

BILLY BUNTER
At Butlins

By
FRANK RICHARDS

Illustrated by
C.H Chapman

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CHAPTER 1

BUTLIN'S FOR BUNTER

'BUTLIN'S?'

'Yes, Butlin's for the hols,' said Billy Bunter.

'Lucky man!' said Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter's fat face was beaming. The fat Owl of the Remove was in high feather that sunny summer's morning.

Luck, in holiday time, did not always come Bunter's way. Only too often, when Greyfriars School was about to break up for the 'hols', was Billy Bunter in an unsettled state. Home, sweet home, seemed to have few attractions for him: perhaps because the Bunter Villa of reality bore little resemblance to his magnificent descriptions of Bunter Court!

Often, only too often, did other Remove fellows have to dodge getting landed with Bunter for the 'hols'.

But this time, it seemed, it was all clear. This time Billy Bunter was serenely assured of a happy landing. Wherefore did his fat face beam, as Bob Cherry handed him down a letter from the rack.

For once, Billy Bunter did not care a straw whether Harry Wharton did, or did not, let him roll along to Wharton Lodge; whether Smithy consented, or did not consent, to let him hook on: or even whether Lord Mauleverer could, or could not, be prevailed upon to tolerate him at Mauleverer Towers. Bunter, like Gallio of old, cared for none of these things. For Billy Bunter was going to enjoy life at a Butlin Camp—or, at all events, he had no doubt that he was.

Hence the beaming satisfaction in the fattest face in the Greyfriars Remove. It

was morning break at Greyfriars. Fellows had gathered at the rack for letters.

Bunter, of course, was on the spot. His first blink through his big spectacles, coming out of second school, was always at the letter-rack, Bunter being in a perpetual state of expecting a postal-order. But on this occasion, it was something even more exhilarating than that postal-order, that he was expecting. Fat and grubby fingers closed eagerly on the letter as Bob handed it down. One blink revealed that it was addressed to W. G. Bunter in the parental hand.

‘It’s from the pater,’ he said. ‘I say, you fellows, it’s all right. I say, you should ask your people to book you up for Butlin’s for the hols. I can tell you it’s topping. Jolly time all round, and the grubs’ good—of course, that’s important—’

‘Ha, ha, ha!’

‘Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Of course a fellow has to think about the grub first of all—’

‘A fellow named Bunter, at any rate!’ agreed Bob.

‘But that isn’t all,’ said Bunter. ‘All sorts of jolly attractions—no end of fun and games. I can tell you fellows, I’m going to have a jolly good time these hols.’

‘You’re in luck, old fat man,’ said Harry Wharton.

‘The luckfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter,’ said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

‘Gratters!’ said Johnny Bull.

‘So it’s fixed up?’ asked Frank Nugent.

‘Well, practically,’ explained Bunter. ‘This letter settles it. You see, I wrote to

the pater that I'd like a few weeks by the sea these hols. I wasn't sure it would

come off. The pater doesn't always play up. But he wrote back that he had thought of an inexpensive seaside holiday for me, and would let me know if it was arranged. So I wrote again at once, and told him about Butlin's, pointing out that it was quite inexpensive. So that's that.'

Billy Bunter inserted a grubby thumb into the envelope in his fat hand.

Evidently he had no doubts about the satisfactory contents of that letter. It was all clear—as how could it fail to be? His respected pater, at Bunter Villa, was not always amenable to suggestions from his hopeful son at Greyfriars.

But this time Mr. Bunter had actually been thinking of an inexpensive seaside holiday for him: and Butlin's was inexpensive as well as topping. So it was all right—right as rain. Bunter, as he opened the envelope, hadn't the least doubt that he was already booked for Butlin's. His fat face was happily anticipative as he jerked out the parental missive and unfolded it. His little round eyes beamed through his big round spectacles as he blinked at it.

Then a sudden change came over his plump countenance. He ceased to beam! Instead of beaming, he stared blankly at the letter.

'Oh, crikey!' he ejaculated.

'Come on, you chaps,' said Bob Cherry. 'Nothing for us—may as well get out.'

Hallo, hallo, hallo! Anything the matter, Bunter?'

Harry Wharton and Co. were turning away. But they turned back, at that sudden change in Billy Bunter's speaking countenance, and his dismayed exclamation. It looked as if the contents of that letter from home were not precisely what the fat Owl had happily expected.

