash him!"

"Look here—" roared Grundy.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Wilkins, interposing between Grundy and the Terrible Three. "Hold on! We've been raided—no end of tuck collared by somebody! Grundy's after him—see?"

"No reason why he should play Tunk in the passage!" growled Tom Merry; but he refrained from collaring Grundy.

"So you've been raided, too?"

"Eh? Have you?"

"Yes; some rotter has scoffed the butter out of our study," said Tom. "We were going to make inquiries. There's a loaf gone, too. That doesn't matter so much, but butter's butter."

"Same rotter, no doubt!" exclaimed Grundy. "I was going to see Trimble about—"

"We were going to see Bunter—"

"Hallo, Gore! You missed something?"

Gore came out of his study snorting. "Somebody's got my butter!"

"Same beast!" howled Grundy.

"Come on, and see me slaughter Trimble! I'm sure it was Trimble!"

George Alfred Grundy sped along the passage, and arrived breathless at No. 2 in the Fourth, stump in hand. The other fellows followed fast. Grundy hurried the door open, and burst in like a four-point-seven shell.

Mellish and Trimble were sitting down to tea, and they jumped up at this sudden interruption, in alarm.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Mellish. "What the—"

"I say—" began Trimble. "Yaroorh! Leggo, Grundy! Wharrer you at? Oh, oh! Ow! Help!"

Grundy's powerful grip was on Trimble's collar, and he was yanked round his chair.

"Where's my tuck?" roared Grundy.

"Yaroorh!"

"Have you got it?"

"Yoooop!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Hold on!" yelled Mellish. "What are you pitching into Trimble for?"

"He's raided my grub."

Whack, whack!

"But perhaps he hasn't!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Rot! If he hasn't, he can say he hasn't, can he? He doesn't dare to say so."

Whack, whack!

Tom Merry grasped Grundy's arm, and forcibly stopped the application of the stump. Baggy Trimble was yelling frantically.

"Let go!" howled Grundy. "Do you think I'm going to let him mop up my grub without making an example of him?"

"Yow-ow-wooop!"

"Let him speak first, you dangerous ass!" said Tom. "Trimble, have you been raiding our studies?"

"Yaroorh! No! Yoooop!"

"Stuff!" said Grundy. "Why couldn't he say that at once, I'd like to know."

"Yow-ow-ow! You didn't give me a chance, did you?" yelled Trimble.

"Yow-ow! I'll go to the Housemaster about this! Yoooop!"

"Well, who was it, if it wasn't Trimble?" demanded Grundy. "Mind, I don't believe yet that it wasn't! But I'm ready to investigate. If it wasn't you, Trimble, who was it?"

"Yow-ow! How should I know, you silly idiot?" hooted Trimble.

"There he goes—prevaricating again!" exclaimed Grundy. "He's guilty, of course, or he wouldn't prevaricate! I'll jolly well—"

"You jolly well won't," said Tom.

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showing the incensed George Alfred back.

"We'll find the right party first."

"I've found him! It's Trimble! He's done it before, hasn't he?" snorted Grundy. "Mellish is hand-in-glove with him, too. I'll give Mellish a jolly good hiding while I'm here!"

"Keep off, you mad idiot!" howled Mellish, dodging round the table in great alarm.

Wilkins and Gunn dragged Grundy back.

"Hold on, Grundy—"

"Look here—"

"Where's Bunter, Mellish?" asked Tom Merry.

"Don't know, and don't care!" growled Mellish. "He doesn't belong to this study now. Go and eat coke, the lot of you!"

"We'll find Bunter before we slaughter Trimble," said Tom. "Come on, Grundy! Keep your stamp for the right party, fathead!"

Grundy glared round the study in search of some sign of the missing tuck. But it was not to be seen, and he allowed himself to be persuaded out of No. 2. The Shell fellows went along the passage inquiring for Bunter.

"Buntah?" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, when the inquirers looked into No. 6. "Buntah? I wemembah seein' him go up into the Shell passage about an hour ago; I haven't seen him since, dear boys. Pawwaps he has gone to tea with some Shell chap."

"It was Bunter, then!" exclaimed Grundy.

"Bai Jove! What was Buntah, Gwunday?"

Grundy did not stop to reply to that question. He rushed away in furious search for the Owl of Greyfriars. The searchers began at the first study in the passage, and went along study by study, in the hope of unearthing the fat junior sooner or later.

And so they came along to No. 4; and three startled juniors within that apartment heard the roar of George Alfred Grundy:

"I'll find him! I'll spifficate him! My cake, my grapes—hothouse grapes, you know, from my Uncle Grundy! I'll squash that fat villain Bunter as flat as a pancake! I'll—I'll—"

"No. 4 next!" said Tom Merry.

"Look in, Monty, and see if the fat bounder's there."

And the door of Study No. 4 was thrown open.

CHAPTER 9.

Trouble in No. 4.

BILLY BUNTER sat as if frozen to his seat as he heard the bull-voice of George Alfred Grundy in the passage outside. Mulvaney minor and Tompkins looked at him very expressively. It occurred to them whence had come that propitiatory spread.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, you fellows—"

The handle of the door was turning. Then Bunter woke to life. He slipped from his chair and disappeared under the study table like a flash.

"I—I say, you fellows, not a word!" he breathed.

Then all was silent.

Mulvaney and Tompkins went on mechanically eating chocolates. The door was thrown open, and Lowther looked in. His glance travelled round the study.

"Not here!" he said.

"Sure?" demanded Grundy, looking in over Lowther's shoulder, with a glare in his eyes. "You're rather an ass, you know—"

"You silly clump!"

"Let me look!" growled Grundy.

"Look and be blown!"

Grundy strode into the study.

"Has Bunter been here?" he demanded.

"Look for him yerself, old top," answered Mulvaney minor diplomatically. He felt that he could not betray the fat junior, quivering under the table close by his boots, though he was much incensed at having been made, unwittingly, a party to a "grub raid."

"He's not there, old top," said Wilkins, in the doorway. "Let's get along. We shall never find him at the rate. What the dickens are you blinking at, Grundy?"

Grundy was blinking at the chocolate-box on the table, and his expression was terrific. He knew that chocolate-box.

"My chocs!" he gasped.

"Oh, begorra!" murmured Mulvaney minor.

Grundy strode up to the table and seized the chocolate-box, and held it up wrathfully in the air.

"Look at that!" he thundered.

"That's my box! They're eating the chocs at this blessed minute!"

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Wilkins.

"So it wasn't Bunter after all! It was these fags!"

"Mulvaney!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"You!"

"Beggorra, and I didn't know the stuff was Grundy's," said Micky in dismay.

"Though sure I might have guessed it was somebody's!"

"Where's my cake?" roared Grundy.

Mulvaney minor tapped his waistcoat.

"Inside, old top!" he answered.

"You're a bit too late. You should have called earlier. You never were in time for anything, Grundy."

Grundy spluttered.

