The two Bunters exchanged a blissful grin

CHAPTER I

BILLY BUNTER winked at Sammy Bunter.

Sammy Bunter winked back at Billy.

Both grinned.

Both, probably, would have chuckled aloud: but it was their cue to keep quiet. So they suppressed their chuckles, and contented themselves with grinning and winking.

It was really amusing—to the Bunters.

They were seated on a bench under one of the ancient elms of Greyfriars. They had been discussing ways and means. It was morning break: and both Bunters liked a spot of tuck in break. Billy—not for the first time—had been disappointed about a postal-order. So he had looked for Sammy, in the hope that his minor might be in more prosperous financial circumstances. But, as it happened, Sammy was looking for his major, for the very same reason. Both, it transpired, were in the sad and sorrowful state known as "stony". Unless Billy could "touch" some Remove fellow for a little loan, or unless Sammy

could raise the wind in the Second Form, there was no spot of tuck for either Bunter.

And then—!

Then Harry Wharton and Co. happened. It was really odd that, as the Famous Five came along, they did not notice the two fat figures on the bench under the elm. Apparently, however, they noticed nothing. They stopped under the tree, on the other side of the trunk: which then hid the Bunters from their view if they had looked round. And the first remark that reached two pairs of fat ears was, in Bob Cherry's voice, "Keep this dark from Bunter."

So it was not surprising that Billy and Sammy winked at one another, and grinned. The Famous Five, evidently, had stopped there to discuss some matter that was to be kept dark from Bunter—in Bunter's hearing! Neither Bunter had any objection to listening-in to a discussion not intended for their ears. They winked, and grinned, and listened-in.

"If Bunter got on to this—!" It was Johnny Bull's voice.

"Once Bunter's on the track of tuck—!" It was Frank Nugent speaking next.

"Well, we all know Bunter," said Harry Wharton.

"The knowfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Bunter ought jolly well to have a lesson about snooping other fellows' tuck!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, Bunter can't help it!" said Bob Cherry. "But so long as we keep it dark from Bunter, it will be all right. If Bunter knew that there were cakes and jam-tarts and dough-nuts about—."

"Would he be after them?" said Nugent.

"Would he?" chuckled Bob. "Sort of! But he won't know, so that's all right."

Two Bunters exchanged a blissful grin. Cakes and jam-tarts and dough-nuts about—when both Bunters were simply yearning for even a spot of tuck! Evidently this was their lucky morning! If either Bunter, or both, had the remotest chance at those cakes, and jam-tarts, and dough-nuts, it was quite certain that not the ghost of a cake, a jam-tart, or a dough-nut, would be left for the proprietors thereof. They grinned: and listened breathlessly.

"Now, let's see, here's the list," went on Bob Cherry. "One dozen jam-tarts—two dozen dough-nuts—half-a-dozen of those small cakes, and one of the big plum cakes. We can get them all at the tuck-shop. Think that's enough?"

"Might shove in a few meringues," suggested Nugent.

"All right—say half-a-dozen."

"And a dozen oranges," said Harry Wharton.

"Right-ho—a dozen oranges. What about half-a-dozen bottles of ginger-pop?"

"Good! And a bunch of bananas."

"And a couple of dozen ham sandwiches."

"And some hard-boiled eggs—all right on a picnic."

"And a box of biscuits."

"Okay! But I say, that will run up rather a bill at the tuck-shop, if we get that lot!" said Bob.