'Anything up, Bunter?' asked Harry.

‘Oh, lor’!’

‘Somebody ill at home?’ asked Bob, sympathetically.

‘Oh, scissors! Worse than that!’ groaned Bunter.

‘But what—?’

‘Oh, crikey! Oh, lor’! Oh, jimmy! I—I—I say, you fellows, look at that! Just look at it!’

Billy Bunter held out the letter. Evidently, something was amiss. The fat Owl looked utterly deflated. All his happy anticipations seemed to have vanished. Plainly that letter from home, so eagerly expected, had given Billy Bunter a shock. Seldom had his plump countenance looked so utterly woebegone.

Why, the Famous Five could not guess. But they understood, as they looked at the letter the fat Owl held out for their inspection. It ran:

Dear William,

I have received your letter, but I regret that a Holiday Camp is quite out of the question. The exorbitant demands of Income Tax make the strictest economy essential. But, as I mentioned in my previous letter, I have been arranging an inexpensive seaside holiday for you, and the arrangements are now completed. You will stay at your Uncle Carter’s boarding-house at Folkestone. You will, of course, be prepared to make yourself useful during your stay. That is, in fact, a condition of your holiday. I understand that in a seaside boarding-house there is a very great deal of washing-up to be done. You will be required to deal with this. You must perform this light and easy task with care, as any breakages will be charged to your pocket-money. In addition to this,

3

you may be required to run errands, and in fact to make yourself generally

useful.

I trust that you will have a most enjoyable holiday at your Uncle Carter's.

Your affectionate Father,

W. S. BUNTER.

'I—I—I say, you fellows, what do you think of that?' groaned Billy Bunter. 'I—I—I thought I was going to have a jolly holiday at Butlin's, and—and—and all the while, this is what the pater had up his sleeve—washing-up for a mob of trippers— Look here, what are you grinning at?'

'Oh! Nothing!' said Harry Wharton, hastily. 'Hard cheese, old fat man.'

'Make the best of it,' suggested Johnny Bull. 'A spot of work won't do you any harm, Bunter. Might do you good.'

'Beast!'

The prospect of a spot of work doing him good evidently did not comfort Bunter. It was a woeful Owl.

'I say, you fellows, I'm jolly well not going to Uncle Carter's for the hols, to wash his dashed dishes! I say, it will be all right if I tell the pater I'm fixed up for the hols with you fellows, see? He wouldn't expect me to turn you down. I say, what about it, you chaps? I say, don't walk off while a fellow's talking to you!' yelled Billy Bunter.

But the Famous Five did walk off! In fact, they ran— and William George

Bunter was left to waste his sweetness on the desert air!

CHAPTER 2

MORE BAD LUCK FOR BUNTER

‘OH lor’!’ breathed Billy Bunter.

He cocked a fat ear to listen, like a startled plump rabbit. There were footsteps in the passage outside Coker’s study in the Fifth. It was an alarming sound to Bunter’s fat ears.

Bunter, the fat ornament of the Remove, of course had no business in a Fifth-form man’s study. But William George Bunter was often to be found in spots where a Remove fellow had no business. And even if he had no business in that study, he was very busy nevertheless. He was standing at the study table, helping himself from a bag of cherries that lay thereon. Juicy smears adorned his fat face and his fat fingers. Billy Bunter had had quite a blow, in that letter from Bunter Villa. But there was comfort in comestibles. Instead of a joyous time at a Butlin’s Seaside Camp, he was booked for an absolutely joyless time at Uncle Carter’s—washing dishes. Nevertheless he was, at the moment, enjoying life. Those cherries were rich and red and luscious.

The circumstance that they belonged to Coker of the Fifth, worried Billy Bunter no more than the circumstance that a packet of chocolates, which he had already slipped into his pocket for later consumption, also belonged to Coker. In matters of tuck, the fat Owl of the Remove had no scruples. It

4

always seemed, somehow, to Bunter, that if there was tuck about, his was the neck down which it ought to be dispatched. And he was dispatching Coker’s cherries at a great rate, when those alarming footsteps came up the passage.

Along with the footsteps came a voice:

that of Coker of the Fifth.

‘Come on, Potter! Come on, Greene.’

‘But—!’ came two voices together.

‘I said come on!’ interrupted Coker.

‘But—!’ repeated the two voices.

‘Come on, and don’t jaw!’

