



I

**S**AMMY BUNTER, of the Second form at Greyfriars, stared. He stared at his major, Billy Bunter of the Remove.

Sammy was surprised, and interested.

Sammy of the Second was seated, at the moment, on a branch of one of the old Greyfriars elms. Under that old elm, there was an oaken bench, backing against the trunk. Bunter minor had been sitting on that bench, lazing away the time till the bell should ring for class, when a playful fag had snatched away his cap and tossed it up into the branches. Sammy had to climb for his cap. He had found it, and jammed it on his head: but he did not immediately descend. Sammy was as plump as his brother Billy, and as short of wind: and his clamber in the elm branches had left him breathless. So there was Sammy Bunter, sitting on a branch, slowly recovering his wind before he clambered down the trunk.

And then Billy happened.

Billy Bunter, of the Remove, came along under the elms. He blinked to and fro, through his big spectacles, as he came. His manner was cautious and watchful—so very cautious, and so very watchful, that any eye that had fallen on him, would have detected at once that Bunter was “up” to something.

Like Moses of old, Billy Bunter looked this way and that way. Obviously, he



was uneasy lest he might be observed. But it did not occur to Billy Bunter to cast a blink upward. He remained in happy ignorance of the fact that his minor, Sammy of the Second, was sitting half-hidden by foliage above his head.

Sammy watched, and grinned.

There was a parcel under Billy Bunter's arm. It was wrapped and tied, stamped and addressed. Evidently it had arrived at Greyfriars School by post, and had not yet been opened.

Sammy's grin widened.

It looked, to Sammy, as if Brother Billy had had a parcel from home, and was seeking a quiet spot in which to unpack it and devour the contents. But the next moment he realized that it was not that. Any moment now the bell might ring for class: there was no time for a feast on the bench under the elm. And blinking down from above, Sammy spotted a name in the address on the parcel. That name was not W. G. Bunter. It was R. Cherry.

Sammy's grin widened still further, till it almost reached from one of his fat ears to the other.

Bob Cherry, of the Remove, might be mystified, when he missed a parcel from his study, to guess what had become of it. Sammy Bunter could have told him. Grinning, Sammy continued to watch.

Below him, Billy Bunter stooped at the bench. He was not going to unpack that parcel: there was no time for that now. He pushed it under the oaken bench, where it was completely out of sight. Sammy heard him chuckle, as he rose again after hiding Bob Cherry's parcel.

"He, he, he!"

Having thus expressed his satisfaction, Billy Bunter rolled away again, and disappeared from Sammy's ken.

Then it was Sammy's turn to chuckle.

"He, he, he!"

From the distance, came the clang of the bell. It was ringing for class, and it was time for Sammy Bunter to get a move on.

He clambered down the trunk of the elm, and stood by the oaken bench. But he did not immediately head for the House and the form-room.

He stooped, and dragged out the parcel from under the bench. Billy Bunter only too evidently, had "snooped" that parcel. He had concealed it under the bench in that secluded spot, with the intention of dealing with it after class. It was going to be dealt with after class—though not by Billy Bunter. Sammy, sad to relate, had no more scruples in the matter of tuck, than his brother Billy. All was grist that came to the mill of either Bunter. Perhaps Sammy felt justified in snooping from the snoopers. Or perhaps he was thinking more about the tuck than the justification. Anyhow, Sammy Bunter put that parcel under a fat arm, and rolled away with it.

All over Greyfriars, fellows were heading for the form-rooms, as the bell clanged. But Sammy Bunter had to risk being late for Mr. Twigg in the

Second-form room. That parcel had to be at a safe distance from the bench under the elm, when Billy Bunter looked for it after class.

Sammy rolled off, like Iser in the poem rolling rapidly. He rolled into the old Cloisters, and carefully selected a spot in a dusky corner behind one of the old stone pillars. The bell had ceased to ring: but that parcel was, in Sammy's eyes at least, of more importance than Mr. Twigg. Having selected his spot, he packed the parcel carefully away out of sight. There it was safe—left till called for, as it were.