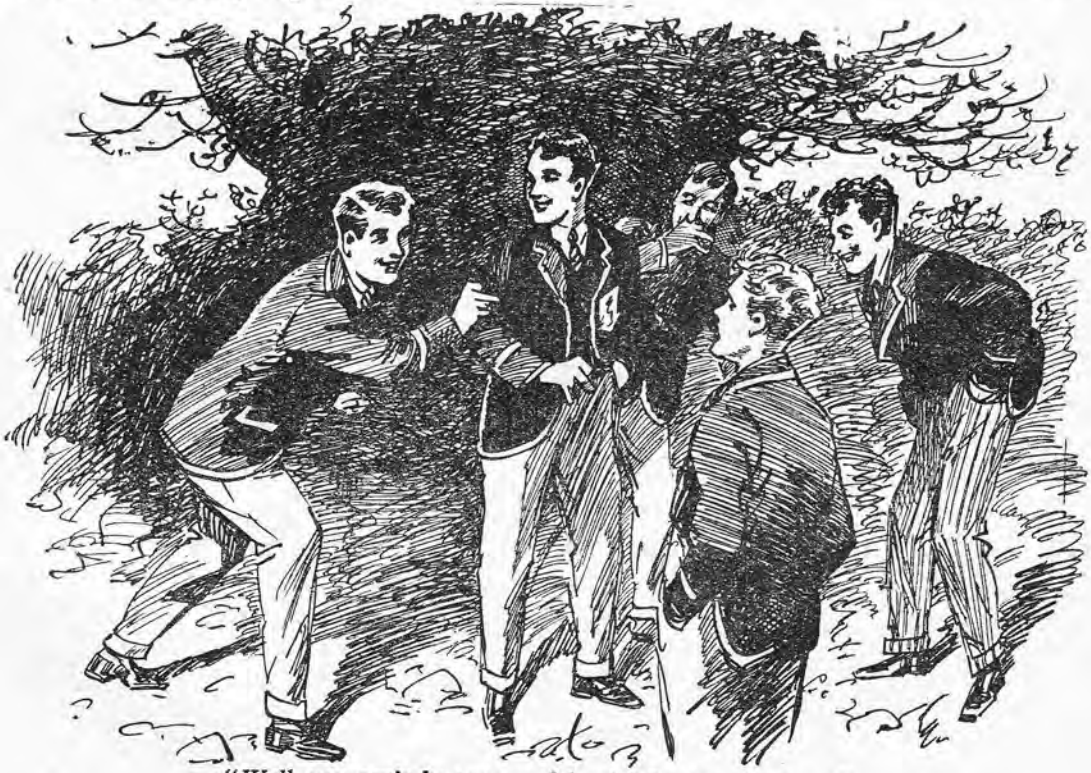
"Oh, never mind the bill. We don't have a picnic every day. We shan't have any trouble about the bill."

"Well, that's that," said Bob Cherry. "Let's get along to the tuck-shop. The bell will be going soon."

"Hold on a minute, though," said Johnny Bull, "If you leave that stack of tuck in the study, it mayn't be there when we go for it."

"Oh, Bunter doesn't know a thing."

"That's all very well: but you know how he noses out tuck. It wouldn't be safe in the study cupboard."



"Well, you can't be too careful, with Bunter about . . ."

"That's all right," said Harry Wharton. "There's a box in my study—that heavy old box we use for an extra chair sometimes. We can stow the tuck in that—even Bunter would never think of nosing into that old box."

Billy Bunter winked again at Sammy, as he heard that!

Sammy winked back.

"Um!" said Johnny Bull. He seemed doubtful. "Is there a lock on the box?"

"No: but—"

"That's all right," said Bob Cherry. "I'll put a nail in the lid, and that will be as safe as a lock, if anybody thought of nosing into it."

"Well, you can't be too careful, with Bunter about—"

"My dear chap, Bunter won't get so much as the smell of a dough-nut out of that box. You can bank on that," said Bob Cherry. "Now let's get along—we're due for third school soon."

Footsteps receded.

Two Bunters blinked round the trunk of the elm. They had a back view of Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. The Famous Five walked away, without a backward glance. Then the two Bunters grinned at one another.

"Oh! crikey!" said Billy Bunter.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Sammy.

"Beasts!" said Bunter. "All that tuck for a picnic, and they never thought of asking a pal—after all I've done for them! I say, Sammy—"

"I say, Billy—"

"We're in on this!" said Billy.

"We jolly well are!" said Sammy, emphatically.

"Keeping it dark from me, as if I'd get after their tuck!" said Bunter. "Serve them jolly well right if I did, Sammy. I rather think I will!"

"Me too!" said Sammy.

