



# Bunter the Palmist!

A PLAY IN VERSE FOR  
AMATEUR ACTORS

[NOTE.—This play may be performed by readers of the *HOLIDAY ANNUAL*, without fee or licence, on condition that the words "By permission of the Editor of the *HOLIDAY ANNUAL*," appear on each programme.]

## CHARACTERS:

BILLY BUNTER .. The famous Fat Boy of Greyfriars.

HARRY WHARTON

BOB CHERRY

FRANK NUGENT

JOHNNY BULL

HURREE SINGH

The Famous Five of  
the Greyfriars Remove.

DOCTOR LOCKE..Headmaster of Greyfriars.

WILLIAM GOSLING..School Porter.

P.C. TOZER..Of the Friardale Police Force.

## ACT I.

SCENE.—No. 1 Study in the Remove Passage.

(THE FAMOUS FIVE are seated round the table, finishing tea.)

WHARTON:

A topping tea, and no mistake!

NUGENT:

Yes! I enjoyed Dame Mimble's cake.

BULL:

I was as hungry as a hunter.

CHERRY:

You mean, as hungry as a Bunter!

(Enter BILLY BUNTER. He comes in slowly,

blinking through his spectacles at THE FAMOUS FIVE, as if doubtful of the reception he will get.)

NUGENT:

Talk of prize porpoises, old bean,  
And they come rolling on the scene!

BUNTER:

I say, you chaps! I just looked in—

CHERRY:

We're short of tuck, and short of tin!

BUNTER:

Oh, really, Cherry—you're a beast!  
I'm wanting neither funds nor feast.





"With soap, this hand which shocks my sight  
May be transformed from black to white."

Cadging is far from my designs :  
I came along to read your lines.  
(*All stare at BUNTER.*)

WHARTON :  
We've none for you to read, you owl!

BUNTER :  
Nonsense! You needn't growl and  
scowl.

CHERRY :  
We've had no impots, Buntie dear—

BUNTER :  
And yet you've "lines" in plenty, here!  
(*So saying, BUNTER takes hold of BOB's  
hand.*)

CHERRY :  
I've lines upon my palm, all right,  
But *you* can't read them, silly kite!

BUNTER :  
That's where I beg to differ, Cherry.  
I am an expert palmist—very!  
I've taken lessons at the art,  
And now I mean to make a start.  
For a small fee—a modest tanner,  
I'll read your lines in expert manner!

WHARTON :  
The porpoise fairly takes the cake!  
It's palpable he's on the make.

BULL :  
This is a money-making stunt.  
There's nothing doing; buzz  
off, Bunt!

BUNTER :  
A tanner each is all I ask  
For tackling such a brainy  
task!

CHERRY :  
He wants a tanner — silly  
chump!  
I'll tan him—with a cricket  
stump!  
(*BUNTER backs away in alarm.*)

HURREE SINGH :  
My worthy chums, I'm rather  
curious  
To have my hand read. Don't  
be furious!  
Though Bunter's far from  
scientific!  
The funfulness will be terrific!

BUNTER (*eagerly*) :  
I'll read your hand, old chap, with  
pleasure,  
And you can pay me at your leisure.  
That's what I call a sporting offer,  
Enough to silence every scoffer!

HURREE SINGH :  
Here is my worthy palm, friend Bunter.  
Now set to work, my merry stunter!  
(*HURREE SINGH extends his palm to BUNTER,  
who examines it carefully and thoughtfully.*)

BUNTER :  
My words can't make a nigger blush!  
First, you require a scrubbing-brush  
And several bars of Sunlight Soap,  
And lots of other cleansing dope,  
So that this hand, which shocks my  
sight,  
May be transformed from black to  
white!  
(*Loud laughter.*)

HURREE SINGH (*wrathfully*) :  
If you are rude, my chumpful chump,  
I shall impart the clumpful clump!

BUNTER :  
Now, don't get hot and bothered, Hurree,  
Or in a ferment, fret, or flurry.



Let me proceed to read your palm.  
 Alas! 'Twill cause you many a qualm.  
 The line of life is very short,  
 You're going to peg out soon, old sport!  
 No fellow with a line like that  
 Can hope to live, I tell you flat.  
 Maybe, you'll catch a fatal chill,  
 So mind you leave me in your will!

HURREE SINGH:

The tommy-rotfulness you speak  
 Makes me desire your nose to tweak!

BUNTER (*resuming his reading*):

The line of health is very bad,  
 There's something wrong with you,  
 my lad!

