

# HOME FOR THE HOLS!



## CHAPTER I

“MAULY, old man—.”

“What’s up?”

“Is the upfulness terrific, my esteemed Mauly?”

“Give it a name, old fellow.”

“What hath chanced to-day, that Caesar looks so sad?” inquired Bob Cherry, quoting from recent Shakespeare in the Remove form-room.

The Famous Five, of the Greyfriars Remove, were quite concerned. It was most unusual to find Lord Mauleverer looking down in the mouth. His lordship was seldom exuberant: but he was always cheerful. When troubles came his way he was wont to meet them with equanimity.

Troubles did accrue sometimes. Mauly, excellent fellow as he was in many ways, was almost as lazy as Billy Bunter, and almost as careless in the matter of lessons. That led, not uncommonly, to spots of bother with Mr. Quelch, his form-master. Sometimes it led to severe admonitions from his guardian,

Sir Reginald Brooke. Nevertheless, it was unusual to see Mauly with a clouded face.

But it was clouded now.

Which was all the more surprising, because it was the day before break-up, and most faces at Greyfriars School were bright, in anticipation of the Christmas holidays. Quelch, and lessons, were going to be left behind, on the morrow. Yet Mauly's brow, for once, was clouded.

Coming on him in the quad, Harry Wharton and Co. stopped to inquire the cause. They liked Mauly—everybody liked old Mauly—so they were concerned.

"Oh! It's nothing, really," said Mauly, with an attempt at his accustomed cheerfulness. "I've no doubt it's all for my good, as nunky said in his letter."

"But what the dickens!" said Harry Wharton, puzzled. "You're going home for the holidays to-morrow—"

"That's washed out!" sighed Lord Mauleverer.

"Something happened to stop it?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Yaas."

"Hard luck," said Johnny Bull. "But—"

"But if you're not going home for the hols, why not join up with us?" asked Harry. "These chaps are all coming home with me, and we'd all be jolly glad if you'd come too, Mauly."

"Hear, hear!" said four voices in unison: and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh added that the hear-hearfulness was terrific.

"Wharton Lodge isn't quite up to the style of Mauleverer Towers," went on the captain of the Remove. "But—. We'd all be glad to have you, if you'll come."

"Jolly good of you," said Mauly. "But it can't be done. I'm booked. Me for school and extra toot."

"What?"

"That's the verdict!" said Lord Mauleverer, sadly. "Quelch seems to have been giving me rotten reports the last term or two. Nunky has put his foot down. My uncle's a jolly old boy, really, and I like him no end: but he can be tough. He seems to think that I take things too easily—"

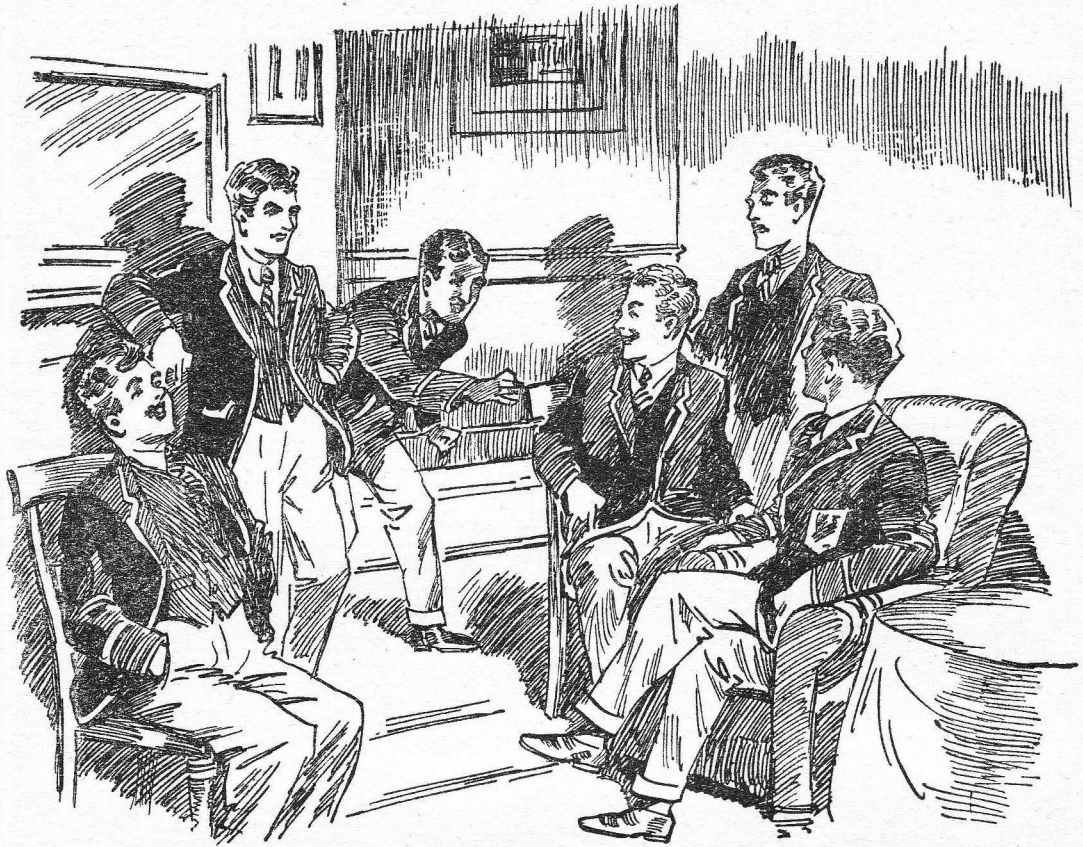
"Perhaps you do, a trifle!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Yaas—I shouldn't wonder," agreed Lord Mauleverer. "Anyhow, nunky's put his foot down. He's fixed it up for me to stay at the school over the hols and have extra tuition every day from Quelch—"

