

KNOCKOUT

FUN BOOK

1946



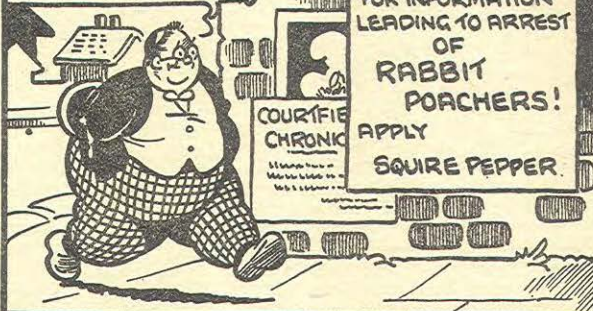
BILLY BUNTER

THE FATTEST SCHOOLBOY ON EARTH

COO! I KNOW WHERE TO FIND RABBIT SKINS—THERE'S LOTS OF 'EM ON RABBITS—AND THERE'S PLENTY OF RABBITS IN SQUIRE PEPPER'S GROUNDS!



YEE! HEE! WHAT A WHEEZE! I'LL GET CASH FOR THE RABBIT SKINS AND A £25 REWARD FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO ARREST OF RABBIT POACHERS! APPLY SQUIRE PEPPER.



1. William George Bunter, the fattest pupil at Greyfriars, if not in the world, went for a toddle in Courtfield, t'other day, chums, and noticed a notice. It told the world that the chappy inside the shop would pay best prices for bunnies' overcoats.

I'LL NEED A JOLLY BIG SACK TO PUT THE RABBITS IN. WHEN I'M DISGUISED I'LL POP ALONG TO OLD PEPPER'S PLACE!



COO! I LOOK LIKE A POACHER—SO IF I RUN INTO OLD SQUIRE PEPPER HE WON'T RECOGNISE ME!



2. Now, our fat chum was hard up—as usual. This looked like easy picking! All he had to do was to snaffle a few bunnies, and sell the skins. He didn't notice the other notice put up by Squire Pepper about poachers.

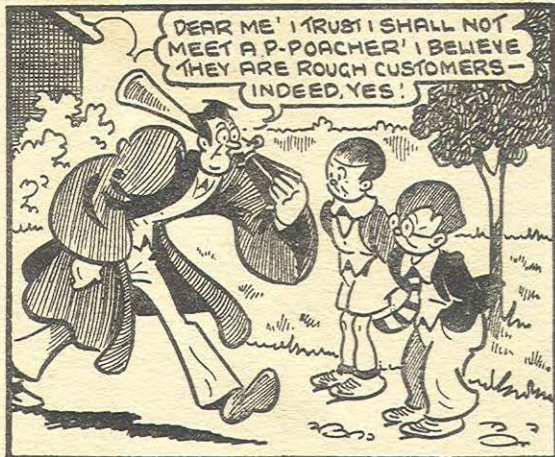
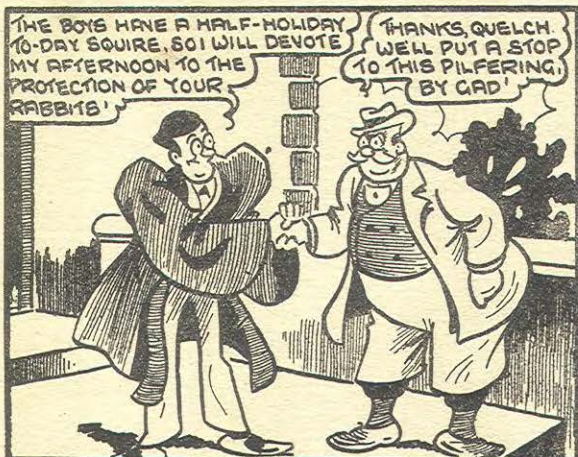
GOOD! I'M CLEAR OF THE SCHOOL AND NOBODY SAW ME! I BET I BAG HUNDREDS OF RABBITS!



THE TROUBLE IS POACHERS, QUELCH. I'M OFFERING A REWARD OF FIVE POUNDS, BUT I NEED MORE HELP TO WATCH OUT FOR THEM. GAD! IF I CATCH ONE—I'LL—



3. Having disguised himself as a poacher and got the sack, he plodded off to Squire Pepper's very private rabbit warrens. Meanwhile, the fruity old Squire was asking Quelch to help him defend his bunnies from the pesky poachers.



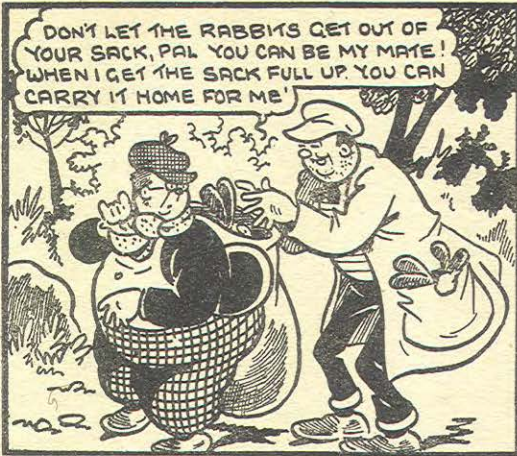
4. Now, Squire Pepper was real mustard about looking after his bunnies. He was also a Governor of Greyfriars. Therefore Quelch thought he'd better show willing. Therefore, he popped out to pot poachers with his second-best blunderbuss.



5. Meanwhile, and during all this, our Billy was hard at work catching bunnies—or trying hard to do so. But the furry little animals didn't play fair. When Billy pushed his mitt in at the front door, they skedaddled by the tradesmen's entrance.



6. Coo, Billy was wild. He glimpsed a white powder puff vanishing round the corner and promptly gave chase. With a wild hallo—a yoicks and a tally ho!—he pursued the bunnies. But Bertram, the Bunny Eagger, was there!



7. He gave our Billy a rough push in the face and said: "I'm collectin' rabbits, too!" Two bunnies were already in his bag. But the next minute he relented. "You can be my mate, see?" he said. And very kindly, he let Billy carry the bag.



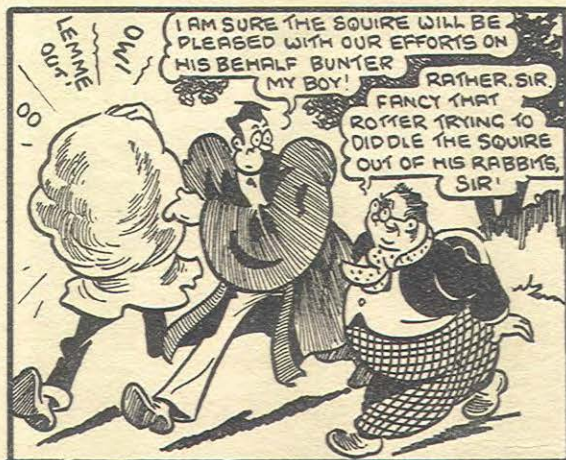
8. But down in the forest, something stirred! 'Twas Quelchy, with his secret weapon! And Quelchy heard and saw things stirring, too—two dark, furtive figures, bagging bunnies like billy-ho! Quelchy had the wind-up. But he knew his duty.



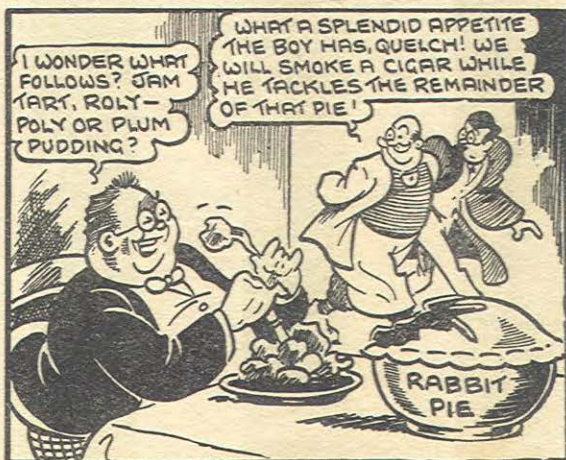
9. He charged! Bertram saw him coming and shinned up the sycamore. Our Billy was holding the bag. Quelchy pointed his gun, shut his eyes and fired. There was a boom—and howl! Billy stopped the lot with his pants!