You'll get the flu, or else a fit,  
 And instantly chuck in your mitt.  
 Or p'raps you'll die of underfeeding,  
 Six meals a day is what you're needing!  
 There seems a chance that sleepy-  
 sickness

Will finish you off with fearful quickness!  
 Already I detect the phases:

You'll soon be pushing up the daisies!

HURREE SINGH (*snatching his hand away*):

Stop! Or I'll lose my self-control;  
 Into the passage you will roll.

BUNTER:

Inky, you are a trying youth,  
 You cannot bear to hear the truth.  
 Because I say you're doomed to die,  
 You glare at me with glinting eye.  
 Now, Wharton, let me see your fist,  
 And tell your future—I insist!

(WHARTON *good-humouredly holds out his hand for BUNTER to read.*)

BUNTER:

A splendid life-line I descry.  
 You'll go on living——

WHARTON:

Till I die?

BUNTER:

That's so; you'll live to ninety-six;  
 But doesn't Fate play funny tricks?  
 Fancy a useless, worthless fellow  
 Living to reach the sere and yellow!  
 For eighty weary years (or more)  
 You'll be a nuisance and a bore  
 To all the folk you live among.  
 Why do the good alone die young?

WHARTON (*angrily*):

How dare you say such things, you  
 worm?

I've a good mind to make you squirm!

BUNTER:

Keep cool, and note the  
 line of health,  
 It's jolly good; but as  
 for wealth,  
 You'll never be a  
 millionaire  
 With costly cars, fine  
 clothes to wear,  
 And all the other boons  
 and mercies  
 Which come to those with  
 well-stocked purses.  
 You'll be a pauper, poor  
 and humble,  
 And Fate will give you  
 many a tumble.  
 Within the workhouse  
 you will spend  
 The evening of your  
 days, my friend.  
 Now, coming to the line  
 of heart——



"Don't dare to lay your paws on me! I am an expert palmist,  
 see?"



WHARTON :

Dry up, or else I'll make you smart !

CHERRY :

He's talking utter rot, of course :

He wants ejecting, chaps, with force !

(THE FAMOUS FIVE move menacingly towards BUNTER.)

BUNTER :

Don't dare to lay your paws on me.

I am an expert palmist, see ?

And expert palmists can't be bumped,

Neither can they be clumped or thumped.

BULL :

That's where you make a big mistake.

WHARTON :

Oh, pitch him out, for goodness' sake.

(BUNTER is seized in the grasp of his school-fellows, and whirled towards the exit, roaring threats and protests. Exit BUNTER.)

END OF ACT I.

## ACT II.

SCENE—*The Head's Study.*

(DR. LOCKE is busy at his writing table. Presently there is a tap on the door.)



"Wharton! I want a word with you. 'Twill be a painful interview."

THE HEAD :

*Upon my soul ! Another knock !*

It really gave me quite a shock.

These interruptions and intrusions

Prevent me penning my effusions.

(*The tapping is repeated.*)

It is a most distracting din,

And makes me most annoyed. *Come in !*

(Enter HARRY WHARTON.)

THE HEAD (*tartly*) :

This is a most untimely visit.

WHARTON :

Sir, that is hardly my fault, is it ?

THE HEAD :

To talk like that is very wrong—

WHARTON :

You told me, sir, to come along.

THE HEAD :

I told you nothing of the kind.

Boy ! Are you wandering in your mind ?

WHARTON (*looking very perplexed*) :

Just now, sir, when I'd finished tea,

I heard your voice addressing me

From just outside my study door.

You thundered, in an angry roar :

"Wharton ! I want a word with you.

'Twill be a painful interview.

Pray cease to gorge on tarts and cake,

And follow promptly in my wake."

I therefore came without delay :

I hurried here, sir, right away.

THE HEAD (*looking as perplexed as WHARTON*) :

There is an error, that is clear,

I did not bid you to come here.

The voice that hailed you was not mine,

It was some joker's, I opine.

So leave my study, if you please.

Intrusions make me ill at ease.

(Exit WHARTON. THE HEAD resumes his writing, but after a brief interval there is another tap on the door.)

THE HEAD :

When will these interruptions cease,

That I may do my work in peace ?



These visitations are a scandal.

Come in!  
Don't fumble with the handle!

(Enter BOB CHERRY.)

THE HEAD (*snappily*):

Why have you come to see me, Cherry?

CHERRY:

Well, that's a funny question, very.

THE HEAD (*frowning*):

Cherry! Be careful what you say!

CHERRY:

You told me, sir, to step this way.

THE HEAD:

Boy, I assure you I did not!  
What quaint delusions have you got?

CHERRY:

You called for Wharton first; and then, sir,

Your voice grew fiercer and intenser.

"Cherry!" you thundered. "Follow me!"