"Plenty for both of us, from what they said," grinned Bunter. "They must be rolling in money, to-day. And only this morning, not one of them would lend me half-a-crown, though I told them I'd been disappointed about a postal-order! Jolly artful of them to stack their tuck in that old box, instead of the study cupboard. I'd never have thought of looking there. I fancy I'm going to look into that box, what? He, he, he!"

"He, he, he!" echoed Sammy.

Billy Bunter wrinkled his fat brows in thought.

"We shall have to be late for class," he said. "The bell will be going, by the time they've stacked away that tuck in the box. It will be all right for us when

all the fellows are in the form-rooms. Quelch will give me lines if I'm late, but it's worth it."

"Twigg can give me all the lines he likes, after I've had a go at that box," grinned Sammy.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Sammy.

One member of the Remove, and one member of the Second Form, did not turn up on time, in their respective form-rooms, when the bell rang for third school. Billy Bunter was missed by Mr. Quelch: Sammy Bunter by Mr. Twigg. Both Bunters were too busy to bother about lessons.

"Blow!" hissed Billy Bunter

CHAPTER II

"BLOW!" hissed Billy Bunter.

He glared at a box in No. 1 Study in the Remove. Sammy gave it a simultaneous glare. Both Bunters were deeply annoyed.

Other fellows were in the form-rooms. At the risk of lines for unpunctuality, Billy and Sammy were in a Remove study. Both of them agreed that it was worth lines from Quelch and Twigg, to have a "go" at that box in Harry Wharton's study—and it was likely to be an extensive "go". In matters of tuck, neither Billy nor Sammy cared to remember that there was a distinction between "meum" and "tuum". They were prepared to dip deep into that box: and howsoever ample the supply, it was improbable that there would be much left after the two Bunters were through. But there was, so to speak, a lion in the path! The lid had been nailed down on that box.

They had heard Bob Cherry state that he would put a nail in the lid, as there was no lock. Just one nail would have been only a temporary difficulty: the lid could have been prised up somehow. But there was more than one nail. Bob had done the nailing not wisely but too well! There was a whole array of nails and they were quite long ones, and hammered well home. At least a dozen nails secured the lid of that old wooden box: and the two Bunters glared at it in intense exasperation.

"We can't get that open!" said Sammy.

"Beasts!" said Bunter. He breathed wrath and indignation. "Suspicious beasts, you know! Fancying a fellow might be after their tuck! They've bunged it all in that old box and nailed it up, and we can't get it open without a hammer and chisel and a pair of pincers. Beasts!"

"Can't kick up a row with a hammer here," said Sammy. "Somebody would be sure to hear. It would jolly well take time too."

Billy Bunter blinked over the box through his big spectacles. Inside that box, he could not doubt, were stowed all the attractive things that the Famous Five intended for a picnic. Cakes, dough-nuts, jam-tarts, ginger-beer, oranges, bananas, biscuits—so near, yet so far! Billy Bunter's extensive mouth had watered as he listened to the list under the elm. Seldom had he been on the track of so extensive a supply of tuck. And what a spot of sheer luck it was, that he had been able to listen-in, and learn exactly where to look for that stack of tuck! And now—not so much as the smell of a dough-nut, as Bob had said. reached him from that ample supply. And the minutes were ticking away—and

he was already late for class with Quelch, as Sammy was for class with Mr. Twigg.

"Beasts!" groaned Bunter.

That box was securely nailed. With a hammer and chisel and pincers, it could be penetrated: but it certainly would take time, and make a great deal of noise during that time. Billy Bunter's idea had been to plunge fat paws into that box without delay. He realized now that a change of plan was indicated.

"We can't bu'st it here, Sammy," he said, at last, "and it would take too jolly long if we could. We can't stay out of form much longer. But we're jolly well not going to leave it here for those beasts to walk off this afternoon. That box ain't going to be here when they come out of form, see?"

"Good egg!" grinned Sammy. "But—"

"It's jolly heavy." Bunter tipped the box, and was quite surprised to find out how heavy it was. Even the extensive supply of tuck that he had heard enumerated seemed hardly to account for the weight. Possibly the Famous Five

Bunter . . . was surprised to find out how heavy it was!

had added still further supplies. Anyhow, the weight of that box was satisfactory in one way—it indicated that it was full inside. "We can manage it between us, Sammy—we shall have to. It's a goner if it's still here when they come out after class. We've got to shift it."