10. Down on his knocking knees fell Billy, half stunned! And Bertram, scared suddenly by the boom of the blunderbuss, lost his hold in the sycamore and fell out faster than he climbed in—and he got the sack! Then that Billy gasped.



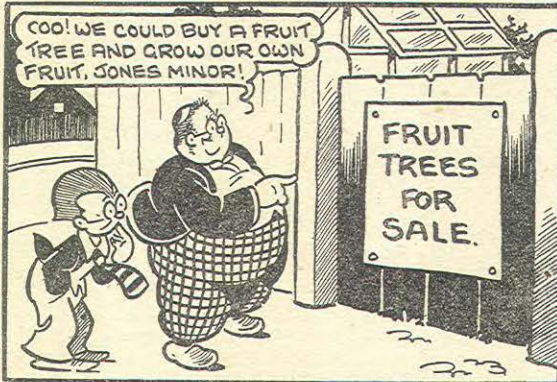
11. For the blunderbuss merchant was none other than Quelchy himself. As Quelchy galloped up, he saw Bunter. "No doubt you, too, are assisting the Squire," he panted. Billy's mighty brain acted fast. "Oh, rather!" said he.



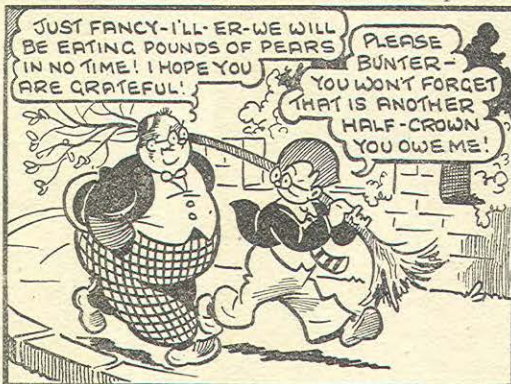
12. So they set Bertram right way up, with his head in the sack, and marched him off to Squire Pepper's place. Co-o, the Squire was pleased. Bertram, naughty lad, went to gaol, but our Billy had a jolly good feed.

BILLY BUNTER

THE FATTEST SCHOOLBOY ON EARTH



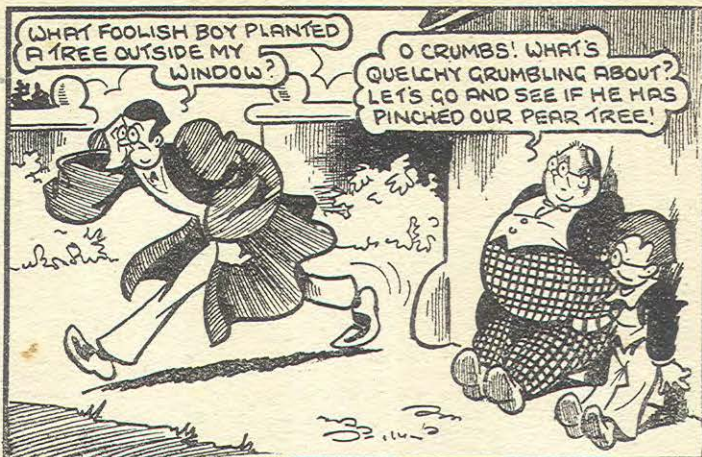
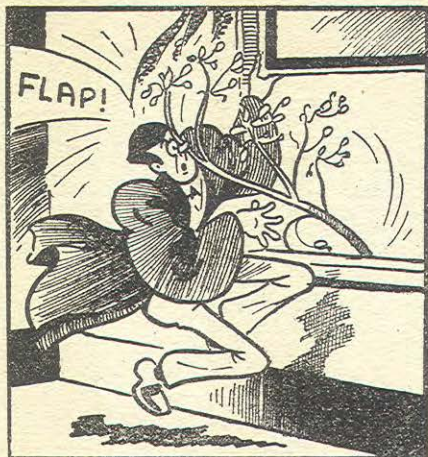
1. If there's anything William George Bunter likes better than a ripe, juicy pear it's a pair! So when he saw a poster telling all whom it might concern that there were fruit trees for sale—and knowing that Jones Minor had half-a-crown in his pocket—Billy bought a pear tree.



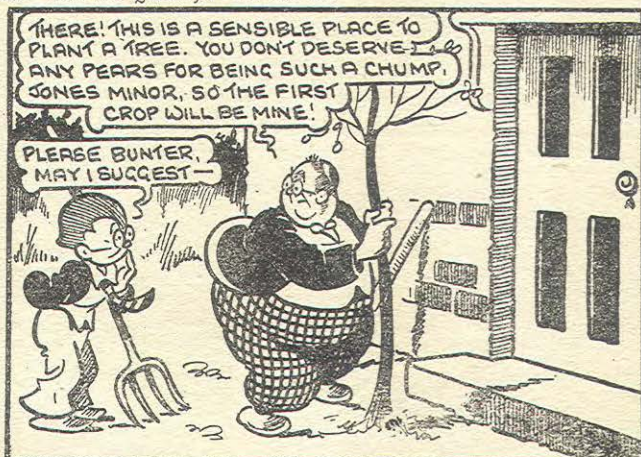
2. Coo, what a wheeze! Nothing to do but let it grow, and in due time the juicy Williams would drop off into his hat! 'Twas as easy as that! All he had to do was to plant the thing. So Billy showed Jones Minor where to dig. The exercise would do the little chap a heap of good!



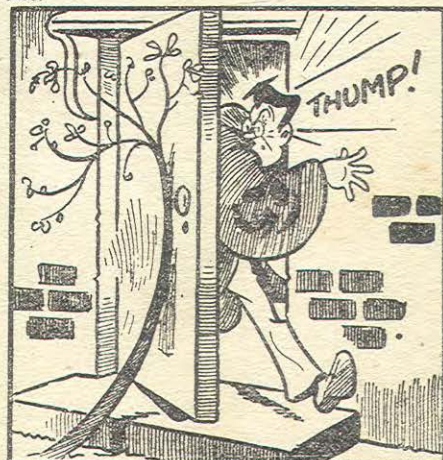
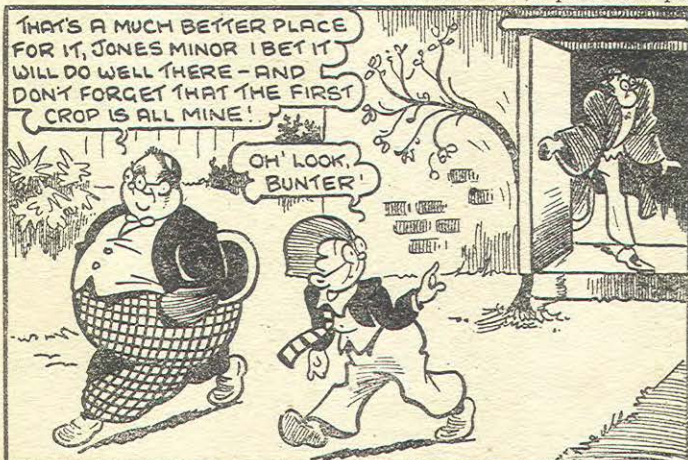
3. 'Twas right big-hearted of our Billy to let him do the digging, really. Jones Minor did point out that Quelchy's window was just there, but Billy didn't let a little thing like that bother him. He pulled down the tree to show Jones Minor that fruit was already showing on the tree.



4. And that was when Quelchy spotted the twigs and things sticking up outside his window. And there never had been a tree there before! Was somebody playing Jack the Giant Killer around there? Quelchy threw up the window just as Billy let go of the tree. Poor old Quelchy! He had it!



5. Yes, chums! He twigged the twigs all right, and he was annoyed. He went striding off to find the wretched boy who had done this to him. He didn't spot Billy and Jones Minor, but they spotted him. Billy realised then, that under Quelchy's window was no place for a pear tree.



6. Quelchy might pinch the pears! So they pulled up the tree and planted it round the other side of the building, close to the back door. But Quelchy came out, and shoved the tree back and the tree didn't like it a little bit.