Having thus disposed of it, Sammy Bunter rolled away to the House. He rolled in haste: but he was six or seven minutes late for class in the Second. For which his form-master, Mr. Twigg, rewarded him with half-an-hour's detention after class. But Bob Cherry's parcel was worth being "kept in" for half-an-hour, and Sammy's fat face was cheery, as he sat through the afternoon's classes, and the half-hour of detention that followed—in happy anticipation of what was to come, when he was free at last to revisit that dusky corner in the old Cloisters.

## II

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Bunter!"

Bob Cherry's cheery roar impinged on Billy Bunter's fat ears.

Bunter certainly heard it. In fact any fellow would have had to be at a good distance, not to hear it!

But if Bunter heard it, he followed the example of the ancient gladiator, and heeded not.

He did not stop.

The Remove were out, dismissed by Mr. Quelch. Billy Bunter, as a rule, moved off last and slowest. On this occasion he was quite brisk. Possibly he was thinking of something he had hidden under an old oaken bench, in the quad. At all events, he rolled on unheeding: Bob Cherry staring after him as he went.

"Bunter!" roared Bob.

Still the fat Owl of the Remove did not turn his head.

"Well, my hat!" Bob glanced at his chums, Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "What's the matter with that fat fozzler? Is he gone deaf, as well as blind and silly?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Looks as if he's off somewhere special, and doesn't want to stop!" he said. "Let him rip!"

"And be blowed!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"The ripfulness and the blowfulness are the proper caper, my esteemed Bob," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"What do you want Bunter for?" asked Frank Nugent.

Grunt, from Bob.

"I don't want him! Could anybody want Bunter? But I've had that parcel



from home to-day, and there's lots and lots, and as there's lots and lots, I was going to ask the fat ass to come up to the study for a whack in the spread . . ."

"Oh!" Harry Wharton laughed again, "if Bunter knew that, he would come running."

"The runfulness would be terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, let's go after the fat duffer, and tell him," said Bob. "Mauly and Smithy are coming, but we can squeeze Bunter in, and I know he's stony. He hasn't had that postal-order yet that he's been expecting."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove followed Billy Bunter into the quad. The fat Owl was already at a little distance from the House. He was heading towards the old elms by the school wall: but every now and then he turned a fat head and gave a backward blink through his big spectacles. One of those backward blinks revealed to him the Famous Five in pursuit: and Bunter came to a sudden stop.

No doubt he had reasons for keeping his destination a secret from the five: especially from Bob Cherry!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob, as the juniors came up. "Gone deaf, Bunter? I called you when we came out of the form-room."

"Oh! Did you?" stammered Bunter, "I never heard you, old chap! Besides, I'm in rather a hurry, or I'd have answered—"

"You fat ass!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Like to come up to my study to tea, old fat man?" asked Bob. "I've had a parcel from home to-day. I haven't unpacked it yet, but I know there's lots and lots, and it's going to be a spread. Come on!"

Bunter did not stir.

If anything, as a rule, could wake Bunter to brisk activity, it was an invitation to a study spread. He might have been expected to head for Bob Cherry's study without delay: indeed, to race Bob there! Amazing to relate, he did not stir.

"Come on, fathead!" said Bob, in surprise. "Don't you catch on? It's a study spread, and lots—!"

"Oh! Thanks, old chap!" stammered Bunter, "I—I'd be jolly glad to come, but—but—but—but—!"

"Is the butfulness terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter?" asked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Don't you want to come, fathead?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Oh! Yes! But—but—as it happens, I'm going to tea with Mauly!" stammered Billy Bunter, "otherwise, I—I'd be jolly glad."

"Mauly's coming too, fathead!" said Bob.

"Oh! Is he?" gasped Bunter, "I—I—I mean, I'm going to tea with—with Smithy, so I can't come, old fellow."

"Smithy's coming too!"

"Oh! crikey! I—I—I—I mean—!"

