

THE
MAGNET

BILLY BUNTER'S UP TO HIS TRICKS AGAIN—Inside!

BILLY BUNTER'S BARGAIN!

By
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The
MAGNET
*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper* 2^d



The GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 373. EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON. December 2nd, 1939.

STOP
PRESS
NEWS

LAUGH AND GROW FAT!

By THE EDITOR

"Laugh and grow fat!" the proverb says. If there's anything in it, Bunter must have spent his infant days laughing himself into hysterics. He still cackles quite often, chiefly at the misfortunes of others; but most of his time is spent in growing fat—chiefly on the tuck of others!

I thought a cheery word on the subject of laughter would be a good idea for this issue. People **MUST** laugh to clear their minds. If you haven't a sense of humour, you become narrow-minded and hard. Laughter is a mental tonic, and make no mistake; our minds need laughter to keep them healthy, just as our bodies need food.

In the last few years the world seems to have become very grim. "The times are out of joint," as Shakespeare puts it. And some people are beginning to get the idea that humour is merely stupidity, and that a flippant treatment of things is wrong. I believe this is a great mistake.

The grimmer our daily life, the more urgent our need of fun. I'm quite sure that is true. In olden times, a baron would take his jester or minstrel to the wars with him, to entertain him after a battle. It was the right spirit. Don't be ashamed of feeling a need to laugh. It shows a healthy mind, and while I am still Editor of the **HERALD**, my policy will be "Laugh and grow fat." Or if you don't grow fat—well, laugh, anyway!

Yours cheerily,

HARRY WHARTON.

DICK RAKE tells of

COKER THE CHEMIST!

I spend a good deal of time in the chemistry laboratory, being fond of experiments, and usually I am there alone. But one day last week Coker barged in. He had leave from Prout to make some sort of analysis, but actually he wanted to make fireworks. From somewhere or other he had dug up a recipe for home-made fireworks, and I watched with great interest as he began work.

First he took down the phosphorus bottle. A lump of phosphorus was floating in benzine, and Coker inserted a large hand and hooked it out. Then was the peace of the "chemmy lab" shattered by a fiendish yell. His fingers seemed to grow incandescent, and he hopped round the room like a kangaroo, nursing his wounded fin.

"Urrrh!" he gasped, glaring at

the bottle. "Here, young Rake, how do you use this stuff? It's burnt my fingers!"

"It always burns on exposure to air," I grinned. "You have to keep it in spirit and cut a lump off with scissors."

Coker grunted, and set to work by opening and examining all the bottles within reach. This wasn't too pleasant—as, for instance, the sulphuric ether, which immediately began to evaporate and turn the room into a lethal chamber.

"Do you want to spifficate us?" I yelled, jamming the glass stopper into the bottle. "That stuff's poisonous and jolly expensive, and you're supposed to use it in a retort!"

Coker sniffed. "Don't you be cheeky!" he said severely. "Which is the nitrate of potash?"

I told him, and watched him mix it with water. Then he glared at his recipe and asked for some potassium. Before I could stop him, he dropped that in the water, too. It burnt like



a searchlight and filled the room with hydrogen fumes.

"Great pip!" gasped Coker. "What made it do that?"

"Oh, you prize image!" I choked. "Potassium always burns in water. You have to keep it dry."

The next thing that happened was that Coker sat in the saltpetre tray and soaked up the stuff with his bags. Then, of course, he had to get his trousers mixed up with the Bunsen-burner I was using. And that was the end of Coker!

He raced upstairs with the seat of his trousers burning like a beacon. His frenzied yells were heard all over the building.

Luckily, one of the baths in the bath-room was half-full of water which had dripped into it from the shower. Coker plunged into it fully dressed and sat with a gasp of relief.

Cloaked in towels, he soon afterwards sneaked up to the dorm to change. And the first thing he did when he came down was to tear up his firework recipe!

Coker was fed-up with fireworks!

E ERLUCK JONES Story.

BAGGING THE BOMBSTER!

By PETER TODD

Sheerluck Jones would be the first to admit that he had the merest trifle of luck in his adventure. Just a slight stroke of fortune. Nothing much, of course, but there it was.

The famous detective and his brilliant assistant, Dr. Spotson, were seated on a bridge over the River Thames, trying to catch a haddock for lunch. Funds were low in the Shaker Street flat, and the famous pair were reduced to a diet of nasturtium seeds and bootlaces, unless the faithful worm, which they had placed on a bent pin, could persuade a fish to bite.

As they sat there, half asleep, a large red car drove up and a sinister-looking scoundrel with a flowing beard alighted. In his hand he carried a black object marked: "BOMB, WITH CARE." He placed this on the bridge, lit a fuse, twirled his beard, and then departed in a great hurry.

"Dear me, Jones," murmured Spotson, astonished, "what can be the meaning of this?"

"Elementary, my dear Spotson!" snapped the great detective. "The gentleman has evidently dropped something here by accident. We had better take it to the Lost Property

Office—there may be a reward."

Filled with hope, the famous pair hurried towards the fizzing bomb. At this moment it went off, with a bang which shattered every window for miles.

For some moments, Sheerluck Jones was a little flustered. He felt himself steadily rising, and, at the height of about 11,000 feet, he pulled himself together to take command of the situation.

"Where are you, my dear Spotson?" he shouted.

"Here, Jones—I am following you, as always!" The voice came from underneath him. He looked down, and saw Spotson ten feet below.

"How high do you think we shall go, Jones?" quavered the doctor.

"I cannot say. Not much higher, I should imagine. I trust you are not scared, Spotson?"

"I'm not scared of going up, Jones, but I don't like the thought of coming down!"

"Tut-tut! Courage, man! We shall probably fall in the river,

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BILLY BUNTER'S NEVER HAPPIER THAN WHEN HE'S FEEDING HIS FAT FACE! WHERE HAS HE GOT THE MONEY FROM THIS TIME? THE ANSWER'S SUPPLIED IN THIS AMAZING AND AMUSING SCHOOL YARN!

BILLY BUNTER'S BARGAIN!



NO USE FOR BUNTER!

THAT ass——"
"That lazy chump——"
"That blithering slow-coach——"

"That dawdling duffer——"
"That terrific lazybones——"

Five fellows, standing outside the bike-shed at Greyfriars, were making those remarks all together when Billy Bunter rolled into the offing.

Harry Wharton & Co. were holding their bikes, ready to start. Bob Cherry held a second machine—a very handsome jigger that belonged to Lord Mauleverer of the Remove.

They were waiting for Mauly—they had been waiting ten minutes or more. They seemed to be getting a little impatient, judging by their remarks.

Billy Bunter gave them an inquiring blink through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, waiting for me?" he asked.

Perhaps Bunter thought the remarks he had heard applicable to himself.

"No, ass!" answered Harry Wharton. "Seen Mauly?"

"I saw him going into the House."
"Cut in, and tell him to buck up," said Bob Cherry.

"Eh?"
Bunter blinked at Bob in surprise. It always seemed to surprise Bunter if anybody expected him to do anything.

Sammy Bunter's fat face beamed at the sight of his major and the good things on the table. "Whacks!" he said. Billy Bunter nodded assent.

"Go and tell Mauly we've got the jiggers out," said Frank Nugent.

"And tell him we're waiting," grunted Johnny Bull.

"And tell the terrific ass to get a move on at oncefully," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Billy Bunter did not move. Having carried his considerable weight down to the bike-shed, he did not seem disposed to carry it back again to the House. It really was not a very long distance. But all distances were too long for Billy Bunter.

"Oh, really, you fellows——" objected Bunter.

"Catch that lazy fat ass stirring his stumps!" growled Johnny Bull. "One of us had better go in and root Mauly out."

"I say, you fellows, where are you going?" asked Bunter.

"Lantham," answered Harry Wharton.

"What for?" asked Bunter. The fat Owl of Greyfriars always wanted to know.

"Football match. The Territorials are playing Lantham Ramblers," answered the captain of the Remove.

"You're going to ride ten miles on a November day to see a football match?" asked Bunter. "Well, some fellows are silly asses, and no mistake!"

"Fathead!"

"You won't be back for tea," said Bunter.

"Fancy that," said Bob Cherry. "Fancy anybody ever going anywhere when he won't be back for tea! Can't expect Bunter to understand that!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Don't try to think it out, old fat man," said Bob. "It's miles beyond the scope of your jolly old intellect."

"Oh," said Bunter, "I know! You're going to tea at the Pagoda—that's why you want Mauly!"

And Bunter grinned, having solved the problem.

The Famous Five of the Remove
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35,000-Word Story of Schoolboy
Fun and Adventure Starring
HARRY WHARTON & CO.,
of GREYFRIARS.

gave Billy Bunter quite expressive looks.

It was true that they were going to tea at the Pagoda, in Latham. But it was not true that that was why they wanted Lord Mauleverer.

The fact that Mauly had more money than he ever troubled to count did not interest the Famous Five in the very least—deeply and perpetually as it interested William George Bunter.

"You podgy piffler!" said Bob Cherry. "We're going over to Lantham to see a Soccer match—"

"He, he, he!"

"And we're going to tea at the Pagoda because we couldn't get back here in time!" roared Johnny Bull.

"He, he, he!"

"And Mauly isn't going to stand the tea, you fat chump!" said Harry Wharton. "We are! So shut off the gurgle!"

Billy Bunter shut off the gurgle. He looked perplexed.

"Then what do you want Mauly for?" he asked.

Harry Wharton laughed.

It was a puzzle to Bunter that any fellow should be ass enough to ride ten miles out and ten miles back just to see a Soccer match. It was a still greater puzzle to him why the Famous Five wanted Mauly, unless Mauly was going to stand the tea at the Pagoda.

They wanted Mauly because they liked old Mauly, and also because they thought it would do his lazy lordship good to exert himself for once.

Lord Mauleverer had agreed to that spin chiefly because he never said "no" if "yes" would do. Probably, on second thoughts, he wished that he hadn't. Anyhow, he did not seem in a fearful hurry to start.

"Oh, we just want him!" said Harry. "Cut in and tell him!"

"You're going to stand the tea?" asked Bunter. "Not Mauly?"

"Yes, ass!"

"Then you don't want Mauly," said Bunter decidedly. "That's all rot! Besides, he don't want to come—he'd rather stick in his study. I expect you ragged him into it. I say, you fellows. I'll tell you what—I'll come!"

Perhaps Bunter expected that offer to evoke enthusiasm on the part of the Famous Five. If so, he was a little out in his calculations. They did not look in the least enthusiastic! They glared.

"I'll borrow Mauly's jigger," went on Bunter. "Mine's got a puncture, and the chain's broken, and the pedals are off. You never mended it for me, Bob. I've asked you a dozen times, at least—"

"You can ask me a dozen more, old fat man," answered Bob affably. "I don't mind."

"Well, I think you might mend a fellow's bike," said Bunter. "You put in a whole afternoon once mending Marjorie Hazeldene's bike. If you like mending bikes, I don't see why you can't mend mine. I've asked Uncle George to buy me a new bike,

but he hasn't done it yet. I don't know why. He mayn't have got the letter—at least, he never answered it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Look here, I'll take Mauly's bike—that's all right, Mauly won't mind—anyhow, he won't know till we get back, see! Is it a go?"

"Not quite!"

"I suppose you'd rather have me than Mauly?" said Bunter, with dignity.

"Oh, my hat!"

"I mean to say, if he isn't going to stand the tea, I don't see what you want him for! I'll come, old chap. You can help me up Lantham Hill, Bob. Two of you can help me—then I can free-wheel up!"

"I don't see how any fellow could refuse an attractive offer like that," remarked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But we won't jump at it," added Bob. "This is our self-denial week, Bunter—nothing doing!"

"Beast!"

"Well, that ass Mauly isn't coming," said Harry Wharton. "I'd better cut in and hook him out!"

"I'll go!" said Bunter unexpectedly.

"Get a move on, then."

Billy Bunter rolled off to the House, leaving the Famous Five waiting, like five Sister Annes, for the arrival of Lord Mauleverer!

ONE GOOD TURN DESERVES ANOTHER!

"CAN I borrow your bike, Mauly?"

"No!"

"Look here, old chap—"

"Oh, I mean yaas!"

Lord Mauleverer was sitting in his study, No. 12 in the Remove. One elegant trouser-end was secured by a trouser-clip, and another trouser-clip was in his noble hand, ready to adjust on the other elegant trouser-end.

But perhaps the exertion of sticking on one trouser-clip had tired his lordship. Anyhow, there he sat, with the other in his hand, leaning back in his armchair and gazing meditatively at the study window.

It was a very fine day for November. It was cold, but it was clear and bright, with a gleam of sunshine in a steely sky.

To the Famous Five it was just the afternoon for a good long spin. To Lord Mauleverer, a deep and comfortable armchair and a glowing fire offered more attractions.

So far as the open spaces were concerned, Mauly seemed satisfied with the section of the same that he could see from his study window.

But he was booked for a ride; and when Billy Bunter put his fat face and his fat head in at the doorway and asked if he could borrow his bike, Mauly naturally answered "No."

On second thoughts, which according to the proverb are the best, Mauly answered "Yaas."

This was a way out of that spin!

If he lent his bike to Bunter, obviously he could not use it himself!

He was not really keen on lending that handsome jigger to a fellow who seldom, if ever, borrowed a bike without damaging it. But anything was better than slogging up hill and down dale—with a strenuous fellow like Bob Cherry making the pace!

It was a popular belief in the Greyfriars Remove that Mauly was almost too lazy to live. But there was a difference between Mauly's laziness and Bunter's. Mauly would exert himself no end on anybody's account but his own. On his own account he preferred to sit it out.

"Yaas," repeated Lord Mauleverer, with a cheerful nod at the fat Owl of the Remove. "Jolly good idea, Bunter! Seen anything of Wharton and his crowd?"

"Eh? Yes—"

"Well, look here, tell them I'm sorry—fearfully sorry—I can't come, after all! Having lent a chap my bike, I can't come, see?"

"Oh! Yes, all right!" gasped Bunter. "I—I know where they are—I'll tell them, Mauly! All right!"

Billy Bunter rolled off, satisfied—leaving Lord Mauleverer in a state of equal satisfaction.

Mauly stretched himself in the armchair, put his feet on the fender, and was content with life.

Billy Bunter rolled away, grinning.

He had had a strong suspicion that Mauly was not keen on that ride—and as Mauly wasn't going to stand the tea at Lantham, obviously, the Famous Five couldn't possibly want him. So it was all right, all round!

Bunter rolled cheerily out of the House and headed for the bike-shed again.

Five Sister Annes watched him roll up, with exasperated looks. They had expected Mauly, and they were not in the least glad to see Bunter again.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Where's Mauly? Isn't he coming?"

"No, he's not coming," explained Bunter. "He's lent me his bike—"

"What?"

"So I'm coming, instead!" said Bunter, blinking at the Famous Five through his big spectacles. "It's all right—you don't want Mauly. He told me to tell you he's sorry he can't come—he didn't look very sorry! He, he, he! I say, you fellows, ready to start? Gimme Mauly's bike, Bob."

"I'll give you my boot, you fat ass! Mauly's coming!"

"He isn't—"

"He jolly well is!" said Bob. "Hold this jigger, Franky, while I go and tell Mauly he's coming!"

"I tell you—" roared Bunter.

Bob handed his lordship's jigger over to Frank Nugent, and tramped away to the House.

Billy Bunter gave him a withering blink as he went, and then turned his spectacles on the other four.

"I say, you fellows, Mauly's lent me his bike!" he squeaked. "I suppose Mauly can lend me his bike, if he likes, blow you!"

"Suppose again!" suggested Harry Wharton.

"I'm going on that jigger!" roared Bunter. "Gimme that jigger, Nugent!"

"Bow-wow!"

Billy Bunter eyed the Co. through his big spectacles, with exasperated blinks. Having borrowed Mauly's bike, Bunter had looked on the matter as settled. It was fearfully annoying to find it still unsettled.

"Well, Mauly won't come—" he snorted at last.

Johnny Bull chuckled.

"Here he comes!" he said.

Lord Mauleverer was coming at last. He was coming quickly—at a rate of speed seldom displayed by Mauly. That was accounted for by the fact that Bob Cherry had hold of one of his arms, and was running.

That arm being held in a grip of iron, Mauleverer had to play the part of Mary's little lamb—everywhere that arm went Mauly was sure to go!

Bob Cherry led that arm off to the bike-shed at a run—and the rest of his noble lordship had to keep pace.

They arrived rather breathless.

"Here we are, here we are, here we are again!" sang Bob Cherry. "Jump on, Mauly!"

"Oh gad!" gasped Mauly.

"Are you going to stick that clip on or carry it in your hand, Mauly?" asked Harry Wharton.

Lord Mauleverer still had one trouser-clip in his hand! Bob had hooked him out of his study in rather a hurry.

"Look here, you beasts!" roared Bunter, in great indignation. "Mauly's lent me his bike—"

"Yaas," gasped Lord Mauleverer. "Sorry I shan't be able to join up, you fellows—I've lent Bunter my bike—"

"Fathead! Get on!"

"Look here—" roared Bunter.

"Sorry!" said Mauleverer firmly. "That jigger's Bunter's for the afternoon. You see, I've lent it to him."

"I should jolly well think so!" exclaimed Bunter.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Bob Cherry. "We can settle that! One good turn deserves another! Now, look here, you've lent Bunter that bike, and it's his for the afternoon—"

"Yaas."

"Well, if it's his for the afternoon, he can lend it to another fellow, if he likes—"

"Oh, yaas."

"You hear that, Bunter?"

"I'm not going to lend it to anybody!" howled Bunter.

"Yes you are! You're going to lend it to Mauly!"

"Wha-at?"

"One good turn deserves another!" said Bob. "Mauly's lent you the jigger—now you lend it to Mauly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you silly ass!" gasped Bunter. "I jolly well won't! I—"

"I'm going to tap your head on the bike-shed till you do!" explained Bob. "Say when!"

"Leggo!" roared Bunter, as Bob caught the back of his fat neck. "I say— Leggo! If you bang my head, I'll— Whoooooop!"

Tap!

"Beast! Leggo!"

"Lending Mauly that bike?"

"No!" roared Bunter.

Tap!

"Wow! I mean, yes!" yelled the fat Owl. "Oh! Yes! Beast! Wow! Yes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"O.K.!" said Bob. "Get on, Mauly—Bunter's lent you that bike!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But—" gasped Lord Mauleverer. "Waiting for me to tap your head, too?" asked Bob. "All right! Here—"

Lord Mauleverer took the bike from Frank Nugent! He did not want his noble nut tapped on the bike-shed!

Six juniors mounted and pedalled away.

Billy Bunter was left rubbing a fat head, and glaring after them with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

Bunter was not, after all, going to see that Territorial Soccer match at Lantham—which he did not mind in the very least! But he was not, likewise, going to tea at the Pagoda—which he minded very much indeed. Tea at the Pagoda at Lantham was gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream!

THE ARTFUL DODGER!

"**T**TIRED?" asked Bob Cherry sympathetically.

"Yaas!" sighed Lord Mauleverer.

"I'll give you a pull up the hill, if you like."

"Oh, thanks!"

"Lean over this way, and let me get hold of your ear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Mauleverer did not lean over. He would have been glad of a pull up Redclyffe Hill—but not by his noble ear!

The cyclists were about a couple of miles on their way. They were grinding up Redclyffe Hill—which was not fearfully steep. It was more than steep enough for Lord Mauleverer, who had been born tired.