And so, sir, here I am, you see.

THE HEAD:

My anger, Cherry, how intense it is!  
Some boy, with humorous propensities  
Mimicked the voice of his headmaster,  
Hoping thereby to cause disaster.  
I do not want you; you may go.  
Too bad to interrupt me so.

(Exit BOB CHERRY. THE HEAD makes a further effort to resume his writing, but soon there is a thunderous knock on the door.)

THE HEAD (*rising to his feet, and pacing to and fro in wrath*):

This really is beyond a joke.  
With anger I could almost choke.



"Cherry! Be careful what you say!"

These endless knockings,  
I declare,  
Are really more than I can bear.

Such interruptions I abhor:

Who dares to hammer at my door?

(Enter JOHNNY BULL):

THE HEAD:

Retire at once, vexatious boy!

How dare you pester and annoy?

BULL:

My only aunt—I mean,  
Great Scott!  
You sent for

me, sir, did you not?

THE HEAD:

Bull, I did nothing of the sort!

BULL (*taken aback*):

You didn't tell me to report?

THE HEAD:

I have not said a single word.

BULL:

Whose was the voice then that I heard?

THE HEAD:

The voice of an impersonator,  
A base, misguided imitator!

BULL (*aside*):

I fancy Bunter is to blame.  
Ventriloquism's just his game!  
We chucked him out of Number One,  
And, for revenge, this trick he's done!

THE HEAD:

Bull! What was that remark you made?

BULL:

Oh, crumbs! He heard me, I'm afraid!

THE HEAD:

I heard you mention Bunter's name.  
You said that Bunter was to blame!





"Your life-line, sir, is jolly fine,  
You ought to live to ninety-nine!"

'Twas he who tricked you all—and me.  
I'll thrash him soundly—when I'm free!  
I mean to make that boy desist  
From being a ventriloquist!  
And now, pray leave my study, Bull.  
Bunter shall pay for this in full!

(Exit BULL. THE HEAD resumes his seat,  
frowning grimly as he bends over his papers.)

THE HEAD:

So Bunter caused all these intrusions,  
These consternations and confusions!  
I'll speak to him with great asperity,  
And then chastise him with severity!

(Enter BUNTER, without knocking. Smiling  
cheerfully, the fat junior advances to THE  
HEAD'S table. DR. LOCKE stares at him  
speechlessly.)

BUNTER:

Ahem! Good-evening, Dr. Locke!  
I planned to call at six o'clock  
And read the lines upon your palm.  
Don't get excited, sir, keep calm!

(THE HEAD glares at BUNTER, his face work-  
ing convulsively. He tries to speak, but words

fail him. BUNTER calmly takes  
THE HEAD by his left wrist and  
proceeds to examine his palm.)

BUNTER:

Your life-line, sir, is jolly  
fine,  
You ought to live to  
ninety-nine.  
But there are signs of  
imbecility,  
You show the symptoms  
of senility,  
Your second childhood will  
commence,  
Depriving you of all your  
sense.  
Your line of wealth is  
rather short;  
I'm very sorry to report  
That when you get to  
eighty-three  
They'll put you on a  
pension, see?  
No longer will you reign  
and rule  
Over the boys of Grey-  
friars School.

You'll take a humble country cottage,  
And there, sir, you will spend your dotage.

THE HEAD (aside):

Good gracious! Can the boy be mad?  
Has sunstroke smitten him, poor lad?

BUNTER (resuming his examination):

Your line of character is weak,  
It's just a faint and narrow streak.  
You're far too fond of caning fellows,  
And revelling in their roars and bellows  
In fact, sir, you are not a hero;  
You have the tyrant strain of Nero.  
You love to wield the birch and cane  
And give your victims pangs of pain.  
Your tyranny, dear sir, is such  
That schoolboys tremble at your touch.  
These revelations, Doctor Locke,  
Will doubtless give you quite a shock:  
But palmists always speak the truth,  
And I'm a most veracious youth.

(THE HEAD snatches his hand away from  
BUNTER'S grasp and jumps to his feet, his face  
red with anger.)



THE HEAD :

BUNTER ! I scarce know what to say.  
Your conduct takes my breath away !  
Such insolence is truly shocking !  
You dared to enter without knocking.  
Forgetful of my high position,  
You seized my hand without permission,  
Then uttered insults reprehensible.  
Such conduct, boy, is indefensible !

BUNTER :

Oh, really, sir—— ! I didn't mean  
To raise your anger, fierce and keen.  
I merely told your fortune truly,  
Calmly, collectedly, and coolly.  
And now, instead of being grateful,  
Your attitude is simply hateful !