Bunter reflected for a moment or two.

"My study wouldn't do," he went on. "They might look there—it would be like them to think of me if tuck was missing. Fellows always do, somehow. We can get it up to the attic. Nobody will hear hammering from there, when we get going on it. I can get a hammer from Cherry's tool-chest in his study. See?"

"Let's!" agreed Sammy.

"After third school, I'll get a hammer and chisel and pincers and we'll go up," said Bunter. "They can hunt for their dashed old box, while we're up in the attic scoffing the tuck, see? Lend a hand, Sammy—there'll be a row if we don't get into form soon."

"Go it!" said Sammy.

Both Bunters heaved at the heavy box. They gasped for breath as they heaved.

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Bunter. "It's too jolly heavy to carry, Sammy. Trundle it."

They trundled the box, end over end, out of the study. They trundled it the length of the Remove passage, to the stair at the end. There they halted to pant for breath. Trundling the box further was impracticable: it couldn't be trundled up a steep stair: it had to be carried up. Having recovered their breath a little they heaved the box up the first stair. Then they stopped to pant again.

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"Oh, scissors!" gasped Sammy.

Then they heaved again, up another stair. Another pause for panting—and another heave! In that narrow old staircase that led up to the attics there were about twenty steps: but it seemed to the two Bunters that there were about five hundred. They were gasping and perspiring when they reached the landing at the top.

"Oh, lor!" mumbled Bunter, mopping a fat brow.

"Oh jiminy!" gasped Sammy, similarly occupied.

Now it was possible to trundle again, and they trundled the box into the attic. It was a tremendous relief to land it there at last. It was painful to leave it there, with its hidden treasures untasted. Still, there was the prospect of a gorgeous spread after third school, when they revisited that remote attic with a hammer, a chisel, and a pair of pincers. For the moment, Billy Bunter and Sammy Bunter had to be satisfied with pleasure in prospect.

"Come on," said Bunter. "We're awfully late—Quelch will be waxy."

"So will Twigg!" said Sammy. "Come on."

They left the attic, carefully closing the door.

Their anticipations that their respective form-masters would be "waxy" were realized. Mr. Quelch gave Billy Bunter a glare and fifty lines. Mr. Twigg gave Sammy a frown, and fifty lines. Nevertheless, both Bunters looked quite cheery in third school, that morning, with their fat minds dwelling on the tremendous feast that was to follow.

CHAPTER III

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter jumped, and dropped a hammer.

"Oh!" he gasped.

He spun round, startled and alarmed. He had not, naturally, expected Bob Cherry in No. 13 Study. After third school, it was usually as certain as anything could be, that Bob would be out in the open air.

Yet there he was, coming in at the study doorway, and startling a fat Owl with his sudden cheery roar.

Billy Bunter was in Bob Cherry's study: busy! He had sorted out Bob's tool-chest. Generally, that tool-chest was easy enough to find—but for some reason, unknown to Bunter, it had been shoved out of sight under the table, and he was several minutes in finding it. Having found it, he was selecting a hammer, a chisel, and a pair of pincers from it: when Bob's roar made him jump and drop the hammer.

Bob stared at him. From behind Bob, the smiling dusky face of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh looked in. Why they had come up to their study, Bunter did not know: but it was very irritating. In the circumstances, he did not want to be spotted in the act of borrowing tools.

"What are you up to in my study, old fat man?" inquired Bob.

"Oh! Nothing!" stammered Bunter. "I—I—I mean, you—you would not mind lending me your hammer, old chap, would you?"

Bunter would have preferred to keep the hammer dark. But it lay on the floor where he had dropped it. He stooped and picked it up.

"Well, you might ask a fellow, before you start rooting about his study," said Bob. "What the dickens do you want a hammer for?"