His lordship was repenting him that he had consented to join up in that long ride. Like the Israelites of old, who looked back with longing at the flesh-pots of Egypt, Mauly was thinking of that comfortable arm-chair in his cosy study. The strenuous life had no appeal for him.

After that hill, a few miles farther on, came Lantham Hill, which really was a steep climb. Lord Mauleverer anticipated it with deep misgivings.

"I'll tell you what, you fellows," said his lordship, at last, "I'm not fearfully keen on seeing the Soccer. You fellows cut ahead—and I'll join you later at the Pagoda. See? You can tell me about the Soccer over tea."

The Famous Five grinned.

"I'll take it by easy stages, see?" explained Mauly. "I'd rather walk the jigger up the hills. Don't you fellows stop—just cut on!"

And Lord Mauleverer dismounted, to wheel his jigger.

Five other fellows also dismounted.

"Sure you'd get as far as Lantham if we left you behind?" asked Bob. "You don't think you might conk out and turn back after about a hundred yards?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, a fellow might get tired, uphill!"

"Of course he might!" agreed Bob.

"The mightfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"We'll all walk the jiggers, then," said Bob; "and as you're tired already, old chap, I'll give you a shove or two."

Bump!

Bob's front wheel banged on Lord Mauleverer's trousers.

Mauly gave a yell.

There was a good deal of mud on the road, and Bob's front tyre had collected some of it. Part of the collection was now transferred to Lord Mauleverer's trousers.

"You mad ass!" gasped Mauleverer. "You're smothering me with mud! Keep your bike away from me, you potty hippopotamus!"

"I'm helping you up the hill!"

Bump!

"Will you stoppit?" yelled Mauleverer.

"No fear—not so long as you're too tired to ride!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Mauleverer gave the cheery Bob a look. Then he climbed on his jigger again, and the Co. followed his example.

They rode on in a bunch, grinding up the hill—five fellows grinning, and one looking more and more thoughtful.

"I'll tell you what!" said Lord Mauleverer suddenly, after grinding up the hill for about ten minutes.

"Go it!" chuckled Bob. "What's the latest?"

"I'm a bit fagged."

"Shall I tow you by your ear or your nose?"

"You silly ass, don't be a goat!" said his lordship plaintively. "Look here, the Redclyffe motor-bus will be along this road pretty soon—well, I'll park my jigger somewhere and hop on the motor-bus! See?"

"Not at all!" answered Bob.

"The not-at-all-fulness is terrific!"

"You're for it, Mauly!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You've come out for a spin—and you're going to spin. If this spot of a hill worries you, think of Lantham Hill to follow!"

"I'm thinkin' of it!" said Lord Mauleverer dismally. "The fact is, if you fellows don't mind, I'd rather hop off and wait for the motor-bus than—"

"But we do!" grinned Bob. "Wouldn't part with you for your weight in toffee, old bean!"

"Push on!" said Johnny Bull encouragingly. "You'll settle down to enjoy it after a few more miles."

Lord Mauleverer groaned. The prospect of a few more miles did not seem to bring any idea of enjoyment to his mind.

But it was evidently futile to argue. The Famous Five were taking him for a ride—and that was that!

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Their opinion was that a jolly good spin would be a jolly good thing for old Mauly—and no doubt they were right! But every mile that passed under Mauly's tyres seemed to make the remaining miles less and less attractive to his lordship.

"I could park the bike in Redclyffe and pick up the motor-bus there!" he remarked, after another pause.

"You could!" agreed Bob. "But you're not going to! Don't you be such a slacker, you old fraud! Think of all the foot-slogging you'll have to do when you get into the Militia!"

"Oh gad!" sighed Mauly.

His eye turned on an opening in the woods that lined the road on the left. It was a bridle-path that led through Redclyffe Wood, back in the direction of Greyfriars—a short cut back to the school.

Mauly would have been quite glad to avail himself of that short cut back to Greyfriars, especially as it was mostly downhill. But he had agreed to go to Lantham with the Famous Five, and he was a man of his word.

On the other hand, he did not see biking it when a motor-bus was available.

All of a sudden, Mauly whirled off the road as the cyclists drew abreast of that opening in the wood and shot away into the bridle-path.

The Famous Five had been wondering what would be Mauly's next device for dodging that spin! But they had not expected that sudden move, and it took them quite by surprise. They whizzed on a score of yards past the end of the bridle-path before they realised that Mauly had left them.

Then Bob Cherry gave a roar.

"He's cut! After him!"

He circled in the road, and dashed back. The other fellows dashed back after him. They jumped down, and stared along the bridle-path.

Mauleverer had vanished—the winding path hiding him from sight.

"By gum!" gasped Bob. "The lazy, slacking, footling ass!"

"He's done us!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "If we go after him, we shan't see much of the Soccer at Lantham!"

"Mauly!" roared Bob. "Come back, you lazy loafer!"

Bob's powerful voice rang deep into Redclyffe Wood.

But if Lord Mauleverer heard, he understudied the ancient gladiator, and heeded not.

"Come on!" said Harry. "We shall be late!"

"Bother the slacking ass!" grunted Bob.

But there was no help for it—Lord Mauleverer had dodged that spin, good as it would have been for him; and the Famous Five could do nothing but remount and ride on their way, leaving Mauly to his own devices.

Which they did—disappearing up the road in a few minutes.

A quarter of an hour later, Lord Mauleverer reappeared on the bridle-path.

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This time he was on foot, and had a cheery smile on his face.

Mauly had parked his bike in a thicket, leaving it there to be collected later. Now, after a cautious glance to and fro, to make sure that his kind friends were no longer on the spot, he emerged into the road again.

There, he leaned elegantly on a tree, to wait for the Redclyffe motor-bus to heave into the offing—which it duly did a quarter of an hour later.

And nearly an hour after that, his lordship smiled from the motor-bus at five cyclists slogging industriously up the steep rise of Lantham Hill—and felt duly thankful that he was not slogging along with them!

BUNTER BORROWS A BIKE!

"BEAST!"

"Eh?"

"Rotter!"

"Talking about yourself, as usual?" asked Peter Todd.

Toddy had come into the bike-shed for his jigger. He found it tenanted by a fat junior in an exceedingly bad temper.

Billy Bunter was eyeing his own bike. But neither his eyes nor his spectacles could discern any hope in that contemplation.

Billy Bunter's bike was in a sad state. Much labour was needed to turn it into a going concern. With both tyres badly punctured, the chain snapped, and the pedals off, that jigger looked really hopeless.

It was not Bunter's way to take care of a bike. If he had a puncture, he waited till some other fellow would repair it for him! Often and often he was booked for a very long wait!

It was a selfish world; and nobody really ever seemed to realise that it was up to him to do these things for Bunter. Even Bob Cherry, who had been known to put in a whole half-holiday pottering with Marjorie Hazeldene's bike, never seemed to have a half-holiday to spare for Bunter's. If anything happened to Bunter's jigger, it went from bad to worse—and, by the look of it, it had now got to the very worst!

Even for a spread at the Pagoda at Lantham, Bunter did not feel as if he could push that bike ten miles.

Indeed, it did not look as if it could be successfully pushed as far as the gate. Bunter blinked at it sorrowfully, and gave it up as a bad job.

But his fat face brightened a little as Peter Todd came in, followed by Tom Dutton.

Toddy and Dutton were his study-mates in Study No. 7 in the Remove, and both had bikes—and surely one of them would consent to lend a jigger to a pal like Bunter, on a special occasion!

"I say, Toddy, you don't mind if I borrow your bike, do you?" he asked.

"Well, as I'm just taking it out myself, I should mind just a teeny-weeny bit!" answered Peter.

"I wouldn't be selfish, Peter!" said Bunter.

"You wouldn't!" said Peter. "First time in your life you wouldn't, then, old fat man!"

"Look here, will you lend me your jigger or not?" hooted Bunter.

"That's an easy one!" answered Peter cheerily. "Not!"

"Beast!"

Bunter turned his spectacles on Dutton. It was rather a bother to talk to Dutton, as he was deaf. But Bunter wanted a bike.

"I say, Dutton, old chap, can I have your bike?" he squeaked. "Do you mind?"

"Eh?"

"Do you mind if I have your bike?"

"Why should I mind if you hike?" asked Dutton, in surprise. "Not much weather for hiking, though—pretty muddy!"

"I didn't say hike, you deaf chump!" howled Bunter. "I've got to get to Lantham."

"Eh?"

"Lantham!" yelled Bunter.

"Catch you hiking as far as Lantham," said Tom Dutton derisively. "You'd fall down dead after the first mile!"

"Oh crikey! I want to take a bike——"

"Whose tyke?"

"A jigger!" shrieked Bunter.

"I didn't snigger, but it's enough to make a chap snigger, the idea of you hiking as far as Lantham!" answered Tom. "And I don't see that a tyke would be any use to you. You're as blind as an owl, I know, but you don't need a dog to lead you about. Besides, who's got a tyke?"

"Will you lend me your bike?" roared Bunter.

"I haven't got a tyke to lend you."

"Bike!" roared Bunter. "I'm going on a bike!"

"Well, you ass," said Tom, "if you're going on a bike, what do you mean by hiking? You don't hike on a bike! And what do you mean about a tyke?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Toddy.

Billy Bunter gasped. Really, he was rather short of breath for a conversation with Tom Dutton. He resorted to actions instead of words—lifting Tom's machine down from the stand.

"Thanks!" said Tom in surprise. "First time I've ever seen you do anything for anybody, Bunter! Come on, Peter!"

He took the bike from Bunter and wheeled it out.

Peter Todd followed with his machine, chortling.

Billy Bunter was left in a more intense state of exasperation than ever.

He stood and blinked at the other machines. There were half a dozen left in the bike-shed—quite a good selection—but the drawback was that none of the owners, if asked, was likely to lend a jigger to Billy Bunter. The way the fat Owl used his own bike did not encourage fellows to do so.

If Bunter was going to borrow a bike that afternoon, he had to do it without mentioning the fact to the proprietor.



"Beast! Rotter!" Billy Bunter stood in utter dismay, blinking after Vernon-Smith, as the Bounder pedalled away downhill for Greyfriars, riding one bike and wheeling the other.

That would not be a new experience for Bunter. But that, too, had its drawback; the proprietor was liable to boot Bunter afterwards for his cheek.

Really it was a bothering problem to solve. But Bunter had to have a bike. A spread at the Pagoda at Lantham drew him like a magnet! By the time the Soccer match was over on the Ramblers' ground, and the Famous Five came along to the Pagoda to tea, Bunter could be there—ready and waiting. All he wanted was a bike—and he made up his fat mind to it.

Of all the machines there, he preferred Herbert Vernon-Smith's. The Bounder's was a very good and expensive jigger. On the other hand, Ogilvy, whose bike was also there, was better-tempered than Smithy. After some deep cogitation, Bunter decided on Ogilvy's bike.

Having decided, the fat Owl took it down, and wheeled it to the door. Wheeling it out, he almost ran it into a junior who was hurrying down to the bike-shed.

"Clumsy ass!" said Ogilvy, dodging the bike.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "Why—what—you fat villain!" roared the Scottish junior, recognising his jigger. "What are you doing with my bike?"

"Oh, nothing!" gasped Bunter. "I wasn't going to borrow it, Oggy! I ain't going to Lantham, and I wasn't going to— Yaroooooooooh!"

Ogilvy of the Remove grabbed his

bike with one hand and Bunter with the other.

Bunter sat down, suddenly and hard, in the doorway—and Oggy pushed away his jigger and mounted.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Beast!" The fat Owl heaved up his weight. He blinked to and fro through his big spectacles.

Skinner of the Remove was lounging near, grinning, as if amused at the incident of Oggy's bike! But nothing was to be seen of Vernon-Smith—and Bunter decided whose bike he was going to borrow!

He rolled back into the bike-shed and reappeared later, wheeling the Bounder's bicycle.

Skinner gave a chortle.

"Smithy lend you that jigger?" he asked.

"Oh, yes!" answered Bunter. "I say, Skinner, if—if you see Smithy, tell him I haven't gone to Lantham, will you? He's beast enough to cut after a fellow! Tell him I've gone to Courtfield. I'm really going to Courtfield, you know, not Lantham—nowhere near Lantham!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Skinner.

Why Skinner was amused, Bunter did not know. But he did not stay to inquire.

He pushed that bike out and mounted it, anxious to get off the scene before Smithy happened along.

It was quite possible that the Bounder might want his bike that fine afternoon, in which case it behoved Billy Bunter to be on the safe side of the horizon before Smithy came down for it.

Leaving Skinner gurgling, the Owl of the Remove pedalled away, putting all his beef into it. And a grunting, gasping, perspiring fat Owl was pushing breathlessly up Redclyffe Hill when, later Herbert Vernon-Smith came to the bike-shed for his bike.

LUCK!

"If this ain't luck!" said Smudge Purkiss.

Mr. Purkiss' grubby, stubbly face beamed with satisfaction.

It was real luck!

Mr. Purkiss, as he tramped by the bridle-path in Redclyffe Wood, looked as if he was in want of some luck. He wore a shabby old overcoat that was too large for him, evidently having been made for a man half as big again as Smudge. His boots were ancient, and held more or less together by twisted wire. His hat would have made a dust-heap look unusually shabby. His countenance indicated that he could not afford the use of soap. His fingers indicated that a nail-brush was far beyond his means.

Only in one respect did Mr. Purkiss appear to be able to spend money. There was an aroma clinging to him of mingled beer and tobacco, which showed that, somehow or other, Mr. Purkiss was able to obtain the unnecessary, if not the necessities, of life.

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Smudge P...es, loafing along the bridle-path, came to a halt, as he caught a glimmer in a thicket near the path. Investigating the same, he discovered a handsome bicycle parked there.

If this was not luck, Smudge would have liked to know what luck was.

He eyed that bike almost lovingly. Smudge knew a lot about bikes. He followed a good many trades—but his chief line was bike-pinching.

He had many other activities. Chickens were often missing from places where Mr. Purkiss passed in the night. Occasionally a horse disappeared when Mr. Purkiss had been in the offing. Articles left in cars were often not found afterwards in those cars, if Mr. Purkiss had wandered by. He did not disdain washing on the line, if opportunity offered. But bike-pinching was his chief stand-by.

That was why his friends called him Smudge. With an eye always open for an unguarded bike, Mr. Purkiss always carried brush and paint in one of his ragged pockets; and it was hardly more than a few minutes' work for Smudge to change a bike's look, so that its owner might have bought it from him without knowing that he had ever seen it before.

Smudge was quite an artist at this business.

Often he had luck, and business would thrive. Of late, however, fortune had deserted Mr. Purkiss. Only that morning he had found a bicycle—and, in the very act of wheeling it to a quiet spot to change its looks, he had been caught by the owner. That was why Mr. Purkiss' nose, at the moment, looked like a squashed strawberry!

He had lost that bike—and nearly lost his nose, so hard had it been punched.

Sadly, Mr. Purkiss had travelled far from that spot, which had been near Courtfield. Now he was heading for Redclyffe, in hope of better fortune, when fortune suddenly smiled on him, in the shape of Lord Mauleverer's expensive jigger.

Smudge looked at it with pleased eyes. Then he looked up and down and round about cautiously. But there was no sign of the owner.

He was in no danger this time of hearing an angry voice call "Hi!"—or of getting his nose pushed a little further into his beery face.

"Luck!" said Smudge. "I believe you, my boy! Wot blithering idjit left that bike 'ere, I wonder?"

Somebody, evidently, had parked that handsome jigger there in the thicket and left it, for what reason Smudge could not guess. He had chanced on bikes in all sorts of places—but never in a thicket in a wood before. But there it was!

Probably the owner, whoever he was, supposed that the machine was parked safe out of sight. No doubt he intended to fetch it away later.

Lord Mauleverer, in fact, intended to pick up that jigger on his way back from Lantham. It was safe enough in that thicket.

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But Mr. Purkiss' eye was not a casual eye! It was a very watchful and wary eye! Mr. Purkiss, in his profession as a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles, seldom missed anything that was going. He did not miss this.

Smudge hooked the bike out of the thicket and, without loss of time, wheeled it deeper into the wood. His first thought, in such cases, was to get to a safe distance from the spot where he found a machine!

He came to a halt in a solitary glade a quarter of a mile from the spot.

Feeling safe at that distance, surrounded by the trees and underwoods, Smudge set to work on the machine.

From one pocket he drew a can of paint, from another a brush. It was a dark green paint of a quick-drying kind—Smudge was skilled in these matters, and had had a lot of experience.

Lord Mauleverer's bike was black. In ten minutes Smudge had changed it to a dark green bike.

Having laid on one coat of paint, Smudge sat down on a tree-stump, opened a bundle tied in a red handkerchief, and regaled himself with bread and cheese, washed down by fluid from a flask.

By the time Smudge had finished his meal the coat of paint on the bike was dry.

Smudge proceeded to give it another coat.

Then he packed away pot and brush in his ragged pockets.

Had Lord Mauleverer seen the bike now, he would never have dreamed that it was his own property.

Certainly, there was a number on it somewhere by which it could have been identified, if the number was looked for. But if Mauly had seen a green bike, naturally it would never have occurred to him that it had recently been a black one.

Smudge's next proceeding was to open the saddle-bag and examine it. He knew that names were sometimes written in such places, and he did not want an awkward name to turn up when he sold that bike to some unsuspicious stranger.

"Gum!" said Smudge.

On a tag fastened in the bag was the name "Mauleverer." That, Smudge guessed, was the name of the covey to whom the bike had belonged.

It did not belong to Mauleverer now, it belonged to Mr. Purkiss.

Smudge carefully eradicated the name of the former owner.

"Ain't this 'ere luck?" said Smudge, addressing space. "Three or four quid at least—p'r'aps a fi'-pun note! Wot?"

And Smudge smiled.

Bike-pinching, like other trades, had its ups and downs. Only a short time ago, second-hand bikes had gone awfully cheap—especially when a bloke was pressed for time in selling. But now there was a war on, and there was rationed petrol, and the good old push-bike was coming back into its own again!

Bikes were in demand. Trade was brisk in the bike-pinching line! Smudge was now experiencing one of the ups of his peculiar profession.

But Smudge did some thinking while he waited for the second coat of paint to dry. The nearest place to the spot where he had found the bike was Redclyffe, so it seemed likely that the owner belonged to that locality.

Smudge decided not to head for Redclyffe with the pinched bike. Different as it looked in its new colour, he was not the man to take unnecessary chances.

He did not want to go back to Courtfield. He felt a throb of anguish in his nose at the thought.

But the bridle-path led, at a distance, into Friardale Lane, and that lane led on to Friardale and new regions.

Smudge decided on that as his direction.

Having decided, and the paint being dry, Smudge wheeled that jigger back to the bridle-path, and, turning his back on Redclyffe, wheeled it away for Friardale Lane.

It was in those very moments that Lord Mauleverer, comfortably seated in the motor-bus, was smiling genially at five cyclists slogging up Lantham Hill—and feeling glad that he was not slogging on a bike also! The former owner of that bike was feeling pleased—and so was the new owner—so there was satisfaction all round!

STRANDED!

BILLY BUNTER gasped for breath.

Breath was short.

A couple of miles or so from the school, the fat Owl had dismounted from Smithy's machine, to push it up Redclyffe Hill.

Peddalling up that hill was beyond Bunter's powers.

He thought with dismay of Lantham Hill to follow.

Still, he had plenty of time. The Greyfriars party would not be at the Pagoda till after the football match on the Ramblers' ground; and Bunter had the extra hour and a half at his disposal.

Still, it was hard work for Bunter.

