

SHUNTING BUNTER!

An Amusing Complete Story, dealing with the Adventures of the Chums of Greyfriars School. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Hanger-on.
"I'm coming with you chaps!" Billy Bunter, of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, made that announcement in the most decided tone.

And five voices—the voices of the Famous Five of the Remove—replied with wonderful unanimity.
"Rats!"

And Hurree Jameet Ram Singh added, with emphasis, that the ratfulness was terrific.

Harry Wharton & Co. were crossing the Clove towards the school gates. It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and the Co. were bound upon an excursion. They had on their best hats and tuckers, as Bob Cherry expressed it, and they were looking very cheerful. And when the Owl of the Remove rolled in their path, with the announcement that he was coming, their replies were more forcible than elegant or polite. They had no intention of having their excursion to Mudley-on-Sea spoiled by that addition to their party. Billy Bunter had a way of taking the lion's share of everything, and making himself a general nuisance, which did not cause his society to be sought after.

Bunter blinked at the juniors through his big spectacles, and planted himself firmly in their path.

"I say, you fellows, I'm coming, you know. A run down to the seaside will do me good."

"Go home!" said Bob Cherry. "Strange as it may seem, Bunter, you fellows arranged this little outing for the special purpose of doing you good. Not at all, in fact."

"And I'll carry the lunch-basket, if you like."

"There would be precious little left in it at Mudley-on-Sea if you did," grinned Nugent.

"Besides, I know that Marjorie and Clara are going with you, and they'd like me to be there," urged Bunter.

"It's not fair to spoil their pleasure. Now, I put it to you."

"We're not going to," said Johnny Bull.

"We're going to make sure of not spoiling their pleasure by leaving you here."

"Oh, really, Bull! I suppose," said Bunter, with great dignity, "that what you are really thinking of is the money. I call that mean. I happen to be short of money at the present moment, owing to a disappointment about a postal-order. But you fellows can club together to pay my fare, or one of you can lend me the money—I don't mind a bit. I always was an accommodating chap."

"You fat bouncer!" exclaimed Harry Wharton in disgust. "You want to plant yourself on us, and worry us to death, and you can't even pay your own fare! Scat!"

"I hope you are going to be mean, Wharton! I shall settle in full when—when my postal-order comes—Yarrah! Wharrier you doing, Cherry, you beast?"

The question was quite superfluous. Bunter knew what Bob Cherry was doing. Bob was sitting him down violently on the ground. The chums of the Remove walked on, and left Bunter sitting there.

"The fat bouncer!" growled Harry Wharton as they marched out of the gates. "We couldn't possibly inflict him on Marjorie and Clara for the afternoon. They can't stand him. My only hat, here he is again!"

The fat junior came bolting out of the school gates, and he overtook the Famous Five, panting for breath.

"It's all right," he gasped. "I—I don't mind a little joke, you fellows. I'm coming, all the same."

"Clear off!" roared Nugent.

"He, he, he!"

Nugent stared at him.

"What are you cackling at, porpoise?"

"He, he, he! I know you're only joking," said Bunter. "He, he, he! I can take a joke."

And, keeping at a safe distance from Bob Cherry, who was doubling his fist, Bunter tramped on with the party towards Courtfield.

The juniors looked exasperated. At Courtfield Junction they were to meet Marjorie and Clara, their girl chums from Cliff House School. If Bunter arrived there with them it would be exceedingly difficult to get rid of him, as they could hardly handle him as he deserved in the presence of the feminine element. Bunter knew that very well, too. Once he was at Courtfield Junction he would be safe.

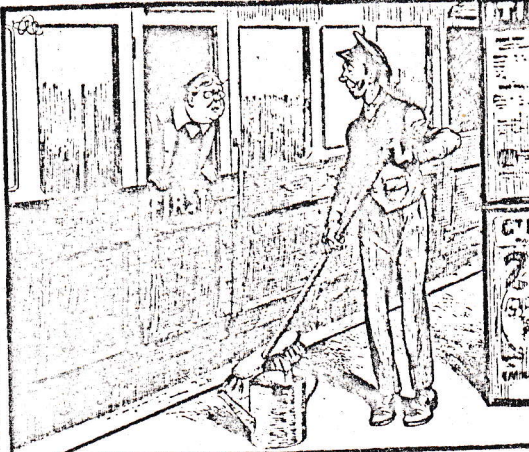
"Walk sharp!" said Harry Wharton.