"I—I—I'll give you chocs! I'll give you—"

"Hold on!" shouted Mulvaney, dodging round the table as the muscular Shell fellow rushed at him. "I tell you I niver— Oh, crickey!"

Twice round the table they went, Mulvaney dodging nimbly, and Grundy raging in pursuit. Clarence York Tompkins stood in a dazed state. But Grundy had not come there to chase an elusive junior round the table. He could not overtake the nimbler Fourth-Formers, but he laid his powerful grasp on the study-table, and sent it whirling out of the way.

There was a terrific crash of tea-things as the table spun to the wall. Then there was a yell of surprise from Tom Merry & Co., answered by a louder yell from Billy Bunter, revealed squatting on the floor where the table had been.

"Bunter!"

"Yaroorh! I—I'm not here! Oh! Ow!"

"Bunter!" roared Grundy.

"Oh dear! I—I say, you fellows, I—"

"They're all in it!" shouted Grundy.

"Hold on!" interposed Tom Merry.

"For goodness' sake, ring off a minute, Grundy! Give your jaw a rest! Mulvaney minor, tell us what this means, and sharp about it! We've been raided, and we find some of the plunder here. Now, what's it mean?"

"Sure, we didn't know," said Micky Mulvaney. "Hadden't the faintest idea where Bunter got the grub. We thought he was standing a spread."

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom. "You fat villain—"

"I didn't!" yelled Bunter.

"What?"

"I wasn't!"

"Wasn't! What do you mean? You weren't what?"

"I—I mean—I—I—that is to say, I—I—"

stammered Bunter. "You—you see, it's like this. I've dropped in to see Mulvaney, only a minute ago—"

"Oh, begorra!"

Wilkins flew to the right and Gunn

to the left, gasping, and Bunter rushed on, heading desperately for the stairs.

In Study No. 9 Grundy scrambled to his feet in red wrath.

"You tripped me up!" he roared. "And you went down!" agreed Cardew. "Like to perform again, old top?"

"I'll—I'll—"
Levison and Clive, and Frank of the Third, jumped up to lend their aid as the Shell fellow advanced on Cardew; and Grundy changed his mind. He shook a big fist at the dandy of the Fourth, and tramped out of the study. He seemed surprised to find Wilkins and Gunn sitting in the passage.

"What are you doing there?" he demanded.

"Ow! That fat beast! Ow! I'm winded!" groaned Wilkins.

"You've let him pass you?" roared Grundy. "You silly chumps! You—you—"

"Oh, dry up!" grunted Wilkins. "I'm fed up with Bunter, and with you, too, Grundy! Go and eat coke!"

"What?"

"Coke!" snapped Wilkins. "Come on, Gunny!"

And Grundy's chums went back to their study. Grundy snorted disdainfully, and started for the stairs. Bunter was just disappearing down the second flight when Grundy reached the top landing.

"Got him now!" said George Alfred vengefully. "By Jove, I'll make shavings of him!"

And he rushed down the stairs in hot pursuit. Bunter flew. He came down the lower staircase with a rush, and at the bottom he was stopped by an iron grasp on his collar.

"Yaroor! Leggo, you idiot!" roared Bunter.

"Bunter!"

It was a terrifying voice. Bunter jumped as he recognised the tones of Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House.

"Oh, crikey!" he gasped. "I—I didn't know it was you, sir! I—I thought it was some other idiot—"

"What?"

"I—I mean—"

On the staircase George Alfred Grundy had vanished from view at the sight of the Housemaster. He did not want to interview Mr. Railton.

"What are you rushing downstairs for in this absurd manner, Bunter? You might have rushed into me—you very nearly did so!" exclaimed Mr. Railton sternly.

"I—I was—was—in rather a hurry, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I wasn't running away from Grundy, sir!"

"What?"

"Grundy's quite mistaken in thinking I know anything about his cake!"

"Is Grundy following you?"

Bunter blinked up the staircase.

"Oh, no, sir! Not at all! Nothing of the kind! I haven't seen Grundy since—since last week!"

Mr. Railton looked at the fat junior in perplexity. He did not know Bunter so well as his Form-master at Greyfriars knew him.

"Have you taken a cake belonging to Grundy?" he asked at last.

"Not at all, sir. I wouldn't do such a thing! Grundy is—*is* making a mistake—I told him so."

"You have just said you have not seen Grundy since last week, Bunter!"

"Oh! I—I mean I told him so last week, sir!"

Mr. Railton looked at the fat junior fixedly for some moments.

"You may go, Bunter!" he said at last.

And Bunter went, glad to escape. He

rolled into the Common-room. A little later, when the coast was clear, the fat junior ventured up the staircase again, and looked into Study No. 4.

Mulvaney minor and Tompkins were still occupied in putting their study to rights. They ceased that occupation as Bunter blinked in, and fixed deadly looks upon him. The Owl of Greyfriars nodded cheerily, unobservant of the threatening storm.

"I say, you fellows, that beast Grundy's gone now!" he remarked. "You can come and help me bring my things to the study—Why, what—Whoop!"

As if moved by the same spirit, Mulvaney minor and Clarence York Tompkins rushed at him. Even Bunter could not misunderstand that. He skipped into the passage.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Collar him!" yelled Mulvaney.

"Bring me the poker, Tompkins!"

But Bunter was gone before the poker could arrive.

CHAPTER 11.

No Go!

THUMP! Bang! "Bai Jove! What's the wow, dear boys?" exclaimed D'Arcy of the Fourth.

Bang, bang! Mellish and Trimble did not trouble to answer Gussy's query. They were thumping vigorously on the door of Study No. 2.

They looked ferocious.

It was the day following Bunter's unsuccessful attempt upon Study No. 4—and the fat junior was still homeless. But Bunter had been thinking during lessons that day. And now, at the hour of evening prep, Mellish and Trimble had arrived at No. 2, to find the door locked on the inside.

Outside was chalked, in big letters across the panels:

"NOTICE TO MELLISH AND
TRIMBLE!
NOT WANTED!
KEEP OFF THE GRASS!
RATS!
(Signed)
W. G. BUNTER."

Which was pretty good evidence that it was W. G. Bunter who was in the study, and had locked the door against his former study-mates.

"You fat villain!" hissed Mellish through the keyhole. "Open this door, or we'll slaughter you! We've got our prep to do."

A fat chuckle came from within.

"Go to the Form-room, old top!"

"Open the door!"

"Rats!"

"Bai Jove! Buntah is turnin' the tables!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"This is weally fair play on you chaps, you know."

"I'll scalp him!" howled Mellish.

"I'll squash him!" roared Trimble.

"Let us in, Bunter, you cad!"

Another fat chuckle.

"Go and eat coke!" came from within, after the chuckle.

W. G. Bunter evidently felt himself to be master of the situation.

Bunter's search of a study was over. Even the Owl had realised at last that it was futile; and that he would get more kicks than halfpence, so to speak, for his attempts to "plant" himself along the passage. So he had returned to his old quarters; and behind a locked door he bade defiance to Mellish and Trimble.