Bunter had never liked exertion. A feed at the Pagoda was worth it—especially as Peter Todd had gone out, and there would be nothing in Study No. 7—and the Famous Five and Lord Mauleverer were out, so neither in Study No. 1 nor in Study No. 12 would there be anything going for a hungry Owl.

"Beasts!" murmured Bunter, as he foot-slogged and pushed at the bike.

All this exertion was really unnecessary, if those beasts had only done what was up to them. Had Bunter gone with the party on Mauly's bike, Bob Cherry could have given him a tow up the hills!

Now he had to walk and push Smithy's bike, which was fearfully annoying.

And after this beastly hill, which was bad enough, there was Lantham Hill to follow, which was worse!

But Bunter, had he only known it, need not have worried about Lantham Hill. He was not destined to see Lantham Hill that afternoon!

Had he looked back, he might have observed a cyclist coming up the hill after him—not foot-slogging, but driving hard at the pedals.

And had Bunter's spectacles fallen on that cyclist, he might have recognised Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, mounted on Tom Redwing's jigger!

But Bunter did not look back. It was bother enough slogging up that beastly hill without blinking round at the landscape.

He trudged and pushed, and pushed and trudged; gasped for breath, and reflected what beasts other fellows were—few of them, if any, such really nice fellows as Bunter!

Not till the pursuing cyclist was close at hand did Bunter take any note of him. Then he heard the sound of the bike behind, but he did not look round; there were plenty of cyclists on that road, and he was not interested in any of them.

He was interested, all of a sudden, when that cyclist shot by him, jammed on his brakes, suddenly dismounted, and turned on him with a red and furious face.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "Smithy!"

He came to a dismayed halt.

It was the Bounder of Greyfriars! And the look on his face was quite alarming!

Smithy jammed Redwing's bike against a roadside tree and stepped towards Bunter.

The fat Removite goggled at him.

"Done with that bike?" asked Vernon-Smith, with ferocious sarcasm.

"Oh! Nunno!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I say, Smithy, if—if you d-d-don't mind, I—I want it!"

"You fat, cheeky scoundrel—"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

Vernon-Smith grasped the bicycle. Billy Bunter let go. He did not feel equal to disputing possession with the Bounder.

"You pinching porpoise!" said Vernon-Smith. "I went down to the bike-shed for that jigger—and you—you—"

"That beast Skinner!" groaned Bunter. "I told the beast I wasn't going to Lantham—I told him distinctly—"

"I had to come after you on Reddy's bike!"

"You needn't have!" pointed out Bunter. "I didn't want you to! I say, Smithy, don't be a rotter! I've got to get to Lantham—it's important."

Smithy leaned the bike against Redwing's.

Billy Bunter eyed him uneasily through his big spectacles.

"Look here, Smithy, if you won't lend me your bike—"

"No 'if' about it!" said Smithy.

"Well, I'll have Redwing's, then—I can manage with that!" said Bunter.

"Think so?"

"Well, 'tain't such a good bike as yours, Smithy, but I can manage."

The Bounder laughed.

"Redwing happens to be waiting for me to get back with his jigger," he said.

"Look here, you can't leave me here without a bike!" exclaimed

Bunter. "Why, it's seven or eight miles on to Lantham! And—and it's two or three back to Greyfriars! What am I going to do?"

"Perish on the road, I expect!" answered Vernon-Smith. "One mile will knock you up—the next will kill you!"

"Why, you beast—" roared Bunter.

"You won't be in a state to be kicked when you get back to the school, if you get back alive at all!" added Smithy. "So I'll kick you now!"

"Look here, you beast—"

Billy Bunter forgot the problem of a bike, urgent as it was, as he dodged the Bounder's boot.

But he did not dodge successfully!

Twice that boot landed on the tightest trousers in the British Empire! Twice a frantic yell awoke the echoes of the Redclyffe road.

Then Herbert Vernon-Smith mounted his own bike, took Redwing's with one hand, and pedalled away downhill for Greyfriars.

"Ow! Beast! Ow! Rotter!" roared Bunter as he went.

The fat Owl stood in utter dismay, blinking after Vernon-Smith as he glided away down the road, riding one bike and wheeling the other.

The Bounder, and the two bikes, disappeared in the distance and vanished from Bunter's eyes and spectacles.

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter.

He was left bikeless! Lantham was seven or eight miles off—it might as well have been seven or eight hundred!

Sooner or later, there would be another motor-bus grinding up that hill—but it was no use to Bunter! Fellows had to pay fares on motor-buses! Owing to a disappointment about a postal order Bunter was in an impecunious state—his total wealth amounting to one penny—which was, unfortunately, a bad one!

Mrs. Mumble, at the school shop, and Uncle Clegg, in the village, had both refused that penny; besides, even a good penny would not have seen him very far! Lantham, and that feed at the Pagoda, had to be written off.

Bunter groaned!

This was one of the drawbacks of borrowing a fellow's bike without mentioning it to a fellow! That fearful beast Smithy had left him stranded—to walk home!

Awful as it was to miss the feed at the Pagoda, it was still more awful to think of the weary miles back to Greyfriars—nearly three by the road, and nearly two by the bridle-path and Friardale Lane!

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

But there was no help for it. Bunter's sole remaining method of locomotion was his own little fat legs.

Sadly and sorrowfully he set those little fat legs into slow motion and rolled along to the opening of the bridle-path in the wood. He trudged wearily into it.

It was quite a pleasant walk by the bridle-path, thick with fallen leaves, surrounded by deep woods. But Billy Bunter did not find it pleasant! He

was already tired by pushing the bike uphill.

More than a long, long mile of bridle-path lay before him—and then there was the lane to follow it!

It was a dismal and doleful fat Owl that trudged and trudged, with weary fat legs.

He did not pass a soul on the path through the wood—it was a solitary place in winter-time. But when he was at last wearily nearing Friardale Lane he heard someone on the bridle-path behind him. Blinking round, he saw a shabby man wheeling a green bike!

BUNTER BUYS A BIKE!

SMUDGE PURKISS looked at Billy Bunter.

Billy Bunter looked at Smudge Purkiss.

But especially he looked at the green bike.

What Billy Bunter wanted, just then, was a bike—anything to save his weary fat legs from foot-slogging! And that man was wheeling a bike!

It was rather heavy going on the bridle-path, thickly carpeted with dead leaves and fallen twigs.

Smudge preferred to wheel his bike till he got it out into a road.

But the heaviest going would not have stopped Bunter from biking if he had had a bike—he just wanted to sit down! He could not help blinking enviously at that green bike.

He did not, of course, recognise it, or dream of Lord Mauleverer in connection with it.

Mauly's bike was black—this was green. Mauly, so far as Bunter knew, was still on his bike, heading for Lantham with the Famous Five. It was, to Bunter's eyes, just a bike; and he would have been extremely glad to borrow it, had that been practicable.

Smudge looked at him very keenly and curiously, and touched his battered hat.

Bunter had trouser-clips on, which looked as if he had been cycling, though he was on foot without a jigger.

"Lorst your bike, sir?" said Smudge civilly.

"Yes!" answered Bunter.

Smudge wondered, for a startled moment, whether this fat boy might be the owner of the bike he had found in the thicket, and which had changed colour in his thievish hands.

"A beast grabbed it away from me!" said Bunter bitterly.

"That's 'ard luck, sir!" said Smudge. "Did it 'appen about 'ere, sir?"

"Back on the Redclyffe road!" answered Bunter.

"And you couldn't get arter him, sir?" asked Smudge.

"How could I get after him, when he was going downhill at top speed?" grunted Bunter.

Smudge realised that this was not the owner of the parked bike in the thicket!

"'Ard luck, and no mistake!" said Smudge. "Dirty trick, pinching a

cove's bike! Not the sort of thing I'd 'old with!"

Bunter blinked at him. He had not meant to imply that his bike had been stolen; but Smudge's mind ran naturally on bike-pinching, so he had misunderstood.

"You don't figger on getting that bike back agin, sir?" asked Smudge.

"Eh? No!" answered Bunter. Certainly he did not figure on getting Herbert Vernon-Smith's bike back again!

Smudge smiled genially.

It looked to him as if he might have found a customer for his bike already!

He could see that Bunter was a schoolboy; and he knew the Greyfriars colours in his cap.

Bunter did not look, perhaps, wealthy—but it was reasonable to suppose that he could afford to buy a second-hand bike—especially one going extra cheap on account of the owner being pressed to sell.

"Look at that bike, sir!" said Smudge.

Bunter was already looking at it—with longing!

"I'm selling that bike, sir!" explained Smudge. "Jest taking it along to Friardale, seeing as I've 'card there's a bloke there wants one."

Smudge had heard nothing of the kind, and he did not expect to find a customer in a little village like Friardale, but Smudge had no use for the truth in his profession as bike-pincher.

"Oh!" said Bunter, with interest.

"I'm only asking fi'pun for it!" added Smudge. "Seeing as you'll be in want of a bike, sir, p'r'aps we could do business?"

Bunter shook his head sadly.

He would willingly have given all he possessed for that green bike. But as he possessed only one penny, and that a bad one, it was obvious that there was nothing doing.

"I'd take four, for a quick trade!" said Smudge.

Bunter blinked at the bike again. It was, he could see, an excellent machine, and in good condition—indeed, it looked as if it had been freshly painted! But he shook his head again.

"I've got no money about me," he answered. "I'd be jolly glad, otherwise. I want a bike! But I've left all my money at the school."

No earthly consideration would ever have induced Billy Bunter to admit that he hadn't any money!

Smudge regarded him thoughtfully. Ready cash was Smudge's rule—when he could get it! But he was, naturally, anxious to get that bike off his hands at the earliest possible moment. Disguised as it was, it was safer off his hands—that was certain.

"That big school near Friardale, sir?" he asked.

"Yes; Greyfriars!"

"You're going there now, sir?"

"Yes; I've got to walk back," grunted Bunter wearily.

"Well, look 'ere, sir, if you got the money at the school, I ain't the man to worry about an hour or two," said

Smudge. "The bike's yours for four quids, sir—it'll save me a walk to the village."

Billy Bunter's fat face brightened.

It was too late to think of getting to Lantham, even on a bike. But a lift on a jigger to Greyfriars was a windfall. After a mile on the bridle-path, Bunter's legs were almost crumpling under his weight.

And Bunter wanted a bike—not merely for a lift this especial afternoon, but because his own dilapidated jigger was almost past praying for.

Bunter did not, perhaps, know a lot about bikes—but he could see that this was a good machine, and dirt cheap at four pounds.

Certainly, if he wanted a bike, he was never likely to strike a better bargain than this.

The difficulty was that he hadn't four pounds at the school—or four shillings—or even four pence!

That, really, was like a lion in the path, or would have been to any fellow but Bunter!

But Billy Bunter was blessed with a hopeful nature!

His postal order might come! Some kind relation might send him a bank-note—Bunter had had a fiver once, on a never-to-be-forgotten occasion! A more reliable resource was his deadly skill as a borrower! It was worth while making an effort to secure a bike like that!

Manly might be good for a quid, perhaps! Toddy would stump up something, on an occasion like this! The Famous Five, beasts as they were, might rally round if Bunter was being dunned for money!

Bunter thought it out.

At the very worst, he would get a lift on that bike to the school, and save his weary legs even if he had to hand it back again because he couldn't pay for it.

That, perhaps, was not very scrupulous. But Bunter was thinking chiefly of the ache in his podgy legs—and a fellow couldn't think of everything.

"Well, look here," said Bunter at last, "I'd like to have the bike. I'm in want of one, as it happens. But four pounds is a lot of money."

"Couldn't let it go cheaper, sir," said Smudge, shaking his head.

"I don't mean that—I'll give four pounds," said Bunter, "but I couldn't manage it before to-morrow."

"Oh!" said Smudge.

He looked rather keenly at the fat Owl.

"What might your name be, sir?" he asked. "Mine's Smith—John Smith!"

"Bunter—I'm in the Remove—that's the Lower Fourth Form," added Bunter, as Mr. Purkiss did not seem to catch on.

"And you could pay up to-morrow?"

"That's all right!" said Bunter.

Bunter hoped, at least, that it was all right! Bunter had a hopeful nature!

Smudge considered it.

Really, it was a good offer, so far as Smudge could see. It would take the bike off his hands, which spelled safety.

That bike would be lost among the innumerable bikes at a big school, far from Redclyffe, where Smudge thought it probable that the owner lived.

If that fat covey didn't pay up, Smudge would be after him fast enough for the money.

Once the bike was safely off his hands, Smudge was in no hurry to leave the neighbourhood.

There were two or three other schools round about, and a healthy chance of business to be done in the bike-pinching line.

Smudge nodded at last.

"It's a go, sir—I'll trust you!" he declared.

There was not a lot of "trust" required, as he knew Bunter's name and school, where he could go for payment if necessary.

"You take that there bike," said Smudge, "and I'll be on that there gate in the lane to-morrow, and you can run out on the bike with the four quid, sir. What time'll suit you, sir?"

"I should have to cut out after dinner," said Bunter, "say soon after one o'clock, Mr. Smith."

"Done!" said Smudge.

The gate on Friardale Lane, at the end of the bridle-path, was in sight, in the distance. Smudge pointed to it.

"I'll be there, sir," he said.

"O.K.!" said Bunter cheerfully.

And he took the green bike from Mr. Purkiss.

It was rough going on the bridle-path, but Bunter mounted at once. He was chiefly anxious to sit down.

He plugged and rocked on towards the gate.

Smudge watched him go with considerable satisfaction.

Seldom had Smudge Purkiss got rid of a stolen bike so soon after pinching it.

All he had to do now was to collect the money on the morrow, in the happy state of having no stolen goods about him—that was all.

Possibly his satisfaction would have been a little dashed had he been aware that the fat covey's total wealth amounted to one bad penny. Fortunately for his peace of mind, Mr. Purkiss did not know that.

SHANKS' PONY!

"A SS!" said Bob Cherry.

"Slacker!" grunted Johnny Bull.

Lord Mauleverer smiled.

Manly was quite satisfied with that afternoon's excursion.

The Famous Five had watched the Territorial team play Lantham Ramblers, and tea'd at the Pagoda afterwards. Now it was time to return.

The Famous Five had their bikes to ride back on.

Lord Mauleverer had to catch the return motor-bus, and drop off the same at the end of the bridle-path in Redclyffe Wood, there to collect his jigger.

The more time he spent on the bus, and the less on his bike, the more his lazy lordship was satisfied. So,



Lord Mauleverer was half-way through the wood when there was a sudden flash of light in the dark.
" 'Old on ! " said a voice.

from Mauly's point of view, it was all right!

"You lazy lubber!" said Bob. "Where did you park the bike?"

"In the wood," answered Mauly.

"In the middle of the path, for any tramp to pick up?" asked Frank Nugent.

"No fear! I parked it safe out of sight. That's all right," said Lord Mauleverer cheerfully. "I shall be in long before you chaps."

"If the bike's still there," said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, it's there all right!"

"Serve you right if some tramp's pinched it, and you have to walk home, you slacking ass!" said Johnny Bull.

"Yaas, wouldn't it?" agreed Lord Mauleverer placidly. "But it's all right! You fellows go and collect mud, and I'll go and collect a motor-bus."

On the way out of Lantham, the Famous Five were well ahead on the steep slope down Lantham Hill. Mauly's motor-bus was lost to sight astern.

On Redclyffe Hill it came into sight behind. But over Redclyffe Hill the cyclists whizzed on again at a great rate, and the motor-bus was lost for good.

The Famous Five whizzed on cheerfully to the school.

They were far out of sight when Lord Mauleverer jumped from the bus at the opening of the bridle-path.

Leaving the bus to grind on its way, his lordship sauntered cheerfully into the wood.

The dusk was beginning to fall, but he had ample time to walk to the spot where he had parked his jigger, collect it, and ride the couple of miles to Greyfriars before calling-over.

Five minutes after stepping off the motor-bus Mauleverer was standing at the thicket where he had parked that bike.

He was standing there with a rather dismayed expression on his noble countenance.

He groped in that thicket. But it was useless to grope for an article that was not there.

"Oh gad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

He groped and stared, and stared and groped. But he had to make up his mind to it that the bike was not on the spot.

Woodland thickets were very much like one another, and he wondered whether, after all, he had mistaken the spot.

But a search of adjacent thickets was equally futile.

The bike was gone.

By the time Lord Mauleverer made up his mind that that bike really was gone, the dusk was settling thicker and thicker, and the woods around him were almost black.

Mauly sighed.

It was rather a blow to lose his handsome jigger. Obviously, some passing tramp had spotted it, where it had been left, and picked it up in passing. But Mauly was thinking less of the loss of the jigger than of the necessity of getting to the school

on Shanks' pony. That prospect dismayed him almost as much as it dismayed Billy Bunter.

"What a life!" sighed Mauleverer. He started at last.

It was nearly three miles by the road, and only about two by the bridle-path, so Mauly naturally chose the latter.

That it was now getting dark, and that a solitary path through a wood might not be quite safe after dark was a consideration that did not occur to his noble mind—not that he would have regarded it had it occurred to him. No danger could be so bad as an extra mile.

Mauly walked on.

He could not get in before dark now, and he would be late for calling over. But that could not be helped. Probably, Mr. Quelch would go easy when he learned that Mauleverer had unfortunately lost his jigger.

Mauly hoped so. Anyhow, it couldn't be helped—and Mauly was not the man to meet troubles half-way.

He walked on cheerfully.

He was about half-way through the wood when there was a sudden flash of light in the dark from a flash-lamp.

" 'Old on!" said a voice.

Lord Mauleverer stopped, his heart beating rather fast. He had a glimpse of a man with a grubby, stubbly face, in a shabby old overcoat too large for him, and a battered hat.

Smudge Purkiss concentrated the beam on his lordship's startled face.

Behind the light, Smudge grinned. "P'raps you could 'elp a cove on his way, sir," said Smudge. "P'raps a quid wouldn't 'urt you."

"Sorry—no!" said Lord Mauleverer politely.

"P'raps you'd rather 'ave a jolt on the jor!" suggested Smudge aggressively—and he displayed a large knuckly fist under Mauleverer's nose as a hint of what was coming.

Lord Mauleverer's friends at Greyfriars would not have called him a slacker had they witnessed what happened next.

Mauly had no idea of handing over a quid to a threatening tramp—and still less did he want a jolt on the jaw! He did not give Smudge time for it!

Almost before Mr. Purkiss had finished speaking, Mauly made a spring forward, and his fist crashed in a stubby, grubby face.

There was a startled howl from Mr. Purkiss, taken quite by surprise by that sudden opening of hostilities.

Smudge went over backwards. The flashlamp flew from his hand and went out. Smudge sprawled in dead, damp leaves, yelling.

What he would have done had Mauly been within reach when he got on his feet again, would probably have been unpleasant! But as Smudge sprawled and howled, Mauleverer bounded on, and went up the bridle-path at a racing speed.

Smudge sat up—then he staggered up.

He felt his stubby chin with his hand—perhaps to make sure that it was still there! It felt as if it wasn't!

"Crimes!" gasped Smudge.

Lord Mauleverer's rapid footsteps were dying away in the distance.

Smudge blinked after him, but did not attempt pursuit. He rubbed his chin and grunted, and made a series of remarks which it was just as well Lord Mauleverer was too far away to hear—they really were not suitable for youthful ears.

Then Smudge, in an extremely bad temper, resumed his tramp in the direction of Redclyffe.

A spot of robbery in a lonely place after dark did not come amiss to Mr. Purkiss—but as he slouched on, rubbing a damaged chin, he rather wished that he had kept to his regular business of bike-pinching and not bothered about a side-line!