"You howling ass," said Bob Cherry, in measured tones, "what are you rolling out fibs for? No need to make excuses if you don't want to come. I thought you'd jump at it—you were eyeing that parcel like a hungry octopus when I took it to my study just before class. Look here, do you want to come or not?"

"Oh! Yes! No! You see, I—I—I've promised to go to tea with Temple, in the Fourth. So I—I can't come. Don't you fellows waste time. You—you get off to your study, Bob old chap. I—I hope you'll have a jolly good spread."

The Famous Five all stared at Billy Bunter.

It was unknown, quite unprecedented, for William George Bunter, of the Remove, to refuse an invitation to a study spread. He was much, very much more likely to invite himself, than to refuse when asked. But on this occasion Bunter seemed bent on making history. He did not want to accompany the Famous Five to Bob Cherry's study, up in the Remove. The mention of a parcel from home, with "lots and lots" in it, did not tempt him.

"O.K." said Bob, puzzled, but certainly not distressed by the loss of Billy Bunter's fascinating society. The invitation had been given out of sheer good-nature, simply because Bob had a parcel from home, and Bunter was hard up. "Please yourself, old fat frump. Come on, you men."

The Famous Five walked back to the House.

"O day worthy to be marked with a white stone!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"First time Bunter's ever turned down a spread!" said Nugent. "But what was he telling fibs about it for?"

"Can't help telling fibs," grunted Johnny Bull. "Nature of the beast!"

As the chums of the Remove went into the House, Bob Cherry glanced round again. He was puzzled by Bunter's refusal: and, if the Owl of the Remove had shown a sign of changing his fat mind, Bob was ready to give him a welcoming beckon.

But he had a view only of Bunter's fat back. Bunter was heading for the elms by the wall again, oblivious of the Famous Five.

The juniors went in. Lord Mauleverer and Herbert Vernon-Smith, guests at the spread, joined them: and a party of seven marched up to the Remove passage. In No. 13, Bob's study, they found Mark Linley, who shared that study with Bob, and was also a sharer in the coming spread. Mark gave them an inquiring look as they crowded in.

"Didn't you tell me you left your parcel in the study here, Bob?" he asked.

"I jolly well did," answered Bob, "I expected you'd have started unpacking it by this time, Marky."

"So I would have: but—"

"But what?"



"I can't find it anywhere in the study."

"What? It's in the cupboard."

"It isn't!"

"Rot! I left it there, just before class." Bob Cherry strode across to the study cupboard. "It's there all right, fathead! I tell you I—Great pip!"

Bob Cherry stared into an empty cupboard.

He stared blankly.

Then he uttered a roar.

"Bunter!"

"What about Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Bunter!" roared Bob. "That parcel's gone! That's why that fat brigand wouldn't come up to the spread—he's had it already!"

"Oh my hat!"

"It's gone?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Gone!" roared Bob.

"The fat villain!"

"The bloated brigand!"

The whole party stared into the cupboard. There was no doubt that that parcel was gone. And there could hardly be any doubt how and why it had gone. Billy Bunter's manners and customs were only too well known in the Remove. No fellow's tuck was really safe from the fat Owl.

"The—the—the podgy pirate!" breathed Bob. "But look here, he can't have scoffed it yet! It was only just before class that I shoved it in here. He hadn't time to scoff it. Let's get along to his study—"

Johnny Bull shook his head.

"It isn't there," he said.

"How do you know it isn't?" demanded Bob.

"Because Bunter isn't!" said Johnny.

"Oh!" Bob thought a moment, and then nodded. "No—he'd know we should draw his study first shot. He's got it somewhere else. Oh!" he repeated, "what was he cutting off for, just after class? He's parked it out of the House—that's it! Why, the fat villain was heading for it, when we stopped him and asked him to the spread! Come on!"

Bob Cherry rushed from the study. His chums rushed after him. There was still time to save that parcel, if Bunter had it. And they had not the slightest doubt that Bunter had it. They rushed out of the House, and headed for the corner of the quad behind the elms, like fellows on the cinder-path.