"We'll smash in the lock!" howled Mellish.

"You'll have the Housemaster up here if you do. What'll he say about turning a chap out of his study?" demanded Bunter.

"I—I—I'll—"
"Besides, I've got the table against the door," continued Bunter cheerily, from the inner side of the keyhole. "You can't get in, you know. Better make it pay!"

"Thump, thump! Bang!"

The clamour at the door of No. 2 brought fellows along the passage from far and near. Tom Merry & Co. arrived from the Shell quarters, and Blako & Co. from Study No. 6. There was a roar of laughter in the passage. Bunter's device for regaining a footing in his own quarters rather tickled the juniors.

"Better not make too much row," advised Tom Merry. "There'll be trouble if you bring the prefects here."

"I—I'll smash him!" howled Mellish. "I've got to do my prep."

"Well, Bunter's got his prep to do, too," said Tom, laughing. "You've no right to keep him out of the study. The Housemaster wouldn't allow it if Bunter went to him."

"If he brings Railton down on us, we'll jolly well tell him about Bunter scoffing our ration."

"I say, you fellows," came from within No. 2. "I'm not going to sneak to Railton. As for the rations, I decline to enter into a paltry discussion about a pat of butter and a few measly sardines. I'm really surprised at you, Mellish. You shock me!"

Bang, bang!

"I don't mind letting you in," continued Bunter, "but it's understood that you've got to behave yourselves. Make it pay!"

"I'll—I'll—I'll—"

"I'll lay down my conditions," went on Bunter. "I'm to keep in the study, and I'm to have the armchair. I'm rather particular on that point. Do you agree to my having the armchair, Mellish?"

"I'll spiculate you!" gasped Mellish.

"Of course, you fellows can have it when I'm not in the study. I'm not selfish, I hope."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! That chap Buntah is weally a corkah, you know."

"You fellows have got to promise, with Tom Merry as a witness. Otherwise, you don't come in. I may mention that if you don't come to terms I'm going to drop your books on the fire!"

"What?"

Bang, bang!

"I say, you fellows, it's no good banging at the door. By the way, I'm just going to start on the grub, Mellish. I suppose you meant the pilchards and the pineapple for my supper, didn't you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fat rotter!" shrieked Mellish.

"If you touch my pineapple—"

"If you touch my pilchards—"

howled Baggy Trimble.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang, bang! Thump! Kick! Bang!

There was a sound of a tin-opener at work in the study, and Mellish and Trimble were quite wild. There was a shout from Roylance on the stairs.

"Cave! Prefect!"

"Bai Jove! It's Knox!"

"Better clear," grinned Monty Lowther.

Knox, the bully of the Sixth, was coming up the stairs two at a time. The crowd of juniors melted away as if by magic. Nobody wanted to interview the Sixth Form bully if he could help it.

"What's this thundering row?" roared

Knox, as he strode into the Fourth Form passage.

But there was nobody left to answer. The only reply was shutting of doors and pattering feet in the distance. Knox stared at the chalked inscription on the door of No. 2, and shook the door-handle.

"What's this? What does this mean? Let me in at once!" exclaimed the prefect angrily.

"Oh, I say—"

"Bunter!"

"I—I'm not here, Knox. I—I mean, the—the door ain't locked— That is to say— Oh, dear!"

"Let me in!" thundered Knox, shaking the handle.

The key turned in the lock; there was no arguing with a prefect of the Sixth, especially when he had a temper like Knox's. The Sixth-Former threw the door open, and strode in, asphalting in hand; and Bunter retreated round the table in alarm.

"I—I say, Knox," he gasped. "I—I wasn't making a row, you know—"

"I—I was as silent as the tomb, you know! I really— Yaroooh!"

The bully of the Sixth was not particular as to his victim, so long as he found one. The asphalting interrupted Bunter. With a wild yell, Bunter sprinted round the table, with Knox after him, laying it on.

"Yaroooh! Help! Fire! Murder!" howled Bunter. "Stoppit, you beast! Oh, erikey! I tell you it wasn't me! I haven't—I didn't—I wasn't— Oh, crimps!"

Whack, whack, whack!

Bunter dodged out of the doorway at last and fled.

"Come back, Bunter!" roared Knox. "I haven't finished with you yet."

Bunter was not a very bright youth; but he was bright enough not to heed that command. He vanished up the dormitory staircase, and Knox, with a grunt, strode away.

A few minutes later, when Knox was safely gone, Mellish and Trimble came cautiously along to No. 2. They were grinning.

Mellish slipped the key of the study into his pocket.

"Now let that fat boulder come back!" he said. "I'll keep my cricket-bat handy for him."

And the bat was lying on the table when the two juniors sat down to prep, all ready for W. G. Bunter when he came—if he came.

When Bunter came, he came only as far as the doorway, and blinked in with great caution.

"I say, you fellows—" he began. Mellish jumped up and seized the bat. Slam!

The Owl of Greyfriars vanished, and did not reappear.

Billy Bunter was still in Search of a Study!

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"THE OWL'S NEST!"—by Martin Clifford.)

Extracts from "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD" and "TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

FIGGY AND THE FAGS. By George Francis Kerr.

I.

"GOT you!" ejaculated Figgy.

We had just come in from footer, ready for tea. Fatty, as usual, was more than ready. He had referred five times in three minutes to the rabbit-pie that was awaiting us, and had at last decided that we would have it hot—if he could manage to last out till it was made hot. I understood that that depended largely upon the state of the study fire. If it had got too low, the dear Fatty was sure that Figgy and I would never have patience to abide the slow heating of that pie.

Slow heating, mind you—don't overlook the aspirate. Take it away, and the process indicated by what would be left would certainly not be slow. As for the pie, none of that was likely to be left.

And Figgy, entering first, found young Jameson at our cupboard!

"I—I— Oh, I say, Figgy, I wasn't doing anything!" said the kid.

"We're not going to have you doing nothing in our study!" rapped out Figgy.

It did look as though the kid was after that rabbit-pie. Jameson is a decent specimen of the fag tribe; but you can't treat them safely as if they were superior to temptation in the grub line.

"The cupboard isn't quite the best place to be doing nothing at, my young friend," I told Jameson.

"I should think not—not with a rabbit-pie there!" said Fatty warmly.

"Give me that cricket-stump, Kerr, old chap!" Figgy said.

"Look here, you're not going to stomp me!" howled Jameson, wriggling hard.

He is a hefty kid—one of the biggest and strongest in the Third—but he found Figgy's grip a grip of iron.

"Your mistake!" growled Figgy. "I certainly am—unless you can give me a satisfactory explanation of what you were after. Mind, pie isn't a satisfactory one!"

"I wasn't after the pie, fathhead!"

"Well, what was it, then?"

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you."

"P'raps—p'raps not. Better try me!" said Figgy.

"Well, then, I was after my lines!"

"Your—er—your which?"

"Lines, I've got two hundred to show up to Selby to-morrow morning."

"But what on earth made you come to our cupboard for them?" demanded Figgy, in natural amazement.