THE HEAD (*pointing to the door*) :

Go ! Do not speak another word !  
Sufficient insults I have heard.  
To-morrow morning, in Big Hall,  
The Sword of Damocles shall fall.  
A flogging I will then impart  
Such as will make you squirm and smart !  
I'll punish your cupidity  
Your rudeness and stupidity,  
With such severity and force  
That you will suffer keen remorse !

BUNTER (*aside*) :

Oh, lor' ! A public execution  
Won't suit my feeble constitution !

THE HEAD :

Depart ! Go quickly ! Disappear !  
Or I will flog you, now and  
here !

(*Exit BUNTER in a panic, with the HEAD  
striding after him.*)

END OF ACT II.

### ACT III.

SCENE.—*The Platform in Big Hall.*

(*THE HEAD stands majestically at the  
dais—or at a table—and frowns upon the  
assembled school, i.e., the audience. He  
is in the act of calling the roll. GOSLING,  
the porter, is also present on the platform.*)

THE HEAD :

WHARTON ! Nugent major ! Brown !

VOICES (*off*) :

Adsum !

Adsum !

Gone to town !

THE HEAD :

Penfold ! Russell ! Hazeldene !

VOICES (*off*) :

Adsum !

Adsum !

Here, old bean !

THE HEAD (*frowning*) :

Some boy, feeling gay and gladsome,  
Dares to say, instead of "Adsum !" "  
Words of grossest disrespect.  
The rascal's voice I can't detect.  
'Tis disgraceful, 'pon my soul !  
I'll proceed to call the roll.

BUNTER MAJOR !

(*There is no reply. THE HEAD's frown  
deepens, and he repeats the name several times.  
Still there is no response.*)

THE HEAD :

The wretched boy declines to answer !

GOSLING :

I really don't see 'ow 'e can, sir.

THE HEAD :

Why, Gosling ? Is not Bunter  
here ?



"Depart ! Go quickly ! Disappear !  
Or I will flog you now and here !"



GOSLING :

'E wandered out of gates, I fear.

THE HEAD :

For Bunter, a sound flogging waits !

GOSLING :

I know, sir ; but 'e ain't in gates.

THE HEAD :

That boy has much to answer for !

He tries my patience more and more.

The way he chooses to behave

Will bring my grey hairs to the grave !

Wherever can the rascal be ?

GOSLING :

Dunno, sir. 'E's a habsentee !

(Enter POLICE-CONSTABLE TOZER, marching BILLY BUNTER on to the platform. TOZER looks very pompous and important ; BUNTER is squirming and protesting in the constable's grasp.)

THE HEAD :

Good gracious ! What does *this* mean,  
Tozer ?



"I caught 'im, sir, when on my beat,  
A-tellin' fortunes in the street !"

TOZER :

I think as 'ow you oughter know, sir.

THE HEAD :

What has this reckless boy been doing ?

What pranks has Bunter been pursuing ?

TOZER :

I caught 'im, sir, when on my beat,

A-tellin' fortunes in the street !

Upon the kerb I see 'im stand,

A-holdin' people by the 'and.

'E says to one old gent, says 'e,

"You'll die when you are fifty-three."

The old gent larfs, an' says, "Here,  
steady !

I'm seventy years of age already !"

Then Bunter says to some smart dame,

"Some day, ma'am, you will rise to  
fame."

She says to 'im, "You ignoramus !

Why, all my life I 'ave been famous !

I'm Lady Vere de Vere, you see,

The 'big noise' in Society."

Then Bunter says to some old  
chappie,

"Your life, 'enceforth, will not be  
'appy.

Misfortunes grim will mar your  
bliss——"

THE HEAD :

Stop ! I will hear no more of  
this !

TOZER :

I says to 'im, I says, "Desist !"

Then clicks the 'and-cuffs on  
'is wrist.

I never took 'im to the station,  
But made this school 'is destina-  
tion.

I thought you wouldn't want a  
scandal

Because of this 'ere blessed  
vandal.

THE HEAD :

You did quite right to bring him  
here.

TOZER (piously) :

My dooty, sir, was plain an'  
clear.

Not even, sir, the lure of Beauty,  
Can ever drag me from my  
dooty.



THE HEAD :

Would you—  
a hem—ac-  
cept a shill-  
ing ?

TOZER :

P.C.'s should  
never be  
unwillin' !

(THE HEAD  
hands TOZER a coin,  
which the constable  
slips into his pocket  
with a grunt of  
satisfaction.)

THE HEAD :

Pray leave this  
rascal in my hands !

TOZER :

So be it, sir ; I  
h u n d e r-  
stands !

(Exit TOZER.)