### III

**B**ILLY BUNTER grinned.

It was a happy grin of mingled satisfaction and anticipation.

Bunter had lost no time.

Bunter was eager to sample the contents of that parcel, hidden under the

oaken bench by the old elm. That unexpected invitation to the spread in Bob's study had delayed him a few minutes. But now he had arrived at the spot: and his eyes glistened behind his spectacles, as he stooped to grope for the parcel under the bench.

He knew that it was still there! It was quite safe there! Nobody would think of looking for a tuck-parcel under a bench in a corner of the quad. Unless an eye had fallen on Bunter when he was hiding it there, that parcel was all right. And Billy Bunter was still happily unaware that two eyes, not to mention a pair of spectacles, had been fixed on him from the branches above, while he was hiding that parcel under the bench.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter.

He groped.

He expected his fat hand to contact the parcel at once. He had shoved it well back under the bench, but it should have contacted his fat hand as he groped. But that fat hand met only empty space.

He groped and groped.

The grin faded from his fat face.

Where was that parcel? It was there—it had to be there! How couldn't it be there, when he had parked it, out of sight, in that spot? It simply had to be there! Yet it did not seem to be there!

He dropped on his fat knees, lowered his fat head, and blinked under the bench, through his big spectacles. It was dusky under the bench: but Bunter could see all that was there. What he saw was a litter of fallen leaves blown there by the wind. Merely that and nothing more!

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked, and blinked, as if he could not believe either his little round eyes, or his big round spectacles. But no parcel was there. The fat Owl had to realize that it was gone! Someone, evidently, had removed that parcel since Billy Bunter had hidden it; who, he had not the faintest idea. But it was only too sadly and sorrowfully clear that the parcel was gone: the snooper had been snooped!

"Oh, crikey!" groaned Bunter.

He rose from his vain search. His fat face, generally much broader than it was long, now looked longer than it was broad. Deep dismay and despondency were imprinted thereon. The parcel was gone! Bunter had taken the risk of snooping it from Bob Cherry's study: it was only too probable that Bob would guess who had snooped it, and look for him, on vengeance bent. As likely as not, in fact more likely than not, Bunter was going to be booted for snooping that parcel—and it was gone! A gorgeous feast was worth a booting, if it came to that! But there was to be no feast—not a mouthful, not a morsel: not a plum or a crumb: absolutely nothing for Billy Bunter, except the probability of a booting!

He groaned.



As he stood there, in utter dismay, the sound of voices came to his fat ears. He gave a startled jump, and blinked round.

"I saw him heading this way—!" It was Bob Cherry's voice. That voice came from quite near at hand, but on the other side of the massive old elm under which Bunter stood by the bench. He could not see Bob—and so far Bob could not see him: but it was coming.

"He's somewhere about—!" came Harry Wharton's voice.

"With the parcel—"

"He can't have scoffed it yet—"

"Not the lot, at any rate!"

"By gum, I'll boot him all over the school—I'll burst him—I'll jolly well give him a lesson about snooping tuck in the studies—"

"The bootfulness is the proper caper!"

"The fat villain!"

"The bloated octopus!"

"Look out for him—!"

Billy Bunter trembled in every fat limb, as the voices of the Famous Five came to his fat ear. Apparently they knew, or had guessed, where to look for him, as they were heading for that very spot: only the massive trunk of the venerable elm hid him from their eyes. He was going to get the booting—without having had a crumb or a plum from the parcel!

"Beasts!" breathed Bunter.

He stirred to action. Not often was Billy Bunter quick on the uptake. Not often did he move swiftly. But peril seemed to sharpen his fat faculties. There was no escape—if he ran for it, he would be in sight of the Famous Five immediately: if he stayed where he was, they would pass that tree in a few moments, and see him standing there, and then—! Billy Bunter dropped on fat hands and knees, and squeezed himself under the oaken bench.