"Oh Nothing—I—I mean—" Bunter cudgelled fat brains. Certainly he could not explain to a member of the Co. why he wanted a hammer! But the

"What are you doing in my study, old fat man?" inquired Bob

unveracious fat Owl was seldom at a loss for a fib. "I—I mean—there's a nail in the armchair in my study, and I—I want to knock it out—just a nun-nun-nail in the—the armchair, if you'll lend me the hammer—"

"Okay!" said Bob, cheerily. "You can borrow the hammer if you like. I'll tell you what," added Bob, "I'll come along and help."

"Eh?"

"I'll help you handle that armchair—"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. It was quite a kind offer, for Bob was rather good at the carpenter's art, while Bunter was anything but! Nevertheless, it was not an offer Bunter was likely to accept: considering the actual use to which he planned to put that hammer! "Oh! No! Don't you bother—"

"No bother at all," said Bob. "You come and help too, Inky."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh nodded and grinned.

"The helpfulness will be terrific," he agreed.

"I—I—I don't want any help!" stammered Bunter. "I can manage all right. It—it's only just a nail in the table—"

"As well as in the armchair?" asked Bob.

"I—I mean in the armchair!" stuttered Bunter. "I—I—I'll take these pincers and the —the chisel, if you don't mind—"

"Oh, do!" said Bob. "Sure you wouldn't like me to help—?"

"Quite sure!" gasped Bunter.

"Well, look here, I'll carry the tool-chest along to your study for you," said Bob. "Then you'll have all the tools you want—"

"Oh! No! I—I should have to carry it back, and it's rather heavy—"

"Oh, that's all right! I'll wait while you knock out that nail and carry it back myself," said Bob, affably.

Billy Bunter breathed hard. This was disconcerting: as there was no nail to be knocked out of the armchair in his study: and he was anxious to head, not for that study, but for the top attic, where Sammy was awaiting him. All he wanted of Bob, just then, was to see his back!

Before he could reply, there were footsteps in the Remove passage, and Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull came into the study. Both of them looked at Billy Bunter, and at the hammer in his fat hand.

"Bunter taking up carpentry?" asked Nugent.

"Mending something?" asked Johnny.

"Oh! Yes! No! I—I—I mean, there's an armchair in the nail in my study —I mean there's a nail in the study in my armchair—I mean—"

"We're going to help!" said Bob. "Bunter isn't much of a hand at carpentry, and I'm going to lend a hand. Come along to your study, Bunter, and we'll have that nail out in two shakes of a monkey's tail."

"We'll come and help," said Nugent.

"Yes, let's!" agreed Johnny Bull.

Billy Bunter breathed harder. Really, it looked as if he never would get rid of those too obliging fellows. Why four members of the Co. had come up to the studies was an irritating mystery to him: as a rule they would have been punting a footer after third school. But here they were, gathered in No. 13 study: the very last place where Billy Bunter wanted them. He had to get rid of them somehow, and their kind offers of help in dealing with that imaginary nail in the armchair.

"I—I say, you fellows—?" he stammered.

"Come on!" said Bob.

"Look here, I don't want any help," said Bunter, desperately, "and I jolly well don't want a crowd in my study. You fellows can stay here."

The fat Owl rolled to the door.

Behind his plump back four fellows exchanged a grin. If Billy Bunter had seen that grin he might have wondered whether they guessed what he was going

to do with that hammer and chisel and pincers! But Bunter, of course, had no eyes in the back of his head, and he remained in ignorance of the fact that the chums of the Remove seemed to be enjoying a joke among themselves.

He rolled out of the study.

He almost rolled into the captain of the Remove. Harry Wharton stopped him.

"Hold on, Bunter—!"

"I—I'm in a hurry—"

"Stop a minute, all the same. I'm looking for a box."

"A—a—a bib-bib-box!"

"Yes. Seen anything of it?"

Billy Bunter, assuredly, had seen something of a box. But he was not likely to confide that fact to the captain of the Remove.

"What—what—what sort of a bib-bib-box?" he stammered.

"Rather a big box—the one we sometimes use for a chair in the study," explained Wharton. "We left it there before class, but somebody must have shifted it out of the study."

"Hold on, Bunter, I'm looking for a box"

"I—I—I wonder who!" gasped Bunter.