Billy Bunter breathed hard through a fat little nose. He had felt quite secure in

Coker’s study, in break. Fellows hardly ever came up to the studies in break.

They generally like a spot of fresh air between classes. And Coker’s pals,

evidently, were reluctant. But Coker, for some reason, was marching them up

to the study: much to Bunter’s alarm and annoyance. He cast a scared blink

at the door through his big spectacles. Only too well he knew what would

happen if Coker caught him in that study, scoffing tuck.

But he had time to hunt cover—just time. Even as a hand was laid on the

door-handle without, the fat Owl ducked and dived under the table. He had

vanished from view when the door opened.

Heavy footsteps tramped into the study. Billy Bunter, under the table, had a

view of Coker’s long legs. Luckily, Coker had no view of Bunter. The fat Owl

huddled in silence: hoping that, for whatever reason they had come up, they

wouldn’t stay long. Morning break was brief: and Billy Bunter could only hope

that they would go, before the bell rang for third school. His form-master,

Quelch, was wont to turn a glinting eye on late-comers. Coker’s voice was

heard again.

‘Trot in, you chaps! What are you hanging about for?’ Potter and Greene

seemed to be lingering at the doorway. 'Help yourselves to these cherries.'

'Oh, all right.'

Potter and Greene came in. Possibly they were keener on Coker's cherries than on Coker's company and conversation.

'Hallo!' came an exclamation from Coker. 'You seem to have been helping yourselves already. All right—you're welcome.'

'We haven't been in the study,' said Potter.

'My dear chap, that bag was full, when I took it out of my aunt's parcel. Look at it now!'

'But we haven't—!' said Greene.

'I tell you it's all right,' snapped Coker. 'You jolly well know that you're welcome to a whack in my parcels from my Aunt Judy. Leave it at that.'

'But we haven't—!' said Potter and Greene together.

'For goodness sake, don't argue,' said Coker. 'You fellows are always arguing. Just sit down and let's finish the cherries, while I tell you about what I've got fixed up for the hols.'

Potter and Greene were willing, at least, to sit down and finish the cherries.

The three of them sat down round the table. Billy Bunter barely repressed a fat squeak, as a large foot contacted a fat shin! Coker uttered an irritated exclamation.

'Don't shove your feet all over the shop, Potter. Give a fellow room for his

5

legs.'

'My feet are under my chair!' said Potter, tartly.

'Well, yours, then, Greene—'

‘So are mine!’ said Greene.

Snort, from Coker. His foot had contacted something under that table—something that stirred as it was contacted! It could only be—so far as Coker could see—some extended limb of either Potter or Greene. He did not want argument on the subject. Horace Coker had a way of laying down the law: and he had no use whatever for argument.

‘Well, keep your hoofs out of the way, anyhow,’ he said. ‘Sprawling all over the shop! But about the hols—I’ve fixed it up, with my Aunt Judy. That’s what I want to tell you fellows. I had a letter from her this morning, see, and it’s all arranged. I thought I’d tell you.’

Potter and Greene exchanged a glance—an expressive glance. They were accustomed, in that study, to giving Coker his head, as it were. They really liked old Coker—in a way—he had his good points: and a fellow who was constantly receiving whacking parcels from an affectionate aunt was worth knowing. But there was a limit. Coker, it seemed, had fixed up the ‘hols’, for self and friends: without a word to them about it so far. Coker, perhaps, did not realize that this was a little high-handed. Still less was it likely to occur to Coker that his pals had enough of him at school, and did not yearn to hear him laying down the law during the holidays as well. They were, in fact, going to get a holiday from Coker, as well as from Greyfriars.

‘That’s a bit late, Coker,’ said Potter. ‘If you’d told us before—’

‘It wasn’t arranged before. I’ve told you now.’

‘The fact is—!’ said Greene.

‘No need to jaw about it,’ said Coker. ‘The bell will be going soon. You chaps tuck into those cherries, while I tell you what we’re going to do in the hols.’

‘The fact is—’

‘Do let a fellow speak,’ said Coker, irritably. ‘You fellows are like a sheep’s head—all jaw! I hardly get a chance to get a word in, in this study. It’s all fixed up, and I’ve only got to tell you—’

‘Sorry!’ said Potter.

‘Eh! What are you sorry about?’

‘We’re fixed up already,’ said Potter, taking the plunge.

‘Coach trip on the Continent. Too late to wash it out now, isn’t it, Greeney?’

