

A Play in Verse for Amateur Actors



BILLY BUNTER'S BIRTHDAY

By the Greyfriars Rhymester

ACT I.

(SCENE.—The entrance hall at Greyfriars.
Enter the afternoon postman, bearing a sack of letters and parcels, and gasping and grunting from his exertions. He shoots the contents of the sack on to the floor, and pauses to mop his heated brow.)

POSTMAN :

A policeman's
lot, they
tell us,
Is hardly one
of glee ;
But, really, I feel
jealous
Of every proud
P.C.
For he needn't
sweat, and
fume and
fret,
And moil and
toil like me!

CHARACTERS

Billy Bunter	The famous fat boy of Greyfriars
Harry Wharton	The Famous Five of the Remove
Bob Cherry	
Frank Nugent	
Johnny Bull	
Hurree Singh	
Harold Skinner	The Japer of the Remove The Remove Form-master
Mr. Quelch	
Mr. Prout	Other masters
Mr. Hacker	
Mr. Capper	
A Postman	

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 *HOLIDAY ANNUAL*" appear on each programme.

(Proceeds to sort the letters and parcels, and allot them to their proper pigeon-holes in the letter-rack.)

I'm sick and tired of hiking
On my eternal track ;
When summer suns are striking
Upon my burdened back.

Or sleets and
snows, they
freeze my
toes,
And stretch
me on the
rack !

(Enter BILLY BUNTER, blinking eagerly at the postman.)

BUNTER :
The afternoon
delivery's
here—
Heoray !



The postman gathered up his sack and departed laughing, and the infuriated Bunter aimed a kick at him as he went.

POSTMAN :

Nothing for my fat friend, I fear,
To-day.

BUNTER (*gloomily*) :

Nothing for me? How jolly rotten!
My birthday, too, and I'm forgotten!
I was expecting gifts galore,
Hampers and letters by the score.
When nothing came for me this morn,
I was inclined to feel forlorn,
But murmured, 'Never mind, my friends;
The second post will make amends.
My titled sire, of Bunter Court,
Will play up like a handsome sport,
And send me such a weighty whack
That it will break the postman's back!'

POSTMAN :

Steady, now, Master Bunter, steady!
I've got a fractured spine already!

BUNTER (*blinking at the mail*) :

Ha! Here's a letter with a crest!

POSTMAN :

To Lord Mauleverer it's addressed.

BUNTER :

Oh, crumbs! And none at all for me?

POSTMAN (*producing a letter*) :

Wait, Master Bunter! Here you be!

BUNTER (*snatching eagerly at the letter*) :

I knew that you must be mistaken,
For I should never be forsaken

At such a special time as this—

My disappointment's turned to bliss!

(*He opens the letter, peering into the envelope to see if there is any enclosure. There is none. BUNTER recites the letter aloud.*)

"Dear William,—Just a line to say

Happy returns of this glad day.

I would have sent you a remittance,

But cannot spare one from my pittance.

Things on the Stock Exchange, alack,

Have never been so slow and slack.

The Bulls and Bears, and other creatures,

Have proved most disappointing features,

With the result (how sad it sounds!)
I'm down to my last million pounds!

I send you greetings, fond, sincere,

Also a five-pound note—NEXT YEAR!

Now, have a hectic time—yes, rather!

Your paupered but devoted FATHER.

BUNTER (*in great chagrin*) :

Oh, what a sell! A paupered Pa!

POSTMAN :

Excuse me larfin'! Ha, ha, ha!

BUNTER :

Nothing to cackle at, you dummy!

POSTMAN :

His rich relations! Oh, lor' lummy!

(*Gathers up his sack and makes his exit, BILLY*

BUNTER aiming a furious kick at him.)

BUNTER :

Oh, dear! This is a crushing blow!

I feel like weeping tears of woe!

(*Enter the FAMOUS FIVE, smiling.*)

CHEERY :

Hallo! The porpoise wants to blub;

Let's lead him gently to a tub!

BUNTER :

All very well for you to smile ;
I could outweep the crocodile !

WHARTON :

Why, what's the cause of this distress ?

BUNTER :

My pater's let me down, I guess.
This is my birthday, as you know,
A time for revelry—not woe.
A time for grand and glorious feasts
(What are you chuckling at, you beasts ?)
I hoped to hold a celebration
Fit for a fellow of my station ;
A spread that would delight your hearts—
Dame Mimble's choicest cakes and tarts ;
Delicious doughnuts, so divine,
Washed down with sparkling ginger-
wine !