The juniors grinned, and stepped out at their best pace. Billy Bunter's little fat legs went like clockwork in the effort to keep up with them. But Bunter was not famous as a pedestrian. He was soon puffing and blowing.

"I say, you fellows, wait for me!" he gasped. "Look here, if you hurry like that I won't come with you at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you rotters, I can't keep up at that rate. Do you hear? Stop for me, I tell you! Yah! Beasts!"



"What do you mean by saying this station is Courtfield?" yelled Billy Bunter. "I—I got into the train at Courtfield over an hour ago! Are you drunk? How can this be Courtfield?" "Haw, haw, haw!" roared the porter. "The train wasn't going anywhere when you got in it. It's only been shunted!" (See Chapter 2.)

Billy Bunter's voice died away behind as the juniors strode on. A bend of the road hid them from his sight. The last they saw of him as they looked round was a fat figure in the middle of the road shaking a fat figure furiously. They grinned as they walked on towards Courtfield.

"Shaken off, by Jove!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Ten minutes later the juniors arrived at Courtfield. Harry Wharton looked at his watch as they reached the station.

"Train's in," remarked Nugent.

"No, that's the train from Chifford; it finishes here. They shunt it on to the siding before our train comes in," said Harry.

"There's lots of time. May as well go on the platform."

Wharton took the tickets, and they entered the station. A few minutes later Marjorie and Clara came in, looking very bright and charming in their white dresses and pretty hats. The train was still motionless on the line, and as it had to be shunted away before the juniors' train came in, there was plenty of time. Bob Cherry proposed ginger-pop for a start, and they adjourned to the buffet. As they did so a fat figure came puffing on the platform.

Bob Cherry gave a snort.

"Bunter, by George!"

The juniors glared at Bunter. The fat Removee did not seem to notice it. He lifted his cap to the two girls, and blinked at them through his big glasses.

"How do you do, Marjorie? Jolly glad to see you, Clara! Lucky I got here in time, wasn't it? Those fellows walked so quick I was left behind; but I got a lift on a farmer's cart coming this way. Lucky, wasn't it?"

Bunter seemed to be the only person present who regarded it as lucky. But Billy Bunter was quite impervious to stony silence. If Bunter had been thin-skinned he would have missed many a treat he now enjoyed.

"By the way, I haven't taken my ticket, Wharton," he said affably. "I suppose you don't mind taking it for me, and I'll settle with you later at Greyfriars. I left my purse in the study in the hurry of starting. You fellows were so impatient."

"Go and get coke!" murmured Wharton.

"There isn't much time," pursued Bunter solemnly. "The train's in, you see."

"Look here—"

"I know Mudley-on-Sea jolly well, Marjorie," said Bunter. "I'll show you round the place when we get there. Don't tread on my foot, Bob Cherry."

"Ahent!"

"What are you making those faces for, Bull?" Johnny Bull turned red.

"A first-class ticket for me, Wharton," said Bunter. "The second-class carriages are always crowded on this line, and I hate a crowd. We may get a carriage to ourselves if we go first, you know."

"We're going second," growled Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton! It's rotten to spoil a holiday to save a few bob. If I hadn't left my purse behind I'd stand the extra fares all round. I'll tell you what, change the tickets for first-class, and I'll hand you over the difference when we get back. I'm expecting a postal-order to-day."

Wharton murmured something inaudibly. That was exactly like Bunter. The juniors could not afford to go first-class, but Billy Bunter always regarded himself as entitled to the best of everything. He was already consuming cake and ginger-beer at the buffet, and the other fellows knew that he did not intend to

settle for it. But for the presence of the girls they would have taken Billy Bunter by his fat neck and run him out of the station. As it was they had to consume their wrath.