"I—I— A chap said they were there!"

"Sounds a bit thin, Kerr—eh?"

"It's a rotten thumper!" said Fatty. "I didn't think you were such a young Har, Jam-face!"

"I'm not!" yelled Jameson.

"It's a queer yarn—so queer that it may be true," I remarked.

In my experience, the more unlikely a story of that sort is, when it's told by a fellow who does not make a habit of lying, the greater the chances are that it's true. If he were lying for once, he would most likely tell a better one.

This does not apply to fellows like Trimble and that chap Bunter we have had here the last few weeks. They do make a habit of lying; but I should not feel any inclination to believe their yarns on the score of their being improbable. They tell all sorts.

"Who was the chap, then?" snapped Figgy.

"I can't tell you."

"Of course he can't! There wasn't any chap," said Fatty. "I name come, Figgy! I shall know in a sec if he's been picking at that pie."

"It isn't sneaking to tell us, kid," I said; to give Jameson a chance.

And, of course, it was not. Telling us was quite a different thing from telling a master or a prefect. We have no authority—though we do know how to deal with grub-sneaks, all the same.

"That's what you say, Kerr," answered Jameson doggedly. "I say it is!"

"Don't we know better than you do?" said Figgy sharply.

"Not likely! You think you do, I dare say!"

"We do! It's like your giddy cheek to doubt it. You can either tell me the chap's name or take a stumping!"

"I won't tell you, and you jolly well aren't going to stomp me! We'll make you sorry for it if you do!"

It was a silly threat. Jameson, as we all three understood perfectly well, was threatening us with vengeance at the hands of Wally D'Arcy & Co. He is the one New House member of the Wally tribe.

But, naturally, we are not exactly afraid of those seven young rips—not much!

Figgy was not in the best possible temper. He had heard that morning that Miss Cleveland—cousin Ethel, you know—was arriving by the midday train; but she had not come. Then someone had hacked him rather fiercely during the afternoon's play, and he was not at all sure that it was an accident, though, of course, he had to accept it as being so when the fellow apologized.

He shoved Jameson out at arm's-length, and brought that stump hard down across his shoulders.

The kid howled with rage, and kicked.

He landed Figgy right on the sore shin. Figgy let go of him. Jameson took the chance to bolt.

But Fatty was in the way, and not at all inclined to get out of it; and old Fatty is a pretty solid lump to get past.

Fatty stood still. Jameson dodged, and caught his left foot against a leg of the table. Figgy struck at that moment; and the stump, instead of getting the kid on the back, took him across the neck and cheek, leaving a great welt.

"Oh!" gasped Fatty.

"You rotten cad!" howled Jameson. "Oh, you fink cad!"

"Here," said kid, "in frightfully sorry!" said old Figgy, his face white with dismay. "I never meant—"

"What did you go stomping me for, you beast? I wasn't doing any harm here; was I? Am I to be knocked about like this because I won't sneek?"

"I tell you I didn't mean—"

"You'd no right to touch me! Oh, you shall smart for this, you brute!"

"Easy does it, young 'un!" I said.

"Figgy's not a brute, and you know that as well as I do. He's apologized. I don't see what more he can do. It's a nasty mark, I know, and, of course, it hurt. But do take it like a sportsman! Let me bathe—"

"I won't have one of you touch me, you cads! Three of you to one, and then to— Boo-hoo!"

It was rage that made the kid cry, not pain. We all knew that. Young Jameson is not the sort to cry because he is hurt.

But I knew as he bolted from the room that if there was anything that could increase his bitterness against Figgy it was our having seen him break down like that. Wally's crowd had been crying a trick beneath contempt.

"I say, I've done it now!" groined poor old Figgy. "Oh, I do hope Ethel doesn't see that kid's face!"

"She'll know that it was an accident. If she ever knows you did it," I told him. "But Jameson wouldn't tell her that."

"I—I couldn't face her if she knew anything about it, Kerr!"

Everybody knows how much good old Figgy thinks of Ethel Cleveland.

He isn't soft and sentimental about it, like Quasy when he gets gone on a girl. But he values her opinion more than anyone else's in the world; and it would almost break his heart if she believed him a fink or a bully.

"Well, he won't know," Fatty said soothingly. "Let's have tea."

"Tea!" snorted Figgy. "Who cares for tea?"

"Why, I do!" answered Fatty, opening his blue eyes very widely.

"Well, I don't!"

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"That's a pity! Still, I dare say I can eat your share of the pie, old top!"

Fatty did, too. Figgy wouldn't touch a scrap of it. He just sat there and grizzled.

Cousin Ethel was coming next day—we knew that. And Wally is her cousin—really, not like the rest of us, except Gussy; we are only adopted cousins—and she likes all Wally's chums, and they like her. But they wouldn't tell her about a thing like that. Jameson would keep out of her way as long as it showed, I felt sure.

I could not get Figgy to believe it, though. He went to bed still uncomfortable. He was ashamed of what he had done, anyway, for he knew he had struck in anger, though the blow's falling where it did was a pure accident. But it was the thought of Ethel Cleveland that made him feel it as a tragedy, instead of a mere "regrettable occurrence."

II.

"It doesn't sound a bit like Figgins," said Frank Levison.

"Sound like him, you silly young fattedid! It was him!" howled Jameson.

That youth had taken his bruised face and his injured spirit over to the School House, that his chums might comfort him and with him concert reprisals upon the enemy.

"Frank means that Figgy can't have meant to do it," said Wally D'Arcy. "I must say myself I'm surprised. But he did it. That's what matters."

"Oh, yes," admitted Frank. "I don't want Jam-face knocked about like that, of course. I think it's dead off. But if it was an accident—"

"Does it look like an accident?" snorted Jameson, with a hand to his bruised and smarting face.

"Not much!" returned Hobbs.

"I vote we give the rotter toko for this!" said Reggie Manners.

"Rather!" agreed Curly Gibson.

"But old Figgy ain't a rotter," objected Frayne.

"That's just what I mean," Frank said. Levison minor and Joe Frayne are far and away the most reasonable of Levison's band.

"He was in a tearing rage about something," Jameson said sulkily. "He let himself go. I know he doesn't often do that. But he did it this time—and just look at my mug!"

"What did you do to him?" asked Wally acutely.

And that was where Jameson went wrong. If he had admitted that he had kicked Figgy's shins it is very doubtful whether any of the other six—even Manners minor, who has been known to be guilty of that trick—would have gone whole-heartedly into a scheme of vengeance.

But he was ashamed to own up.

"Don't I tell you?" he said impatiently. "I was at their cupboard. That young sweep Gladwin had collared my lines, and he said he'd put them there."

"He was pulling your leg," said Wally.

"Well, he'll be jolly sorry he tried that on. I don't put up with having my leg pulled, I can tell you!"

No one commented on that. Gladwin is an inconspicuous fag on our side of the way, where the fags are rather down on Jameson, partly because all his chums are School House, and partly because he can lick any of the New House fags, and doesn't let them forget it. His giving Gladwin a hiding would be all in the day's work, and was not worth arguing about.