And now—my hopes are rudely shattered ;
No invitations will be scattered
Among my vast array of friends,
So there, alas, the matter ends.
Unless you chaps would let me borrow
A pound ; I'd pay it back to-morrow !

NUGENT :

Bunter, we know your funny
tricks,
Your assets are exactly nix !
And, therefore, how could
you repay
A loan, you fat and fatuous
jay ?

BUNTER :

Really, old chap, I promise
you—

BULL :

We won't advance a single
sou !

HURREE SINGH :

Has not the worthy Shake-
speare said (I keep his
maxims in my head) :
“ Neither a borrower be,
nor lend,
Or you will lose both loan
and friend.” Already,
you've an ample figure

BUNTER :

Oh, really, you're a cheeky
nigger !

That is a slander on the slender.
Now, who will be my moneylender ?

CHERRY :

There's nothing doing, Buntie dear,
What cash we have, we'll hold.

ALL :

Hear, hear !

BUNTER (*glaring at the FAMOUS FIVE*) :

The meanest mob I ever met !
I won't descend to be in debt
To such a stingy set of beasts !
I shan't attend *your* birthday feasts !

WHARTON :

Chance is a splendid thing, my son !

BUNTER :

Bah ! I despise you, every one !
(*He takes out his handkerchief and bursts
into tears.*)
Boo-hoo ! A beastly birthday, this,
I'm shunned on every side.
My titled folks have given a miss
To me, their joy and pride !
No gifts, no grub, no celebration ;
Nothing for me but slow starvation !



BUNTER (*bursting into tears*) : No gifts, no grub, no celebration ;
Nothing for me but slow starvation.
ALL (*in chorus*) : Boo-hoo !

ALL (*in chorus*):

Boo-hoo!

BUNTER:

Pip-please don't mock me any more!

You see, I'm feeling sick and sore.

Leave me alone to nurse my woes,

Or else I'll dot you on the nose!

HURREE SINGH:

If Bunter isn't more pacific,

The dotfulness will be terrific!

But *Bunter's* nose will dotted be,

Not our illustrious beaks, you see!

(*Suddenly a loud noise is heard "off."*)

WHARTON:

Hark! Sounds like Billy Bunter snoring!

NUGENT:

It's only a loudspeaker roaring.

CHERRY:

The "Children's Hour" is going strong.

BULL:

Well, we're not children. Come along!

(*The FAMOUS FIVE move towards the exit, but stop short as a loud voice is heard announcing.*)

Gay greetings, jolly birthday joys,

To all the following girls and boys:

Anthony Allen, of Acton,

Cicely Clare, of Clacton.

Dicky Drake, of Dorchester,

Philippa Phillips, of Porchester.

Angus MacNab, of Aberdeen,

Tommy Turner, of Turnham Green.

Patrick O'Connor, of County Clare,

Patricia O'Connor, who's also there——

(Hello, Twins!)

Barbara Blake, of Barmouth,

Yvonne Young, of Yarmouth.

Stanley Stokes, of Stoke-on-Trent,

Marjorie Martin, of Margate, Kent.

Larry Lloyd-Jones, of Pontypool,

And——

BILLY BUNTER of Greyfriars School!

BUNTER (*beaming with pleasure*):

I say, you fellows! Fancy that!

I thought I was forgotten;

My birthday seemed to fall quite flat,

And really, it was rotten!

But blessings on the B.B.C.

Somebody has remembered me!

HURREE SINGH:

And Bunter's wistful tearfulness

Is turned to blissful cheerfulness!

BUNTER:

My name is broadcast near and far,

From China to Peru;

From Kent to distant Kandahar

They'll pay me tribute due.

The news electrifies the earth:

"This day marks Billy Bunter's birth!"

CHERRY:

Bunty, you are an artful rogue!

Birthdays, with you, are quite a vogue.

You had a birthday, I remember,

Last May, and also in September!

Now you've the nerve to claim another.

NUGENT:

He must be older than his mother!

BUNTER:

Really, you beasts! If you imply

That I'm a base deceiver,

I'll whack each nose, and black each eye——

BULL:

He's caught the fighting fever!

WHARTON:

I therefore vote we cool his ardour;

So bump him hard——

CHERRY:

Then bump him harder!