"Oh, scissors!"

"What rotten luck!"

"Poor old Mauly!"



*"Jolly good of you"—said Mauly, "but it can't be done"*

"That will put me in better shape for school work next term. Good thing for me, really. I daresay nunky's right. I may have let things slide a bit—and it's time I pulled up. Drastic beneficial, and all that. Only it will seem a bit slow," sighed Lord Mauleverer. Then he smiled. "It came as a bit of a shock—but when a fellow asks for it, he must expect to get it. I'm going to play up—and while you're doing your Christmas stunts at Wharton Lodge, you can think of me up to the neck in irregular verbs with Quelch, and simply burstin' with knowledge when you come back next term."

And Lord Mauleverer, with a cheery nod, sauntered on his way, leaving the chums of the Remove more concerned for him than he was for himself. No doubt it was a blow: but Mauly was taking it on the chin.

"Hard luck on old Mauly!" said Harry.

"Good for him, in the long run!" said Johnny Bull.

"Um! Yes! But—."

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked a fat voice. Billy Bunter rolled up to the Famous Five. "I say, I've been looking for you chaps. I say, you know we break up here to-morrow. I say, about Christmas—."

"Run for your lives!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter had more to say, on the subject of the Christmas holidays. But he had no chance of saying it. Nobody in the Greyfriars Remove was keen to discuss that subject with William George Bunter. Five laughing juniors scampered away in time.

## CHAPTER II

"I SAY, Mauly."

"Shut that door!"

"Oh, really, Mauly—."

"Buzz off—I'm busy."

It was the following day, and Greyfriars School was in the process of breaking up. Form-rooms and studies were deserted—passages echoed to hurried footsteps and bumping of boxes. Some fellows were already gone, others on the point of going. Why Lord Maulever had shut himself up in his study, with so much animation on all round him, Billy Bunter did not know. Often, at the end of term, a magnificent car arrived for Mauly. No such car had yet arrived—Billy Bunter's little round eyes and big round spectacles had been on the look-out for it. Nor was Mauly to be discerned among the crowds of Greyfriars fellows, when those little round eyes and big round spectacles looked for him. But Billy Bunter had found him at last—in his study. Mauly was sitting at the study table writing a letter—a quite unusual occupation when every other fellow in the school was thinking of home and holidays.

"Busy?" repeated Bunter. "What are you busy about, Mauly?"

"Letter to nunky. You're interrupting. Buzz off, like a good bluebottle."

"Oh, really, Mauly!"

Bunter did not buzz off. He rolled into the study.