Figgy was a different matter. The kids all know what a jolly decent chap our old Figgy is, every way; and they had their doubts, I suppose.

But the law of Wally & Co. is cash for all and all for cash, and it was scarcely on the cards that Jameson's urgings to revenge should be fruitless.

"Well, anyway, we don't want to drag Kerr and Fatty Wynu into it," said Frank Levison.

"We certainly don't, old man," answered Wally, with a grin. "Unless we're going to get another half-dozen or so of our chaps in to help us."

"Game is to get Figgins somewhere alone, and jolly well put him through it," said Hobbs.

"But how are we going to get him alone?" asked Curly Gibson.

(I am reporting all this as if I had heard it, I know. I was not there, but I learned later about the deliberations, and you may

take it from me that what I set down here is pretty accurate.—G. F. K.)

"I've got a notion for that—a ripping wheeze!" cried Manners minor.

Nobody seemed very enthusiastic. Somehow Reggie Manners is hardly taken at his own valuation in the Third. And that's just as well, for he is a swanky young ass, and often needs sitting upon.

"Well, we don't mind hearing it, though we know it will be a wash-out," said Wally.

"Rats! It will work like a charm! Do any of you know a dead sure way of fetching Figgins anywhere?"

"Tie him up and carry him there," suggested Hobbs, rather weavily.

"Ass! Unless you can get him somewhere you can't tie him up. Any place where you could tie him up you could rag him baldheaded—see?"

"How do you think you'd do it?" asked Wally.

"I don't think—I know!"

"Well, then, clever?"

"Send him a message from cousin Ethel!"

The six stared at Reggie. He had certainly thought of something that would not have occurred to any of them.

"Dead off!" said Levison minor.

"Oh, you dry up! We don't want any of your pious notions!" snarled Reggie.

"I don't see that it's off," said Jameson.

"An' I can't see that Frank's notion's pious," Joe Frayne said. "I reckon as it's dead off, too. We can't go draggin' of cousin Ethel into this 'ere bizness."

"Who wants to drag her into it?" shrilled Reggie.

"I don't, you silly asses! I s'pose I— Well, I think as much of her as any of you; and I wouldn't do a blessed thing to annoy her. But it wouldn't be dragging her in; she'd never even know."

"Seems a bit rough on old Figgy, though—trapping him that way," objected Curly Gibson.

"Well, if he goes and gets spoony on a girl—"

"It isn't a girl—it's cousin Ethel!"

"Young ass, you are, Levison! What is she if she isn't a girl?"

Frank could not explain. But some of them at least knew what he meant. Ethel Cleveland is to most of us something a good deal more than the ordinary girl, you see.

"An' I shouldn't exactly call it bein' spoony," said Frayne.

"Don't see what else you can call it," answered Wally. "And I don't see much against it myself. 'Tain't as if it was going to hurt Ethel in any way. I wouldn't have that."

"There you are, young Levison! And Wally really is her cousin!" said Manners minor triumphantly.

Wally's weight thrown into the scale turned it decisively.

The two dissentients had to give in. They agreed to share the enterprise, though they did not half like it. That is the law of the pack.

III.

"WHAT do you want, Gladwin?"

Figgy was not in the study when Gladwin of the Third put in his tousled head.

"Ain't Figgins here?"

"You can look under the table if you like. Unless he's there, he can't very well be in the room without being visible."

"Oh, don't be funny, Kerr! It's serious."

"What's serious, kid?"

"What I've got to say to Figgy."

"Well, he'll be in before long."

"I—I say, Kerr, he'll be tearing mad with me. I shouldn't like him to give me a welt like he gave young Jam-face, you know."

"I don't think that's any way likely. But if you're afraid of it you can tell me, and I'll tell Figgy."

"I know what it is!" said Fatty.

I turned round sharply. I had supposed that Fatty was asleep.

"What, then?" I asked of him.

"That kid Jameson's yarn was true, though it did sound pretty thin. And this is the young sweep who put his impot in our cupboard!"

"No, I didn't," said Gladwin, looking rather relieved. "It wasn't put there at all. We only kidded the silly ass it was, that's all. It was my idea; that's why I came to own up."

"You've made a nice mess of things. I must say! What did you do it for?" said Fatty.

"Well, Jam-face thinks he's so jolly smart, and he kinds of looks down on us lot, and goes about with D'Arcy minor and that crowd. We like to take it out of him now and then. But— Oh, I say, here's Figgy!"

And Gladwin bolted, leaving us to tell the tale.

Figgy didn't seem greatly interested, and he was not at all pleased.

"Makes it worse, if anything," he said. "I ought to have believed the kid. He's straight enough."

"Well, I didn't believe him," said Fatty slowly.

"You, porpoise? What's it matter what you think? You can't think, come to that! Kerr believed all right."

"No, Figgy, old son. I only thought it might be true because it sounded so blessed unlikely."

"What's bothering me is what cousin Ethel will say," said Figgy, frowning hard.

"Nothing at all, old top! She won't hear about it."

"I think she has heard. Anyway, I shall know in a few minutes, for I shall see her."

And Figgy started to put his tie straight and brush his clothes.

We did not ask him anything. We never do.

But I felt certain that Ethel Cleveland hadn't sent to say that she wanted to see him because she meant to rag him. That is not her way.

Matter of that, it's not her way to send him messages at all. We all know that she likes to see Figgy better than she does any of the rest of us, but that kind of thing is hardly in her line.

If she had sent for him, though, there was bound to be some reason for it. Figgy might have told us that Wally D'Arcy had given him the supposed message. I should have smelt a rat at once, though Wally is Ethel's cousin, for I felt sure that he and his crowd would want to get home on Figgy for the affair Jameson. But as it was I suspected nothing.

Figgy went off, looking distinctly neater than usual. He is hardly up to the mark of the admirable Arthur Augustus in the matter of appearance, you know, as a rule. He wasn't even then, for that matter.

He went off, and he fell right into the trap. An old bird like Figgy, too!

The seven were waiting for him behind a hedge half a mile or so from the school, and while he was looking round for cousin Ethel they pounced upon him as one man.

"Whoop!" howled Figgy, as he went down.

"What's all this for, you young rotters?"

"Jam-face's mug," replied Wally briefly.

"You can't go doing beastly things like that without getting it in the neck for it," added Manners minor.

Figgy struggled desperately. He feared that at any moment cousin Ethel might be along, and it sent him nearly mad to think she might see him being handled like that by the fag tribe.

"If you don't let me go I'll—"

"Rats! We're too many for you, my beauty!" answered Wally. "What shall we do to him, you fellows?"

"He'll have to apologise to Jimmy, anyway!" said Hobbs.

"I'll do that," said Figgy at once. "I know now that the yarn he told was true. And I did apologise to him directly I'd done it. He knows it was an accident, and that's more than he can say about kicking my shin!"

"Did you do that, Jimmy?" snapped Levison minor, letting go of Figgy.