"Well, somebody has! Seen anything of it?"

"Oh! No!" Billy Bunter was never handicapped by any regard for the facts. "I—I haven't been near your study, Wharton. I—I don't know anything about your box. Sure it isn't in the study?"

"Well, it's big enough to be seen, if it was!" said Harry. "We left it there, but it's not there now."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Somebody been monkeying with that box?" asked Bob Cherry.

"It's been shifted—."

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I expect somebody's shifted it for a jig-jig-joke," stammered Bunter. "I—I'd look in the other studies, if I were you, Wharton. I—I expect you'll find it in one of the studies. Anything in it?" added Bunter, in a casual sort of way.

"Oh, nothing of any value," answered Wharton, carelessly.

Billy Bunter blinked at him. He was not likely to believe that! Unless his fat ears had deceived him when he was listening-in under the elm, that box was stacked with jam-tarts, cakes, dough-nuts, ham sandwiches, ginger-pop, and other such attractive things. Wharton, apparently, was keeping that dark! But Bunter knew what he knew!

"Sure you've seen nothing of it, Bunter?" asked Harry.

"Quite!" answered Bunter. "I—I wasn't up in the studies just before class. I was late because I was out of the House when I was up in the studies—I mean when I wasn't up in the studies. Sorry, old chap, but I haven't an idea what's become of your box."

Harry Wharton, to Bunter's great relief, went into No. 13 study. The fat Owl was impatient to head for the attic: but he did not want so to do with eyes on him. The door of No. 13 closed, however, and not an eye among five pairs of the same was on Bunter now.

Grinning, the fat Owl rolled along to the stairs at the end of the passage. He mounted those stairs with unusual rapidity. Generally Bunter did stairs at the pace of an old fatigued snail. But circumstances alter cases. What awaited him in the attic drew Bunter like a magnet. He fairly skipped up those stairs.

In No. 13 study, five juniors looked at one another, and chuckled.

"I wonder," said Bob Cherry, ruminatively. "I wonder when it will dawn on that fat chump that we knew he was listening in when we were talking in the quad before class—!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He won't guess that till he gets that box open!" chuckled Nugent.

"And then—!" said Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He won't get it open in a hurry," said Bob. "I used up about half a pound of nails on that box, and I can tell you I drove them well in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's time Bunter had a lesson about snooping tuck," said Bob. "When he gets that box open, it may dawn on him that we fixed up that chat in the quad entirely for his benefit. But I don't suppose he'll be grateful! It's a thankless world."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob opened the door of No. 13 and glanced into the passage. It was vacant. Billy Bunter was gone.

"Come on," said Bob. "May as well get out and punt a footer. No use calling Bunter to join up—I expect he's busy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Five laughing juniors went down to punt a footer. Where that box was they did not know: but they had no doubt that wherever it was, Bunter was there too, and that he was busy! They were quite willing to leave him to it—and they left him to it!

CHAPTER IV

BILLY BUNTER rolled into the attic, gasping for breath. Sammy Bunter, sitting on a nailed box, blinked at him impatiently. Bunter minor had been waiting for Bunter major in the attic. He had cut up the stairs immediately Mr. Twigg dismissed the Second Form. He expected Billy there every minute: but a good many minutes had elapsed.