THE HEAD (addressing the audience) :

This boy has acted in a fashion  
That forfeits mercy or compassion.  
No need for me to keep on dwelling  
Upon his feats of fortune-telling.  
He is a humbug and a cheat,  
A fraud, a charlatan complete !

BUNTER :

Oh, really, sir—that's rather strong !

THE HEAD :

Your conduct, boy, was base and wrong !

BUNTER :

I am a palmist, smart and clever——

THE HEAD :

Your palmistry must end for ever !

GOSLING :

The school's good name, sir, 'e's been  
smirchin',

The rascal wants a thorough birchin' !

THE HEAD :

Now, in the sight of all beholders,  
I'll flog him ! Take him on your shoulders.

(BUNTER is hoisted on to GOSLING'S shoulders,  
whilst THE HEAD takes up a birch-rod. For  
purposes of the Play, the victim's back will be  
suitably "barricaded.")

BUNTER :

Ow ! Let me off, sir ! I appeal !



"Yarooo! That beastly birch-rod hurts!"

GOSLING :

Before 'e's 'urt,  
'e starts to  
squeal !

BUNTER :

I won't tell  
fortunes any  
more !

THE HEAD  
(grimly) :

You should  
have thought  
of that be-  
fore !

BUNTER :

Oh, dear ! I  
feel I'm go-  
ing to faint !

THE HEAD :

Coward ! Pray  
exercise re-  
straint !

BUNTER :

I'd rather, sir, that *you* did that !  
I don't mind taking one slight pat ;  
But if you flog with all your might,  
I'll write and tell my dad to-night !

THE HEAD :

You shall receive your just deserts !

BUNTER :

Yarooo ! That beastly birch-rod hurts !

GOSLING :

'E 'asn't felt it yet at all,  
An' yet 'e starts to bawl an' squall !

THE HEAD :

The flogging I will now administer !

BUNTER :

Help ! He's a tyrant, cruel and sinister !

(THE HEAD administers six strokes with the  
birch. BUNTER'S yells of anguish are piercing  
and penetrating. He struggles and kicks, but  
GOSLING holds him tightly. Finally, when the  
last stroke has been dealt, BUNTER rolls off the  
porter's shoulders, and grovels on the platform.)

THE HEAD (laying aside the birch) :

Bunter ! I trust this castigation  
Will put a sudden termination  
To all your fortune-telling folly  
Which caused this scene so melan-  
choly !



BUNTER :

Oh, dear! Oh, crumbs! Yow-ow!  
Yaroooo!

I'm sure my back is black and blue!

THE HEAD :

Your conduct has been base and baneful.  
The sequel has been grim and painful!

GOSLING :

"The way of the transgressor's 'ard,"  
Says Shakespeare—or some brother bard.

BUNTER (*blinking at the audience*) :

Though smarting in a dozen places,  
I see no sympathetic faces!  
I hear no cries of "Poor old chap!"

I don't believe you care a scrap!

You've all got hearts as hard as  
Pharaoh.

This pain is more than I can bear. Oh!

THE HEAD :

I won't prolong a scene like this.  
The school will instantly dismiss!

(*Exit THE HEAD and GOSLING. BUNTER  
pauses on his way to the exit, and blinks patheti-  
cally at the audience.*)

BUNTER :

Take this advice, you chaps, from me.  
Never go in for Palmistry!

CURTAIN.

## A REMINDER!

Every year the cheery schoolboy characters who play such a prominent part in each volume of the "Holiday Annual" automatically make hosts of new friends. The great majority of these are keen to follow the trend of events at Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood from week to week throughout the year—as many thousands of enthusiastic readers have been doing for years past.

It is my custom, then, to mention here, for the benefit of all whom it may concern, that every Monday throughout the year Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars School, disport themselves in the pages of the "Magnet" Library, which publication is also graced, of course, by the weighty presence of Billy Bunter!

Each Tuesday brings "The Popular," a great feature of which is a complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the lively chums of Rookwood School; while most of the other favourites find a place in its pages.

Wednesday brings the "Gem," with its extra-long yarn of famous Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's. The pranks and adventures, grave and gay, of these evergreen favourites—among whom Arthur Augustus D'Arcy holds a high place—have been faithfully chronicled in the "Gem" every week for nearly twenty years by Mr. Martin Clifford—and they are now more popular than ever!

The price of each of the above-mentioned weeklies is twopence. In addition to these, book-length stories of the three famous schools are issued each month, in the "Schoolboys' Own Library," at the price of fourpence per volume. Thus is every need of the enthusiastic school-story lover adequately catered for by the Companion Papers, from which the "Holiday Annual" originally sprang.

THE EDITOR.



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