Jameson let go, too.

"Yes, I did," he growled. "I'm sorry now. But—"

"You ought to have told us!" said Wally severely.

"I know; but—"

"Oh, never mind that!" said Figgy hastily. "I can forgive it all serene. Let me get up, you kids. Look here, I'm expecting someone. You know that, Wally. I—I'll give myself up to you anywhere you like later on. Honest injun, I will! Mind, I don't say I won't struggle or bash any of you; but, hang it all, you're seven to one! Surely it's a fair offer?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

You can fancy how Figgy scowled at the riotous fags as they cackled.

It was no joke to poor old Figgy.

"You may be expecting someone, but she won't come," said Wally. "Why, you fat-

head, don't you see it was all a spoof? Ethel didn't send you any message!"

"Then you are a rotten young liar!"

"No, Figgis, no! I only asked you if you'd meet cousin Ethel here. It was you who said you would. Your mistake. Ha, ha!"

"But I'm here, Wally!" said a voice. And there was Ethel Cleveland looking over the hedge at them!

They let Figgis go at once. He scrambled up, red and confused. But he was not redder or more confused than the fags. Levison minor told his major afterwards that he would have been jolly pleased if the earth had opened up and swallowed him. And what Manners major told his minor about thinking out caddish schemes I won't repeat, for I don't think any of the kids meant to be caddish.

"Mr. Selby's coming!" said Ethel.

"My hat!"

"Ob, crumbs!"

"What a squeak!"

Of course, old Selby has no love for George Figgis. But he is no end down on those fags, and it would have been a fine score for him if he had caught them at their ragging.

But all he saw when he stalked past was Ethel Cleveland talking to one Fourth-Former and seven Third-Formers, and he just lifted his mortar-board to Ethel and scowled at her companions; and he went on.

"I don't understand this," said Ethel, looking straight at Wally.

"There's no need you should," said Reggie, who did not want her to know anything of his precious scheme.

"I spoke to my cousin, Reggie," she said quickly.

And she laid her hand on Figgis' arm. I don't think she knew she was doing it, and I am sure that it was not because she thought he needed protection. But it made Figgis feel happier at once; and somehow it impressed the fags, though it wouldn't have done if cousin Ethel had been anyone else.

"Well, I suppose I'll have to tell you," said Wally, drawing a deep breath. "You'll be mad, though. It wasn't just the most decent thing to do, I reckon, now."

And he told her of the trap into which Figgis had fallen.

She let her hand stay on Figgis' arm. Her face flushed as Wally told his tale, but she was not as angry as they had thought she would be.

"But what was it for?" she asked.

All the kids looked at Figgis. They were not going to answer that.

"I did that!" Figgis blurted out, pointing to Jameson's face.

"Oh, chose it, Figgis! It was really my own fault!" protested Jameson.

"I'm sure it was an accident! I'm quite sure of that!" said cousin Ethel.

She was angry then, and hurt, too; and

they all felt uncomfortable—none of them more so than Figgis.

"I didn't mean to hurt him like that, Ethel, of course," he said humbly. "But I was in a rage, and I did lash out at him."

"Well, I'd kicked your shins," growled Jameson.

"Let me look at it," said Ethel gently. Her fingers touched the red weal, and young Jameson went beet-root colour. But he liked it all the same; I am sure of that. For he knew that it meant the shin-kicking was overlooked, and it had cost him a pretty big effort to confess to that lapse.

"Girls are no end queer," said Wally, as he and five of the clan followed cousin Ethel and Figgis and young Jam-face.

They were more or less in disgrace, and they knew it; but those two weren't in the black books.

"Cousin Ethel isn't 'girls,' and I don't call it queer a bit!" said Levison minor stoutly.

"Oh, you're a young donkey!" snapped Reggie.

"And you're a young cad, Manners minor!" snorted Wally.

"Well, I like that! What are you, then?"

"Another of 'em! We all are—except Franky and Joe!"

But they are not, you know! Figgis says they are very decent kids. Cousin Ethel thinks them so. That proves it!

THE ST. JIM'S GALLERY.

No. 34.—The Hon. Walter Adolphus D'Arcy.

THAT is Wally's proper name, you know. But he does not insist on the use of it. In fact, the insistence is all the other way. Wally turns up his nose at the "Honourable," and is apt to put up his fists if anyone tries on the "Adolphus."

Which does not in the least imply that Wally is not honourable, in fact as well as in name.

He is as straight and essentially decent as any fellow at St. Jim's. He may poke fun at Arthur Augustus' high-flown ideas; but really Gussy and Wally are not so absolutely unlike as you might think to hear Wally talk. Their ways are different, but many of their characteristics are the same.

Wally is not a swell. There are times when Gussy finds it necessary to give him brotherly admonitions concerning clean collars and all that kind of thing. But a swell of thirteen or so is, as a rule, an almost undurable specimen. At that important age there are so many other things for a fellow to think about, and his personal appearance is but a trifling matter. Two years later, when he has become aware of girls as girls, you know, it is different.

Like Gussy, Wally is ready to stand up for a fellow down on his luck. There have been many instances of this; some of them may crop up later in this article.

And, like Gussy, Wally has any amount of pluck, and is frank almost to a fault. You might say that he is franker than his major; for Wally will tell a fellow of his defects on purpose, whereas when Gussy does that the hostile criticism generally slips out more or less unawares. Wally is less tolerant than Gussy, who is always looking for the good that must be somewhere in every fellow. You would not catch Wally looking for the good points of, say, Pigott, or Racker, or Cutts. He is quite content to regard them as having none.

Study No. 6 went to meet Wally when he first came to St. Jim's, and Blake was particularly struck by his utter apparent want of resemblance to Gussy. Wally was very untidy indeed, and his jacket was covered with hairs. The hairs came from Pongo. As Wally explained, "That's the worst of Pongo! His wool does come off, and no mistake!"

"Hallo, kid! So you've come!" was Wally's greeting to Gussy at the station. "Same old Gussy! Same old window-pane!"

It is hardly needful to remark that Wally does not sport an eyeglass.

"I and sowwy!" Gussy told him, with dignity. "I will shake hands with you presently, when you have had a wash. I cannot have my gloves soiled!"

An inquiry after Wally's gloves elicited the fact that Pongo had gnawed one of them on the way, and the other had been left under the seat.

Jameson was cock of the Third at that date. In the Form-room Jameson was using two lockers. Mr. Selby told Wally he could have No. 10. Jameson told him he couldn't. It was plainly a case that could only be

settled by ordeal of battle, and everyone expected that Wally would be licked, not only because he was a mere new kid, but because Jameson was bigger and heftier, and had long swayed the Third.

But it turned out that Wally could have the key of the locker; and it also turned out before long that Jameson's reign over the Form was at an end.