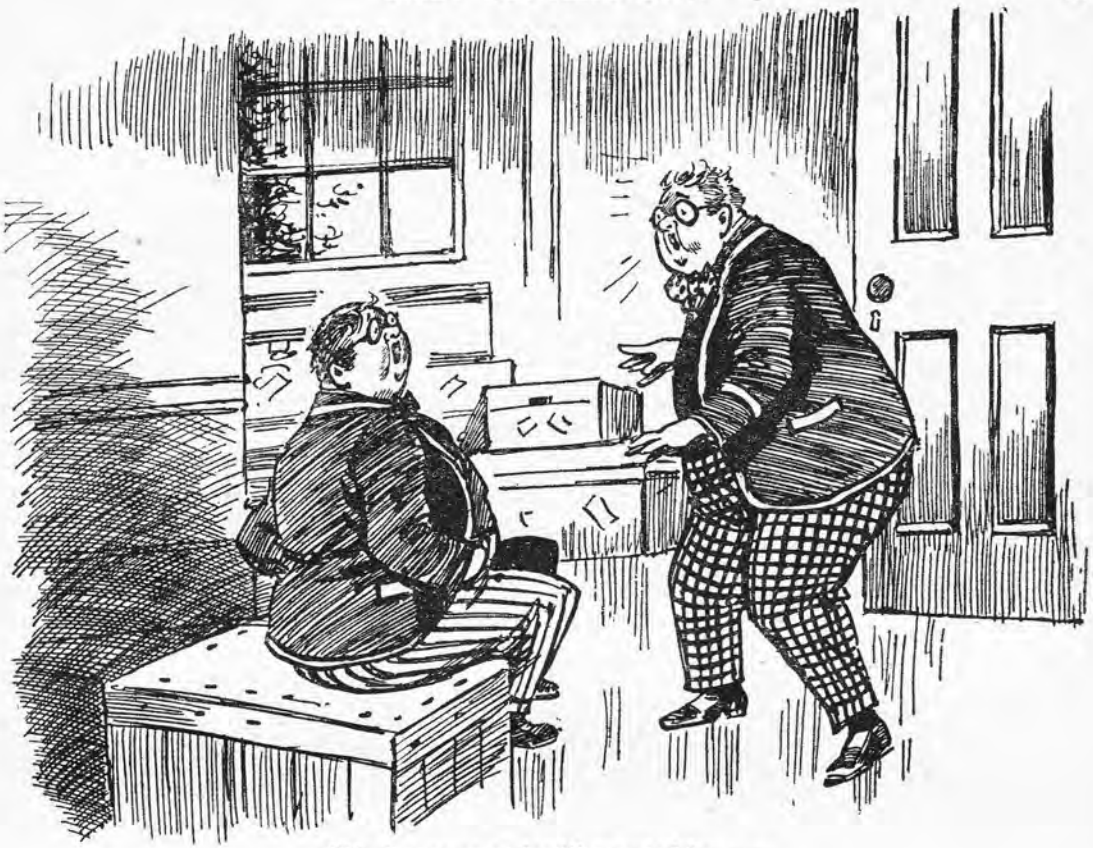
"You've come at last!" grunted Sammy.

"Oooh! Those stairs!" gasped Billy Bunter. "I'm all out of breath."

"I've been waiting a jolly long time," yapped Sammy. "Has it taken you all this while to borrow a hammer?"

"I had to look for Cherry's toolchest. Then all those beasts came up to the study and wasted time. Just as if they knew I was in a hurry to get away!" said Bunter. "They've missed the box: but they don't know where to look for it—he, he, he! I expect they're rooting through the studies now—he, he, he! Wharton said there was nothing of value in it. He wasn't going to let on that it was packed with tuck! He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter chuckled breathlessly.



"You've come at last!" grunted Sammy

"We jolly well know what's in it!" grinned Sammy. "We heard them going over the list in the quad. I say, get it open."

"Here's the hammer."

"Go it!"

Neither Bunter was much given to exerting himself. But both were eager to get that box open. Hammer and chisel and pincers were soon busily at work.

Bang! bang! bang! resounded in the attic. That remote attic was too remote for the sounds to be heard below. Both Bunters were feeling quite safe from interruption and discovery.

But it was an arduous task. Bob Cherry had not spared the nails. Nails innumerable secured the lid of that old box: and every one of them had been driven in to the head.

Hammer banged on chisel, and the chisel wrenched, and nails, one by one, were loosened, and gripped in the pincers and dragged out. Nail after nail

scattered on the attic floor, till there was quite a sea of nails. Still there were more nails to be drawn, before the lid could be prised up.

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Bunter. "What did the silly ass nail it up like this for, I'd like to know?"

"He meant to keep his tuck safe!" gasped Sammy. "I say, pile in, Billy—we don't want to be up here when the dinner-bell goes."

"Blow him and his nails!" panted the fat Owl.

"Get on with it."