Greene stared for a moment. It was the first he had heard of a coach trip on the Continent. But he caught on at once. This was a tactful way of eluding Coker in the ‘hols’. Really, it was very bright of Potter to have thought of it on the spur of the moment. Greene nodded solemnly.

‘No, it couldn’t be washed out now,’ he said. ‘Sorry, Coker, old man! Hope you’ll have a good time at home with Aunt Judy.’

Coker frowned with annoyance.

‘Well, dash it all, you might have told a fellow, if you were fixed up already for the hols,’ he snapped. ‘Leaving a fellow in the dark—’

‘Well, you left us in the dark, you know—’

‘I wish you wouldn’t keep on arguing. Well, if you’re fixed up, it can’t be helped, I suppose. I’d have liked you to come—Skegness is a jolly bracing spot, and you’d have had a good time—’

‘Skegness!’ repeated Potter and Greene, simultaneously and blankly.

6

They had taken it for granted that Coker’s idea was home for the ‘hols’, in his company, with that of Aunt Judy thrown in. That prospect had no attraction for

them at all. But Skegness was, so to speak, a horse of quite another colour.

‘That’s the place,’ said Coker. ‘Up on the north-east coast somewhere—

Northumberland, I think—’

‘Isn’t it Lincolnshire?’ ventured Greene.

‘I don’t care whether its Lincolnshire or Northumberland,’ said Coker, testily.

‘Don’t start teaching me geography, Billy Greene. Anyhow it’s a jolly place on the seaside, the camp a bit out of the town—’

‘The camp?’

‘Haven’t you ever heard of Butlin’s Camps?’ asked Coker, sarcastically.

‘Haven’t you ever heard of anything?’

‘Oh!’ said Potter. He began to wish that he had not invented that coach trip on the Continent. Coker, it now seemed, was not thinking of dragging them home to enjoy

—more or less—his company and Aunt Judy’s. He was thinking of a topping holiday in a Butlin Camp. It made a tremendous difference.

‘Well, I’m sorry you fellows can’t come,’ said Coker.

‘Aunt Judy’s made all the arrangements for three fellows—you see, I thought you’d be coming. But never mind, if you’re fixed up. I’ll ask Tomlinson and Bland instead.’

‘Oh!’

Potter and Greene exchanged another glance. Now that they knew, Potter could have kicked himself for having invented that coach trip. Still more willingly, Greene could have kicked him for that bright idea.

‘Finish the cherries, you chaps,’ said Coker. ‘I’ll go and look for Tomlinson and Bland now—’

‘Hold on a minute, Coker,’ said Potter, hastily. ‘The—the fact is—’

‘Yes,’ stammered Greene. ‘The—the fact is, Coker— We—we—we——’

Coker sat and stared at them across the table. He could not see what they were stammering about.

‘Well, what?’ he asked. ‘The bell will be going in a minute or two—’

‘Oh! Yes! But—’ Potter stammered. Having invented a coach trip on the Continent, it really was not easy to disinvent it again, as it were. But Potter was not going to miss a jolly holiday at Skegness, if he could help it, now that he knew. Neither was Greene. It was Skegness for both of them, if they could explain away that Continental coach trip. It had to be explained away somehow. ‘Look here, old chap, it may not be too late—’

‘Not at all, now I come to think of it,’ said Greene, coming to Potter’s aid.

‘We—we haven’t actually taken the tickets, you know.’

‘I fancy we could wash it out,’ said Potter.

‘I’m sure we could!’ said Greene.

‘And I don’t think we should really care for continental tripping, without you, Coker, old man—’ added Potter, piling it on a little.

‘Well, I expect you’d be a bit lost, without me,’ said Coker, with a nod.

‘Oh! Ah! Yes!’ gasped Potter. ‘Quite.’

‘Well, make up your minds one way or the other,’ said Coker. ‘If it’s going to be Skegness—’

‘Skegness!’ said Potter and Greene.

‘All right, then,’ said Coker. ‘That’s settled. Now I’ll tell you what the place is

7

like, as you’re coming. I—for goodness sake, Potter, don’t stick your feet right

across the room.’ Coker’s foot had again made contact under the table. ‘Or is

it you, Greene? Can’t you keep your silly legs to yourselves?’

‘Not my legs,’ said Potter.

‘Nor mine,’ said Greene.