(*The FAMOUS FIVE advance grimly on*

BUNTER, who yells and expostulates.

He is about to be bumped, when the sudden entrance of HAROLD SKINNER causes his captors to release him.)

SKINNER (*to BUNTER*):

I've hunted for you everywhere,

My podgy porpoise, I declare!

Here is a note from Quelch to you;

A really charming billet-doux.

CHERRY:

Open and read it, Billy do!

WHARTON (*sternly*):

Punning will be the death of you!

(*BUNTER blinks at the letter, and opens it with trembling fingers. He is quivering with excitement.*)

HURREE SINGH:

Read what the Quelchy sahib has written!

CHERRY:

"Come to my study to be smitten!"

BUNTER:

It's nothing of the sort, you chump;

Listen! the news will make you jump!

So green
with en-
vy you
will be

That you
will
want to
slaughter
me!

(*Recites
the letter.*)

"Dear
BUNTER
—to my
favourite
pupil

I write with-
out the
slightest
scruple

To send a
birthday
invitation.

I have arranged a celebration
In honour of my brightest boy ;
A bounteous banquet you'll enjoy.
You'll find it set out, neat and nicely.
Within my room, at five precisely.
Bring any friends you may desire
(Your taste in friends I much admire).
Make yourself free of all you find,
And have a glorious evening, mind !
I much regret I shall be out
(I've a golf-match on with Mr. Prout),
So I will leave you on your own,
Eat everything ; leave not a bone !
Let not a single crumb survive
Of that grand feast which starts at five !"

WHARTON :

Bunter, you are a pig in clover !

BUNTER (*smirking*) :

Something to get excited over !

NUGENT :

Quelch must be softening in the head.

BULL :

Bunter's his favourite boy, he said !

CHERRY :

The queerest thing I ever struck.

SKINNER :

Bunter, old chap, I wish you luck !



Bunter was about to be bumped by the Famous Five when Skinner opened the door.

SKINNER (to Bunter): Here is a note from Quelch to you ; a really charming billet-doux.

(*BUNTER slips the note into his pocket, and dances up and down in high glee. Then he turns to the FAMOUS FIVE.*)

You chaps have twitted and teased me,
You've squashed me and you've squeezed me :

You've banged and biffed and bumped me,
You've whacked and smacked and thumped me ;

You've pelted me with crockery,
And made my life a mockery.

You've barred a chap from feeding, too.

WHARTON :

Whatever's all this leading to ?

BUNTER :

With wrath and bitterness I burn,
But good for evil I'll return :
Heap coals of fire upon your heads,
And ask you to this spread of spreads !

CHERRY :

Now, that's what I call charity !

NUGENT :

Such virtues are a rarity.

BULL :

Bunter is most magnanimous.

WHARTON :

Our verdict is unanimous !

HURREE SINGH (*making a low salaam*) :

Accept my humble salutation ;

We will accept your invitation.

BUNTER :

That's settled, then ; and as for Skinner—

SKINNER :

Ahem ! I'm off elsewhere to dinner.

BUNTER :

Oh ! Won't you come and join the fun ?

SKINNER :

Sorry, old scout ; it can't be done.

(*Exit SKINNER.*)

BUNTER :

My mouth is watering, I confess,

My optics blink with eagerness.

My heart is thumping with excitement !

HURREE SINGH : We, too, feel crazy with
delightment !

CHERRY (*consulting his watch*) :

Hallo, hallo ! It's nearly five !

BUNTER : Come on, you fellows ! Look alive !
(*Aside*)

Now for this grand and glorious spread,
And blessings on old Quelch's head !

(*Exit EVERYBODY.*)

END OF ACT I.



Highly elated at being invited by Mr. Quelch to a handsome spread, Bunter danced up and down the room in glee.

ACT II.

SCENE—MR. QUELCH'S STUDY.

(*The table is laden with good things, including a cold chicken ; a large veal-and-ham pie, a dish of fancy pastries, etc.*)

(*Enter BILLY BUNTER, with the FAMOUS FIVE at his heels.*)

BUNTER (*blinking at the festive board*) :

Oh, what a sight for weary eyes !

A banquet fit for Royalty !

Quelchy no longer I'll despise ;

He has my lifelong loyalty !

My senses thrill, my pulses quicken,

At sight of such a tender chicken !