Bang! bang! bang! Billy Bunter got on with it, with the hammer and chisel: Sammy Bunter with the pincers. More and more nails were extracted. At last—at long, long last—the lid was loose: and two pairs of fat hands dragged at it, and dragged it up.

"Now—!" gasped Billy.

"Now—" gasped Sammy.

It was quite a large box. Its weight had taxed the efforts of both Bunters to get it up to the attic. So the quantity of tuck it contained must really have been enormous. Two wide mouths watered at the prospect. Four fat hands clutched up a layer of old newspapers that covered the contents of the box.

And then—!

"Oh!" gasped Billy.

'Oh!" gasped Sammy.

They gazed into the box! They looked, for the moment, as if two pairs of eyes would pop through two pairs of spectacles. Indeed, for a moment or two, they could hardly believe their eyes or their spectacles.

After what they had overheard under the elm, they knew—or at least fancied they knew—what was in that box: jam-tarts, cakes, dough-nuts, ginger-pop, ham sandwiches, hard-boiled eggs, biscuits—! But no such things met their astonished eyes. There was not the ghost of a cake, or a jam-tart, or a dough-nut, or a sandwich—not the spectre of a bottle of ginger-pop—not the phantom of an orange or a banana!

What met the astounded gaze of the two Bunters was a stack of old bricks, carefully and neatly packed in the box. Bricks! Merely that, and nothing more!

"Oh!" repeated Billy, faintly.

"Oh!" moaned Sammy.

"It—it—it's a lot of—of old bricks—."

"Just old bricks!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"Oh, scissors!"

Both the Bunters had good appetites. They could eat almost anything.

"It . . it . . it's a lot of . . of old bricks . . . ."

But both of them drew the line at dusty old bricks! The contents of that box were safe from the most voracious members of the Remove and the Second Form at Greyfriars!

"Bricks!" moaned Bunter.

"Bricks!" groaned Sammy.

"Nothing to eat—."

"Nothing at all—."

"We—we—we've dragged a box of old bricks up all those stairs—" gasped Billy Bunter. "I—I say, is Cherry off his rocker? What did he want to nail up a lot of old bricks in that box for? We heard what they were saying in the quad—it was tuck they were going to pack in that box—."

"You silly ass!" hooted Sammy. It dawned on Sammy. "It's a leg-pull! They jolly well knew we were there behind that tree—."

"Oh!" gasped Billy.

"They jolly well piled it on for us to hear! This is what they meant all along! There wasn't any tuck at all!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"Just pulling our legs—."

"Beasts!" groaned Bunter.

"Rotters!" hissed Sammy.

"Oh, lor'!"

Two Bunters blinked at one another across that box of old bricks. They understood now. Harry Wharton and Co. had deliberately gone through that enticing list of comestibles in their hearing, aware that they were listening-in. There was no tuck! There never had been any tuck! There had been nothing but a playful scheme to pull a fat leg. And both Bunters had fallen for it: and they had lugged a heavy box up endless stairs and laboured hard to extract innumerable nails—only to be rewarded with a view of a stack of old dusty bricks! Their feelings, as they realised it, could hardly have been expressed in words.

Slowly and sadly they rolled out of the attic.

CHAPTER V

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Enjoying life, old fat man?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter's fat face did not indicate that he was enjoying life! He rolled in the quad, looking as if all the woes of the universe, and a few over, had landed in a heap on his fat shoulders. Like Rachel of old, he mourned for that which was lost, and could not be comforted.

"Beasts!" was his reply.

"Anything up, Bunter?" asked Nugent.

"Beast!"

"Is the upfulness terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter?" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Beast!"

"Seen anything of a box?" inquired Harry Wharton.

"Beast!"

"Done with that hammer?" asked Bob.

"Beast!"

"Did you get that nail out of that armchair?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!"

Billy Bunter's vocabulary seemed limited. But it was very expressive. It was a disconsolate and exasperated Owl: and the glare he cast after the Famous Five, as they walked on, laughing, might almost have cracked his spectacles. He was the only fellow in the Remove who failed to see anything funny in the episode of Both Bunters and a Box!

THE END