Lord Mauleverer, breathless, reached the gate on Friardale Lane—after which he dropped into a walk again and sauntered on to Greyfriars—occasionally rubbing his knuckles, which had been barked on Smudge's stubby chin!

BUNTER'S NEW BIKE!

"WHOSE bike?"

"Mine!"

"Looks a jolly good jigger!" said Bob Cherry.

"Well, it would be!" said Billy Bunter. "My Uncle George doesn't

care what he pays—he's rich, you know."

After third school, in the morning, Billy Bunter had wheeled his new bike out.

Bunter was pleased with that bike. It really was a first-class jigger, and he had reason to be pleased with it—ever so much better than his old jigger in its palmiest days.

The only drawback about that jigger was that it had not yet been paid for, and so really was not yet Bunter's.

But that was a difficulty Bunter hoped to overcome somehow.

In break that morning he had looked eagerly for a letter—hoping that his celebrated postal order might have materialised at last.

If that postal order came, and if it was for, say, a pound, Bunter would be in a position to pay a pound off that bike—and he considered that he could reasonably ask the vendor to wait a day or two for the other three.

Unfortunately, the postal order had not arrived—and Bunter was still limited, in the financial line, to a bad penny!

Still, it was a couple of hours yet before he had to see the man who had sold him that bike; and, after all, a fellow might be late!

Anyhow, he had the bike, and if the man had to wait a bit for payment, he was not the only man who had to wait a bit for his money in war-time! Why shouldn't that stubby man wait, like anybody else? Bunter saw no reason why he shouldn't!

In the meantime, there was the bike—and was Bunter going to tell the world that he had picked up that first-class jigger, at an amazing bargain, second-hand, for four pounds?

Bunter was not!

Nobody was going to know that the green bike was a second-hand jigger, picked up cheap! It sounded ever so much better if that handsome bike was a present from one of Bunter's numerous rich relations!

Fellows in the Remove did not seem to believe much in those rich relations—possibly because none of the riches ever seemed to get as far as Greyfriars School. But seeing was believing!

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at that jigger admiringly. They did not much like the way it was painted; but, except for that, it was obviously a first-class machine and more expensive than their own. If Uncle George had weighed in with that jigger for his nephew at Greyfriars, it looked as if George was an avuncular relative worth cultivating.

"I told you I wrote to my Uncle George about a bike!" remarked Billy Bunter carelessly.

"So you did!" agreed Bob. "But I—"

Bob checked the rest of the remark he had been going to make. He had certainly not supposed that Uncle George was going to squeeze out the bike requested by Bunter. But there was the bike—speaking for itself, as it were!

"Pretty good machine, what?"

said Bunter airily. "I don't mind telling you fellows that my Uncle William gave twenty guineas for it."

"Did he?" ejaculated Bob.

"He did! Money's nothing to him!" explained Bunter.

"Your Uncle William gave twenty guineas for a bike that was sent you by your Uncle George!" exclaimed Bob, staring at the fat Owl.

"Oh! I—I mean—" stammered Bunter.

The class of persons to which Billy Bunter belonged needed, proverbially, to have good memories.

Bunter had a very bad one.

This was rather a handicap to a fellow who never, except by accident, got anywhere near the truth.

Billy Bunter was never at a loss for a whopper. But his fibs disagreed with one another in the most surprising way.

"I—I—I mean, Uncle George gave twenty-five guineas for the bike," explained Bunter.

"Jolly expensive jigger, if your Uncle George gave twenty-five guineas for it and your Uncle William twenty!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Whose bike is it?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Mine!" roared Bunter. "I told you I'd written to my Uncle Rupert—that is, William—I mean, George—and he sent me this bike! It came while you fellows were at Lantham yesterday! It's a better bike than you fellows have got, and chance it! Your people can't afford this make!"

"Where did you get it?" asked Johnny.

"Haven't I told you my Uncle Phillip—I mean William—that is, George, gave it to me?" roared Bunter. "Think I pinched it, you beast?"

"Well, you can't have pinched it!" said Johnny Bull. "You never pinch anything you can't eat!"

"Beast!"

"Well, gratters, old man," said Bob. "You've got a jolly good bike, wherever you got it! Don't let it run to seed like the old one!"

"I say, you fellows, I was going to speak to you about my old bike," said Bunter. "Having this one, of course, I don't want the old one! If one of you fellows would like it, I'll sell it for four pounds."

Billy Bunter blinked eagerly at the Famous Five as he made that generous offer. The sale of his old bike for four pounds would have seen him nicely through his financial problem.

Unfortunately, though the new bike was worth a great deal more than four pounds, the old bike was worth a great deal less—if it was worth anything at all, which was doubtful.

"Four whiches?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Pounds, old chap!"

"Not shillings?"

"Or pence?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Don't you mean pence?"

"Dear at fourpence!" said Nugent, shaking his head. "If you mean fourpence, Bunter, you're asking too much!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Nugent! Look here, I'll let it go for two!" said Bunter. "After all, if I give the man two, he can wait for the rest."

"What man?"

"Oh! Nobody! I don't owe anybody four pounds for this bike!" explained the fat Owl hastily.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Famous Five.

Really, they did not need telling much more than that! Bunter evidently had bagged a second-hand bike at a bargain!

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" yapped Bunter. "I haven't got to pay for this bike, and the man isn't going to wait for me in Friar-dale Lane after dinner."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, do stop cackling! I say, you fellows, will one of you take my old bike off my hands?" asked Bunter. "Look here, I'll take a quid for it! What about that?"

"Better see if you can find a blind man!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Eh? A blind man wouldn't want a bike! Wharrer you mean?"

"More likely to want it than anybody who could see it!" explained Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "Look here, what will you give me for my old bike? I don't want it now that I've got this new one from the pater—I mean from my Uncle Arthur! Look here, what do you think it's worth?"

"Anybody know the price of scrap?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" grunted Billy Bunter. "You fellows will never get a chance like this again!"

"I'll tell you what," said Bob. "Sell it while the war's on, Bunter—while the price of scrap metal is up! It will go down again after the war, and you won't get so much!"

"Beast!"

The Famous Five walked away, laughing—evidently not disposed to take Bunter's old bike off his hands, at any price whatever.

Bunter rather wished that he had taken a little more care of that machine—it would have come in useful now—now that he wanted to sell it. But it was rather too late to think of that.

Until the bell rang for dinner that day, Billy Bunter was making attempts to get an offer for the old bike, up and down the Remove. But even Fisher T. Fish, who would buy almost anything—at his own price—refused to make an offer for that old jigger.

That resource failed the fat Owl. And he was rather worried about his financial problem when he went in to dinner with the Remove.

But there was steak-and-kidney-pie for dinner!

This, of course, did not solve financial problems! But with steak-and-kidney-pie before him, Bunter could not possibly think about anything else. He dismissed his problem from his mind, and devoted himself to steak-and-kidney-pie, and was happy.

EVERY SATURDAY

RAISING THE WIND!

"MAULY, old man——"

"Oh dear!"

"Anything the matter?"

asked Billy Bunter, blinking through his big spectacles at the schoolboy earl of Greyfriars.

"Yaas, you!" answered Mauly.

"Oh, really, old chap——"

"Blow away, Bunter!" said Lord Mauleverer plaintively. "I've got a lot of worries! I don't want any more! You're worse than the others. Shut the door after you!"

Bunter did not blow away! Having run down Lord Mauleverer in his study, after dinner, Bunter was not likely to let his victim off so easily as all that!

Mauly, who generally managed to avoid worry by the simple system of letting things slide unregarded, had a worry on his noble mind now.

Mr. Quelch, his Form-master, had excused him for being late for roll the previous evening, in the circumstances. But the matter did not end there.

With regard to the missing bike, Mauleverer would have been satisfied with intending to do something or other, sooner or later. That, probably, would have been the end of the affair, so far as his lordship was concerned.

Mr. Quelch did not take that view at all. The Remove master very properly insisted upon steps being taken to recover the lost property.

The loss had to be reported to the local police.

Mr. Quelch undertook that part of the business. But the number of the bicycle had to be ascertained, for purposes of identification.

If Mauly knew that bikes had numbers, he had forgotten the circumstance. Certainly he had no idea of the number of his own expensive jigger. It might have been, so far as Mauly knew, any number up to a million or so.

But his guardian, at Mauleverer Towers, could supply the number—so Mauly had to write to Sir Reginald Brooke and inquire.

He had come up to his study after dinner to write the letter. So far, he had not written it!

He was still thinking of doing so when Bunter blew in. Which really seemed altogether too thick, to Mauly! It was bad enough to have a laborious task on hand, without Billy Bunter's company added thereto.

"I was going to ask you something, Mauly!" said Bunter.

"I guessed that one!"

"I've been disappointed about a postal order, old fellow!"

"Help!"

"Oh, really, Mauly! I say, can you lend me four pounds?"

"Wha-a-t?"

Lord Mauleverer sat up and took notice. He fairly blinked at William George Bunter.

Mauly had a good deal of money, and he was the easiest-going fellow ever. How many bobs and half-crowns Bunter borrowed of him in a term, he never thought of counting.

But a request for four pounds in a

lump made Mauly stare! He was easy-going, but not quite to that extent! Even Mauly could hardly have afforded to ladle out his wealth four pounds at a time.

"It's something rather special!" explained Bunter.

The fat Removeite realised that it was a somewhat unusual request.

"It must be, I think!" agreed Lord Mauleverer. "Now tell me another funny story! That one doesn't make me laugh."

"I say, old chap, I ain't being funny!" protested Bunter.

"You are!" assured Lord Mauleverer. "Now run away and play!"

"If you won't lend me four pounds, Mauly——"

"Leave out the 'if'!" suggested Mauly.

"Well, look here, what about a pound?" asked Bunter. "I'll let you have it back out of my postal order, Mauly, honest Injun! As soon as ever my postal order comes, I'll let you have that quid!"

"And suppose I never become a centenarian?" asked Mauleverer.

"Beast! I mean, I don't mind your little jokes, old fellow! He, he, he! The fact is, Mauly, I was expecting that postal order to-day—it's from one of my titled relations, you know."

"I don't!"

"Well, you do now I tell you!" yapped Bunter.

"Not at all!"

"Look here, you silly idiot—I mean, look here, dear old fellow, I'm in a hole!" said Bunter. "I've got to pay a pound on my new bike."

Lord Mauleverer grinned.

He had heard of Bunter's new bike—all the Remove had heard of it, by that time—as a magnificent present from Bunter's uncle—though Bunter never seemed to remember exactly the name of the particular uncle from whom that handsome gift had come!

"I mean, for carriage!" added Bunter hastily. "I'll tell you exactly how it stands, Mauly."

"Don't!"

"It's like this!" said Bunter, unheeding. "My Uncle Montague sent me that bike, carriage forward! See?"

"Very thoughtless of Uncle Montague!" said Lord Mauleverer, shaking his head. "You haven't brought your uncle up to business habits, Bunter."

"And there's a pound to pay on the railway!" said Bunter.

"Isn't that rather a lot?"

"Well, charges have gone up, owing to the war, you see!" explained the fat Owl. "It's exactly a pound, Mauly! I've got to pay!"

"Bow-wow!"

"I had a lot of trouble persuading them to leave the bike without being paid yesterday!" urged Bunter. "But they—they did!"

"Very kind of them!" said Mauly. "Now ask them to add to their kindness by waiting till you've had time to write to Uncle Montague!"

"They won't wait!" said Bunter sadly. "I've got to dub up to-day at the latest! I say, Mauly——"

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"Will you blow away, Bunter?" sighed Lord Mauleverer. "I've got a letter to write."

"I haven't finished yet!"

"When are you going to finish?"

"When you lend me the pound, old chap!"

"Oh gad!"

Lord Mauleverer sighed deeply, and jerked a wallet out of his pocket. He extracted a green slip of paper therefrom, and handed it to the fat Owl.

Billy Bunter clutched it eagerly.

He was safe now for a pound on account—and surely the man would be willing to wait for the balance! He would have to, anyhow, if he wanted to sell Bunter that green bike!

But, having extracted a quid from his easy-going lordship, Billy Bunter could not help noticing that there were other quids in that wallet—of which only three would see him quite clear.

Like Alexander of old, he sighed for fresh worlds to conquer.

"I say, Mauly, wait a minute before you put that wallet away!" exclaimed the fat Owl. "What about the other three?"

Lord Mauleverer looked at him. Without replying, he slipped the wallet back into his pocket and rose from his sofa. Taking Billy Bunter by a fat neck, he led him to the doorway, pushed him out of the study, and closed the door after him.

Bunter was left blinking in the passage, in a state of surprise. He opened the study door again, and blinked in.

"Wharrer you mean, you silly ass?" he demanded. "Gone potty?"

Lord Mauleverer did not answer. He had sat down to the study table to get on with writing that letter at last.

Bunter rolled in.

"I say, Mauly—" he squeaked.

"Get out!" hooted Mauleverer, over his shoulder.

"But I was asking you a question when you interrupted me, Mauly! I say, what about the other three quid? I wouldn't be stingy!" urged Bunter.

"What?"

"Stingy!"

Lord Mauleverer rose to his feet.

Billy Bunter blinked at him in anticipation. Perhaps he was expecting the wallet to come into view again! But it didn't!

For the second time, Lord Mauleverer grabbed him by a fat neck. But this time he did not lead him from the study.

He slewed Bunter round in the doorway!

The fat Owl, guessing what was coming then, gave a howl of apprehension.

His apprehension was well founded. Thud!

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter, as he flew out into the Remove passage.

Lord Mauleverer closed the door again.

"Ow! Wow!" roared Bunter, in the Remove passage. "Beast! Ow! Kicking a chap—wow! Yah! Rotter! Wow!"

The fat Owl squirmed and wriggled.

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It had been quite a hefty kick. Then he turned to Mauly's study door again. He did not open it—it was clear, even to Billy Bunter, that there was no prospect of the "other three."

He stooped to the keyhole and bawled through it.

"Yah! Beast! Mean beast! Yah!"

And having thus expressed his grateful thanks for the loan of a quid, Billy Bunter rolled hastily away before the door could open—and rolled down to the bike-shed to wheel out the green bike!

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING!

BANG!

Lord Mauleverer's door flew open.

"Oh gad!" gasped his lordship.

Bob Cherry tramped into the study. Four other fellows looked in at the doorway.

"Ready?" asked Bob.

"Oh! No! I've got a letter to write—"

"Haven't you written it yet?" demanded Bob.

"No; just going to."

"Then you can just-going-to after class!" said Bob Cherry. "Buck up—we've got none too much time to go and look for your bike."

"My dear chap," said Lord Mauleverer, "the bike's gone! I told you it was gone! What's the good of lookin' for a thing that's gone?"

"You know what a silly ass you are!" said Bob. "Ten to one it's where you left it, and you missed it when you looked for it! Anyhow, we're going to make sure! Come on!"

"Better make sure, Mauly," said Harry Wharton. "You might have missed it in the dusk! Pretty ass you'd look if the police started hunting for it and it turned up where you parked it in Redclyffe Wood."

"But I'm sure—" protested his lordship.

"Come and make assurance doubly sure, then!" said Frank Nugent, laughing.

"Well, if you fellows like to go and look for it, I don't mind—I'll describe just where I left it—"

"You'll do that on the spot," said Bob. "Come on! Look here, you ass, you're not going to lose your bike, if there's a chance of finding it!"

"It's miles—"

"We'll go by the short cut!"

"But I haven't a bike to ride now—"

"We've borrowed Squiff's jigger for you," said Johnny Bull.

"Look here, I'd rather not borrow Squiff's jigger! It's rather takin' advantage of his good nature, you know. Shakespeare says 'Neither a borrower nor a lender be'—"

"Are you coming?"

"No!" roared Lord Mauleverer. "I was slogging about on a bike yester-

day, and I'm jolly well not goin' to slog about on a bike to-day, and—Leggo!"

Bob Cherry grasped his lordship and waltzed him out of the study.

Lord Mauleverer tottered breathlessly into the Remove passage.

"Come on, Mauly!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "We've none too much time before class!"

"We haven't time enough!" gasped Mauly. "Don't be asses! We can't possibly risk bein' late for class! You know how shirty Quelch gets when a fellow's late for class! Punctuality is the politeness of princes, you know!"

"Full of proverbial wisdom, ain't he—to get out of a bike ride!" said Bob Cherry. "Take his other ear, Johnny!"



The Famous Five put on speed, and Smudge Punt followed him as he pounced.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Leggo!" howled Mauleverer. "I'll come!"

And he came—the Famous Five walking round him, to see that he did not escape!

They walked his lordship down to the bike-shed, where the machines were wheeled out.

Lord Mauleverer sighed and heaved himself into the saddle, and they rode away in a bunch.

To Harry Wharton & Co., it seemed quite likely that Mauleverer had overlooked that jigger, in the November dusk, parked in a wood. Mauly had to admit that it was possible. Anyhow, it was only sensible to make absolutely certain that it was not where Mauly had left it, before starting an official hunt

for it. Half a dozen fellows rooting after it, in broad daylight, could not fail to ascertain whether it was there or not. Certainly no member of the famous Co. would have been surprised to discover it where Mauly had left it—knowing Mauly as they did!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, sighting a figure ahead, as the party went swooping along Friardale Lane. "Know that fairy figure?"

"Bunter on his new bike!" said Nugent.

Ahead of them, travelling in the same direction, was an ample figure plugging along on a green bicycle.

They had only a back view of that figure—but Billy Bunter was always recognisable, seen from the north or south, east or west!

Bunter was not making good speed

that that handsome jigger was a gift from Uncle George.

"I say, are you going to the village?" he asked.

"Looks like it, when we've got our back to it!" said Bob. "It's twenty-five thousand miles to Friardale, this way—more than you could do on your new bike, old porpoise!"

"Well, look here, why not ride to the village?" asked Bunter. "The road's better—it's fearfully muddy, the way you're going."

"What is that fat chump up to now?" asked Bob. "Why doesn't he want us to ride the same way?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I'm not going to see anybody, or—or anything!" said Bunter hastily. "I'm just out to try my new jigger! Nobody's waiting for me, or anything of the kind, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, I'd go the other way, if I were you!" urged Bunter. "The—the fact is, the road's up, a bit ahead of you, this way!"

"Is that why you're going this way?"

"Oh! I—I mean——"

"Come on!" said Johnny Bull; and the cyclists put on speed again, leaving Bunter astern.

What the fat Owl meant, if he meant anything, was a puzzle to the Famous Five. But it was not a puzzle that interested them very much. They rode onward regardless of Bunter.

"Beasts!" murmured Bunter.

And he slowed down.

As the cycling party were going in the same direction, Bunter's idea was to let them get well ahead and get off the scene before he arrived at the gate and John Smith.

Bunter had already been moving to slow motion. Now he crawled like a tired snail, with the result that Harry Wharton & Co. disappeared from sight up the winding lane in a minute or less.

Harry Wharton & Co. rode fast.

Lord Mauleverer, in the midst of the party, had no choice about doing the same.

There was time to get along the bridle-path, make a search for that jigger, and return for class; but there was not too much time. So the Famous Five did not mean to waste any.

Billy Bunter was far behind, crawling, when they came in sight of the gate on the bridle-path.

A man was sitting on that gate—a man in a shabby loose overcoat, with a battered hat, and tattered boots secured by wire, smoking a short black pipe. He looked up quickly at the sound of bicycles—he was, in fact, waiting there for a fat covey on a bike!

He did not see the fat covey for whom he was waiting. But he gave a start at the sight of Lord Mauleverer in the party.