WHARTON :

Quelchy's a trump to treat us thus.

NUGENT :

Hear, hear !

BULL :

And so say all of us !

BUNTER :

Sit down, you chaps, for goodness' sake ;

The place of honour I will take !

(*They seat themselves at the table.*)

CHERRY :

The sight of all this tempting stuff

Surprises me—yes, vastly ;

I thought the feast was Skinner's bluff—

NUGENT :

My hat, that would be
ghastly !

CHERRY :

You know what Skinner is,
the japer !

Methought this was his
latest caper,

And that the feast had no
foundation

Except in his imagina-
tion.

WHARTON :

Well, here's the feast, in solid
shape,

So Skinner hasn't worked a
jape ;

Though why old Quelch
should be so pressing

To Billy Bunter, leaves me
guessing !

BUNTER (*airily*):

Me and old Quelch are bosom
cronies

(I like the look of those
polonies!);

Quelchy's my pal, as well as
teacher

(This chicken is a handsome
creature!).

He knows how wonderful I
am

(This pie's perfection—veal-
and-ham!),

So when my birthday came
along

(These pastries make me
burst with song!)

He promptly sent, without
compunction,

An invite to this happy
function.

Pour out the good old ginger-
wine

And drink his health—but first drink
mine!

(*The glasses are filled, and the FAMOUS FIVE
rise to their feet to toast BUNTER.*)

WHARTON:

Here's to your fat and famous figure—

CHERRY:

And may its shadow ne'er grow bigger!

HURREE SINGH:

Your birthday toast we pledgedfully sip—

NUGENT:

Three cheers for Bunter! Hip, hip, hip—

ALL:

Hurrah!

BULL:

Three cheers for good old Quelchy, too!

ALL:

Hip, hip, hurrah! Hip, hip, hooroo!

(*They resume their seats.*)

BUNTER (*taking up the carvers*):

Before I carve this king of birds

I'll speak a few well-chosen words.

I wish to make it crystal clear

I'll have no gormandising here.

I know you're famished, poor and needy,

But you must not be gross or greedy.

Just take your cue from me, you
men—



Mr. Quelch suddenly entered his study and gazed in blank amazement at the juniors round his table.

CHERRY (*aside*):

Oh, help! He eats enough for ten!

BUNTER:

I don't mind dashing chaps, or doggish;

I can't stand fellows who are hoggish!

(*He carves the chicken.*)

A wing between John Bull and Cherry

(Half each is more than necessary);

A leg for Hurree Singh and Franky

(Share equally—no hanky-panky!);

Wharton, a thin slice off the breast;

I can accommodate the rest!

WHARTON (*aside*):

He can't stand greed, he does declare,

Then goes and bags the lion's share!

BUNTER:

Tuck in, you fellows, with a will;

A banquet is a tonic;

But eat too much, and you'll be ill

With indigestion chronic!

(*The FAMOUS FIVE eat sparingly; they have
no choice in the matter. But BUNTER
attacks the chicken with astonishing vigour.
They gape at him in amazement.*)

BUNTER (*at length, pushing the skeleton of the
chicken away from him*):

Farewell, my worthy Wyandotte!

I have enjoyed you quite a lot!

WHARTON (*aside*) :

What horrible rapacity !

CHERRY :

What infinite capacity !

NUGENT :

Bunter will be exploding soon—

BULL :

He's swelling like a kite-balloon !

HURREE SINGH :

The burstfulness will be terrific,
Like an explosion scientific !

BUNTER :

The second course we now will try ;
It looks a poem ! Who says pie ?

ALL :

PIE !

(BUNTER carves the veal-and-ham pie, distributing very small portions to his guests.)

CHERRY (*aside*) :

This was a very eager meeting,
But this is very meagre eating !

(*Laughter.*)

BUNTER :

Although the portions served are biggish
I trust you fellows won't be piggyish !
(*He takes the bulk of the pie himself, and*

attacks it forthwith. Approaching footsteps are heard, "off," but BUNTER pays no heed.)

This is the stuff to give the troops ;
Better than all your stews and soups !
Old Quelchy's taste I much approve ;
I wish he catered for the Remove !
Fancy a middle-aged old foggy
To whom all pastry is a boggy,
A solemn, staid, and sober guy,
Able to choose a perfect pie !
When next I see the Quelchy bird
I'll slap him on the back—my word !
I'll offer him sincere "congratlers"
And tell him he's the man who matters !
But if his banquet makes me suffer,
I'll brand him for a mean old buffer !