‘What’s the good of talking rot?’ demanded Coker. ‘Think I dreamed that I jammed my foot on something? You don’t give a fellow an inch to put his feet.

If that isn’t your hoof, Potter, and if it isn’t yours, Greene, perhaps you won’t mind if I kick it?’ said Coker, sarcastically.

And he kicked it—whatever it was!

The next moment he knew that it wasn’t Potter or Greene: as a fearful yell resounded from under the table.

‘Yarooooh!

Billy Bunter had kept still and quiet hitherto in his hide-out. But as Horace Coker’s heavy foot landed in plump ribs, he did not continue to be still and quiet! Far from it! He uttered a frantic yell that woke every echo in the study and along the passage. Coker and Potter and Greene all jumped up.

‘What—?’ gasped Coker.

‘Who—?’ stuttered Greene.

‘It’s somebody under the table—’

‘Ow! Wow! Oooooh! Beast! Wow!’ Evidently, there was somebody under the table. ‘Oh, crikey! Ow!’

Coker grasped the table and whirled it aside. A fat figure was revealed, huddled on the floor, and blinking up in alarm through a pair of big spectacles.

‘Bunter!’ roared Coker.

‘That fat Remove tick!’ exclaimed Potter. ‘What are you doing here, you young

ass?’

Coker reddened with wrath.

‘I know what he’s been doing!’ he roared. ‘That’s where the cherries went!’

‘I—I—I say,’ gasped Bunter. ‘‘Tain’t me! I—I mean, I—I—I ain’t here! I—I—I mean, I—I say—yaroooooh! Stoppit! Whoooooop!’

Rapid motion was not in Billy Bunter’s line, as a rule. But he bounded up like a kangaroo as Coker’s foot lunged, and bolted for the door. Coker had time for only one, but it was a good one. Potter and Greene landed one each, as the fat Owl flew through the doorway.

Billy Bunter vanished—yelling. Coker and Co. were left to their discussion of the joys of Skegness in the ‘hols’. Billy Bunter—at a safe distance—wriggled and rubbed the places where Fifth-form feet had landed on his fat person. He was still wriggling and rubbing when the bell rang for third school. There was only one gleam of consolation for Bunter. He still had Coker’s chocs in a sticky pocket!

CHAPTER 3

WHOSE CHOCS?

‘EQUO ne credite, Teucri—’

Bob Cherry, on ‘con’ in the Remove form-room, broke off suddenly. He was

8

interrupted,

‘BUNTER!’

It was the sharp voice of Mr. Quelch, master of the Remove, that interrupted.

Virgil was the order of the day, in the Remove, in third school that morning.

Nobody was enjoying the lesson. Quelch was not in his bonniest mood. Like

other members of the Staff, Quelch had that end-of-the-term feeling, He was

not exactly irritable: but his patience had worn a little thin. Even Harry

Wharton, whose ‘con’ was always good, had not felt quite easy under the

gimlet-eye. Lord Mauleverer, whose ‘con’ was seldom good, had sat down the

richer by fifty lines. Then Vernon-Smith and Tom Brown in turn were apprised,

not for the first time, that there was a sharp edge to Quelch’s tongue. Then

Bob was called on. Bob was a great man at games, but in class he did not

shine. He was seldom anywhere near the top of the class. Now he was next

to Billy Bunter. He was rather glad of the sudden interruption, having some

doubts about the rendering of the passage in hand. Quelch’s sudden rap

came as a relief to him, if not to Billy Bunter.

Billy Bunter had a fat hand in a sticky pocket. He whipped it out swiftly as

Quelch rapped.

Oh! Yes, sir!’ stammered Bunter.

The fat Owl of the Remove had had rather a shock that morning The letter

from Bunter Villa had been quite a blow. The happy prospect of Holiday Camps had faded out like a mirage, replaced by a dismal vision of washing endless plates and dishes at Uncle Carter's. But there was still balm in Gilead: in the shape of a packet of chocolates in a sticky pocket.

It was, of course, strictly against the rules for any fellow to bring 'stickers' into class for surreptitious consumption during the lesson. The fat Owl had to be very wary. Twice, and thrice, had Bunter slipped a fat hand into his pocket for those chocs, and then drawn it empty away, not daring to make the venture. Now he did so hurriedly, once more, as Quelch rapped.

'Bunter! Are you giving attention to the lesson?'

'Oh! Yes, sir! Certainly, sir.'