Smudge Purkiss, whom Billy Bunter knew as John Smith, had seen that elegant schoolboy before—by the flash of a pocket-lamp, the previous night, on that very bridle-path! There was still a lingering ache in his stubby chin from that schoolboy's knuckles.

Smudge gave him a black look.

Had Lord Mauleverer been alone, Smudge would probably have thought of giving him a jolt back for that jolt on his chin. But in such numerous company there was no jolting to be done, and Smudge only hoped that the bloke would not know him again.

In that, Smudge was disappointed.

As the cyclists dismounted at the gate, Mauleverer's eyes fell on the man sitting thereon. He had seen Smudge only by the flash of his pocket-lamp in the deep dusk, but he knew him again at once.

"Oh gad!" ejaculated Mauleverer. "That footpad!"

MR. PURKISS CHANGES COLOUR!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. stared at the man on the gate and at Lord Mauleverer with a questioning stare.

The stubby man was a stranger to them. Evidently, he was not a stranger to Mauly.

"Who——" began Harry.

"What——" ejaculated Nugent.

"Know that merchant?" asked Bob Cherry.

Smudge drew a quick breath. He was sitting on the gate facing the road—now he shifted his legs over to the inner side, ready to jump.

"That's the footpad," said Lord Mauleverer—"the awful blighter who stopped me on that path last night!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I got in first with a jolt!" said Mauly. "But if I hadn't——"

"Collar him!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Bag him!"

Smudge jumped.

He was waiting there for the fat covey who had bought the green bike. But he did not think of waiting any longer for that fat covey. He jumped down from the gate and scuttled up the path through the wood.

"After him!" roared Bob.

"Oh, let him rip!" yawned Lord Mauleverer. "We should have to walk him miles to a police station if we bagged him!"

"We'll give him a lesson, anyhow!" said Bob.

"Yes, rather!"

The Famous Five were not thinking of playing the part of police-constables and running in the footpad, but of giving him a lesson on the subject of stopping Greysfriars fellows in lonely spots.

Bob dragged the gate open, and they rushed their bikes through, and remounted on the bridle-path.

They dashed after the fleeing Smudge.

Lord Mauleverer followed, in a more leisurely manner. He preferred

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fairly flew, his roomy old coat flapping behind him as he plugged up the path!

on his new bike. The cycle was first-class; but the cyclist was not!

The fat Owl trundled on in slow motion, and he was not half-way to his destination, the gate on the bridle-path, when the party overtook him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob. "Race you, Bunter! Let's see what you can do on that new jigger of yours!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Put it on, old fat man!" said Bob encouragingly.

"I say, you fellows, where are you going?" asked Bunter, rather anxiously. He did not want witnesses to his meeting with Mr. John Smith!

Mr. John Smith had to be kept quite dark, if fellows were to suppose

to wheel his bike on the hard going of the bridle-path.

But the Famous Five put on speed. Smudge Purkiss flew, his roomy old coat flapping behind him as he pounded up the path.

A hundred yards or so from the gate he turned to look back—and saw the bunch of cyclists rushing him down.

"Crimes!" gasped Smudge.

He quitted the path and rushed off among the trees.

But there was no chance for Smudge.

Bob Cherry turned his bike off the path also, swept after him, and crashed into the flapping tail of Smudge's coat.

Crash!

There was a fearful yell from Smudge as he went over headlong under the impact of the bike.

Smudge sprawled; and the bike rocked, and Bob Cherry jumped off. He let his bike go where it would, and pounced on Mr. Purkiss.

"Got him!" roared Bob.

"Bust my buttons!" gasped Smudge.

He twisted round and grasped at Bob, and they rolled over and over together, in a sea of whirling dead leaves, struggling.

"Back up!" panted Bob.

Bob was strong and sturdy, but Smudge was rather too much for him.

His comrades were quickly at hand, however. They leaped from their machines and rushed to Bob's aid.

"Leggo a bloke!" roared Mr. Purkiss, as the whole Co. grasped him. "You 'car me? Leggo a bloke! Leggo my 'air, blow yer! Leggo my ears, blow yer! Leggo a bloke's neck!"

But the Famous Five declined to leggo.

Mr. Purkiss, still struggling frantically, was secured. His old hat was rolled on—his ancient coat split—and all sorts of articles exuded from his tattered pockets. But they had him—and they held him!

"Now what about walking him to Redclyffe Police Station?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Blow yer!" gasped Smudge. "I ain't done nothing!"

"You didn't stop that chap who was with us back at the gate on that path last night?" asked Bob. "He didn't see your ugly mug by your own flashlamp?"

"Never seed the bloke in my natural, and he ain't never seed me!" gasped Smudge. "Never 'ad a flashlamp about me in my life!"

"I suppose that ass hasn't made a mistake?" grinned Nugent.

"'Course he has!" gasped Smudge. "He ain't never seed me afore!"

"Never had a flashlamp about you?" asked Bob.

"Never!"

"Then what's this?" inquired Bob, picking up one of the articles that had fallen from Smudge's tattered pockets and lay half-buried in the dead leaves.

It was a flashlamp.

"Oh crimes!" gasped Smudge.

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"This is the flashlamp you've never had about you, I suppose?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blow you!" snorted Smudge.

"Anyhow, I never did nothing! I spoke civil to the bloke, and he 'it me!"

"No mistake about it!" said Harry Wharton. "He's the man! But what the dickens is this?"

He picked up a small can of paint. By it lay a painty brush, rolled in a fragment of newspaper.

The juniors stared at it.

For what imaginable reason that tattered tramp was carrying about a can of paint and a paint-brush, they could not begin to guess.

"Paint!" said Bob.

"Green paint!"

"And a brush!"

"Pinched from somewhere, I suppose!" said Johnny Bull. "What the dickens did you pinch them for, you grubby rascal?"

"You leggo a bloke, and mind your own blooming business!" panted Smudge. He was not likely to explain why he carried that can of paint and the brush.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"The blighter ought to be run in!" he said. "But we ain't bobbies—and we don't want to be late for class! We're going to give him a lesson—and we'll let him have his own paint!"

"Good egg!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Four of the Co. gripped Smudge. Bob Cherry prised the lid off the paint-can and dipped the brush into it. The can was about half-full of green paint—quite enough for the purpose.

"Leggo a bloke!" yelled Smudge, as the brush approached his stubbly countenance. "Don't you stick that there paint on me! Don't you—Groooogh!"

"Better keep your mouth shut!" suggested Bob Cherry. "You may get a little more in it!"

"Gurrgh!" gurgled Smudge.

Bob got busy with the brush.

Smudge gurgled horribly, but he did not open his mouth again. Green paint outside was bad enough—he hated the idea of it inside. But he gurgled incessantly and horribly as his stubbly face was painted green.

Smudge, really, was getting off cheaply. He was entitled to at least three months hard for an attempted robbery with violence. A coat of green paint was a mere trifle in comparison.

But Smudge did not like it—he hated it! He gurgled and wriggled, and his beery eyes glared fury.

But he had to go through it. Bob scraped out the last of the paint on the brush and daubed it on Mr. Purkiss' face. By the time he had finished, that stubbly countenance was as green as Bunter's new bike!

"Now you can cut!" said Bob.

"Keep this in mind, next time you have a fancy for stopping a chap on a lonely path after dark!"

"Groooogh!"

"You didn't look as if you'd ever had a wash before—but you'll want

one now!" remarked Johnny Bull. "Better go and look for one!"

"Urrgh!"

"The washfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed and disgusting friend!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Gurrgh!"

Smudge stood gurgling, clawing at paint, making his grubby hands as green as his stubbly face. His aspect with a green face was really extraordinary. There was no doubt that Smudge was badly in want of a wash—little as he was accustomed to such things.

Breathing fury—and paint—Smudge collected the various articles that had fallen from his tattered pockets.

Lord Mauleverer, by that time, had arrived on the spot, and he stared in amazement at the green-faced footpad.

"Oh gad!" ejaculated Mauly. "Who—what—is that the footpad? Oh gad!"

"Blow yer!" gasped Smudge, with a green glare at his lordship. "P'r'aps I'll meet you agin some dark night, and—"

"Look here, let's run him in, after all!" said Johnny Bull.

That was enough for Smudge! The green paint was all he wanted, and more—he did not desire to be run in, in addition. He bolted, scuttling away through the wood like a rabbit.

"Come on!" said Bob. "We've wasted time over that sweep—we've got to look for Mauly's bike!"

And the juniors pushed on up the bridle-path to the spot where Lord Mauleverer had parked his bike the day before.

Their search for that jigger was thorough. But they failed to find any trace of it. Evidently, it was gone—and had been gone when Mauly looked for it the day before!

Satisfied at last on that point, the juniors remounted their machines to ride back to Friardale Lane—while Mr. Purkiss, leaning over a pond deep in the wood, was frantically striving to wash off green paint!

BUNTER MISSES AN APPOINTMENT!

"BEAST!" grunted Billy Bunter.

Bunter was annoyed.

He got off the green bike in the lane at the gate. He blinked at the gate, and up and down and round about, through his big spectacles.

Nobody was in sight.

Bunter had given Harry Wharton & Co. plenty of time to get clear. But he expected to see John Smith waiting for him at the gate.

John Smith was not on view.

But for Harry Wharton & Co. coming that way, Smudge Purkiss would have been there, ready to do business with the fat covey. Now Smudge was busy with green paint, a mile away.

Bunter did not know that, but he knew that the man who had sold him the bike was not visible at the place of appointment.

Bunter leaned the green bike

against the gate and sat down to rest his fat limbs. A mile on a bike was quite enough for Billy Bunter. He was tired, and he was fearfully annoyed.

He had to see John Smith, to hand over that pound on account, and explain to him that he had to wait for the rest. And he had to get back to school for class. He looked like getting in late.

"The silly idiot!" grunted Bunter. "If he doesn't want to be paid, I jolly well won't pay him, blow him!"

Billy Bunter was peeved. He was so peeved that he was tempted to clear off and leave John Smith to whistle for his money!

On the other hand, he did not want John Smith to call at Greyfriars for it. Smudge was not the sort of visitor that was expected to blow in at Greyfriars. And a call from Smudge would reveal the fact that that green bike was a cheap bargain in second-hand jiggers—a circumstance that Billy Bunter was going to keep awfully dark.

So he waited. If he was late for class, he had to be late!

There was a jingle of bicycles on the bridle-path.

Billy Bunter blinked round in surprise at a bunch of cyclists coming down the path.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry, as he sighted the fat figure on the gate. "Is that our old porpoise? Taking a rest, Bunt? Get off that gate and open it for us!"

"I say, you fellows, wharrer you doing here?" exclaimed Billy Bunter, blinking at the party as they arrived.

The fat Remove did not get off the gate, and did not open it, and the juniors dismounted.

"We've been looking for Mauly's bike, fathead!" answered Bob. "Hold on!" he added, as he swung the gate open.

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter.

Bump!

Billy Bunter sat, suddenly, on the hard, unsympathetic earth. He sat and roared.

"Ow! Beast! Wow!"

"You silly ass, I told you to hold on!"

"Ow! Wow! Beast!"

"How long are you going to sit there, Bunter?" inquired Bob. "Do you want the jiggers wheeled over you?"

"Beast!"

Bunter scrambled up.

The bikes were wheeled out into the lane while the fat Owl spluttered.

"Better get a move on, Bunter!" called out Harry Wharton. "You'll be late for class!"

"I say, you fellows, have you seen a man about here?" gasped Bunter. "I say, I've got to see him before I go back!"

"You've got to see a man here!" exclaimed Bob.

"Yes! I—I mean no!" amended Bunter hastily. "That is, I mean—"

"You mean yes and no?" asked Bob.

"No—yes—I mean— Look here, I—I haven't exactly got to see a man, but if you've seen a man coming this way, you can tell a chap, I suppose?"

The Famous Five gazed at Billy

Bunter. They could hardly suppose that the fat Owl had come to that secluded spot to see the footpad whom they had painted green in the wood. But it looked like it!

"We saw a man here when we got here, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton. "He was sitting on the gate. But—"

"Oh! Perhaps he never waited for me," said Bunter. "That may be it. What was he like?"

"A grubby, scrubby blighter who looked as if he never washed or shaved, in an overcoat too big for him, and boots tied up with wire."

"That's the man!" Bunter recognised at once the unflattering description of the man who had sold him the green bike. "I say, is he still about?"

"So that's the man you wanted to see?"

"Oh! No! I never wanted to see anybody," explained Bunter. "I've been taking a run on my new bike, so that I can write and tell Uncle Maurice what it's like! I never expected to see anybody here, and I wasn't waiting for him when I saw you fellows coming—"

"What—"

"Still, if you know where he is, you can tell a chap!" said Bunter. "Did you see which way he went?"

"You howling ass!" roared Bob Cherry. "What have you got to do with a sweep like that?"

"Oh! Nothing! I don't know him—never heard of him! I never met him when I was walking home yesterday, after that beast Smithy collared my bike! His name ain't John Smith, so far as I know—you see, I know nothing whatever about him!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Still, you might tell a fellow which way he went!" added Bunter.

"Look here, you piffling porpoise," said the captain of the Remove, "that frowsy blighter is a footpad—"

"Eh?"

"He stopped Mauly on that path last night, and he would be run in if the police got hold of him!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"He cleared off, with us after him, and we jolly well painted him with a can of paint he had in his pocket!" said Bob Cherry. "If you want him, you'll find him in the wood somewhere, scraping the paint off!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter again.

He comprehended now why John Smith had not been at the place of appointment.

"If you have anything to do with a blighter like that, you'll land yourself in trouble!" said Harry.

"I—I haven't anything to do with him, of course!" gasped Bunter. "Never seen him in my life! N-n-never heard of him till you fellows mentioned him!"

"What the thump does all this mean?" asked Bob Cherry blankly. "What can that burbling idiot have to do with a man who ought to be in chokey, and has very likely been in chokey a dozen times?"

"Nothing at all!" gasped Bunter. "I keep on telling you I don't know anything about the man—not even that his name's Smith!"

"I suppose that fat Owl couldn't tell the truth if he tried—and he's never likely to try!" remarked Bob

Cherry. "But we'd better keep him out of mischief! Get on your bike, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Do you want to wait here till that tramp comes back?" roared Bob.

"Oh! No! I—I'm just going to take a rest on the gate," said Bunter. "I'm not going to wait for anybody—you see, there's nobody to wait for! I—I'm going to sit here a bit because—because I—I like the—the scenery!"

"Boot him!" said Bob.

"Look here, you beast—"

"I'll give you two ticks to get on that bike," said Bob. "Then I'm going to begin! One—"

"You cheeky beast!"

"Two!"

"Look here!"

Thud!

"Yaroooh!"

Bunter made a jump for his bike.

What Billy Bunter's connection might possibly be with the man who had been painted green, the chums of the Remove could not imagine; but it was clear that such a character was bad company for Bunter, and that the less he saw of such a dubious acquaintance the better.

Bunter was going back to the school with them, and they were not going to lose sight of him till he was inside the gates of Greyfriars.

Bunter clambered on the green bike.

Bob Cherry's boot was not to be argued with.

It was fearfully cheeky on the part of these fellows to butt into Bunter's concerns; nevertheless, a boot was an unanswerable argument.

Bunter got into the saddle and started.

His ride home was much speedier than his ride out. Nobody wanted to be late for class and draw down the vials of Mr. Quelch's wrath. So the fat Owl had to exert himself for once.

Both Billy Bunter and Lord Mauleverer preferred lateness to exertion—but an occasional thump in the back from Bob Cherry spurred them on. And a breathless bunch of cyclists arrived at the school as the bell began to ring.

LITTLE BY LITTLE!

"A QUID!" murmured Billy Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove gazed through his big spectacles at a pound note.

It was not often that Billy Bunter possessed a whole pound note. That green-printed slip of paper was fascinating to his eyes.

After class, Bunter wandered out into the quad, and his footsteps led him inevitably in the direction of the tuckshop.

But, for once, he rolled slowly as he rolled in that direction.

Bunter had a pound note and a bad penny, so it was clear which he was going to spend, if he spent anything.

But he hesitated—a thing Bunter seldom did when he had cash in his fat hands, and the tuckshop called.

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He had extracted that pound note from Lord Mauleverer, and, really and truly, he had intended to hand it over to John Smith on account of the green bike. But the stubbly man had not turned up, and, really and truly, Bunter was not to blame for not having handed it over. He could not possibly hand over a pound note to a man who wasn't there.

When and where he was likely to see John Smith again, Bunter did not know, and couldn't guess. From what Harry Wharton & Co. had told him, it seemed probable that John Smith would give Greyfriars a wide berth.

Bunter did not know where to find him, if he wanted to. And he did not particularly want to.

Bunter, of course, was honest. He was going to pay for that bike, as he had bought it. Even if John Smith was, as those fellows had declared, no better than a footpad, he had to be paid for an article he had sold to Bunter. Bunter would have repudiated indignantly the idea of swindling the man.

Still, he had kept his part of the appointment, and the other fellow hadn't. Now he had a pound note on his hands—a whole quid—and he was, of course, hungry after class.

He hesitated. But it is well said that he who hesitates is lost.

Bunter's feet carried him almost of their own accord into the school shop.

He had made up his fat mind. He was going to keep cash in hand for John Smith, when the vendor of the green bike claimed payment. But, instead of giving him a pound on account, nineteen shillings would do. Practically, it came to the same thing. And it left a bob over to tide Bunter through till tea-time!

That decision taken, Billy Bunter sat down in the tuckshop and started.

He started on exactly one shilling's worth of jam tarts, receiving nineteen shillings change from Mrs. Mumble.

A ghost at cockerow had nothing on those jam-tarts for swiftness in vanishing.

Almost before Billy Bunter realised that he had tasted jam, they were gone, leaving him blinking at a sticky plate.

Bunter blinked at that sticky plate for about a minute.

During that minute, he thought the matter over carefully and decided that fifteen shillings on account would answer the purpose when he met John Smith, practically as well as nineteen. After all, there was not a lot of difference!

Doughnuts and cream puffs, to the value of four shillings, followed the jam tarts on the downward path.

Once more Billy Bunter gazed at an empty plate.

Plenty of fellows, having consumed five shillings' worth of tuck, would have felt that they had done pretty well, and needed a spot of rest. Not so William George Bunter.

Bunter had simply whetted his appetite; indeed, he was rather like a tiger that had tasted blood.

He rose from his chair—but sat down again.

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The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak.

With fifteen shillings in his pocket, and unlimited sticky things round him, Billy Bunter simply could not resist.

Again he thought the matter out—carefully. He had to give John Smith something on account when he asked him to wait for the balance. What about a ten-bob note? It was a round sum—really better for the purpose than fifteen shillings, which was an odd amount.

Bunter decided on keeping a ten-shilling note for John Smith. And he ordered five shillings' worth more tuck at one fell swoop!

His fat face beamed over that new supply. He was shiny and happy and sticky.

He was nearly at the end of that supply when his minor, Sammy of the Second, came into the tuckshop.

Sammy Bunter had a threepenny-piece tightly clutched in a hand as fat and grubby as Billy's.

The two Bunters were much alike.

Sammy was there to obtain the utmost amount of stickiness that could be obtained for a threepenny-bit.

But at the sight of his major, Sammy blinked at him through the spectacles that were so like Billy's, and joined him.

"Whacks!" said Sammy.

Billy Bunter blinked at his minor and nodded.

The Bunter clan did not stick together very much, sticky as they were. But Billy Bunter could be hospitable when he had the wherewithal.