Lord Mauleverer, who was an orphan, had several uncles. To which of them he was writing, Bunter did not know, and couldn't have cared less. A fellow who wasted time writing to any old uncle, on breaking-up day, was, in Billy Bunter's opinion, a silly ass. Anyhow it was a matter of no importance—and what Billy Bunter had to say was very important indeed. It was about the Christmas holidays.

Lord Mauleverer, that morning, was looking his usual cheerful self. The prospect of "hols" at school, and "extra toot" with Quelch during those hols, was not precisely exhilarating. But his cheery lordship never allowed anything to dash his cheery spirits for long. So his good-natured face had its accustomed amiable and placid expression, when the fat Owl of the Remove rolled in on him.

"Do buzz off, Bunter, when a fellow's busy writing a letter."

"Oh, never mind that!" said Bunter, airily. "What the dickens do you want to write to your uncle to-day for, Mauly?"

"It's about his arrangement for the hols," explained Lord Mauleverer. "I want to let him know that it's okay by me."

"Oh! The hols!" said Bunter. "As a matter of fact, Mauly, that's what I looked in to speak about."

Billy Bunter was quite glad that that subject had come up. It was one in



*He sat on the corner of the table*

which he was deeply interested. Nobody, so far, had asked Bunter for the "hols". Harry Wharton and Co. actually dodged him if he raised the subject. Quite probably Lord Mauleverer might have done the same. But the fat Owl having run him to earth, as it were, in his study, he had to take it. Mauly was, in fact, Bunter's last hope. The alternative was Bunter Villa. Happily unaware of the drastic change in Mauly's plans for the hols, Bunter was going to land himself at Mauleverer Towers—if he could.

"About the hols—," went on Bunter.

"Do be quite while a fellow's writing a letter!"

"I'll wait, if you like," said the fat Owl.

Lord Mauleverer's expression did not indicate that he "liked". Even Billy Bunter could not have supposed that Mauly was delighted to see him. But that, to Bunter, was a trifle light as air. Billy Bunter was somewhat pachydermatous. Anything short of a boot on his plump trousers was good enough for Bunter.

It was like Bunter to blink over Mauly's shoulder at the letter he was writing. Inquisitiveness was one of his many sins. The letter had not, however, proceeded very far. Mauly was a slow worker. So far it ran:

Dear Nunky,

Your letter came as a bit of a shock, but now I've thought it over, I rather think that you are right. Quelch certainly hasn't been pleased with me in class this term, and I'd better own up that I've been a bit slack. I'm jolly well going to pull up, and put my beef into it.

That was all so far. From which, Billy Bunter deduced that Mauly's guardian was not precisely pleased with his ward's progress at school, and had probably been "ragging" him on the subject. Bunter could sympathize—for he had been there himself, so to speak. At home, at Bunter Villa, the fat Owl's reports from school often caused a spot of stormy weather.

"Carry on, Mauly," he said. "I don't mind waiting."

But Lord Mauleverer did not carry on. Evidently Bunter did not intend to go, with what he had come to say unsaid. He sat on the corner of the table, prepared to wait. But he did not have to wait. Mauly laid down the pen.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Not finishing that letter now?" he asked. "Well, look here, old chap. I dropped in for a chat about the hols."

"Oh, dear!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

Bunter decided not to hear that.

"I haven't quite made up my mind yet," he resumed. "Smithy's rather keen for me to go with him, but—" Bunter shook a fat head. "Smithy's a bit of a



*"You are the only chap I should care to do the hols with"*

bounder, you know. Then there's Wharton's crowd—I was at his place last Christmas, and it wasn't too bad—but the fact is that I see quite enough of that mob at school. To tell the truth, Mauly, you're the only chap in the form that I should really care to do the hols with."

"Oh!"

"I mean it," said Bunter. "Not because you've got a topping place at Mauleverer Towers, or anything of that kind: but just because I like you so so much, old chap. Why shouldn't we stick together for the hols, Mauly?"

"But—!"

"After all, we're pals, ain't we?"

"Are we?"—

"Oh, really, Mauly! I say, is it a go? Let's settle it now old chap—the school's breaking up to-day, you know."

"Yaas! But—."

"Lots of time to finish that letter," said Bunter. "You won't be going off in the school bus with the mob."

"No! But—."

"I'll wait as long as you like. It's a go, then!" said Bunter. "Rely on me, Mauly: I won't let you down."

"But—!"