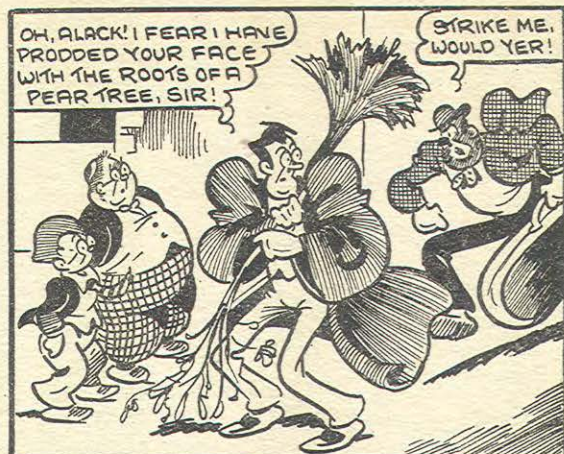
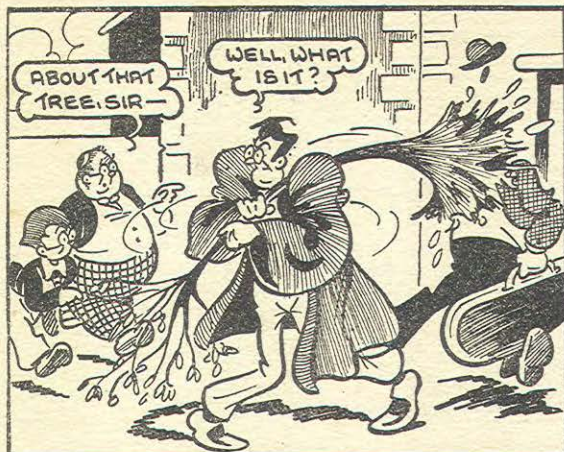
7. It did a spot of shoving all by itself, and poor old Quelchy got jammed in the jamb, so to speak. He felt properly squashed! And, really, he was annoyed—and amazed! For, believe it or not, when he looked for the shover he found the tree! It must have walked round after him!



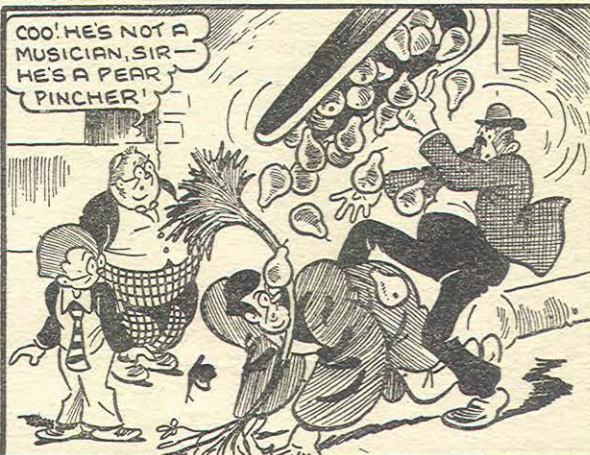
8. In a fit of temper, Quelchy pulled up the pear tree by the roots. "I will soon dispose of this rubbish!" he snapped, nastily. And Billy began to get really wild. "He's pinching our pears!" he barked. "After him!" Billy and Jones Minor ran after Quelchy. But other trouble was around.



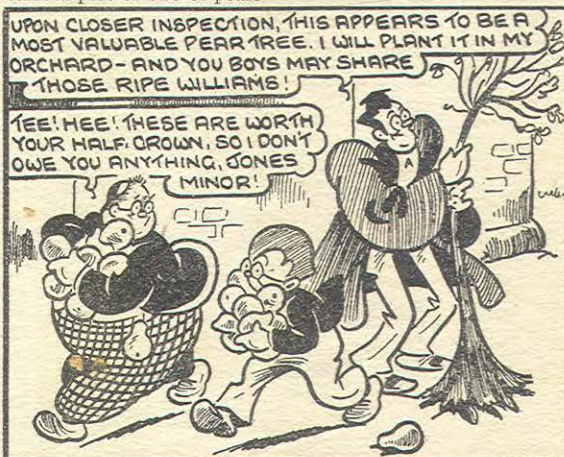
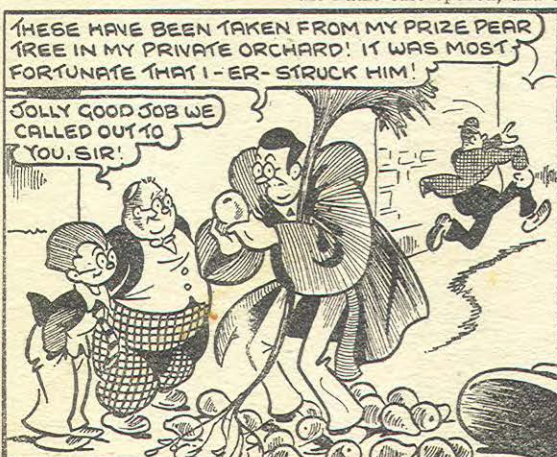
9. Peter, the Pear Pincher, was hopping over the fence of Quelchy's orchard. And he carried a fiddle case full of pears. "Hee, hee!" he chuckled. "If anyone sees me I'm the new music master!" He and Quelchy ran into each other.



10. 'Twas on the corner, chums. Billy hated seeing his pear tree chucked on the rubbish dump. He yelled at Quelchy. "Hi, sir! About that tree?" he called. Quelchy heard his fruity voice and turned sharply, saying: "Who calls?" And Peter copped the soiled roots in the face!



11. Was he sore! What with the dirt and woody bits, a few worms and a slug that went down his neck—well, he wasn't standing for that! And raising his fiddle case he aimed a blow at Quelchy. But Quelchy ducked, the blow missed fire, the fiddle case opened, and out came a pint or two of pears!



12. The game was up! Peter bolted and headed for somewhere safer, and Quelchy was pleased about that. And on closer inspection he decided that Billy's tree was a pippin. So he kept it and gave Billy the fruit. Nice work!



BILLY BUNTER'S STORY

I think this is the best storie in the Nockout Fun Book.
The Editter was serprized when he red it, and so will you be !

Billy Bunter

A Serprize for Jack Jolly & Co.

"How the dickens can we have a picnic when we've no munny?" Jack Jolly of the Fourth asked that question in the old gateway of St. Sam's. And Merry and Bright and Fearless shook their heads.

"Can't be done, old chap!" sighed Fearless. "I wish I hadn't suggested it now. I knew I'd run out of cash myself, but I thought that with three of you to come to the reskew, a picnic would be plain sailing enuff."

"Unforchuntily we're all in the same boat as yourself!" said Merry, with a rewful grin. "What can we do?"

It was a proper poser. Fearless' suggestion of a picnic had been hailed with delite by the others. But then they had come up against a brick wall.

They were all stony!

"Looks as if that picnic's off," remarked Jolly sadly. "If only some kind friend would come along and ask us——"

"Like to come along to my picnic, boys?"

The chums of the Fourth farely jumped as that question fell on their ears!

Turning round they were serprized to see standing behind them Doctor Alfred Birchmall, the revered and majestick

headmaster of St. Sam's. He was wearing plus twos and a panner-ma hat and there was a beeming smile on his skollarly dial. He pointed meaningly to an intreeging assortment of baskets and parcels lying at his feet.

"Like to come along to my picnic, boys?" he repeated.

Jack Jolly & Co. raised their caps. The Head's question had raised their hoaps!

"Corn in Egypt!" mermered Fearless.

"We'll come along with plezzure, sir!" grinned Jolly. "Won't we, you fellows?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Good!" said the Head. "I'm going to have a good tuck-in under the shade of an old oak tree. It will be ripping to have somebody to carry the tuck and keep me company!"

"We'll carry the tuck with plezzure, sir," chuckled Jolly. "Pick up the Head's parcels, you chaps. Where were you thinking of going, sir?"

"To a topping little picnicking ground on the other side of the woods, Jolly. Perhaps you know it already? It's near a field where there's a scarecrow!"

"Why, of corse! I know that scarecrow well, sir. Are you ready?"

"Ready, I, ready, Jolly!"

"Then off we go!"

And off they went—shouldering Doctor Birchermall's burden of tuck with grate cheerfulness.

The chums of the Fourth could hardly believe their good luck. If they had had their choice, they mite have preferred an invitation from one of their own pals to an invitation from an old fossil like the Head. But beggars can't be choosers, and Jack Jolly & Co. were quite prepared to put up with the old buffer's company in return for a good tuck-in.

They tramped down the lane and across the fields in grate good spirits. It was a fine summer afternoon and even the Head himself seemed to be in a jeenial mood.