He nodded assent, and Sammy Bunter did not wait for him to nod twice. Sammy started as if it was a race.

The remaining good things on Bunter's table disappeared as if by magic. They would not have lasted long with only one Bunter—with two, they simply whisked out of existence.

Once more, Billy Bunter gazed at an empty dish and a sticky plate.

Once more, he turned this matter over in his fat mind.

He had intended to stop at that. But then, he had not expected assistance from Sammy in clearing the table. Sammy had given him all the assistance he could cram into the time.

Sammy, supposing that this was the finish, went to the counter, expended his threepenny-piece, and departed.

As soon as he had disappeared, Billy Bunter made up his podgy mind.

Five shillings would do for John Smith. It was his own fault for not turning up as arranged. A man who made an appointment should keep an appointment.

Billy Bunter expended another five shillings—and sat devouring cake with marzipan on top, and feeling that life, with all its trials, was really worth living.

After that cake, even Billy Bunter felt that he had done fairly well. He heaved himself up from his chair and rolled to the door.

He got as far as the doorway.

There he paused.

It was borne in on his fat mind that it really was not much good

offering a man such a small sum as five shillings on account of such a considerable sum as four pounds. It was rather absurd, in fact. Bunter wondered why that consideration had not occurred to him before.

Now that it occurred to him, he decided at once that it was no use. He revolved on his axis and rolled back into the tuckshop.

He was not now feeling fearfully hungry. Still, he had room for more—plenty of cargo-space. His eyes and his spectacles dwelt lovingly on a box of chocolate-creams.

John Smith disappeared from consideration altogether. Half-a-crown for a box of chocolate-creams and half-a-crown put by, in case his postal order did not come on the morrow—that was the idea!

The chocolate-creams went down at the rate of three a minute. There were quite a lot in a half-crown box, but it was surprising how fast they went.

Billy Bunter turned to the door.

He turned back.

He was thirsty after so much sticky provender. Ginger-pop was indicated. The last half-crown was changed.

As it was changed, it was hardly worth while, of course, to worry about the odd change. And a few buns went well with the ginger-pop. And a bag of bullseyes to put in a fellow's pocket was rather a good idea.

Billy Bunter rolled at last from the tuckshop—his worldly wealth reduced once more to a bad penny. He could only hope that his next meeting with John Smith would not take place at an early date.

GOING OVER!

"I'LL come!" said Billy Bunter. "Nobody asked you, sir, she said!" sang Bob Cherry.

"I suppose I can bike over to Cliff House and see my sister Bessie if I like!" said Billy Bunter, with dignity.

The Famous Five looked at him.

It was Saturday afternoon.

That afternoon, the Famous Five of the Remove were fulfilling a very special engagement—nothing less than tea at Cliff House School with Marjorie Hazeldene & Co.

On such an occasion, Billy Bunter was at a discount.

Nevertheless, it was a fact that Billy Bunter's sister Bessie was at Cliff House School, and a fellow could ride over on a half-holiday and see his sister, if he liked. Indeed, it was quite an affectionate and meritorious action on his part.

"If Marjorie didn't really mention me when she asked you fellows—" said Bunter suspiciously.

"No 'if' about it, fathead!"

"Well, they're coy!" said Bunter, "they" apparently referring to the feminine gender in general. "Of course, she took it for granted—but she mightn't have liked to mention me specially! Girls don't when they have a crush on a chap!"

And Bunter smirked.

He ceased to smirk suddenly and

jumped, as Bob Cherry drew back his foot.

Bob gave him a ferocious glare.

"You fat, foozling, frowy, frab-jous frog!" said Bob, in measured tones. "If you want me to boot you round the bike-shed and back to the House—"

"Beast!"

"Shut up!" roared Bob.

"Yah! Jealousy as usual!" sneered Bunter. "It's pretty sickening that a chap can't be good-looking without all this rotten jealousy! 'Tain't my fault I'm good-looking, I suppose!"

"Oh gum!" gasped Bob. "No! You've got lots of faults, old fat man—but I shouldn't say that was one of them!"

"Not guilty!" grinned Nugent.

"Girls look round at me!" said Bunter. "I can't walk along the High Street at Courtfield without girls looking round at me, and smiling, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five.

They did not, for once, doubt Bunter's statement. But they did not suppose, like Bunter, that it was good looks that drew those smiling glances. They thought it was more probably circumference.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! But it's always the same when a fellow's a bit fascinating—other fellows get their backs up!" said Bunter. "I'm used to it! Look here, rotten jealousy apart, you know that it's me that Marjorie Hazeldene wants to see. What's the good of humbugging about it? She asks you fellows simply as cabbageflage!"

"As what?" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Cabbageflage. Sort of screen, see?"

"Oh, camouflage!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's all you fellows are—cabbageflage!" said Bunter disdainfully. "I'm the chap she wants, but she doesn't like to put it plain, so she asks you simply as cabbageflage. Well, I'm not going to disappoint her. I suppose there'll be a cake as usual?" added Bunter. "Miss Primrose always lets them have a cake when they have visitors to tea in the school-room!"

"Whether there's a cake or not, there won't be a Bunter!" said Bob Cherry. "Now ring off, you foozling frog! Come on, you men!"

"Wait till I get my bike out!" squeaked Bunter.

"Scat!"

The Famous Five wheeled out their machines. On their own account, they would have yielded the point to Bunter, observing the ancient injunction to suffer fools gladly. But they were not going to inflict the fat and fatuous Owl on the Cliff House girls. There was a limit—and that was it!

"Beasts!" roared Bunter. "I'm coming, see? I can jolly well go over and see Bessie, if I like! And I'm jolly well going over, see?"

Bob Cherry paused, and handed his bike to Nugent.

"You want to go over?" he asked.

"I jolly well do!" declared Bunter

emphatically. "And you jolly well ain't going to stop me, Bob Cherry, so yah!"

"No fear!" agreed Bob. "If you want to go over, I'm going to help you!"

"Oh, all right! If you—Yarooooop!"

Billy Bunter roared, as Bob grasped him by a fat neck. He had said that he wanted to go over—now he went over quite suddenly!

Bump!

"Ow! Oh! Ow! Beast!" roared Bunter. "Wharrer you up to, you beast?"

"Didn't you say you wanted to go over?" asked Bob in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" howled Bunter. Apparently, that was not the way in which he had wanted to go over. "Yah! Rotter!"

"Some fellows are never satisfied," remarked Bob. "He said distinctly that he wanted to go over, and now I've helped him go over, he just grouches!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! I'm jolly well going over!"

"You've gone over! And you'll go over again if I see you on a bike!" declared Bob.

He rejoined his comrades, and they rode out at the gate. And as Coker of the Fifth was standing in the gateway, Bob Cherry playfully hooked off his hat in passing and carried it on in his hand—eliciting a roar of rage from Horace Coker.

Coker charged after the cyclists.

Bob Cherry dropped the hat neatly on the head of Temple of the Fourth, who was standing in the road—leaving Cecil Reginald Temple quite startled by the sudden addition of a hat to his cap.

Then the Famous Five, laughing, put on speed and vanished from Coker's enraged gaze—leaving him to find what comfort he could in kicking Temple of the Fourth.

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter wheeled out the green bike.

Greatly pleased as he was with that new bike, Bunter had not, so far, given it a lot of work. He had not, in fact, had it out at all since the day he had missed his appointment with Smudge Purkiss. Neither would he have trundled it out now, but for the lure of a cake at the end of the bike-ride.

Bunter was going over to Cliff House.

Perhaps, at the bottom of his fat heart, the Owl of the Remove was not quite sure that he was the fellow who was really wanted, and that the invitation to the other fellows was only what he called cabbageflage. But, really, he was not very particular about that so long as he had a cut at the cake!

He was going to see Bessie Bunter.

Bessie, it was fairly certain, would be found in the neighbourhood of the cake—so that was all right!

Billy Bunter blinked at the green bike as he wheeled it out. He was rather peeved to see that the green paint showed signs of peeling off. It was getting rather a patchy look.

The fact was that the paint did not hold very well over polished black enamel. Smudge's disguise of the pinched bike was likely to wear away before a very long lapse of time.

That did not matter to Smudge, who did not, as a rule, expect to see his customers a second time. But it was rather peevish to the new owner of the jigger.

However, if the paint was getting patchy, the rest of the bike was all right.

Billy Bunter rolled it out, and mounted.

Harry Wharton & Co. were already out of sight. But Billy Bunter did not want their company—in fact, he objected to it. He was liable to go

(Continued on next page.)



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2/6
PER PACK

over again if Bob Cherry spotted him on the way to Cliff House.

In the lane he passed Coker of the Fifth, who—once more in possession of his hat—was walking to the village.

Bunter was heading for Friardale, to take the road to Cliff House—short cuts through the wood being too muddy and bumpy for him.

He had nearly reached the village, and was passing the yard of the Cross Keys public-house, when a man in a shabby overcoat and a battered hat came out of that establishment.

He stared at Bunter on the green bike.

"Hi!" he ejaculated.

Billy Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh crikey!" he gasped.

It was the stubbly man, whom Bunter knew as John Smith—known in his own social circle as Smudge Purkiss!

He was about the last man in the United Kingdom whom Billy Bunter was anxious to meet.

Smudge, on the other hand, seemed pleased by the meeting.

"Jest the bloke I want to see!" he exclaimed. "'Ere, 'old on!"

Billy Bunter did not hold on! He was not in a position for financial transactions with Smudge, and he wanted to get over to Cliff House before all the cake was gone! He still had his bad penny, but it was quite hopeless to think of offering that to Smudge on account!

"I'm in a hurry!" gasped Bunter.

"So'm I!" said Smudge genially. "'Old on!"

Bunter drove at the pedals! He was going to ride round Smudge and scuttle on.

Smudge stared—and grabbed!

Crash!

The bike—and Billy Bunter, for the second time that afternoon—went over! The bike clanged down in the lane, and Billy Bunter sat on the earth and roared.

Smudge looked down at him.

"What about that four quid?" he asked.

COKER TO THE RESCUE!

BILLY BUNTER staggered to his feet.

He leaned against a tree by the side of the lane and spluttered for breath. His eyes, and his spectacles, fixed on Mr. Purkiss with a deadly blink.

The green bike lay where it had fallen.

Smudge held out a grubby hand.

Smudge expected payment—now that he had come across the fat covey again! Smudge had been keeping a watchful eye open for a fat covey on a green bike for some days.

Since his spot of trouble with Lord Mauleverer and the Famous Five, Smudge did not care to butt into the school to see Bunter about that little sum. He knew that those fellows belonged to the same school, and he did not want to meet them again.

So he had hung about with an eye open for Bunter.

Now that he had found him, the

fat covey had to come down to brass tacks!

"Four quid, please!" said Smudge, his grubby hand extended. "You was trying to dodge me, blow you!"

He eyed Bunter suspiciously.

"Oh! No!" gasped Bunter. "I—I'm jolly glad to see you, Mr. Smith! In—in fact, I was—was looking out for you!"

"Was you?" said Smudge, as if he doubted it. "Well, now you've found me, Mr. Bunter, and I'll trouble you for four quid for that there bike!"

"You—you see—" stammered Bunter.

"I don't!" denied Smudge. "What I want to see, Mister Bunter, is the colour of your money, and I don't see nothing of the sort!"

"The—the fact is—"

"You 'anding it out?" asked Smudge, more and more suspicious now. "I s'pose you don't think I was making you a present of that there bike? That there bike sets you back four quid! Where's the quids, I'm asking you?"

"It's your own fault!" snapped Bunter. "If you'd turned up the other day, I was going to give you a pound on account. You never turned up!"

"Well, I've turned up now!" said Smudge surlily. "You paying for that there bike or 'anding it back?"

"I shan't have any more money before next week!" said Bunter.

This was the solid truth! Bunter was not going to have any more money before next week! He did not add that it was very problematic whether he would have any next week, either!

"Won't you?" grunted Smudge.

"But it's all right," said Bunter reassuringly. "I'm expecting a postal order on Monday, from one of my titled relations! It's quite all right!"

"Is it?" snorted Smudge.

"Oh, quite!" assured Bunter. "All you've got to do is to wait! People have to wait for their money in war-time, you know! That's all right."

Smudge Purkiss gave him a look and picked up the green bike. He held it by the handlebars.

"All right, is it?" he grunted. "Sez you! Now you 'ear me, Mister Bilking Bunter—you pay for this 'ere bike on the spot, or I take this blooming bike back and sell it to somebody else—see?"

Billy Bunter gave a yelp of dismay.

"Why, you cheeky beast, I've bought that bike!" he exclaimed indignantly. "It's mine! You can't take my bike!"

"Your'n?" sneered Smudge.

"Yes, mine!" hooted Bunter. "You gimme my bike! Look here, I've got to get over to Cliff House, at Pegg, and—"

"On that jigger what you ain't paid for?" sneered Smudge. "I don't think!"

"I can't walk over to Cliff House!" gasped Bunter. "I ain't going to walk back to the school, either! You can't take my bike! Gimme my bike!"

Billy Bunter was both dismayed and indignant at the prospect of his

new bike disappearing from his gaze like a beautiful dream.

He had bought that bike! True, he had not paid for it, but he was going to—as soon as ever he could!

All Smudge had to do was to wait for the money. That seemed a satisfactory arrangement to Bunter. It did not seem to satisfy Smudge, however.

He swung the bike round.

"Gimme my bike!" howled the indignant Owl.

Snort from Smudge.

He did not deign to give Bunter any other answer. Smudge had had enough of that customer. He was going to look for another!

The bike was in his hands now and was going to stay in his hands till he found another buyer. Payment from that fat covey seemed so very uncertain that Smudge was glad of the chance of getting hold of the jigger again. He wheeled it down the lane towards a gate on a field-path that led to Woodend.

"I say—" yelled Bunter.

Smudge did not even take the trouble to snort again! He marched on with the bike, regardless.

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

He glared after Smudge with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

Smudge walked on towards the field gate.

"Gimme my bike!" roared Bunter.

"His" bike was going! It was almost gone! Billy Bunter shook a fat fist after Smudge as he went!

It was just then that Coker of the Fifth, walking up the lane to the village, arrived on the spot.

Coker stared at Smudge, wheeling the green bike away, and at Bunter, at a distance behind him, shaking a fat fist and spluttering.

"My hat!" ejaculated Coker.

He planted himself in front of the bike.

"Here, stop that!" he rapped.

Smudge stared at him surlily.

"Who are you, when you're at 'ome in the zoo?" he asked unpleasantly. "Git out of the way of this 'ere bike!"

"By gum!" said Coker.

Coker was quite amazed! This, to Coker, seemed the most barefaced case of bike-pinching that he had ever heard of.

That bike was Bunter's. He had seen Bunter on it! He could see Bunter now, evidently dismayed and enraged by the loss of his bike. And this shabby sweep was clearing off with it. Coker of the Fifth was not the man to let a bike-pincher walk off with a Greyfriars fag's bike under his nose! Not Horace Coker!

"Let go that bike!" he snapped.

"Look 'ere—"

Coker did not look there! Coker came at Smudge Purkiss with left and right.

Coker was not the man to stand on ceremony with a bike-pincher! Coker went into action on the spot!

Smudge let go the bike, then, in a hurry! He required both hands to deal with Horace Coker!

Coker's right landed on his ear. Coker's left squashed into his eye.



"Leggo a bloke!" yelled Smudge, as the brush approached his stubbly countenance. "Don't you stick that there paint on me!"

The bike curled up in the hedge, and Mr. Purkiss curled up in the dust of Friardale Lane.

"Crimes!" gasped Smudge.

He bounded up and leaped at Coker.

Coker met him with a pair of fists that were rather like hams!

Right and left, left and right, Coker punched—and the hapless Smudge roared and yelled and dodged.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter, blinking on at the scene, with his little round eyes almost popping through his big round spectacles.

Smudge went staggering back against the field-gate under Horace Coker's hefty attack. His nose was streaming red—one of his eyes was closed—his chin felt as if it had been pushed through his neck! Smudge had had enough—and a little too much!

He scrambled over the gate to escape. The biggest foot in the Fifth Form at Greyfriars crashed on the flapping tails of his old coat and helped him over!

Smudge, yelling, rolled in the field. Coker looked over the gate at him, with a grin.

"I give you half a minute to get out of sight!" he said genially.

"Blow yer!" gasped Smudge, sitting up dizzily in a puddle. "Blow yer! I tell you—"

"Going?" asked Coker.

"I tell yer—" spluttered Smudge.

Coker began opening the gate.

Smudge did not wait for him to get it open. He had had too much of Horace Coker at close quarters

already. He scrambled up and flew. Mr. Purkiss did that field-path as if it had been the cinder-path—disappearing over the horizon at a really creditable turn of speed!

Coker looked round for Bunter.

The fat junior rolled up, grinning.

"There's your bike, Bunter!" said Coker. "Lucky I came by!"

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at, you little fat idiot?"

"Oh! Nothing! He, he, he!"

Coker of the Fifth gave him a stare, and walked on to the village.

Billy Bunter grabbed his bike and remounted it.

While the hapless Smudge, with a darkened eye and a crimson-streaming nose, was hitting the open spaces, Billy Bunter pedalled on cheerfully to Cliff House—where, happily, he arrived in time for the cake!

A LITTLE BILL FOR BUNTER!

"BUNTER!"

"Oh lor'! I—I mean yes, sir!"

On Monday morning, in the Remove Form-room, Mr. Quelch rapped out that name like a bullet.

Quelch had a letter in his hand as he entered the Form-room. He had a frown on his face.

He fixed his gimlet eyes on the plumpest member of his Form as he rapped out Bunter's name.

Billy Bunter eyed him uneasily through his big spectacles. This looked like trouble! The fat Owl could only wonder which of his many

sins of omission or commission had come to the knowledge of his Form-master.

"It wasn't me, sir!" said Bunter—provisionally, as it were!

"What?"

"It wasn't me, sir! I never—" gasped Bunter.

"Bunter! This letter has been delivered for you!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!"

Why Quelch had brought that letter with him into the Form-room, instead of letting it be placed in the rack as usual, was a mystery to Bunter. But he brightened up. It was only a letter, anyhow. Quelch was not going to inquire about a missing pie, or anything of that kind.

"You may take this letter, Bunter."

"Yes, sir!" said the fat Owl.

He rolled out before the Form.

The rest of the Remove looked on rather curiously. It was clear that there was something unusual about that letter for Bunter. Quelch was frowning, and he seemed to be eyeing Bunter rather suspiciously. Obviously, it could not be a letter from home.

Billy Bunter took it in a fat paw and blinked at it. He blinked again, and yet again.

The envelope was grubby, showing traces of fingers that had seldom known soap. There was a faint scent of tobacco about it. And it was addressed in a somewhat unusual manner:

"Mister Bunter,

Remove,

Grayfriars Skool."

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It was no wonder that that missive had drawn the special attention of the Remove master.

Bunter could only blink at it in surprise. He had never seen the straggling, scrawling hand in which it was addressed, before. The postmark was the local one of Friardale; and there was nobody in Friardale, so far as Bunter knew, who had any reason to write to him.

"That is a very extraordinary letter for a Greyfriars boy to receive, Bunter!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I don't know who it's from, sir."

"You do not know the handwriting?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Never seen it before, sir."

"That is very singular, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, scanning the fat Owl grimly. "Very singular indeed! In the circumstances, Bunter, you will open that letter in my presence! It appears to have been written by some person at the village, and requires explanation. If you have been making undesirable acquaintances outside the school, Bunter—"

"Oh! No, sir!"

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged rather startled glances. They remembered that incident at the gate on the bridle-path the week before.