It was a close fit.

Any other Remove man of Greyfriars would have had ample space there. But Billy Bunter's circumference was uncommon. He had to squeeze.

Desperately, he squeezed!

In a matter of seconds, there was a tramp of feet on his side of the tree. But Bunter was out of sight. Squeezed, cramped, half-suffocated under the oaken bench among the dead leaves, he was at least hidden from view. He hardly dared to breath. If they discovered him—!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Not here—I thought we might find him squatting on that bench, scoffing the tuck—"

"Sure he came this way?"

"Quite sure—I looked back when we went into the House, and saw him. But he's not here now."

Bunter was glad to hear that!

"Come on—we've got to run him down, if we're going to have anything for



tea in the study! My first kick when we find him!" said Bob Cherry. "Come on!"

To Billy Bunter's infinite relief, there was a tramp of departing footsteps. He heard Bob's voice as the juniors went:

"We'll comb the whole jolly old show for him! Mind, first kick to me—"

The voice died away.

"Oh, crikey!" breathed Bunter.

Not till footsteps and voices had faded out, did a breathless, grubby, dusty fat Owl venture to crawl out from under the bench. He crawled out at last, and sank down on the bench, gasping for breath.

"Oh, lor'!" moaned Bunter.

He had escaped! So long as he remained where he was, he seemed fairly safe: they were not likely to search the same spot twice. But it was, after all, only postponing the evil hour! Sooner or later he had to turn up in the House, and then—! If he had had the spread, it wouldn't have been quite so bad! But he hadn't! Not as much as a crumb or a plum—and they were looking for



*It was a close fit.*



him to boot him—first kick to Bob Cherry who had the largest and heaviest foot in the Greyfriars Remove! It was a sad, sorrowful, disconsolate Owl who sat on the bench under the old elm and gurgled for breath.

## IV

“WHERE is he?”

“The wherefulness is terrific!”

“Not here!”

“May as well look round.”

The Famous Five were getting exasperated. They had looked for Billy Bunter, up and down and round about. Now they had come into the old Cloisters, to give that secluded spot the once-over. But there was no sign of Billy Bunter there. There had been no sign of him anywhere. As they did not think of looking again in the spot they had looked first of all, they were not likely to see a sign of him—not till calling-over, at all events.

Half-an-hour had passed: and Bunter was still understudying the Invisible Man! Nobody was to be seen in the deserted old Cloisters.

“The bloated brigand!” said Bob Cherry, breathing hard. “He seems to have got into a hole and pulled it in after him! He’s travelling through our spread all this while.”

“And he’s a quick traveller!” remarked Nugent.

“Where the dickens—”

“Might have seen us coming, and dodged out of sight!” said Johnny Bull.

“Look round, at any rate. That fat villain must be somewhere.”

The juniors moved along the cloister, looking about them. Suddenly Bob Cherry stopped, and held up his hand.

“Listen!” he whispered.

“What—?”

“Quiet—listen!”

They stood quiet, and listened. From somewhere, close at hand, came the sound that had caught Bob’s ears. It was a strange sound to be heard in that spot: and yet not exactly unexpected by fellows who were in search of Billy Bunter and a missing tuck-parcel. It was a sound of champing and guzzling!

Guzzle! guzzle! guzzle!

Evidently, out of their sight, a pair of very active jaws were at work. The juniors could hardly doubt whose jaws they were! They exchanged a grin of satisfaction. The tuck-raider had been run down at last! The guzzling sound came from behind one of the old stone pillars. In that dusky corner, someone as yet unseen was guzzling away at a rapid rate.

“Bunter!” breathed Bob.

“The Bunterfulness is terrific!” grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

“Listen to the band!” murmured Frank Nugent.



"Bunter all right!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "Only Bunter makes a row like that over his fodder."

"We've got him."

"Mind he doesn't dodge!"

"What-ho!"

"Come on! Quiet, and take the fat villain by surprise!" whispered Bob.