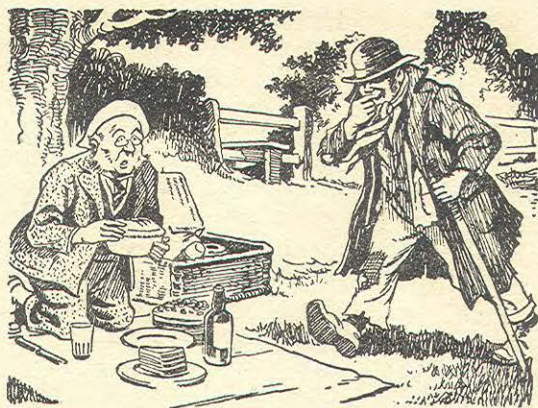
"If there's one thing I do like about you boys," he remarked, as they wound their way through the woods, "it's your willingness. It's not every yungster at St. Sam's who would jump to it so promptly if I asked him to carry my tuck to a picnic. But I'll give you your dew—you're willing."

"That's all right, sir," said Bright, whose grate fault was his lack of tact. "We're always willing to do anything for a feed! Ow! You're stamping on my foot, Jolly!"

Doctor Birchermall started slitley.

"Bless my sole! What did you say, Bright?"

"He said we're always willing to do anything in a case of need—or something like that, sir," said Jolly, giving Bright



"Afternoon, old covey!" roared the newcomer.

a sly dig in the ribs. "That was it, Bright, wasn't it?"

"Ow! Yes! Something like that!" gasped Bright.

And the Head nodded approvingly, and Jack Jolly & Co. smiled again.

But their smiles were fated soon to fade. Not long after their arrival at the spot near the scarecrow, they had a shock that would have taken the grin off a Cheshire cat.

Jack Jolly asked the question that bust the bombshell. He put it to Doctor Birchermall soon after he had finished setting out the good things on the Head's snow-white tablecloth.

"When are we going to start on the feed, sir?" he asked.

And the Head fairly jumped! "We?" he cried. "Did I hear you say, 'When are "we" going to start on the feed?' Jolly?"

"Yes, sir. When are we?"

"Never!" was the Head's serprizing answer.

"Eh?" gasped Jolly.

"Chuck it, sir!" urged Fearless. "A joak's a joak, but——"

"I am not joaking, Fearless!" wrapped out Doctor Birchermall. "I say 'Never!' and that's what I mean!"

"But you invited us——"

"I invited you to come along to my picnic because I wanted someone to carry the parcels! Surely you didn't imagine I was inviting you along to skoff my tuck?"



"Surely you didn't imagine I was inviting you along to skoff my tuck?" said Dr. Birchermall.

Doctor Birchmall cocked his head on one side and eyed the juniors with a beady eye like some inquisitive ostridge. And Jack Jolly & Co's grins vanished as if by magick, to be replaced by baleful glares.

"That's eggactly what we did think, anyway!" growled Jolly. "Dash it all, sir, you've brought enuff for six!"

"I always make it a rule to bring enuff for six—and I always get through it myself without the slitest difficulty!" snorted the Head. "I'm serprized at you boys thinking I wanted you to help me skoff the tuck. I never thought you were such a greedy lot!"

"Oh, grate pip!" gasped Frank Fearless. "Then aren't we going to get anything at all?"

"Not a sossidge, Fearless."

"But you said you'd enjoy our company, sir!"

"Quite likely! But that duzzent mean you're going to enjoy my tuck!"

Jack Jolly & Co. looked at each other with feelings that were too deep for words.

"Well, you fellows," said Jack Jolly, "This takes the cake!"

"The Head takes the feed, anyway!" groaned Merry.

"He wants jam on it!" said Fearless tartly. "Let's go!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Please yourselves, of corse, boys!" grinned the Head. "You're very welcome to stay and watch me feeding my face!"

"You're awfully jenniferous, sir!" said Jolly with hevvy sarkasm, "but we really

can't impose on you. This way, you fellows!"

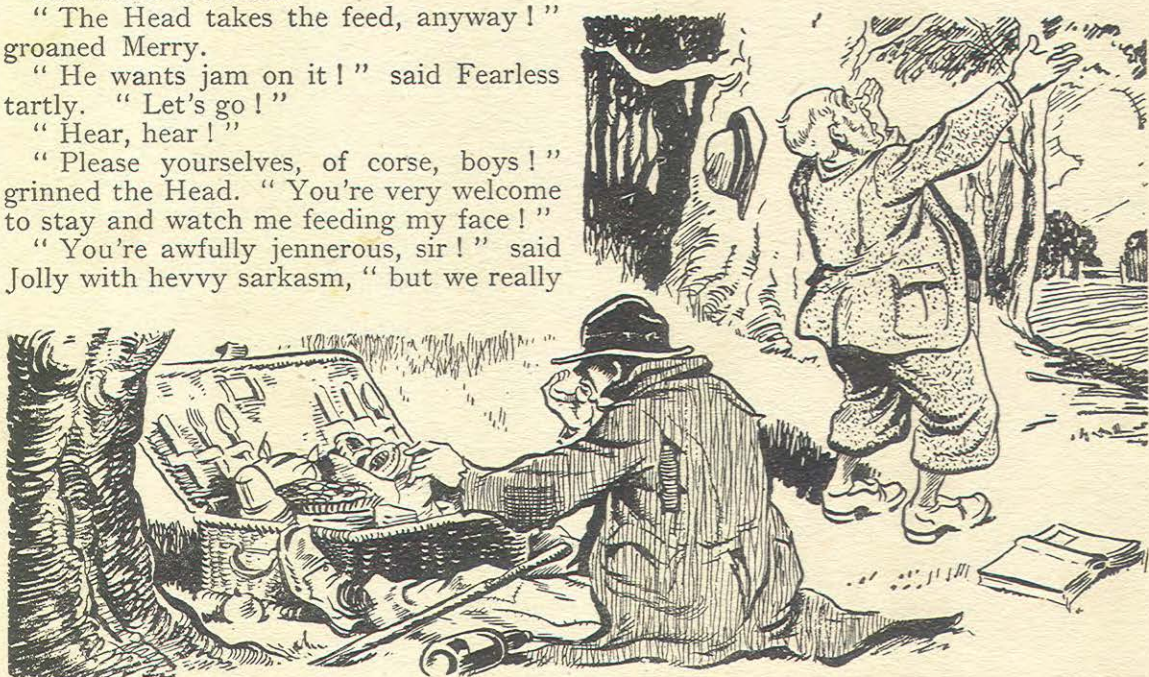
The Kaptin of the Fourth turned on his heel and tramped off, and his pals followed him.

They felt jolly wild at being diddled by Doctor Birchmall. But the Head's conshance seemed to be quite clear. He waved them farewell with the utmost cheerfulness, then turned his attention to the real bizziness of the afternoon—skoffing the tuck!

The Head was destined, however, not to be left to finish his feed in peace that afternoon.

He had hardly got into his stride, in fakt, before the sound of fresh footsteps cawsed him to look up with a start.

An eggspression of fear came into the Head's fizz when he saw who was approaching. Never in his life had Doctor Birchmall seen such a ruff-looking tramp as he saw now. The man's coat and weskit were thick with dust and his trowsis were in rags and tatters, while the bowler hat he wore pulled over his eyes looked as if it had come out of the ark!



"Jolly! Merry! Bright! Fearless!" bawled Doctor Birchmall. "Help!"

" 'Arternoon, old covey ! " roared the newcomer, in a terrifying voice.

Beads of perspiration stood out on the Head's forrid.

" B-b-bless my sole ! "

" That grub looks good ! " bellowed the tramp. " Wot I says is this 'ere : that grub looks too good for an old covey like you ! I'll 'ave it meself ! "

" You can't—you mustn't ! " gasped the Head. " I'll call the perlice and have you arrested——"

" Haw, haw, haw ! Call away, old covey ! If you call 'ard enuff the nearest copper may 'ear yer ! 'E's only a cupple of miles away ! "

An aggerised look appeared in the Head's shifty eyes. The meer thought of his bewtiful feed falling into the hands of this tramp was suffishant to make Doctor Birchmall's hart almost fail him.

" LEEVE that tuck alone ! " he wrapped out, as the tramp bore down on the tuck. But the tramp only larfed leeringly.