'Why are you groping in your pockets, Bunter?'

'I—I—I didn't—I—I—I mean, I—I wasn't—I—I—'

'I have observed you. Bunter, groping in your pockets, several times.'

Quelch's eyes seemed to be everywhere, that morning.

'Oh! I—I—I——' stuttered Bunter.

'On several occasions, Bunter, you have been punished for bringing sweetstuffs into the form-room. Is there anything of that kind in your pockets now?'

'Oh! No, sir!' gasped Bunter. Billy Bunter had long been a stranger to truth: and he was not likely to make its acquaintance at such a moment as this! 'Oh, no, sir! N—nothing of the kind, sir! Only—only a letter from my pater, sir—I—I was just making sure that I hadn't lost it, sir—'

Mr. Quelch gave that fat member of his form a very hard look. Billy Bunter

quaked in dread of being called out to turn out his pockets. However, to his

tremendous relief, Quelch let it go at that. The gimlet-eyes turned back to Bob Cherry.

‘You may go on, Cherry.’

Bob took up the tale again.

‘Equo ne credite, Teucri. Quidquid id est, timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.’

9

‘Construe!’ rapped Mr. Quelch.

‘Trust not the horse, Trojans!’ translated Bob. ‘Whatever it is, I fear the Greeks when they bring gifts.’

‘Even when bringing gifts!’ snapped Mr. Quelch. ‘That will do, Cherry! You will go on, Nugent,’

Frank Nugent went on from ‘sic fatus’. He was a good distance from Bunter, and Quelch’s eyes were on him, and no longer turned in the fat Owl’s direction. It seemed, to Bunter, a chance at last. Once more the fat paw slipped into a sticky pocket. This time it drew out the packet of chocolates. But alas for Bunter! Quelch, certainly, was not looking towards him. But he seemed able to take in everything with the corner of his eye.

‘BUNTER!’ came an ominous rumble.

‘Oh, crikey!’ gasped Bunter.

‘Did you take something from your pocket, Bunter?’

‘Oh, no, sir! Nothing, sir.’

‘Stand out before the form, Bunter.’

‘Oh, lor’!’ breathed Bunter. He blinked at his form-master, through his big spectacles, dismayed: the packet of chocs clutched in a fat hand. He wished

that he had left those chocs in Coker's study. He was fairly caught now. Or

was he?

For once his fat brain worked swiftly. As he rose to his feet to obey the command, he brushed against the junior next to him—Bob Cherry. Only for a moment was he in contact with Bob. But in that moment, he slipped the packet of chocs into Bob's jacket pocket. Even Quelch's eyes, sharp as they were, did not detect that swift surreptitious action: and the next moment, Billy Bunter was rolling out before the form.

There he was able to display empty hands. Quelch glanced at those hands. They looked as if they might be all the better for a wash! But there was certainly nothing of an edible nature in either of them. But Quelch had a strong suspicion that there were forbidden comestibles about the fat junior. 'You will turn out your pockets, Bunter.'

Billy Bunter was careful not to grin. He had no objection to turning out his pockets, in the circumstances. He turned them out cheerfully.

An assortment of articles came to light. There was that letter from Bunter Villa, with a forgotten fragment of a bulls-eye adhering to it. There was a sticky piece of string, a pen-nib, a pocket-knife with broken blade, and a pencil with a broken point. There was also Bunters total present supply of cash—one halfpenny.

Mr. Quelch eyed those various productions, and his frowning brow cleared.

Billy Bunter's voracious appetite was well known: but even Billy Bunter could not be suspected of having intended to devour any of those articles.

'Very well, Bunter! You may go back to your place.'

The fat Owl replaced his various properties in his pockets, and rolled back to

his place in form. Bob Cherry gave him rather an expressive look, as he sat

down. Bob had felt that incriminating packet slipped into his pocket, but had of course given no sign. It was up to one Remove man to stand by another at a critical moment. But he decided to jam that packet of chocs down Bunter's fat neck after class.

Billy Bunter, however, had no idea of leaving that packet in its present hide-out till after class. Bunter's fat mouth watered for those chocs. He was only
10
waiting for an opportunity to recover them.