"But what?" asked Bunter. He did not want to hear of any "buts". He had settled the matter, whether Mauly had or not, and "buts" were superfluous.

"I'm not going home for the holidays." Mauly got it out, at last. "I'm not having Christmas at Mauleverer Towers. So you see—."

"That's all right, old chap," interrupted Bunter, breezily. "What does it matter where we are, so long as we're together? That's all I care about."

"But—."

"Leave it at that!" said Bunter. He slipped off the table, prepared now to go, and leave Mauly to finish his letter. "I don't care a bean about anything but sticking together for the hols, Mauly."

"I don't think you'd really care for it—."

"I jolly well would!" declared Bunter. "Stick together—that's all I care about."

"But—."

"It's a go, then," said Bunter.

"If you like. But—."

"That's settled then," said Bunter. "Not another word, old fellow. It's a fixture."

Bunter rolled to the door. He was not only willing to depart now, but anxious to do so—before Mauly could change his mind!

"But—," said Lord Mauleverer. Mauly seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of "buts". But his last "but" was wasted on Bunter, as the study door closed behind the fattest figure in the Remove.

Billy Bunter grinned cheerily as he rolled away down the Remove passage. Really he could hardly believe in his good luck.

Of all the Remove fellows that he regarded as possible victims, Mauly was the one he would have selected: and Mauly had proved an unexpectedly easy victim. Bunter could afford now to turn up his fat little nose at Wharton Lodge! Christmas with Mauly, whether at Mauleverer Towers, or at some other equally magnificent abode, made Harry Wharton's place in Surrey seem very small beer indeed, in comparison. It was no longer necessary for the Co. to "run for their lives" at the sight of William George Bunter. The Owl of the Remove had absolutely no use for them now. Billy Bunter rolled out into the quad in high feather.





*Billy Bunter rolled out into the quad*

Probably Bunter would have felt less tremendously bucked, had he lingered in Mauly's study to read the remainder of that letter over Mauly's shoulder. For the remainder ran:

I can't say that I shall exactly enjoy staying at school over the holidays, with extra tuition from Mr. Quelch. But I'm going to make the best of it, and I'm not grouching. So no more at present from your affectionate nephew,

HERBERT MAULEVERER.

"That's that!" said Lord Mauleverer, as he rose from the table. And leaving that epistle where it lay, his lazy lordship stretched himself on the settee under the window, for a much-needed rest after his exertions as a letter-writer.

## CHAPTER III

"HALLO, hallo, hallo, there's the old fat bean."

Five pairs of eyes fell on Billy Bunter, as he rolled out of the House. Five faces had rather thoughtful expressions. As a matter of fact, Harry Wharton and Co. had been discussing Bunter, when he rolled into view.

The crowd was thinning out. Many fellows were gone. Vernon-Smith had rolled off in a Rolls: less wealthy fellows were content with the school 'bus to take them to the station at Courtfield. The bus in which the Famous Five were to embark, was filling up. But they had not yet taken their places. And—strange to relate—it was on Billy Bunter's account that they were lingering.

Hitherto the Co. had, like a good many other fellows, "dodged" Billy Bunter on the subject of the "hols". Billy Bunter's own opinion was that he was the life of any party: but somehow or other, Bunter had that opinion all to himself. Nobody, really, wanted Bunter, in the hols. Everybody seemed to have quite enough of him at school.

Nevertheless, perhaps under the ameliorating effect of the near approach of Christmas, Harry Wharton was thinking of adding the fat Owl to the party for Wharton Lodge.

"If you fellows wouldn't mind—!" he had said.

"It's your party," said Johnny Bull. "Don't mind us."

"Oh, rot," said Harry. "I know it's a bit thick to land the fat ass on you chaps. But—if you think you could stand it—."

"My dear chap," said Bob Cherry. "We've stood him before, and we can stand him again."

"The standfulness will be preposterous!" assented Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Right as rain!" said Frank Nugent.

Johnny Bull grunted. But he nodded. And so it was settled, when the Owl of the Remove rolled out of the House, and came into view. Billy Bunter was going to be asked to join the party at Wharton Lodge for the Christmas hols, and that was that! He was not, perhaps, likely to add to the enjoyment thereof: but it was a kindly impulse, and all the Co. were prepared to play up.