" Look 'ere, old covey, you buzz off, see ? " he growled. " If you don't, you'll get a clip on the ear—an' arter that you'll get a wunner on the conk ! "

He made a dive at the feast, and Doctor Birchmall hurriedly jumped to his feet and backed away. And then, in his moment of desperation, the Head had a branewave. He remembered Jack Jolly & Co.

" Jolly ! Merry ! Bright ! Fearless ! Help ! " he bawled.

" Haw, haw, haw ! " larfed the tramp. " Nobody won't 'ear yer, old covey ! "

" Reskew, St. Sam's ! " yelled the Head. " Come and save the feed, boys, and I'll give you a half of it—two-thirds—three-quarters——"

" Coming, sir ! " came a yell from the woods.

It was the voice of Frank Fearless—and it sounded like mewsick to the Head's lissening ears !

" This way, boys ! " he cried. " Come and give this beestly tramp what for ! I'll hold your coats ! "

There was a thudding of footsteps across the terf. Fearless came into view and behind him were Merry and Bright. And



Fearless and Merry and Bright chased merrily after the tramp, as he hit the trail for the woods.

the Head farely danced with joy as he saw them.

The tramp danced, too—but he didn't seem to dance with joy. He danced towards the woods to put as grate a distance as possibul between himself and the Fourth Formers.

" Capture him, boys ! " cried the Head. " We'll bump him and hand him over to the perlice ! "

" I, I, sir ! "

And Fearless and Merry and Bright chased merrily after the tramp, as he hit the trail for the woods. But apparently they did not suxxeed in capturing him, after all, for when they returned a few minnits later, they returned empty-handed. This time Jolly was with them.

" He's gone, sir, I'm afraid," grinned the Kaptin of the Fourth. " I eggspect you thought I was going to cut off his retreat ; but he vannished just as though he'd never eggsisted ! "

Doctor Birchmall mopped his perspiring brow and grinned.

" Well, well, perhaps it duzzent matter, after all. Now that you've all come back, the fellow will never dare venture here again ! My boys, I am deeply indetted to you for what you have done ! "

" Don't mensh, sir ! " grinned Frank Fearless. " It's a plezzure ! "

" Prey, don't think any more about what I said before, boys," went on the

(Now turn to page 184.)



(Continued from page 48.)

used for a year or more and was fast falling into a terrible state of disrepair.

After that they went into the woods where, until the sun went down, they practised just how they were going to rescue old Grandpa Badger.

The more Billy practised the more his spirits rose and the braver he became until, by sun-down, nearly all his fears had gone and he was almost as brave as little Happy.

A big yellow moon was beginning to climb up into the sky when the pair of them crept stealthily back to the farmyard. Each of them was carrying on his head a little wooden door about twelve inches square which they had taken from the old tumble-down house of Mr. Otter.

"Don't make a sound!" whispered Happy, as they reached the farmyard gate.

"I'm not going to!" breathed little Billy.

"I see that great nasty dog's still there in front of the stable," whispered Happy, peeping through the gate. "But we're so little that he won't see us if we don't make any noise. Come on!"

In spite of himself his tiny little heart was thumping twenty to the dozen as he pushed his little door silently under the bottom bar of the gate and crept through after it. So was Billy's heart as he did the same.

Then picking up their doors and balancing them on their heads, they crept along to where the drain-pipe was lying.

They left one door lying on the ground near one end of the drain-pipe, and the other door lying near the other end.

"Now we've got to find a couple of stones," whispered Happy. "There're plenty lying about, thank goodness!"

It didn't take them long to find a couple

of stones of the size they wanted. Exerting all their strength, they rolled one stone near one end of the drain-pipe, and the other stone near the other end.

"Now we're all ready!" said Happy, his voice trembling with excitement.

"There's not the slightest danger, if you're smart, Billy. You're not frightened, are you?"

"N-no, not very!" said Billy bravely.

"Right-o, get started!" said Happy.

He dodged out of sight behind the drain-pipe. Billy advanced a few paces towards the stable, outside which the savage dog, Snatcher, was sitting. Then, lifting up his voice, Billy yelled shrilly:

*"Yah! Boo-oo! Silly old Snatcher!
Chased Bessie Bunny home,
But still he couldn't catch her!"*

At the sound of that jeering rabbit voice, there in his very own farmyard, the savage Snatcher nearly had a fit. With a snarl of rage he leapt to his feet. Eyes blazing, he tore madly towards the voice.

Billy saw him coming and turned to flee. In that very same moment Snatcher saw Billy. With another frightful snarl, he fairly flew in pursuit.

Billy shot into the drain-pipe, rushed through it and shot out at the other end. The raging Snatcher never stopped to think. He, too, shot into the drain-pipe in pursuit of Billy.

But he was far bigger than Billy and he quickly discovered that he couldn't get through the drain-pipe anything like so quickly as Billy had done. In fact, he was so big that the only way he could get through was to crawl through.

"Quick—quick!" yelled Billy, dancing excitedly about as the most frightful snarls and growls came from the crawling Snatcher inside the drain-pipe. "Oh quick, Happy!"

But Happy was already busy. Lifting up the little door which he had brought from Mr. Otter's house, he slammed it against the end of the drain-pipe towards which the raging Snatcher was crawling.

"Now the stone, Billy!" he panted. "Quick!"

Together, they rolled against the little

door one of the stones which they had found.

"Now the other end!" cried Happy.

He and Billy scuttled swiftly round to the other end of the drain-pipe. It was the work of a few moments to prop the other little door against that end of the pipe and to roll the stone against it to keep it in place.

"Hurrah!" yelled little Billy, capering madly about with delight. "We've caught the great, nasty, horrid bully, Happy. Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Then joining hands—or, rather, paws—he and Happy danced gaily about in the moonlight singing:

"Horrid old Snatcher!

Wicked rabbit catcher!

Now you're safe inside that spout

Until old Grunter lets you out!"

"Oo-ooh, my, doesn't he sound mad?" cried Billy, as from inside the drain-pipe there came the most terrible snarls and growls.

"Yes, but we can't waste any more time on him," chuckled little Happy. "Come on, we've got to get old Grandpa Badger out of that nasty box and stable before one of those humans comes to take him to the Zoo!"

Turning, they scuttled away towards the stable. They knew how they were going to get in, all right. Happy had seen that when he had been peeping through the farmyard gate that morning.

There was a little square hole through the bottom of the front wall of the stable. It was used to drain the water off when the stable was being washed out with buckets of water swilled over the floor.

His little heart fairly thumping with excitement, Happy crawled through the hole followed by Billy. Next minute the pair of them found themselves inside the stable.

And there in front of their very eyes was the box in which poor old Grandpa Badger was a prisoner!

Happy and Billy could see him quite plainly behind the horrid bars with which the front of the box was fitted. He was lying there, staring at them in the utmost astonishment.

"Why, if it isn't little Happy and Billy Rabbit!" he exclaimed. "Wherever have you two little fellows come from, and how have you got in here with that dreadful dog guarding the stable?"

"He's not guarding it any longer, Grandpa Badger!" cried Happy triumphantly. "Billy and I have got him shut up safe and sound, haven't we, Billy?"

"Yes, yes!" cried Billy, dancing excitedly about and clapping his little paws with glee. "And we've come to get you out, Grandpa Badger. We've come to rescue you!"

Grandpa Badger gave a violent start.

"Rescue me?" he cried. "But you can't do that. Even if you get me out of this dreadful box, I can't get out of the stable. I'm much too big to crawl out through that hole by which you've just come. And the stable door is locked, so I can't get out that way."

"We know you can't!" chuckled Happy. "But we're not going out that way, Grandpa Badger. We're going out another way altogether. Aren't we, Billy?"

"Yes, yes!" cried Billy. "Happy's got it all fixed, Grandpa Badger. He knows how to do it!"

"And we've jolly well got to hurry!" cried Happy. "That horrid human will be here at any moment to take Grandpa Badger off to the Zoo. Come on, Billy, let's get the box opened!"

Happy and Billy to the Rescue

THE lid of the box was fitted with a catch on the outside. Helped by a bump-up from Billy, Happy climbed up on to the lid and it didn't take him very long to push back the catch with his sharp little claws.

"Push the lid up, Grandpa Badger!" he cried excitedly, dropping down to the stable floor again. "Push the lid up with your front paws!"