CHERRY (*warningly*) :

Shush ! Someone's listening just outside !

BUNTER :

The spying beast ! I'll have his hide !
(*Enter MR. QUELCH, in cap and gown. He gazes round the study in blank amazement, then fixes a fierce frown on BUNTER.*)

MR. QUELCH :

Bunter, you took my name in vain !

BUNTER :

No, sir !

MR. QUELCH :

I shall correct you with the cane !

BUNTER :

Oh, sir !

You're getting deaf, sir, or
mis-heard,

I never breathed a single word !

MR. QUELCH :

Enough ! Such base prevarication

Merits a hearty castigation.

But that's the least of your
offences !

Boys ! Are you in your sober
senses ?

How dare you all invade my
study

With boots abominably
muddy ?

How dare you sit at my own
table,

Eating as fast as you are able,



MR. QUELCH : Be good enough to touch your toes !

SKINNER : Oh, dear ! I'm for it now ! Here goes !

Mr. Quelch administered six severe strokes, and Skinner's anguished yells awoke the echoes.

Consuming
this, my
special
dinner?

BUNTER (*aside*):

Oh, crumbs!
We have
been japed
by Skinner!

MR. QUELCH:

Explain at
once this
rash intru-
sion!

Enter Messrs.
PROUT,
HACKER, and
CAPPER.)

MR. PROUT:

What is the
cause of
this con-
fusion?

MR. HACKER:

What are these rascals doing here?

MR. CAPPER:

Demolishing our feast, I fear!

MR. QUELCH:

Gentlemen! Great is my surprise!
I scarcely could believe my eyes!
To think that these six boys should dare
To raid my study unaware,
And help themselves to our supplies,
Our festal fowl, our savoury pies!

MR. PROUT:

Such conduct has no parallel!

MR. HACKER:

Let us chastise the rascals well!

CHERRY (*aside*):

Help! We are in a fearful fix!
We shan't escape with less than "six"!

MR. CAPPER:

Well may you quake, for Nemesis
Arrives upon the premises!

BUNTER (*to Mr. Quelch*):

We came, sir, at your invitation—

MR. QUELCH:

Another base prevarication!

BUNTER:

You sent a birthday note to me, sir,
I have it here, for you to see, sir!



BUNTER (*going down on his hands and knees to Mr. Quelch*): Oh, let me
off the execution!
Think of my feeble constitution!

(*He takes the note from his pocket and hands it to MR. QUELCH. The Remove master peruses it in great astonishment.*)

MR. QUELCH:

Dear me! I never penned this screed,
I am amazed—I am, indeed!
Some rascal, it is clear to see,
Has copied my caligraphy!
Who could have been the hardened sin-
ner?

BUNTER (*eagerly*):

Please sir, his name is Harold Skinner!

MR. QUELCH:

Then he's a base deceiver—very!
Summon him to my study, Cherry!
(*Exit BOB CHERRY, grinning.*)

MR. PROUT (*calling after him*):

Bring also, boy, a supple cane,
Skinner shall squirm and squeak with
pain!

BUNTER (*to Mr. Quelch*):

Now that we've started on the spread,
I s'pose, sir, we can go ahead?

MR. QUELCH:

Put down that knife and fork at once,
You greedy, good-for-nothing dunce!

BUNTER :

Oh, really, sir ! This lovely pie——

MR. QUELCH :

Be silent, Bunter, and comply !

(Enter BOB CHERRY, dragging SKINNER by the collar, and carrying a cane, which he hands to MR. QUELCH.)

MR. QUELCH :

Skinner, your conduct is outrageous !

More than sufficient to enrage us.

You found (by devious ways, I fear)

That I had planned a supper here.

My writing, then, you imitated,

And Bunter you deceived and baited.

What can you say in condonation ?

SKINNER (*wringing his hands*) :

I can't invent an explanation !

MR. QUELCH :

Your sense of humour is perverted ;

By caning, it shall be converted !

Be good enough to touch your toes !

SKINNER (*aside*) :

Oh, dear ! I'm for it now ! Here goes !

(He touches his toes, and MR. QUELCH administers six severe strokes. The other masters look on approvingly. SKINNER's yells of anguish awaken the echoes.)

MR. QUELCH :

There ! You will feel less mirthful now !