Before Wally became cock of the Third, however, things had happened to him. He ran away. He had kicked a football right into the face of Mr. Selby—by accident, of course. But Mr. Selby did not believe that it was an accident, and he told Wally before the whole Form that he was lying in saying it was, and that he should cane him, not for the accident—or otherwise—but for the lie. Wally had had several other combats by this time, and had won them all. He was at the stage when he might look forward to being cock of the Form, but was not acknowledged as such, and was not exactly popular with the youngsters; he had licked. They chortled at his getting a caning for telling a lie; and Wally determined to bolt rather than submit to the indignity.

Gussy refused to hear of his doing anything so foolish as bolting—offered to expostulate with Mr. Selby on his behalf—and lent him a couple of sovereigns. This gave Wally the chance to cut. Gussy had failed to perceive that; he does not always see all the way.

Wally went home to get together a few things before casting himself upon the world. His father, Lord Eastwood, was not there; but the butler wired to him, and locked Wally in his room to keep him safe.

Gussy came after him. But Wally eluded Gussy and did down Walker, and got clear away to London. Gussy, with Blake and Tom Merry, came to look for him, and found him—selling newspapers, or, rather, trying to establish his right by combat to a pitch whereon he might sell them.

He went back, and the trouble was cleared up. But Mr. Selby has never forgiven him, and probably never will.

Of the feud between master and boy much has been already told in the sketch of Mr. Selby. It has gone on without any real cessation ever since that early trouble. But it would, no doubt, have started in some other way if it had not started in that particular way. For to Mr. Selby, who really dislikes all boys, a boy of Wally's type is specially objectionable. Wally is inclined to be cheeky; Mr. Selby considers him abominably impudent, and reads cheek into speeches quite harmless in intention. Wally is high-spirited and full of mischief; to Mr. Selby



high spirits and mischief are only varied forms of original sin. It is safe to say that there is no boy in the Third for whom that Form's tyrant has the slightest liking; but Wally and Reggie's chums are his special detestation.

In these days Wally has six staunch and loyal followers, all to be depended upon to back him up in emergencies, though they may kick over the traces at times. Reggie Manners, for instance, often does that. Frank Levison, the latest arrival of them all, is really Wally's best chum; but little Joe Frayne, the golden-hearted Cockney lad, stands very high in his regard. Perhaps that is because Wally has the strong fellow's natural liking for someone weaker than himself, someone who may now and then need standing up for. By which it is not in the least meant that Joe Frayne and Frank Levison cannot stand up for themselves. But they are gentler of nature than Reggie Manners, or than Hobbs, or than Jameson—enemy turned friend—or, perhaps, than Curly Gibson, though he is not quite of the same type as those three.

It is impossible to give much space here to the varied activities of the fag tribe—their japes—their feuds with the Fourth and the Shell—their cooking of kippers and bloaters on the fire in the Form-room—and all that sort of thing. By the way, the joke about the wacky herrings is only a joke; the Third do not really like them best that way. It is impossible to begin to recount the many tricks played upon Mr. Selby. It is impossible to tell of all the times in which Wally and Gussy have come into conflict over questions of behaviour and dress and graver matters. But it would be a big mistake to suppose that Wally, though he may constantly poke fun at Gussy, though he never treats him with the respect that Gussy considers his due, is not fond of his major—fond of him and proud of him, though he would never own to the pride.

There was another time when Wally ran away. It was more serious then. Piggott had plotted to make him seem guilty of theft, and many of the Form believed; and the evidence seemed so conclusive that the Head could not doubt. Lord Eastwood was sent for; but Wally would not wait to face his father. He bolted, and joined a boxing-booth as a very juvenile light-weight—with the added attraction of a mask. At Abbot'sford Reuben Piggott, badly in need of money, guessed Wally—whose identity was quite unguessed by him—in combat in the hope of making some. You will remember how the booth got on fire, and how Wally rescued his enemy. They are still enemies, in spite

of that rescue; Wally and Piggott could never be friends.

At first there was trouble between Wally and Levison minor on account of Wally's very outspoken remarks about Levison's major. But it was soon discovered in the Third what a first-rate little fellow in every way Frank is; and after that Wally & Co. went easier on the subject of "Ernie." Now there is no need for them to shun that subject; Levison's major is an elder brother to be proud of. Afterwards trouble again arose through Frank's keen sense of honour. It developed to an extent that meant fighting; and they fought. Frank was licked, of course; he is not up to Wally's weight. But Wally's remorse when he found out how utterly in the wrong he had been made the bond of friendship between them stronger than ever.

Wally does not mind owning—once in a way—not often enough to make Tom conceited, you know—that he really has a good opinion of Tom Merry. When the row with Blake put Tom in the black books of his own Form and the Fourth, the Third stood by him loyally; and Wally was at the head of the Third in that, as in other matters.

Tom was master of the Third for a little while in the absence of Mr. Selby. And, of course, the Third gave Tom lots of trouble. To them his presence in a position of authority seemed no end of a joke. They called him "Mr. Merry" and "sir," and regarded the calling him so humorous. Wally, in spite of his real fondness for Tom, led the japing; and it was he who, pursued by Lowther and Manners, darted into Tom's study as a place of refuge, and said:

"Excuse me, sir, would you mind telling me exactly how many lines I have to do? You gave me so many this morning that I had forgotten. I know they were less than a million, sir, but I don't know exactly how many, sir."

Wally has his share of cheek, and a bit over—no doubt about that!

Do you remember how Wally stood up for Joe Frayne? So did Tom Merry, naturally, for it was through Tom that Joe came to the school. So did Gussy. Is not Gussy always to be counted upon by anyone down on his luck? But it was easier for them than for Wally; and Wally's championship was at closer quarters, and counted for more. But there will be more to tell about that when Joe comes to be dealt with. Wally could not stand it when Joe became a convert to Skimpole's Socialistic theories, however.

He stood up for Dudley, too. Dudley really was a bit of a rotter. Not quite a hopeless rotter—that was proved later. But Dudley

had won Wally's heart by protecting Pongo; and it was through Wally that Dudley got a chance to make a fresh start.

Wally has done a good deal in the way of looking after Manners' minor, too—a pretty thankless task. Reggie really is a handful, as was clearly indicated when he was dealt with in this series.

Don't imagine Wally as preaching or "pi." He is not that in the very least. But he has his standard of honour and decency, and he hates to see any of his chums fall below that standard. It is a tolerably simple one. According to Wally's code it is rotten to funk, sneak, tell lies, gamble, or smoke—and quite right, too! Piggott does all these things and so Wally bars Piggott completely. Reggie has had lapses into most of them, if not all; but he is not barred completely, for they are only lapses.

Pongo—well, really, I think Pongo must be dealt with separately. It was doubtless something of a surprise to many readers to find Tower included in the Gallery. After that, the inclusion of Pongo will not surprise anyone; but I think it will interest most of you. There will, incidentally, be more about Wally then; but I feel sure none of you will mind that.