The fat Owl blinked at the group of juniors. But, rather to their surprise, he did not roll up to them. He gave them the most careless of blinks. Harry Wharton waved a hand to him, but the fat Owl did not seem to observe it. As Bunter did not roll over to them, they walked over to him, considerably perplexed. So far from making the most of this last chance of chatting about the hols, Bunter did not seem interested in them at all.

In fact, his blink at them was not merely careless, but slightly contemptuous.



*Bunter rolled away*

He had—though they were not yet aware of it—no use for these fellows now. Happily landed for the hols with the magnificent Mauly, Billy Bunter could afford to take a lofty line. And if Billy Bunter could afford to take a lofty line, Billy Bunter was the fellow to take it.

“Hallo, hallo, hallo, old fat man,” greeted Bob, affably.

“Did you speak to me?” asked Bunter.

“Eh! You know I did, you fat ass.”

“Well, don’t yell.”

“What?”

“Don’t yell! You’re too jolly noisy, Bob Cherry.”

“You fat chump—.”

“That will do!” said Bunter. And he turned to roll away, the chums of the Remove staring at him in surprise. This was quite an unexpected Bunter.

“Hold on a minute, Bunter,” said Harry.

Bunter condescended to hold on.

"Well, what?" he asked. "Cut it short."

Harry Wharton breathed rather hard. This was not only an unexpected Bunter, but a far from agreeable Bunter. However, having made up his mind what he was going to do, he proceeded to do it.

"About the hols, Bunter," he said.

"Oh, the hols," said Bunter, carelessly. "What about the hols?" He smiled, a derisive smile. "I suppose you'll be going home to your little place."

"I'm going home, and these fellows are coming—."

"Wish you joy of it," said Bunter, sarcastically. "I'd have thought you had enough of them at school. I know I have."

"You cheeky, fat tick—!" began Bob Cherry.

"More than enough," said Bunter, calmly. "Glad to see the last of them."

That rather dimmed the kindly impulse to include the fat Owl in the Christmas party at Wharton Lodge. But Harry Wharton went on:

"Like to come along too, Bunter?"

"Eh?"

"We'll make you welcome, if you'd like to come," said Harry.

Bunter blinked at him.

Quite recently, the promptest of prompt affirmatives would have been his answer. But circumstances were changed now. Billy Bunter was booked for Christmas with Mauly: and words could hardly have expressed his disdain for Wharton Lodge. His fat lip curled as he answered:

"Thanks! Nothing doing."

"What?"

"Deaf?" asked Bunter. "I said nothing doing. Sorry, and all that. I'd give you a look-in these hols, if I could: but it couldn't be done."

The chums of the Remove gazed at him. This was not merely surprising—it was astonishing. For days on end Billy Bunter had been going up and down the Remove, seeking a landing for the hols. Fellows had been known to dodge round corners when they saw Bunter coming. And now—!

Billy Bunter grinned. He was enjoying this. This was an opportunity to let these fellows know what he thought of them.

"Sorry, of course," he went on. "But it wouldn't do, Wharton. I have quite enough of your crowd at school—I just couldn't stand them in the hols. as well. You can't expect it."

"You fat, fozzling, footling frump—!"

"You can call a fellow names," said Bunter, cheerfully. "But you jolly well won't get me to your little place for Christmas, Harry Wharton, and you can put that in your pipe and smoke it. I can't stand your pals, and, if you

don't mind my mentioning it, I can't stand you either, with your airs and graces. And that stuffy old Colonel, your uncle—I had enough of him, I can tell you, last time I had the hols at your show. Sorry I can't come: but if you want it plain, I wouldn't be found dead at Wharton Lodge. I don't want to rub it in, but you and your pals are a bit too much of a Bank Holiday crowd for me."

Never had Billy Bunter enjoyed himself more. The varying expressions on five astonished faces were a sheer delight to him. He had said that he didn't want to "rub it in": but he certainly had rubbed it in very thoroughly—perhaps a little too thoroughly.

"Thanks all the same!" added Bunter, with overwhelming sarcasm.

And with that, and his fat little nose in the air, the fat Owl rolled away: leaving five fellows staring after him, quite dumbfounded—turned down—unmistakably and emphatically turned down—by Billy Bunter. They were still



*"Thanks all the same"*

astonished, when the school bus rolled off with them to take their train at Courtfield: and Billy Bunter could never have guessed that relief was mingled with their astonishment!