His eyes, and spectacles, were watchfully on Quelch, as 'con' went on in the Remove. After Nugent's turn came Peter Todd's, then Johnny Bull's, then Hurree Singh's, and then Skinner's. Skinner, luckily as it seemed to Bunter, blundered over '*quae me aequora possunt accipere*', and Quelch proceeded to give him the sharpest edge of a sharp tongue. He seemed concentrated on the hapless Skinner, and this was Bunter's opportunity. He whispered to Bob Cherry.

'I say, gimme my chocs.'

'Shut up, you fat ass!' breathed Bob.

'Look here, you gimme my chocs—!'

'BUNTER!'

Quelch's ears that morning seemed as sharp as his eyes and his tongue!

'Bunter! Are you whispering in class?'

'Oh, crumbs! I—I mean no, sir—' gasped Bunter.

'You were whispering to Cherry, Bunter.'

'Oh! No, sir! I—I never opened my lips, sir—I—I—I—I wasn't asking Cherry for

anything, sir—I—I never said anything about chocs, sir—'

'Chocolates!' repeated Mr. Quelch. 'Upon my word! Bunter, you will take fifty lines for whispering in class. Cherry, you will stand out before the form.'

With deep feelings, Bob Cherry marched out. He stood with a crimson face under his form-master's portentous frown.

'It seems that that greedy, foolish boy, Bunter, was asking you for sweetstuffs, Cherry,' snapped Mr. Quelch.

'Are you aware Cherry, or are you not aware, that there is a strict rule that no such comestibles may be brought into a form-room during class?'

'Yes, sir,' stammered Bob. 'But—'

'Have you anything of the kind in your pockets?'

'Ye—e—e—s, but—'

'Place it on my desk at once.'

Bob extracted Bunter's packet, and placed it on his form-master's desk. All eyes in the Remove were on his crimson face. Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, looked at him in wonder. Bob was not the fellow, as a rule, to come into class with 'stickers' in his pockets like Bunter, and that packet of chocs was a surprise to his chums. But there it was!

'Go back to your place, Cherry! That packet will be confiscated, and you will take two hundred lines.'

In silence, Bob returned to his place. There, he gave Billy Bunter a very expressive look. Nothing would have induced Bob to give the fat Owl away: but undoubtedly it was up to Bunter, in the disastrous circumstances, to own up about that packet of chocs. Probably it did not even occur to Billy Bunter's

fat mind to do so. The loss of the chocs was enough for Billy Bunter to think

about.

‘You fat villain!’ breathed Bob into a fat ear. ‘I’ll boot you all over the shop after class.’

‘Are you speaking to Bunter, Cherry?’ came a deep rumble.

‘Oh! Yes, sir.’

‘You will take another hundred lines.’

Bob was silent after that. But his look was even more expressive than before,

11

and the fat Owl gave him uneasy blinks. Evidently, something was going to happen to Bunter after class: in fact, he could almost feel, in anticipation, the largest foot in the Remove landing upon the tightest trousers in that form. And he had really had more of that than he wanted from Coker and Co.

With that dread anticipation in his fat mind, Bunter, probably for the first time in his fat career, was not anxious for the lesson to end. However, it did end, and the Remove at last were dismissed. But, to Bunter’s great relief, Quelch called Bob Cherry back as the juniors marched out.

‘Cherry!’ rapped Quelch.

‘Yes, sir!’ mumbled Bob. He turned back, reluctantly. He did not want to lose sight of Bunter.

Bunter, on the other hand, was extremely anxious to be lost sight of! He rolled out of the form-room: and he rolled rapidly. Neither did he linger in the corridor. Instead of modelling his movements, as usual, upon the tortoise, he understudied the hare.

Bob came up to the form-master’s desk. Quelch gave him a frowning glance.

He indicated the packet of chocs with a lean forefinger.

‘These sweetstuffs will be confiscated, Cherry, as I have told you,’ he rapped.

‘You have three hundred lines to write. You will bring them to my study before preparation this evening. You are not infrequently an unpunctual boy, Cherry.

I warn you that if you are late with your imposition, it will be doubled. You have ample time, as it is a half-holiday today.’

Bob was grimly silent.

‘That is all, Cherry! You may go.’

Bob Cherry went.

In the corridor he looked for Billy Bunter, more than ever keen to bestow upon the fat Owl that for which he had asked, But no fat figure and no glimmering spectacles met his view.

The delay had been brief. But brief as it was, Billy Bunter had made the most of it. Bunter was seldom swift in his motions: but moments, at such a time, were enough for even Bunter. Billy Bunter was gone.

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