The juniors grinning, tiptoed round the stone pillar, on either side of it. The sound of happy guzzling did not cease for a moment. Evidently, someone in that secluded dusky corner was having the time of his life with unlimited tuck. Guzzle! guzzle! guzzle!

A moment more, and they were looking at a fat figure, seated with its back to the stone pillar, with a large parcel, packed with good things, open on the flags at its side. Two fat hands were grasping a cake, and the solitary feaster was taking it in in chunks. For a second, they fancied that they had found Billy Bunter. But the next second, they saw that it was a smaller edition of the Owl of the Remove.

It was Bob Cherry's parcel that lay there open. It was a cake from that parcel that the fat feaster was guzzling. But the feaster was not Billy Bunter of the Remove. It was Sammy Bunter of the Second Form!

So busy was Sammy with the cake, that he did not hear tiptoeing feet, or look up at staring faces. Having been kept in half-an-hour after class by his form-master, Sammy had not been many minutes in that corner when the Famous Five happened. That cake was his first sample from the parcel. He was enjoying it: and looking forward happily to more and more good things to follow.

But alas for Sammy!

No more good things were to follow. He was not going even to finish that cake. Had not Harry Wharton and Co. been looking for Billy Bunter, it would have been all right for Sammy: they would never have thought of him, and never have dreamed of the feast that was going on. Looking for Billy, they had found Sammy—with the purloined parcel.

Guzzle! guzzle! guzzle!

"You fat young sweep!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Oooooogh!" gasped Sammy.

He jumped, and stared round, his mouth full of cake. Five separate and distinct glares were fastened on him. It was a surprise for the Famous Five. They had expected that sound of guzzling in a hidden corner to lead them to Bunter major, not to Bunter minor. But it had led them, at all events, to the snooper of Bob Cherry's tuck-parcel.

"Urrrrrgh!" gurgled the startled Sammy. A chunk of cake went down the wrong way, and Sammy choked and gurgled horribly, "Oooogh! Grooogh! Oooogh."

"Not Bunter!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Bunter's minor!" ejaculated Nugent.

"That fat smudge in the Second, snooping tuck in a Remove study—!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Snooping runs in the Bunter family!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Collar him!"

"Bump him!"

"Boot him!"

"Urrrrrrggh!" gurgled Sammy Bunter, "I say—wurrgh—I—I—groogh—"

"Boot him!" roared Bob Cherry. "Why, the cheeky little sweep—raiding a Remove study, by gum! We were going to boot Bunter all over the shop—and it wasn't Bunter at all—it was his minor! Boot him!"

"Bump him!"

"Give him beans!"

Sammy Bunter ceased to gurgle, and yelled, as five pairs of hands grasped him. The Famous Five would have been wrathful, if Billy Bunter had been the raider. They were wrathier to discover that it was Sammy. A Second-Form fag tuck-snooping in a Remove study was the limit! They were going to impress on Sammy of the Second that it was injudicious to follow in his major's footsteps! They whirled him up, and bumped him down, and the yell that Sammy gave woke every echo in the ancient Cloisters.

Bump!

"Wow!"

Bump!

"Yoo-hoooooop!"

Bump!

"Yow-wowow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Now boot him, all together!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I—I say—oh, jiminy—I say—yaroooh—I—I say—whooooop!" Sammy Bunter, yelling frantically, fled for his life, with the Famous Five in pursuit, dribbling him out of the Cloisters.

Sammy, yelling, vanished into space. Harry Wharton and Co. walked back to collect the parcel. They walked it away to the House in cheerful mood. There was a handsome spread, after all, in Bob Cherry's study.

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BILLY BUNTER was surprised, when he rolled in at calling-over, to find that the Famous Five took no particular notice of him.

He was relieved also.

He grinned, when he learned what had happened. Nobody was going to boot Billy Bunter. The booting had been administered, and Sammy Bunter had had it. Billy had had a narrow escape. Sammy hadn't! There had been a booting instead of a spread for Sammy!

THE END