Go from my study !

SKINNER (*making his painful exit*) :

Ow ! Ow ! Ow !

BUNTER :

I hope I'm not malicious,

Or venomous, or vicious ;

But I'm jolly glad the japer

Has suffered for his caper !

The claims of justice have been met——

MR. QUELCH :

No ; there's another victim yet !

BUNTER (*quaking with alarm*) :

Not meaning me, I s'pose, sir ?

MR. QUELCH :

Bend down and touch your toes, sir !

BUNTER :

Oh, really—I've done nothing——er——

MR. QUELCH :

Over that chair, if you prefer !

BUNTER (*going down on his knees to MR.*

QUELCH) :

Oh, let me off the execution !

Think of my feeble constitution !

Grant me this special birthday plea,

Flag one of these, instead of me !

CHERRY (*aside*) :

Of all the cheek !

His nose I'll tweak !

MR. QUELCH (*smiling*) :

Well, Bunter, you shall go scot-free,

I will extend my clemency.

In future, guard your speech with care,

Or Skinner's fate you'll surely share !

BUNTER :

Oh, thanks !

(*Glances at the food on the table*)

And if you'd be so kind——

MR. QUELCH :

Go, sir ! before I change my mind !

(*Exit BILLY BUNTER, followed by the FAMOUS FIVE. The masters smilingly sit down to what is left of Mr. Quelch's handsome spread.*)

A REMINDER—

IF you have enjoyed reading about the lively adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's ; and Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, you will, of course, want to meet them again long before the next edition of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL is published. This you can do, for their adventures, told in fascinating style by the popular authors, Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, and Owen Conquest, are to be found in the following weekly and monthly publications. Make a note of the school-story papers in which all these cheery schoolboy characters appear, and give your newsagent an order for them to-day :

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INDEX

	PAGE		PAGE
A			
After School Hours :		Fortress in the Foothills, The <i>Story by</i>	
The " Greyfriars Herald." <i>By Mark</i>		<i>Roland Howard</i>	13
<i>Linley</i>	100	Full-Page Drawings :	
The Greyfriars Parliament. <i>By Tom</i>		Bunter the Hunter !	77
<i>Redwing</i>	52	Development of the Motor-Car, The	49
The Law Courts. <i>By S. Q. I. Field</i>	268	Famous Long-Distance Aircraft ..	99
B			
Billy Bunter's Alphabet	250	Fighting Planes of the R.A.F. ...	267
Billy Bunter's Birthday. <i>Play in Verse</i>		Greyfriars Freaks at the Fair !..	116
<i>by the Greyfriars Rhymester</i>	269	Progress of the Railway Engine, The	205
C			
Cheering the Victors of Waterloo ! ..	65	G	
City of Terror, The <i>Story by Keith</i>		Getting Their Own Back ! <i>Story by</i>	
<i>Orme</i>	103	<i>Owen Conquest</i>	217
Classics Versus Moderns (Poems) :		Ginger for Pluck ! <i>Story</i>	139
Cricket	216	Grave Injustice, A <i>Poem by Horace</i>	
Football	237	<i>Coker</i>	115
Rival Eights	120	Gunpowder Plot at St. Jim's, The ..	193
Coker's Capture ! <i>Story by Frank</i>		Guns of Gumpeco, The <i>Story by C.</i>	
<i>Richards</i>	3	<i>Malcolm Hincks</i>	206
Coker's Great Game ! <i>Story by Bob</i>		H	
<i>Cherry</i>	131	Hansom's "Twin Brother." <i>Story by</i>	
D			
"Dandy Horse," The	51	<i>Owen Conquest</i>	39
Day in the Life of a School Nurse. <i>By</i>		Helping a Fugitive !	224
<i>Marie Rivers</i>	50	K	
Dude of the Prairie, The <i>Story</i>	253	Knights of the Air !	129
Duffer Pays Back, The <i>Story by</i>		L	
<i>Michael Poole</i>	121	Laughable Limericks. <i>By the Greyfriars</i>	
E			
Flying Visit to St. Jim's, A <i>Conducted</i>		<i>Rhymester</i>	85
<i>by Monty Lowther</i>	161	Little Versefulness, A <i>Poem by Hurree</i>	
F			
		<i>Singh</i>	28
		Lowther's Last Laugh. <i>Story by Jack</i>	
		<i>Blake</i>	101

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