## CHAPTER IV

“MAULY!”  
“Yaas?”

“Finished your letter?”

“Yaas.”

“Time’s getting on,” said Billy Bunter. “Almost everybody’s gone, Mauly.”

“Yaas.”

“I’ve been looking out for the car. It hasn’t turned up yet.”

“Eh! What car?”

“Oh, really, Mauly! Your car from Mauleverer Towers, of course. Aren’t you going home in the car?”

“Not at all.”

Grunt, from Bunter. Mauly, as a rule, went home by car. Bunter saw no reason why his manners and customs should be changed on this particular occasion. It annoyed Bunter. He preferred cars to trains. Still, he was going when Mauly went: that was the chief thing. He was still happily unaware that Mauly was not going at all.

Bunter had been watching and waiting for that car, while the rest of Greyfriars went their various ways. Now, when he came up to the study to ask Mauly about it, it was only to learn that there wasn’t going to be a car. Lord Mauleverer was still stretched in lazy ease on his settee. His letter still lay on the blotting-pad. Mauly had not yet found energy enough to enclose it in an envelope and take it down for the post. Bunter—naturally for Bunter—blinked at it.

The inquisitive fat Owl had already read the first part of that letter, over Mauly’s shoulder. Now he read the conclusion. And, as he read it, he gave quite a jump, and his little round eyes almost seemed to bulge through his big round spectacles.

“Oh, crikey!” gasped Bunter.

He blinked at that letter. He blinked again. He read it a second time, as if he really could not trust his eyes or his spectacles.

Then he blinked at the lazy figure on the settee. And the blink he bestowed on Lord Mauleverer was absolutely deadly.



*"What's all this," hissed Bunter*

"Mauly—!" he squeaked.

"Yaas," yawned Mauly.

"What's all this?" hissed Bunter. "Wharrer you mean? You're not stopping at the school over the hols—."

"Eh! Yaas."

"Stopping at school, for extra toot with old Quelch!" shrieked Bunter.

"Yaas."

"Aren't you going home for the hols?" yelled Bunter.

"Eh! Didn't I tell you I wasn't?"

"Oh! Yes! I thought you meant you were going somewhere else for Christmas—," howled Bunter. "You didn't tell me you were staying at the school for extra toot with Quelch."

"You didn't give me a chance—."

"Oh, you fathead! Oh, you chump! Oh, you idiot!" gasped Bunter. "Oh, you blithering cuckoo!"

Lord Mauleverer gazed at him.

"What's the matter, Bunter?" he inquired. "Didn't you say that it wouldn't matter where we were, so long as we were sticking together? We shall be sticking together here."

"Think I wanted you to ask me for the hols, sticking at school?" yelled Bunter.

"But I didn't ask you," Lord Mauleverer pointed out, gently. "You asked me."

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

"Is anything the matter?"

"Yah!"

Into that monosyllable, Billy Bunter threw all the scorn and contempt that a fat squeak could express. Then he rolled out of the study and banged the door after him.

Really, it was beastly for Bunter. He had turned down Harry Wharton and Co.—turned them down so emphatically and effectually that there was no hope of turning them up again; now he had turned down Lord Mauleverer. His feelings were deep, very deep indeed, as he rolled off for his train for home. When Lord Mauleverer came down to post his letter, Bunter was gone.

## CHAPTER V

"**MAULEVERER!**"

Mr. Quelch called to his solitary pupil, the next morning, as Mauly, somewhat pensively, was sauntering in the deserted quad. It seemed very quiet, and a little dismal, to Mauly, now that all the fellows were gone. He was "taking it on the chin": but he was pensive.

"Yes, sir!" said Mauly. "I'm ready, sir, if it's lessons—."

Mr. Quelch smiled.

"I have had a telephone call from your guardian, Mauleverer!" he said. "He seems to have been very pleased by your reply to his letter: and on further consideration, he has decided that you may go home for the holidays as usual. He is sending the car for you this morning."

"Oh!" gasped Mauly.

At Wharton Lodge, Harry Wharton and Co. enjoyed their Christmas holidays. In the more magnificent surroundings of Mauleverer Towers, Mauly also was having a good time. And—sad to relate—they did not even remember the fat existence of Billy Bunter, who had turned them all down, and who was home for the hols!

THE END