Grandpa Badger did so quite easily, for, like all badgers, he was very strong.

"Thank goodness for that!" he cried, climbing out of the box and stretching his stiff, cramped limbs. "Oh, little Happy and Billy, how can I ever thank you for getting me out of that dreadful box? It

was so low that I couldn't even stand up in it. But now that I am out of the box, how are we going to get out of the stable?"

"Up that ladder there!" chuckled Happy, pointing to the wooden ladder which led up to the hayloft above. "I know all about the inside of stables, because I've slept in them more than once when the nights have been cold. You're a good climber, Grandpa Badger, and you can easily carry Billy and me up on your back."

"Yes, but once we are up there, Happy, how are we going to get out?" asked Grandpa Badger in a puzzled voice.

"You'll see," chuckled Happy. "But we really must hurry in case that nasty Farmer Grunter and his friend come and catch us."

"Yes, of course!" cried Grandpa Badger. "Very well, then, Happy; you and Billy climb on my back and I'll carry you up the ladder. But hold on very tightly, mind."

"You bet we will!" cried Happy and Billy.

They climbed on to Grandpa Badger's strong, silver-grey back. Then, gripping the rungs of the ladder in his claws, Grandpa went up it like the clever climber he was.

"Hurrah!" cried Happy, when they had reached the loft. "Now we shan't be long!"

He dropped to the floor and pointed to the skylight, through which a beam of moonlight was streaming, in the low, sloping roof.

"That's how we're going to get out, Grandpa Badger!" he cried triumphantly. "Through that skylight. You can easily reach it by standing on a pile of hay. There's heaps and heaps of hay here, and if you can't manage to open the skylight you can easily break the glass with your strong paws!"

"Yes, yes, so I can!" cried Grandpa Badger excitedly. "Oh, what a clever fellow you are, Happy!"

Then a sudden thought seemed to strike him, for he said:

"But isn't it going to be rather a long drop from the roof to the ground?"

"We've thought of that—we've thought of that!" cried little Billy, jumping delightedly about. "At least, Happy has. All you've got to do is to bung a lot of this hay up through the skylight on to the roof, then tumble it down on to the ground and drop down on to it!"

"My word, how clever!" gasped old Grandpa Badger admiringly. "You seem to have thought of everything——"

Abruptly he broke off, his ears pricked and his head cocked on one side as he listened intently.

"Oh, my goodness, here's somebody coming!" he whispered.

"It's Farmer Grunter, and the other human is with him!" gasped Happy, as he heard the sound of human voices and heavily booted human feet approaching the stable-door. "Oh, hurry, Grandpa—hurry!"

Grandpa Badger did so. As quietly and as silently as anything he started gathering great armfuls of hay and piling them on the floor directly below the skylight.

"Oh, dear, here they come!" quavered little Billy, as plainly to their ears there came the sound of a key turning in the lock of the stable-door below.

Next moment the sound of human feet filled the stable, and up the loft ladder came the sound of Farmer Grunter's harsh, bad-tempered voice.

"I can't think where that dog's got to," he was saying angrily. "But when I do catch the brute I'll give him the thrashing he deserves. I'll l'arn him not to run away when I leave him on guard——"

Next moment he let out an ear-splitting roar.

"Where's the badger?" he yelled at the very top of his voice.

"It seems to have gone," said the voice of the man who was with him.

"Gone?" bellowed Farmer Grunter furiously. "I can see that it's gone. But where can it have gone to? It couldn't get out of the stable. The door's locked!"

"It may be hiding in a corner somewhere," said the other man.

"Let's have a look!" roared Farmer Grunter.

They looked, but they couldn't find the badger hiding in any corner at all.

"But it must be somewhere," bellowed Farmer Grunter, fairly dancing with rage. "It couldn't have got out, I tell you!"

"What about the loft?" said the other man. "Badgers are good climbers, you know. It might have gone up there!"

"Aye, let's have a look up there!" roared Farmer Grunter.

He had a lantern in his hand and he carried it quickly up the ladder into the loft. He was just in time to see old Grandpa Badger hoisting himself up through the skylight.

"There he is!" he roared, making a furious dash at old Grandpa.

It was then that Grandpa Badger did what he afterwards said was the cleverest and smartest thing that he had ever done in the whole of his life.

Instead of making a frantic effort to escape before the cruel farmer could grab him, he just drew up his powerful hind legs. Next instant he lashed out with them, catching the farmer such a terrific smack on the chest that it knocked him flat on his back on the floor of the loft.

The lantern, sent spinning from Farmer Grunter's hand, crashed to the floor and broke.

"Look out!" yelled the other man, who had followed Farmer Grunter up the ladder.

But it was too late. Already the burning oil from the smashed lantern was spreading to the great pile of dry hay in the loft. And almost before the raging farmer could stagger to his feet, the hay was burning furiously.

By that time, however, old Grandpa Badger was safely out on the roof. He had already lifted Happy and Billy out, and they were waiting there for him. There had been no time, however, to throw any hay down to the ground.

"Never mind!" cried Grandpa Badger. "There's bound to be a rain-pipe somewhere. I can easily climb down that. Get on my back and hang on like anything!"

Happy and Billy did so. Already the

slates of the roof were getting hot and great flames were shooting up through the skylight from the furiously burning hay in the loft.

Moving swiftly along the edge of the roof, Grandpa Badger soon found a rain-pipe which ran down to the ground at the back of the stable.

"Hang on!" he said to Happy and Billy, who were clinging to his back.

"Stay on my back!" he cried, as he reached the ground. "I can run faster than you two little fellows!"

He sped away across the fields, and, like all his kind, he could run very swiftly when he wanted to.

"Oh, look—look!" cried Happy.

Old Grandpa Badger halted and turned. Great flames were leaping up through the roof of the stable.

"Well," said Grandpa Badger gravely, "that wouldn't have happened if Farmer Grunter hadn't caught me and tried to sell me to a Zoo."

"It's his punishment, that's what it is!" cried little Billy.

"I agree with you, Billy," said Happy.

"I haven't thanked you two brave little fellows yet for rescuing me," said Grandpa Badger in a trembling voice. "But I do thank you from the very, very bottom of my heart. And now you must come home to supper with me and let Mrs. Badger thank you, as well."

As they reached the woods a sudden, startled voice cried:

"Why, chase my tail! If it isn't Grandpa Badger!"

"Hallo, Freddy!" cried Grandpa Badger, recognising Freddy Fox. "Yes, it's me, thanks to little Happy, here, and little Billy!"

"But—but how have you escaped from Farmer Grunter?" gasped Freddy.

"Come home to supper and I'll tell you," cried Grandpa Badger gaily. "Collect all our friends and tell them to come to supper, as well. Bring everybody. Oh, what a happy, happy party we're going to have to-night!"

They certainly did. It was the merriest, maddest party ever held in the woods.

THE END

BILLY BUNTER

THE FATTEST SCHOOLBOY ON EARTH

ON BEHALF OF OUR LOCAL HOSPITAL, I AM ARRANGING FOR A SCHOOL CONCERT. I SHALL RELY ON YOU BOYS TO MAKE IT A BIG SUCCESS OF COURSE I SHALL SING, BUT —

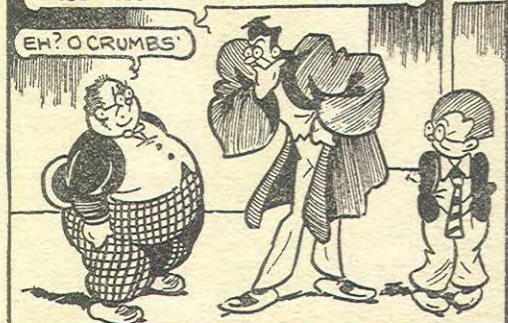


AH-SMITHSON-YOU SHALL GIVE A PIANOFORTE RECITAL. INFORM CHERRY THAT HE WILL PLAY HIS VIOLIN AT MY CONCERT!