The man they had painted green in Redclyffe Wood was undoubtedly a very undesirable acquaintance; and there was no doubt that Billy Bunter was acquainted with him in some way or other.

"What has that blithering owl been up to?" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Silence in the class, please!" said Mr. Quelch. "Bunter, open that letter at once!"

"Yes, sir!"

Billy Bunter jabbed a fat thumb into the envelope, which was his elegant way of opening a letter.

He drew out a single folded sheet of paper.

The scent of tobacco was a little stronger now that the letter was open. On the letter itself was a brown stain of beer! From whomsoever that mysterious missive came, there could be little doubt that he was an undesirable sort of acquaintance for a schoolboy.

Bunter unfolded the letter and looked at it. Then he jumped!

"Oh crikey!" he ejaculated.

Bunter was not thinking about the man from whom he had bought the green bike. The problem of paying for that bike was still on his fat mind, but it was not foremost in his thoughts. Owing to the happy intervention of Coker of the Fifth he was still in possession of the bike; and John Smith had to wait! Bunter was going to pay him as soon as he could! No fellow could do more!

He was now suddenly and unpleasantly reminded of John Smith. That letter ran, in a straggling hand:

"Mister Bunter, Grayfriars Skool.

"To One Bicycle, £4.

"Pleeze post kash to the Cross Keys public-ouse, Friardale. I ain't gowing to wait no longer.

"Yores trooly,

"J. SMITH."

"Oh lor'!" breathed Bunter, as he blinked at that document.

It was the bill for the bike!

Having failed to collect the cash, or the bike in lieu thereof, Mr. John Smith had sent in his little bill!

Perhaps Smudge Purkiss did not know that there was supervision of schoolboys' correspondence. Perhaps he did not guess that that little bill would come under the notice of a schoolmaster.

On the other hand, perhaps he did! It had already dawned on Smudge that the customer he had found for that bike was rather a slippery customer! If the eye of authority fell on the transaction, that fat covey would have to pay up! So Smudge had sent in his bill.

The dismay in Billy Bunter's fat face was not likely to escape the gimlet eyes of Henry Samuel Quelch.

Those gimlet eyes almost bored into Bunter as he blinked at the bill from John Smith.

"Well?" said Mr. Quelch, in a deep voice.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "It—it—it's nothing, sir!"

"Nothing?" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Not at all, sir! N-n-nothing at all!" stammered Bunter. "M-m-may I go back to my place now, sir?"

"You may not, Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!"

All eyes in the Remove were fixed on Bunter. Some of the juniors were grinning. All were wondering what extraordinary scrape the fat Owl had got himself into now.

"Have you any objection, Bunter, to your Form-master seeing that letter?" inquired Mr. Quelch, his voice deeper and deeper.

"Oh! Yes, sir—"

"What?"

"I—I mean no, sir!" groaned Bunter.

"If you have no objection to showing me that letter, Bunter, you may show it to me," said Mr. Quelch. "If, on the other hand, you have an objection, it is my duty to order you to show it to me."

"Oh crikey!"

"In either case, Bunter, hand me that letter at once!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"I—I—I—" stammered Bunter.

He did not want Quelch to see that little bill. Quelch was certain to order him to pay for that bike at once, or else return it to the vendor. Quelch was not likely to understand that that bike was now Bunter's, and that he could reasonably expect the vendor to wait till he received some postal orders he was expecting. It was clear enough to Bunter—but he had a misgiving that it would not be equally clear to Quelch.

But there was no help for it.

"Bunter!" Quelch's voice was deeper than ever. "If you do not immediately hand me that letter—"

"But, sir—"

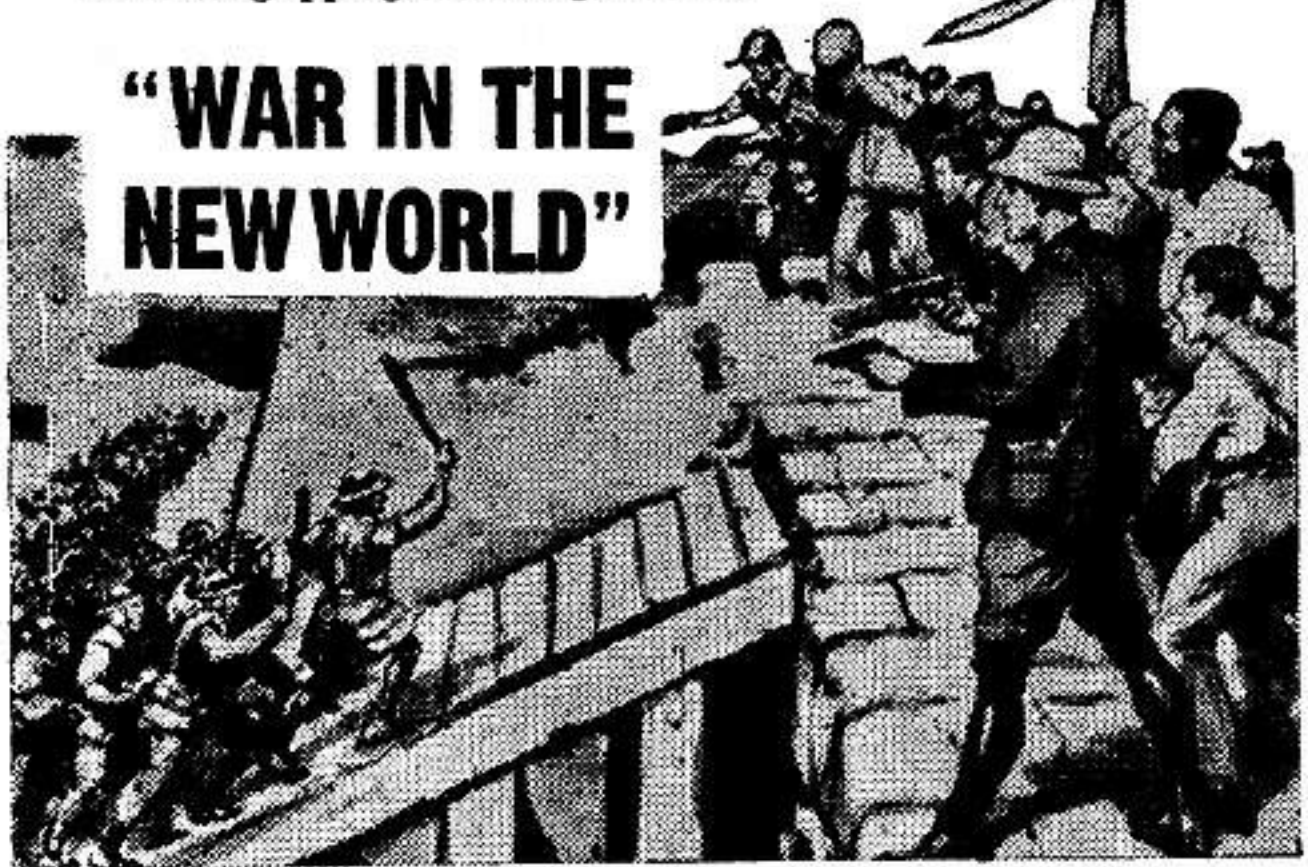
"Bunter, I command you to hand me that letter!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

Billy Bunter handed him the letter. He blinked uneasily at his Form-master as the gimlet eyes fixed on the bill for the bike.

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PAY UP!

THUNDER gathered on the brow of the Remove master as he gazed at that little bill.

Billy Bunter quaked as he noted it. The Remove fellows looked on with intense interest, wondering more and more what was up.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Bunter, this is an account for a bicycle you have purchased!"

"Oh, no! Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"You have a new bicycle, Bunter?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

There was a giggle in the Remove. All the Form knew that Bunter had a new bike, a handsome gift from Bunter's uncle, whose name, however, seemed continually to slip Bunter's memory.

They were learning more about that bike now. If this mysterious letter contained a bill for a bike, obviously it was for that green bike.

Mr. Quelch, frowning, glanced over a crowd of grinning faces.

Quelch saw nothing at which to grin. Quelch had not heard of that bike before.

"Silence!" rapped the Remove master. "Bunter, it appears from this that you have bought a bicycle for the sum of four pounds and have not paid for it!"

"I—I'm going to, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I'm expecting a postal order shortly, sir!"

"This man, who gives his name as Smith, states that he will wait no longer!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "How long have you had that bicycle, Bunter?"

"Since—since last week, sir!"

"And you have not paid for it?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"I—I—I'm going to, sir!"

"This is a very singular matter," said the Remove master. "I must inquire into this, Bunter. It appears that you did not purchase this bicycle at a cycle dealer's. The man gives his address as the Cross Keys public-house at Friardale—a place that is strictly out of bounds for Greyfriars boys. Am I to understand, Bunter, that you have been out of bounds?"

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Then where did you see this man Smith on the occasion when he sold you the bicycle?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

"In—in Redclyffe Wood, sir!" stammered Bunter.

"In Redclyffe Wood!" repeated Mr. Quelch blankly.

The Removites simply blinked. Bunter's statement was really startling. Of all the places where a bicycle might have been bought, a wood was the least likely. A fellow might, possibly, have bought a second-hand bike at a public-house—but nobody in the Remove had ever heard of a fellow buying a bike in a wood.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Skinner. "If Bunter thinks he will get by with that——"

"The howling ass!" breathed Bob Cherry.

Nobody thought of believing Bunter's statement. It was, as it

happened, true, but it sounded like one of Bunter's wildest fibs!

Evidently—to Bunter's hearers—he had picked up that machine from a man at a public-house—and was telling the first fib that came into his fat head, in the hope of concealing that circumstance.

"Bunter!" Mr. Quelch almost gasped. "How dare you make such a statement?"

"I—I—I did, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"You did not see this man at the Cross Keys, Bunter?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Then where did you see him?"

"In—in the wood, sir—on the bridle-path!" gasped Bunter. "He—he was wheeling the bike, sir, and—and he sold it to me!"

"When did this happen, Bunter?"

"Last Wednesday, sir. I—I had to walk back from Redclyffe, and—and so——"

"Did you know the man, Bunter?"

"Oh, no, sir! Never seen him before!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch. "You bought a bicycle from a man you did not know in such a place as a path through a wood!"

"It's a good bike, sir. I—I thought it was jolly cheap at four pounds!" gasped Bunter. "It—it was such a bargain, sir, I—I bagged it!"

"You should have done nothing of the kind, Bunter!"

"Yes, sir—I mean, no, sir!"

"But if you bought the bicycle, Bunter, you should have paid for it! Why have you not done so?"

"I—I haven't any money, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a howl from the Remove. They could not help it.

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily. "This boy's stupidity, and indeed unscrupulousness, are not matters for merriment! Bunter, do you dare to tell me that you bought a bicycle from this man Smith, knowing that you could not pay for it?"

"Oh, no, sir! I—I've been expecting a postal order for some time, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I hoped it would—would come, sir! But—but it didn't!"

Again there was a giggle in the Remove. Mr. Smith was booked for a long wait, if he was not to be paid for that bike till Billy Bunter's

celebrated and long-expected postal order arrived!

"Bunter, I hardly know what to say to you!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Have you, or have you not, the means of paying for this article that you have purchased?"

"Oh, yes, sir! I—I'm going to pay for it, sir! I—I expect to get the money to-day!" gasped Bunter desperately.

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch. "If that is the case, Bunter——"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"You should not have purchased a bicycle, in the first place, from a stranger!" said Mr. Quelch. "Having purchased it, however, you should have paid for it immediately. I will allow you to pay for it to-day, Bunter, and close the matter—otherwise the bicycle must be immediately returned to this man Smith!"

"Oh lor—I mean, yes, sir!" groaned Bunter. "M-a-a-y. I go back to my place now, sir?"

"You may not!"

"Oh crikey!"

"You will bring the receipt to my study, Bunter, as soon as you receive it, in order that I may be assured that this account is paid!" said the Remove master sternly. "I shall expect to see it to-morrow morning, as the money must be sent by post!"

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

"And now," added Mr. Quelch, "I shall cane you!"

"Eh?"

Mr. Quelch picked up a cane from his desk.

Billy Bunter eyed that proceeding with deep feelings.

"I shall cane you, Bunter, for having purchased an article for which you could not pay!" said Mr. Quelch. "It will be a lesson to you, Bunter, not to be so thoughtless and indeed unscrupulous on another occasion! I trust, Bunter, that the lesson will be for your benefit!"

Judging by Billy Bunter's expression, he had no desire whatever to be benefited in that particular manner.

"But—but I say, sir," gasped Bunter, "I—I was going to pay for it the same day, if—if Mauly had lent me the money!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Continued on next page.

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"Silence! Bunter, bend over that desk!"

Billy Bunter, in low spirits, bent over the desk.

Mr. Quelch swished the cane.

Whack!

"Oh!" roared Bunter.

Whack!

"Wow!"

Whack!

"Yooooooooop!"

"Go back to your place, Bunter—and do not forget to bring me that receipt to-morrow!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "Otherwise, I shall cane you again more severely!"

"Ow! Wow! Yow!"

Billy Bunter crawled back to his place in a dismal frame of mind. He wriggled uncomfortably through the lessons that morning.

He had had three—and he looked like having six on the morrow when he failed to turn up with that receipt!

Billy Bunter began to wish that he had never met John Smith at all, and never secured that big bargain in bikes!

WHARTON THINKS IT OUT!

"MAULY, old man——"

"Yaas!"

"You've got the number of that jigger you lost?"

"Oh, yaas!"

"Trot it out, then," said Harry Wharton.

"Yaas!"

Lord Mauleverer groped in his pocket.

Why Harry Wharton wanted to know the number of the jigger that had been lost in Redclyffe Wood nearly a week ago, Mauly did not know. Neither did he inquire. He sorted out a letter from his pocket in which he had received the required information from Mauleverer Towers.

The Co. looked curiously at their leader. They knew no more than Mauly why the captain of the Remove wanted that number.

Harry Wharton's face was very thoughtful. He had been thinking over that episode in the Form-room that morning, and after third school he looked for Lord Mauleverer to inquire the number of the lost bike.

Quelch seemed to have believed Bunter's statement as to how he had come by his new bike. But a good many fellows regarded it as a transparent fiction, and did not doubt that Bunter had picked up that second-hand jigger from a man at a pub.

But quite other thoughts were in the mind of the captain of the Remove now that he had heard where and when Bunter had bagged that big bargain in bikes.

"Here you are!" yawned Lord Mauleverer. He looked over a letter. "This is from nunky—let's see—half-term report not very good. That's not it. Very careless to leave a bicycle in a wood—hem! That's not it! Oh, here you are—here's the number of the jigger—33554447."

"33554447!" repeated Harry.

"That's it, old bean!"

"Thanks!"

Lord Mauleverer nodded amiably and ambled away—still ignorant of why Wharton wanted that number, but not interested.

But the Co. were curious. They eyed the captain of the Remove inquiringly.

"Think you've got a chance of getting on the track of Mauly's bike?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I think so," assented Harry.

"Might be a hundred miles away by this time," said Nugent.

"And it might not," answered Harry. "The blighter who pinched it would most likely sell it as soon as he could. He might sell it to the

first mug he met who happened to want a bike."

"That's so!" agreed Johnny Bull. "But we're not likely to come across the mug, are we?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I think we've come across him a good many times," he answered. "You fellows know him pretty well, I believe."

"Eh?"

"Let's cut down to the bike-shed, anyhow," said Harry. "I want to look at Bunter's new bike."

"What on earth for?"

"To see if it's got a number on it," said Wharton.

His friends blinked at him.

"All bikes are numbered, ain't they?" asked Johnny Bull.

"I believe so. Anyhow, Mauly's was, and Bunter's is the same make! I want to see whether Bunter's new jigger is numbered 33554447, same as Mauly's!"

"Couldn't be," said Nugent. "The same makers wouldn't use the same number twice."

"Hardly," agreed Wharton.

"Then what the thump do you mean, if you mean anything?" asked Bob Cherry blankly. "Sounds to me as if you're wandering in your mind a bit, old bean!"

"This is what I mean," said the captain of the Remove quietly. "You heard what that fat ass told Quelch in the Form-room this morning."

"We heard him gammoning Quelch," grunted Johnny Bull. "He didn't dare tell Quelch that he had picked up that bike at a pub."

"Not the sort of thing a chap could tell a beak," grinned Bob Cherry. "So he told Quelch he got it from a man who was wheeling it in Redclyffe Wood."

"I think he did," said Harry. "According to what Bunter says, he got it from a man in Redclyffe Wood the same afternoon that Mauly's bike was pinched there. Well, if it's only a coincidence that Mauly's bike was pinched in Redclyffe Wood the same afternoon that a rogue had a bike to sell close to the spot, it's a jolly queer coincidence."

"Oh!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"We know the man he was dealing with is a rogue," went on Harry. "He was the man Bunter was going to meet at the gate on the bridle-path the next day, and would have met if we hadn't got there first. He let out that the man's name was Smith—the same name that Quelch got from that letter this morning."

"Oh!" repeated Bob.

"Whether that's his real name or not, goodness knows; but that's the name he gave Bunter," said Harry. "Well, that's the same man that stopped Mauly in the wood—a foot-pad—the kind of man who would pinch a bike or anything else."

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob. "Mean to say you fancy that Bunter butted into the bike-thief and that he sold him Mauly's jigger?"

"That's what it looks like to me! Of course, he never dreamed that the bike belonged to a Greyfriars man, finding it near Redclyffe, miles from here, or he wouldn't have thought of

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selling it to another Greyfriars man, I should think."

"Hardly," said Johnny Bull. "But—"

"But there's one thing you forgot, old bean," grinned Bob.

"What's that?"

"Mauly's bike was black—and Bunter's is green," said Bob. "Mauly's was black as the ace of spades, and Bunter's new bike is green as grass—or as Bunter himself!"

"I haven't forgotten that," answered the captain of the Remove. "Any more than I've forgotten that the man Bunter calls Smith carried a pot of green paint and a brush about with him."

"Oh gum!"

"We used them to paint his chivvy," said Harry. "We wondered at the time why the thump the man carried such things about with him. I think we know now—as Mauly's bike was black, and Bunter's green!"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "A regular bike-pincher—with a pot of paint about him to disguise a jigger when he pinched it."

"That's it," said Harry.

Bob Cherry whistled.

"Mauly's bike!" he said. "Ten to one! That blithering owl, Bunter, had a bike landed on him that same afternoon that it was pinched!"

"The esteemed Mauly's ridiculous jigger!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Come on!" exclaimed Bob. "Let's go and have a squint at the jolly old bike that Bunter got from his Uncle George, and his Uncle William, and his Uncle Phillip, and his Uncle Maurice! If it's got the same number as Mauly's bike, Bunter's jolly old uncles ought to be run in!"

"The run infulness of the esteemed uncles should be terrific!" agreed Hurree Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five hurried down to the bike-shed—with little doubt in their minds of what they would discover there.

Harry Wharton lifted down the green bicycle from the stand.

"Oh gum!" exclaimed Bob. "Look at the paint peeling off already!"

"And black under it," said Johnny Bull. "It hasn't been on long, I fancy—and black enamel underneath!"

"Look at the number!" exclaimed Nugent.

It did not take long to spot the number of the machine, engraved in the metal.

Harry Wharton pointed it out to his comrades:

"33554447!"

That was the number cut on Billy Bunter's new green bike! That was the number of Mauly's lost black cycle

"That's that!" said Bob Cherry.

And that, undoubtedly, was that!