As might be guessed from his experiences as a runaway, Wally is a boxer of no mean order. In fact, he is quite a little champion for his age. It was no very difficult task for him to beat Racke, in spite of the Shell fellow's big superiority in height, weight, and reach. At cricket and footer Wally is also really good. He might fill a place at any time in the Junior Eleven at either game without any danger of letting the side down. He is unquestionably the best runner in the Third. In that connection one recalls more than one paper-chase, with reckless tearing-up of papers alleged to be valuable by their owners, for scent. And there is one paper-chase in particular which it is not easy to forget—that one in which Wally and Frank, as hares, went through the field with the bull in it—though Frank protested against the folly of that—and Reggie Manners, alone of the pack, followed.

Some of Wally's troubles with Mr. Selby have already been told of in dealing with that genial personage; and there would be little profit in recounting others. It must be admitted that Wally does not show up at his best in some of his encounters with the tyrant of the Third. But the odds are very heavily against him every time. Mr. Selby has the whip-hand, and it is hardly to be wondered at if Wally is rebellious and even sulky at times. I don't think he ever sulks with anyone else.

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"THE OWL'S NEST!"

By Martin Clifford.

This week we have Bunter in search of a study. He does not find one—no one will take him in, though the whimsical Cardew may be said to have taken him in very completely in another sense.

In the next story Bunter is still searching. He does not find anyone willing to share a study with him; but— Well, I must not tell too much. But the Owl does find a nest, of rather a strange sort; and out of that complications arise.

The Third Form comes into this yarn, and you will be amused by the feud between Billy Bunter and Wally & Co., I know.

CARDEW.

The mention of Cardew reminds me that I have had quite a number of letters of late about that enterprising and erratic youth. "Cardew's Pig" seems to have pleased many readers; and I have been asked for more stories in which Ralph Reckness figures prominently. Here and there someone—generally a very young reader—says that he cannot bear Cardew; but, on the other hand, with a large number he seems to have become almost first favourite.

Perhaps it is not surprising that the youngsters don't like him so well as the older readers. For essentially Cardew is older in his manner and his thoughts than most of the Fourth, just as Talbot is older than most of the Shell. And that makes him difficult for youngsters to understand. But I think even they cannot fail to appreciate the arm chair trick played on Bunter.

Yes, we shall be seeing quite a lot of Cardew in the near future, both in the long stories and in the short ones. It might be possible to get some yarns of his early days at Wodehouse. You can imagine, perhaps, what sort of a fag Cardew would have been!

TELL YOUR FRIENDS:

How do you like these Bunter stories? To me they seem as funny as anything I have ever read. I think they can hardly fail to strike you in much the same way.

Tell your chums about them! Don't keep a good thing to yourself—that's too Bunterish, you know.

Our circle of readers is growing every week; but we have room for lots more yet, as many more as you can gather in for us, in fact.

Most fellows have some sense of humour; and no one with a sense of humour could fail to appreciate the stories that Mr. Clifford is giving us just now.

I have often before urged upon my readers the fact that the best turn they can do me is to help in shoving up the circulation; and the response has always been good. But I hope that it will be better than ever this time.

NOTICES.

Correspondence Wanted.

F. Atkin, 160, Russell Street, Moss Side, Manchester—with readers anywhere, 16-17; friendly style.

Miss Evelyn M. Jones, 161, The Vale, Acton, W.3—with readers anywhere, 14-16.

F. Burnage, 483, Chester Road, Old Trafford, Manchester, wants members for stamp club.

N. Outwin, Fernleigh, Reckness, Yorks, wants readers for free pass-rund magazine.

Norman Griffiths, 10, Wote Street, Basingstoke, Hants, wants readers and contributors for the "Amateur World," 2d.

R. G. McCulloch, care of W. A. Cooper, 5, Barnhill Street, Rutherglen, near Glasgow—with readers interested in chemistry.

L. S. Patterson, 103, Parliament Street, Stockton-on-Tees, wants to hear of contributors to amateur magazines.

F. Bottomley, 46, Downhills Park Road, Philip Lane, Tottenham, N.13, wants contributor, about 12, for short stories for amateur magazine. Copy, 13d.

Miss P. Lockey, 109A, Tottenham Road, Islington, London, N.1—with girl readers in Colonies or America interested in stamps, books, etc.—aged 13-16.

H. Swindells, 10, Vernon Street, Buxton Road, Macclesfield, offers advice to readers on general subjects. Stamped envelope.

D. E. Strafford, Brampton House, 120, Weaste Lane, Pendleton—with readers anywhere.

R. Dunford, 406, Bowling Old Lane, Bradford—with readers, in their own languages, in France, Switzerland, Spain, South America and United States.

Your Editor



BUNTER— and BUNTER!

An introduction to the first Magnet/Gem 'twinning' series

by Eric Fayne

(Editor of Collectors Digest)

This was one of the several occasions when Charles Hamilton employed the "doubles" theme and, though on the face of it the whole thing was incredible, it was handled so well that it provided splendid entertainment for the reader.

It was also the first instance of what has been called "twin series" — in which the plot was played out at both Greyfriars and St. Jim's, with *The Magnet* and *The Gem* being synchronised.

Of necessity, the foundation for the series was laid at Greyfriars, and three stories were written in preparation in *The Magnet* before *The Gem* joined in. Taken as a whole, the series occupied 18 weeks in *The Magnet* and 15 in *The Gem*.

It is my opinion that *The Gem* had the better part of the arrangement, and the reason for this was that Billy Bunter went to St. Jim's.

Nowhere in the entire range of Hamiltonia is the importance of Billy Bunter as a valuable Hamilton asset more obvious than here.

So St. Jim's gained Billy Bunter — temporarily — and, in *The Gem*, we had a number of outstanding stories in the series. Billy, taking advantage of the old-world courtesy of Gussy, was hilarious.

Then, in what was possibly the best story in the series in either paper, Billy and Wally had to "change back" for one afternoon while Mr. Penman, Wally's benefactor, visited St. Jim's, so we had, in a shorter but not less effective form, the joy of seeing Bunter surprising the natives at St. Jim's.

Billy Bunter, of course, was a ventriloquist and in a couple of wonderful *Gems* he turned St. Jim's into a haunted school. It was a formula of inevitable success for any but those who had a lofty aversion to the extravagance of such stories. And it is invaluable as showing the worth of Billy Bunter to his creator.

Between 1919 and the present time, this intriguing "twin series" was only partially reprinted once — in the *Popular* of the mid-nineteen-twenties. Plenty of readers have never met it before, and for them this volume will provide many hours of joyous entertainment.

For those who knew it all long ago, to read it again will be like meeting a much-loved friend after many years.

It would, of course, be impossible to reprint so immense a series in one book, but in the Howard Baker volume now in your hands you have the cream of the tales, carefully selected and presented in a worthy setting. The story starts and ends at Greyfriars, as it always did and, for so long as they are pertinent to the main plot, it follows the adventures of Wally Bunter, impersonating uncomfortably, at Greyfriars, his wily cousin Billy.

But the major part of the volume is given over to following the amazing experience of Billy Bunter in his new school at St. Jim's, related with all the whimsical humour and skill of the master school story writer . . .