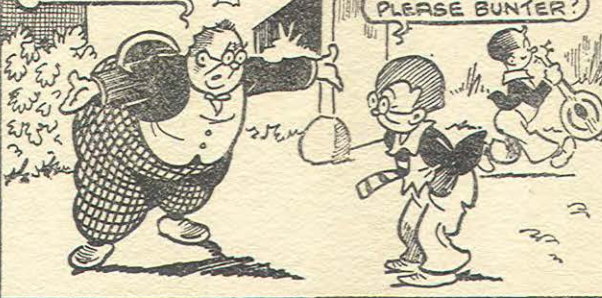


1. Quelch was getting up a school concert, chums, in aid of the Courtfield Cottage Hospital. "Smithson shall play the piano," he said, "and Cherry, the violin." Billy decided to play "old Harry" with the refreshments if he got a chance!

BUNTER HM! YES-PERHAPS I CAN TRUST YOU TO SELL PROGRAMMES!



SELL PROGRAMMES! WHAT A CHEEK! I'M GOING TO DO A TURN!



2. He asked for a job, did William George Bunter! He knew that only those who took part got a look-in at the refreshments. But Quelch said, doubtfully: "Maybe you can sell programmes, Bunter!" Of all the nerve! Selling programmes!

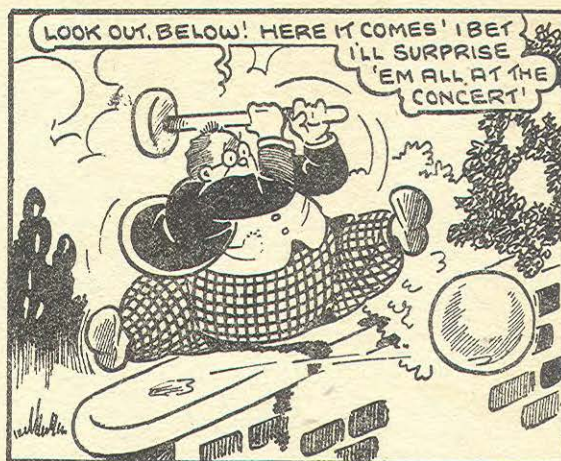
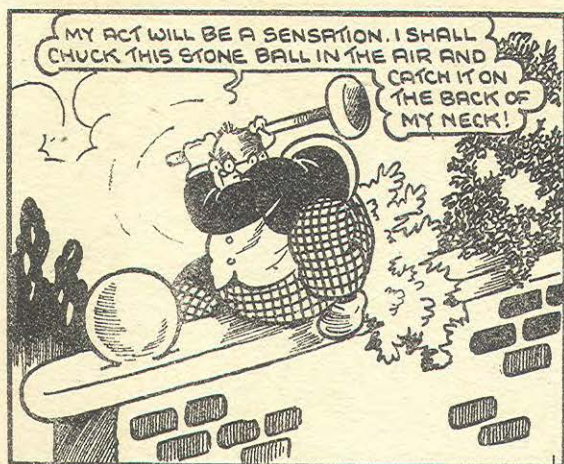
WELL, I MIGHT PLAY AN OBOE IF I HAD ONE — I — COO! I KNOW — I'LL GIVE A STRONG MAN JUGGLING ACT! YOU CAN ASSIST ME, SO WE'LL GET BUSY!



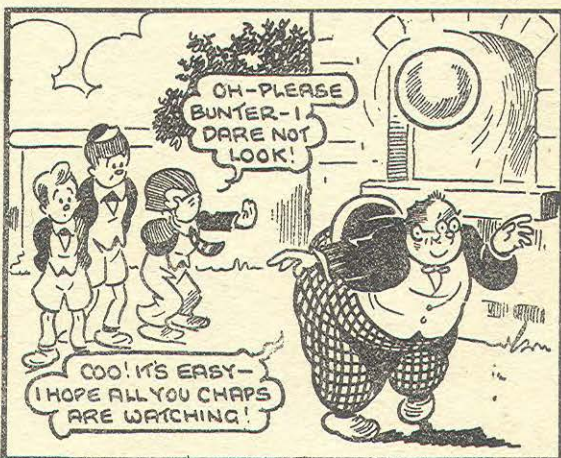
I'VE BEEN READING A BOOK ABOUT STRONG-MAN ACTS, JONES MINOR, AND IT SAYS YOU HAVE TO HAVE A HEAVY BALL THAT ONE WILL DO NICELY!



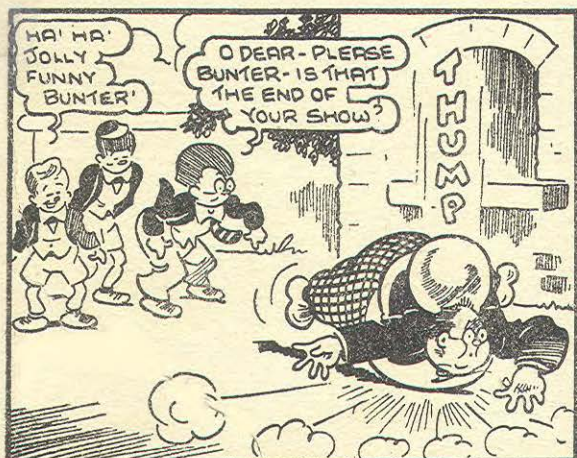
3. "I'll do a turn, that's what!" he barked. But what could he do? If he had an oboe he'd oboe it! But he hadn't. All he had was the brute strength Nature had given him. The mighty Bunter brain clicked on a corking notion, chums!



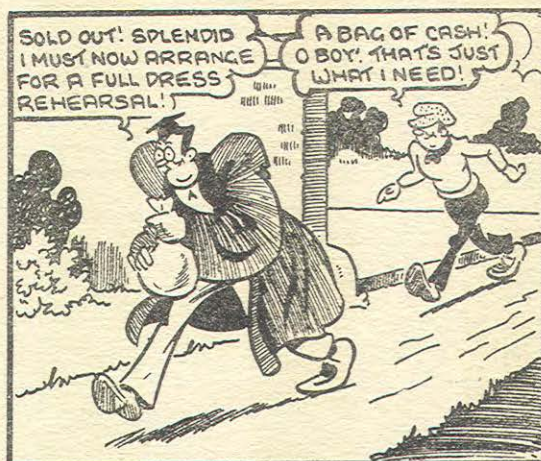
4. "I'll juggle!" he decided. "And do a strong man act!" Forthwith, he climbed the wall by the school gates and knocked off the big stone ball that made things look pretty around there. In fact, our Billy swiped it off with one wallop.



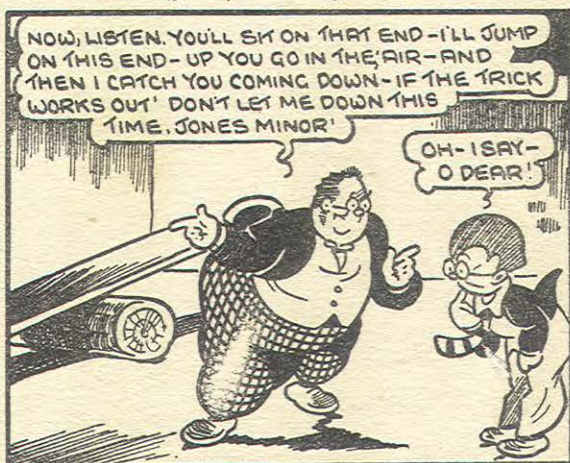
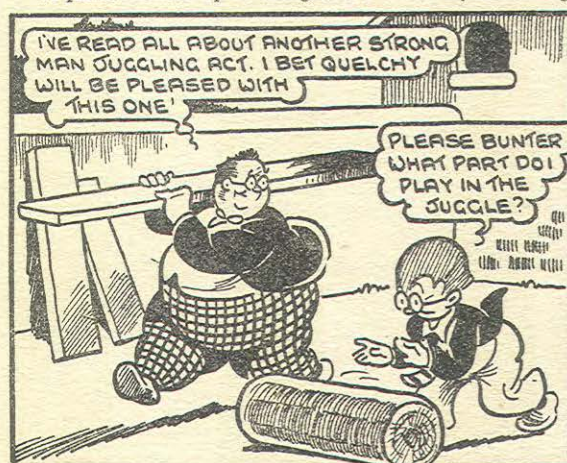
5. Jones Minor wasn't very sure about it all. You see, chums, the idea was for our Billy to juggle with the stone ball. He would toss it high in the air, and catch it neatly on the back of his neck. He started to practise his show.