Lord Mauleverer had little hope of ever seeing his lost jigger again. Certainly, he did not expect it to turn up anywhere near Greyfriars. And it had turned up—in the Greyfriars bike-shed!

The Famous Five had found Mauly's lost bike!

WHOSE BIKE?

"I SAY, you fellows!" Billy Bunter rolled into the bike-shed.

He blinked suspiciously at the Famous Five gathered round his new green bicycle.

"MAGNET" and "GEM" PEN PALS

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"Wharrer you doing with my bike?" he demanded. "If you think you're going to borrow that bike, you can jolly well guess again! Rotten trick, I call it, to borrow a fellow's bike without asking him."

(Continued on next page.)

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Billy Bunter, naturally, was indignant at the idea.

"You fat ass——" began Bob.

"You can call a fellow names," said Bunter scornfully. "You were jolly well going to borrow that bike without asking a chap! Dirty trick, I call it. There's such a thing as respecting a fellow's property, though you fellows don't seem to know anything about it. Bagging a fellow's bike behind a fellow's back—yah!"

"You blithering owl——"

"You gimme that bike!" said Bunter. "I want to show it to Mauly!"

"Mauly!" ejaculated Harry Wharton. He wondered for a moment whether the fat Owl had discovered the real identity of that jigger.

"I'm going to sell it to Mauly!" said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"Mauly's lost his bike!" said Bunter. "He lost it the same day I bought that one, I believe——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean, the same day my Uncle Arthur sent me that one!" said Bunter hastily. "Well, Mauly wants a bike! That's a jolly good jigger—quite as good as the one Mauly lost, and——"

"Quite!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"The quitefulness is terrific!"

"Exactly as good!" said Johnny Bull. "Not a pin to choose between them, in fact!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I knew my Uncle George would send me a first-class jigger—he's got tons of money. I'm going to let Mauly have it for ten pounds!" said Bunter.

"Not less?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Well, it's a jolly good bike—only wants a new coat of paint," said Bunter. "That's coming off a bit. Or the paint could be scraped off. I believe it's black underneath, just like Mauly's old jigger, if he wants a black jigger. What are you fellows cackling at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five. They did not explain what they were cackling at—they just cackled.

"Oh, cackle!" snorted Bunter. "That bike's worth ten quid! And I've got to get at least four from somewhere to-day to pay for it——"

"Did your Uncle George charge you four quid for it?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! I—I—I mean—— Do stop cackling, you cackling cuckoos! Gimme that bike—I want to catch Mauly and settle it before dinner. He won't get his bike back now, and I think he might buy that one, see?"

"I don't think Mauly will buy that one!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "I rather think he will want it for nothing!"

"Eh? Catch me giving it to him for nothing!" said Bunter, blinking. "Wharrer you mean? Mauly wouldn't take it for nothing if I offered it to him!"

"I think he will—when he sees the number on it!" said Harry.

"The number on it! Is there a number on it? What's the number

got to do with it?" asked Bunter, mystified.

"Lots!" chuckled Bob. "You see, the number on it's the same as the number on Mauly's bike!"

"And it happens to be Mauly's bike!" said Harry.

"And you bought it of the pincher that pinched it!" said Johnny Bull. "Lucky you got it cheap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter jumped. He blinked at the Famous Five, with his eyes popping through his spectacles.

"Mauly's bike!" he gasped.

"Yes—Mauly's bike, with a smudge of green paint on it!" said Harry.

"Tain't!" yelled Bunter.

"Tis!" chuckled Bob.

"Tain't!"

"Tis!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I say, you fellows, I know you're only gammoning!" exclaimed Bunter, in alarm. "My Uncle Herbert——"

"Chuck it, you howling ass!" said the captain of the Remove. "The man who sold you that bike in Red-clyffe Wood last Wednesday pinched it from where Mauly parked it, and put a coat of green paint on it, to sell it to the first mug who was idiot enough to buy a bike from a stranger."

"And you were the mug!" said Bob.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. His fat face registered dismay. "I—I say, you fellows, I—I can't sell that bike to Mauly if—if it's his!"

"Not quite!" chortled Bob.

"Still, I shan't have to pay that beast for it!" said Bunter, brightening a little. "If it wasn't his, you know——"

"No fear! As soon as Quelch hears this, he will telephone for a bobby to call at the Cross Keys and see Mr. Smith. You needn't worry about Mr. Smith any more!"

"Well, I shall be glad to see the last of him!" said Bunter. "He's been dunning me for the money, you know—practically making out that I'm the kind of fellow that wouldn't pay——"

"Not really!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Yes, really—insulting beast, you know! I say, you fellows, if that's really Mauly's bike——"

"No 'if' about it—it is Mauly's bike!"

"Then I'll tell you what!" said Bunter. "You fellows scrape off that green paint—it's peeling off already, and you'll soon get it off—and I'll go and find Mauly and tell him his jigger's here all right."

"O.K.!" said Bob. "We'll have it looking its old self in a quarter of an hour!"

"Right-ho!" said Bunter, and he rolled away quite cheerfully.

The Famous Five were quite prepared to clean off that green paint and restore Mauly's jigger to its former appearance, though they were rather surprised that the suggestion came from Bunter. They set to work at once—and many hands made light work. Smudge's paint was not, perhaps, intended to last—anyhow, it peeled off the black enamel without

much difficulty under a vigorous rubbing and scraping, and it was not long before Mauly's jigger was easily recognisable.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Mauly!" exclaimed Bob, as the slacker of the Remove loafed in at the doorway of the bike-shed.

"Yaas!" assented Lord Mauleverer. "Bunter says my bike is here—dashed if I know how it's here, when it was pinched miles away—but Bunter says he got it back and brought it here——"

"What?" ejaculated the Famous Five, all together.

"Didn't he?" asked Mauly.

"Oh! Yes, I suppose he did!" gasped Bob. "He certainly got it—and he certainly brought it here! Yes! Here it is, anyhow!"

Lord Mauleverer gazed at his jigger.

"Oh gad!" he said blankly. "I thought Bunter was gammonin', of course—how was a chap to guess that he was tellin' the truth? And he was——"

"As near as he can get!" said Harry Wharton.

"Good gad! Then I owe him a quid!"

"You owe him a quid?"

"Yaas! He asked me if I would lend him a quid for gettin' my jigger back for me, and I said I would, if the jigger was really here—and here it is!" said Mauleverer.

"The fat villain!" gasped Bob.

The chums of the Remove understood now why the astute fat Owl had wanted to leave them busy with that bike while he went to look for Lord Mauleverer!

"I'd better go and tell Quelch I've got it back—so that he can tell the policemen not to go hunting for it!" remarked Mauly.

"Yes—and tell him, at the same time, that it's Bunter's new bike—so that the policemen can go hunting for the sportsman who sold it to Bunter!" chuckled Bob.

"Oh gad!"

And Lord Mauleverer ambled away to the House with that surprising news for Mr. Quelch!

Smudge Purkiss, later that day, departed from the Cross Keys by a back window as Police-constable Tozer entered the building by the front door! He did not stay to inquire what Mr. Tozer wanted, but sagely set off, at his best speed, to seek fresh fields and pastures new.

Lord Mauleverer had recovered his lost jigger. Billy Bunter, on the other hand, had lost his new bike. But for the rest of that day Billy Bunter was seen in a shiny, sticky, happy state, and he felt that he had, after all, not done so badly out of that bargain in bikes!

THE END.

(You've enjoyed this yarn? Of course you have! Well, then, next Saturday's tale of Harry Wharton & Co. is even better. Note the title: "THE MAN IN THE MASK!" It's one of Frank Richards' extra specials.)

The GREYFRIARS HERALD

(Continued from page 2.)

anyway. No, by Jove, Spotson—look! We are approaching a captive balloon. Grab it, Spotson—grab it!"

A moment later, Jones and Spotson were seated comfortably on top of one of the great silver fish which comprise the balloon barrage over London. From here they had a birdseye view of the great city.

Sheerluck Jones leaned back and filled his pipe.

"Well, Spotson, I have deduced that the object we saw on the bridge was a bomb."

"Marvellous, Jones! What led you to that deduction?"

"The fact that it has hoisted us up here, my good man. I further deduce that the bearded man in the red car was a bombster. If you will have the kindness to jab a pin into this gasbag, Spotson, we will descend and fling that fellow into quod!"

The faithful Spotson inserted a pin into the balloon, which rapidly grew flabbier and flabbier, falling at the same time. When it floated to the ground, the pair jumped off and found themselves confronting Inspector Gumboil, who had just driven up in a Black Maria.

"Thank Heaven you are safe, Jones!" said the inspector. "We were too late to stop the villain. His name is Patrick O'Hooligan, and he stole that car from a garage. We chased him, but he has utterly disappeared. However, we are still searching for him—"

"Come, Gumboil!" snapped Jones. "I have an urgent case on hand. Give me a lift to the third turning on the right down Woople Street."

As the Black Maria sped on its way, Spotson wondered what the famous detective wanted in Woople Street, over a mile away. He heard Sheerluck say to the inspector:

"We shall get him, never fear. This O'Hooligan is a clever man, but he made one serious mistake. Here is Woople Street—third on the right, please. Ah!"

They drew up before an empty house. A closed furniture pantech-nicon was standing at the gate, and Jones, borrowing a spanner from the police-van, went up and leaned it across the furniture-driver's ear. The man collapsed without a grunt.

"What's the meaning of this?" demanded Gumboil.

"Get in!" snapped Jones, pushing the unconscious driver on one side. "I wish to borrow this pantech-nicon. You will see why, in due course."

Filled with amazement, Spotson and the inspector climbed in. Jones started the van and drove it straight to the copshop, where he backed in against the tradesmen's entrance to the cells. Then he opened the doors at the back and let down the tail-board.

"Come right out, Paddy!" he called.

A red car slid out of the van's

interior and ran down the board into a cell.

Jones locked the door and handed the key to the inspector, as a roar of baffled rage was heard from the bearded man.

"Sure, begorrah, where am I? Faith and begob, 'tis the copshop intirely!"

"Put his pal in with him!" snapped Jones, and then turned to the inspector. "That's how he dodged your men—by driving into a pantech-nicon and shutting the doors!"

"Astonishing!" stuttered the inspector. "How on earth did you know that?"

Jones smiled.

"I told you he made a mistake. He stole a vivid red car instead of a black one. My dear Gumboil, from the top of that balloon I could have watched that red car drive all over London. Elementary, my dear Spotson!"

"Begob, I'll get ye for this, and so I will!" roared Patrick O'Hooligan furiously.

But Jones merely laughed.

"Come, Spotson," he said, "let us begone. There may be a bloater on our hook by now!"

But, alas, it was only a tiddler!

Penfold's Parodies.

IN CELLAR COOL!

In cellar cool he sat asleep,

And there at last we found him,

A lazy lord in slumber deep,

With lumps of coal all round him.

We'd sought him up and down the school,

Our eyes in anger gleaming,

While Mauly in his cellar cool Was dreaming, dreaming, dreaming!

At footer practice Mauly should Have spent hours and hours of leisure,

And any other fellow would Have joined the game with pleasure.

But Mauly felt too tired that day, He ambled, gently beaming,

Down the cellar, where he lay Just dreaming, dreaming, dreaming.

At last we found his hiding-place And gathered round him grimly:

The peaceful smile upon his face We saw in darkness dimly.

We each picked up a lump of coke To give him for his scheming,

And Mauly, when he shortly woke, Was screaming, screaming,

screaming.



Essay by BOB CHERRY.

AUTUMN!

Autumn is a grand season, with ripe fruit and berries, red leaves and morning mist—I wish to goodness that idiot Fishy would stop talking to me. He's trying to sell me a camera, and I can't keep my mind on what I'm doing with his idiotic yapping all the time. Take it away and bury it, will you? I don't want a camera, and that one's broken, anyway.

Autumn is a grand time for hiking. To see the stubble fields, shorn of their harvest, lying under a kindly sun, with the new hayricks over by the hedge, which is worked on a noo principle with a sliding shutter—Oh corks! There's that camera again! Will you clear off, you bony blighter, before I ram that camera down your neck? Vamoose! Slide! Levant! Absquatulate!

And with autumn, of course, comes footer. We have enjoyed the cricket season, with white figures dotted about the smooth green fields, but now it's good old footer again. Every fellow must feel pleased at the thought of kicking a collapsible view-finder—I mean, a footer—Will you go away?—and slamming it straight and true into high-speed lens of a really cute little camera, and I guess I'll take a dollar—For pity's sake clear off!

I kinder guess and calculate that autumn is a sure-fire bargain—

Nunno! How can a fellow write an essay with an American idiot gabbling in his ear? Let me start again.

Autumn is a grand season, with ripe fruit and berries, and though I've said "No!" fifty-seven times, he won't take that for an answer, red leaves, and if I do get up to him I'll strew the hungry churchyard with his blithering bones, red leaves, and morning

mist. No, that's all wrong! Let's start again.

Autumn is a grand season—Take it away and bury it, I tell you! Aw, go on, big boy, a dollar won't hurt! Look here, shut up! I'm getting your silly gabble all over my essay! For the fifty-eighth time, "Nope!" I mean "No!" Now clear off!

And then, of course, autumn's the time when a fellow really needs a camera dirt-cheap at a dollar—That tears it! Wait a minute! ("Yarooop! Wake snakes! Look hyer—Leggo my year! I guess this gets my goat! Whoooooop!" Slam!) Now let's start again.

Autumn is a grand season—(We'll take your word for it, old bean! Can't waste any more space.—Ed.)



COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

I DON'T think anyone could get tired of Frank Richards' glorious school yarns of Greyfriars—and the old saying that you can't get too much of a good thing is borne out week after week by the number of letters I receive telling how pleased readers are with the grand tales of Harry Wharton & Co. Take, for instance, this week's story—if you don't get a fill of laughs out of it you ought to see a doctor.

Now let me talk about next week's yarn:

'THE MAN IN THE MASK!'

which deals with the further exciting adventures of your old chums at Greyfriars. News of a burglary at Courtfield Hall reaches Harry Wharton & Co. The robbery is believed to be the work of a masked cracksmen known to the police as "Slim Jim," from the apparent ease with which the thief gains access to buildings by small windows. What's more, the thief pays Greyfriars a visit. The only man who can identify the burglar—the only man who has seen the rascal unmasked—is Mr. Quelch. But before the master of the Remove can act, something startling and dramatic happens. You're looked for a feast of thrills in this great yarn, chums!

Supporting this splendid treat will be another interesting issue of the "Greyfriars Herald," giving the latest news and views of the "Big Noises" at Greyfriars. A word of warning—ask your newsagent to deliver the MAGNET to you regularly each Saturday morning, as war-time restrictions ban him from ordering more copies than he can sell.

With a little more space at my disposal this week, I am granting the request of a large number of new readers by publishing a list of the juniors in the Remove Form, or Lower Fourth, at Greyfriars. Here it is:

Form-master: Mr. Horace Henry Samuel Quelch, M.A.

Name	Age y. m.	Hgt. ft. in.	Wgt. st. lb.	Study
Wharton, Harry (Capt.)	15 4	5 5	7 12	1
Brown, Tom	15 2½	5 3½	7 9	2
Bolsover, Percy	16 2	5 5½	9 4	10
Bull, Johnny	15 3	5 2	9 4	14
Bulstrode, George	15 9	5 4	8 1	2
Bunter, Wm. George	15 1	4 9	14 12½	7
Cherry, Robert	15 2	5 4½	8 3	13
Delarey, Piet	14 10	5 3	7 10	12
Desmond, Micky	14 11	5 0	7 5	6
Dupont, Napoleon	15 0	4 11	7 0	10
Dutton, Tom	15 4	5 2	8 1	7
Field (Squiff), S.Q.I.	15 3	5 4	8 0	14
Fish, Fisher T.	15 4	5 1	7 4	14
Hazeldene, Peter	15 1	5 1½	7 3	2
Hilary, Richard	15 4	5 3	8 1	5
Kipps, Oliver	14 11	5 0	7 2	5
Linsley, Mark	15 7	5 5	8 2	13
Mauleverer, Herbert	15 3	5 1½	6 12	12
Morgan, David	14 10	4 11	6 13	6
Newland, Monty	14 3½	5 2	7 12	9
Nugent, Frank	14 10	5 2½	7 7	1
Ogilvy, Donald	15 0	5 5	7 12	3
Robert	15 1½	5 3	8 0	9
Penfold, Richard	14 11	5 4½	7 8	6
Rake, Richard	15 8	5 5	8 12	4
Redwing, Tom	14 11	5 4½	7 10	3
Russell, Richard	14 11	5 3	7 5	13
Singh, Hurree Jamsset	14 11	5 3	7 3	11
Ram	14 8	5 1½	7 0	8
Skinner, Harold	15 5	5 3	7 13	11
Smith (Minor), Robert	15 7	5 4½	8 4	11
Snoop, Sidney James	15 0	5 4½	6 10	7
Stott, William	15 10	5 6½	7 13	7
Todd, Alonzo	15 8	5 3	7 12	9
Theophilus	14 11	4 11	7 3	9
Todd, Peter	15 10	5 5	8 1	4
Treluce, Anthony	14 4	4 11	7 0	12
Trevor, Herbert	15 3	5 0	7 12	6
Vernon-Smith, Herbert	14 3	4 5½	6 0	13
Vivian, Jimmy	15 3	5 0	7 12	6
Wibley, Wm. Ernest	14 3	4 5½	6 0	13
Wun Lung	14 3	4 5½	6 0	13

Arthur James, of St. Ives, Cornwall, writes to tell me that he has been tinkering with his bicycle, and, in consequence, has got grease-marks on his flannel "bags." He asks me the best way to remove these marks. My Cornish chum will find the following is the simplest and best method of removing grease-marks. Get a piece of soft brown paper and lay it over the spot, then get an iron which is fairly hot and press it on the paper for about a minute. It will then be found that the paper has taken up a considerable amount of the

grease. My chum should apply fresh pieces of paper until all the grease is removed.

THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL"

IT is specially worth noting that you who have so far omitted, for one cause or another, to secure a copy of this year's issue of the splendid book so closely linked up with the MAGNET and "Gem," have still a chance to repair the omission. Never before has this popular Annual put forward a better programme. It'll bring sunshine to your dull hours and turn your leisure into unending pleasure. Make sure of this bumper five shillingworth by securing your issue **RIGHT NOW!** This world-famous Annual is obtainable from all newsagents and booksellers.

Yes, I think I have space to answer in full another query. A Manchester chum, whose initials are "T. M.," wants me to tell him how to remove tobacco stains from the tips of his fingers. This question leads me to suspect that "T. M." is a heavy cigarette smoker. If so, I am sorry to learn this fact, for cigarette smoking is a very harmful habit, and best left alone by the youngster who wants to keep himself fit and well.

One of the best remedies that I can suggest to my chum for removing these stains is the application of a slice of lemon, the juice being rubbed well into the finger-tips. This must be repeated every night until the stains disappear. A far better remedy, and one which I heartily recommend, is for my chum to give up the injurious habit of cigarette smoking altogether. Then the stains he complains about will no longer make their appearance.

Now for two

RAPID-FIRE REPLIES

to readers' inquiries.

F. MASOFIX (no address).—There is no fear of Harry Wharton & Co. having to join the Army, Navy, or Royal Air Force. No, there is no Cadet Corps at Greyfriars now.

James POTTS (Northumberland).—Billy Bunter is a "funk," inasmuch as he would fear "standing-up" to young Dicky Nugent, of the Second Form. See list above.

As these replies fill up my space, here's wishing you all the very best of luck.

Chin, chin!

YOUR EDITOR.

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