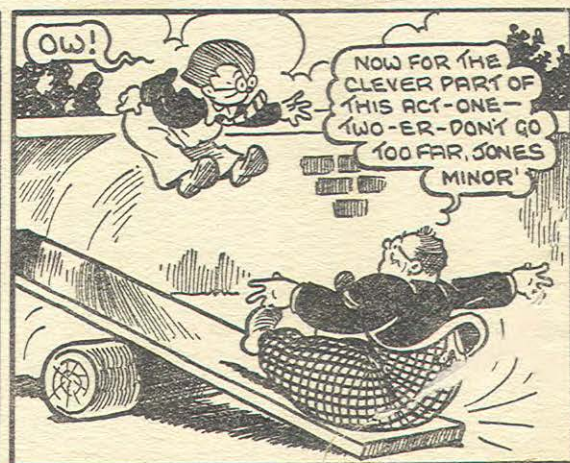
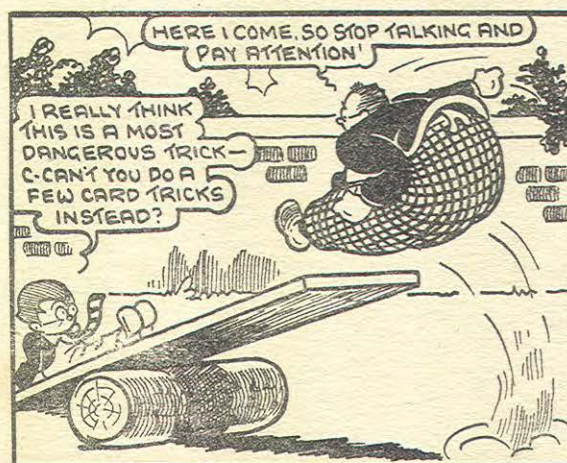
6. High in the air he tossed the stone ball. Such strength, chums, you never saw. His muscles stood out like spiders' knee caps! Up went the stone ball. The next move was to catch it on the back of his neck. And he caught it, chums! Thump!



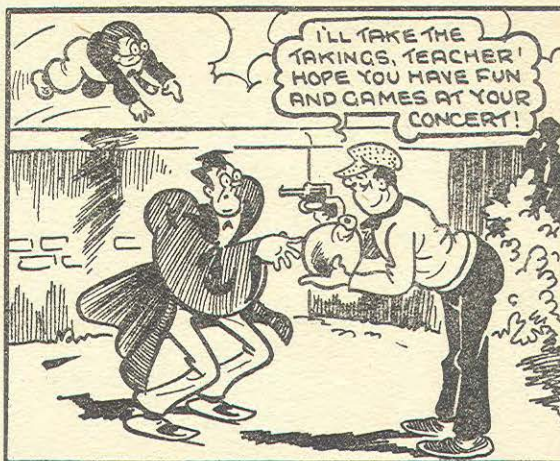
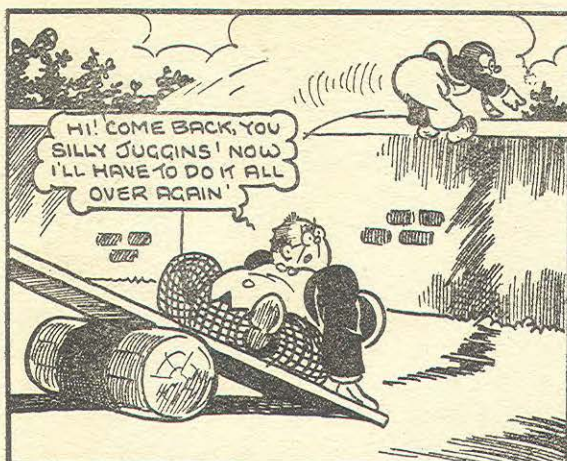
7. His back stud was smashed almost through to his tonsils. His head was whirling round and round and back again. When he picked himself up he thought he'd better try something else. Meanwhile, Quelch was selling tickets for the concert.



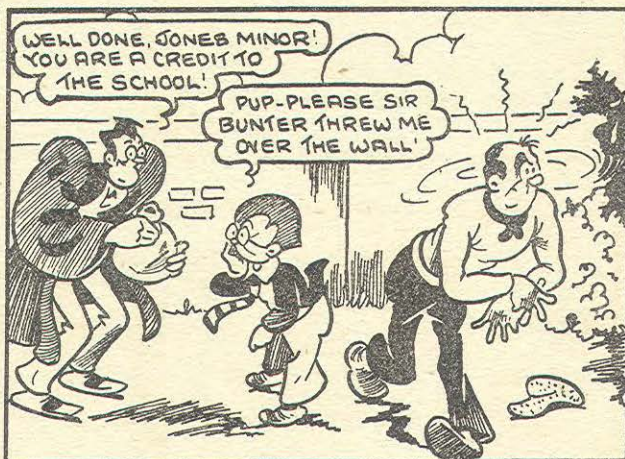
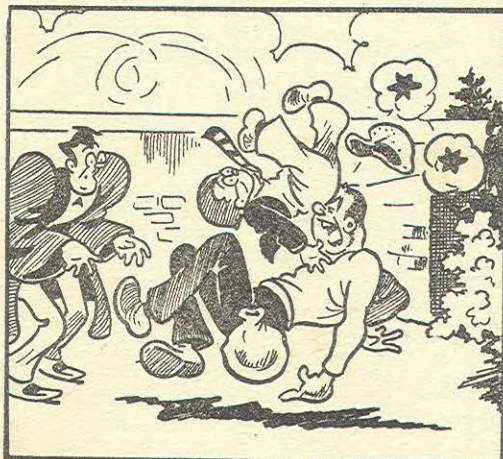
8. But kindly note the bad lad sneaking into the picture with a nasty look in his eye. He's spotted the bag of cash takings! Our Billy knew nothing about the bad lad. He needed the help of Jones Minor. They would juggle together.



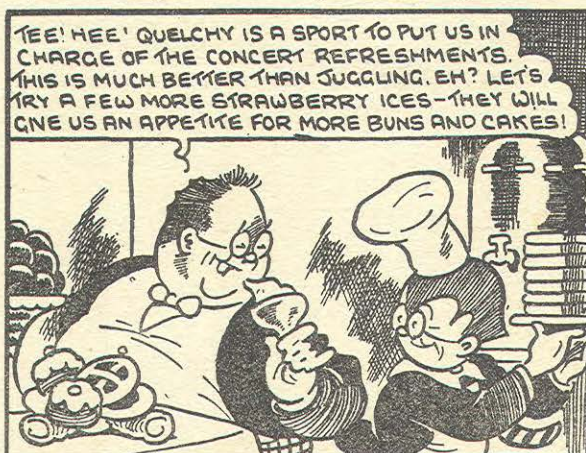
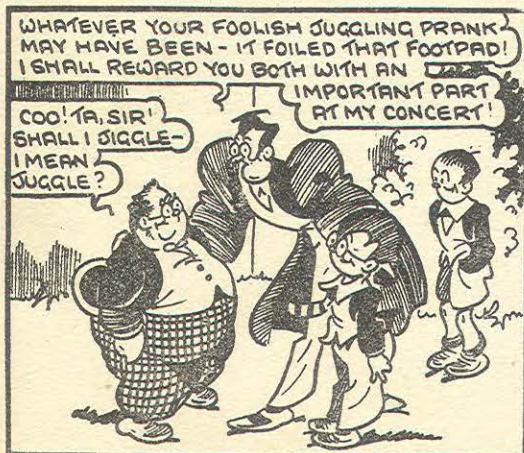
9. With a plank and a log, Billy made the finest see-saw ever seen. The idea was for Jones Minor to sit on the lower end, while Billy sat at the top end. Up would go the lower end, flinging Jones Minor into the stratosphere. And Billy would catch him!



10. Well, they tried it. Billy took a bop, skip and a jump. Plonk! Down on the plank he plonked, and up shot Jones Minor into the air. But the duffer did his stuff wrong. Instead of coming down where Billy could catch him, he sailed out of sight.



11. Right over the wall he flew, into Quelchy's back garden. And there was the big bad lad taking the cash takings from Quelchy. Oh, what a wicked world this is! Quelchy being robbed and Jones Minor baling out without a parachute!



12. But Jones Minor landed on the bad lad's head. The bad lad never knew what hit him. But Quelchy did, and Billy worked it so that Quelchy thought 'twas a clever rescue stunt. In fact, he put our Billy in charge of the eats! Coo, lucky lad!