"They're putting the engine on the train," said Bunter.

"Better buck up. If I have to get in without a ticket, you'll have to pay on the way; so it comes to the same thing. I don't mind going a second, if you insist on it. I'd rather go first, but—"

Bob Cherry burst into a sudden chuckle.

"That's all right, Bunter," he said.

"We're going a second, but you can go first. Never mind about getting the ticket now—no time. Come on, you fellows."

Bob Cherry's comrades stared at his remarks. Bunter planted upon them was had enough, but for Bob to take it in this good-humoured way was extraordinary.

"Look here," exclaimed Wharton,

"the fat bouncer can go second, I suppose."

"No fear! He's going first," said Bob.

"He will have a carriage all to himself, you see, and he can take a nap if he likes. He always goes to sleep on a journey, and we don't want him snoring in our carriage. Besides, the second are always crowded, and Bunter takes up too much room. Leave it to me. Come on!"

Bob Cherry closed one eye significantly. Bunter was too busy bolting tarts to observe it. Bunter was working in Bob Cherry's active brain, though his chums could not guess what it was.

"I say, you fellows, you can settle for what I've had," said Bunter. "I'll hand it over when I get my postal order."

Harry Wharton frowned and settled Bunter's bill. It made a hole in the funds that were intended to pay for limited indulgences at Mudley-on-Sea. But there was no help for it. The party left the buffet, and Bob grasped Bunter's arm and ran him along the stationary train.

"But that train does not—" Marjorie began.

"It's all right," said Bob quickly. "Here's a first-class carriage. Bunter—"

"But," said Miss Clara in amazement, "that train—"

"Yes, yes, that's all right. This suit you, Bunter?"

The chums understood at last. Marjorie and Clara turned their heads away to hide their smiles. The Co. looked as solemn as owls, but with a great effort. Bunter rolled into the first-class carriage.

"This is jolly comfy," he said. "Sorry I sha'n't be with you on the journey, Marjorie, but I'll join you the moment we get to Mudley. I think I shall take a snooze—I'm rather fagged with hurrying here. Is there time to get a few more tarts? I may get hungry on the journey."

"No time," said Bob. "Hurry along, you fellows. You all right, Bunter?"

"Yes. See you later."

Bob Cherry slammed the door of the first-class carriage, and the party hurried along the train. Bunter blinked from the window and watched Bob Cherry shepherding them into a second-class carriage. Then he sank down upon the comfortable cushioned seat and sighed with content.

"They jolly well can't leave me out," he murmured. "I'll have a comfy nap, and be as fresh as a daisy at Mudley. Those silly asses think the girls like me—I know jolly well whom it is they like. Yaw-aw-aw!"

And Bunter's eyes closed.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Shock for Billy.

Five minutes later Bob Cherry looked cautiously out of the window of the second-class carriage. Then the party alighted and proceeded to take cover in the buffet again, taking care not to get near Bunter's carriage. In the buffet they milled over their ginger-beer. Bunter was comfortably ensconced in the train that was to be shunted to a siding before the Mudley train came round. As he had not the slightest suspicion of the fact, he was not likely to make the discovery until it was too late.

Billy Bunter opened his eyes as the train began to move. He blinked out on the platform and then slid to a comfortable full-length on the seat. He pillowed his head upon his arm and settled down to repose. The train rattled and bumped, but it did not disturb William George Bunter. He had a sleepy impression that it was going at top speed, and that impression soon faded in deep slumber. Five minutes more and another train glided in,

and Harry Wharton & Co. cheerfully took their places in a second-class carriage, and started off in merry spirits for Mudley-on-Sea.

Billy Bunter slept the sleep of the over-fat. He had pleasant dreams of unlimited feasts at Mudley-on-Sea, at the expense of the unfortunate Co.; of appropriating all the tin snuffers green with envy and jealousy. Fat smiles overspread his face in his slumber.

He was awakened at last by the bumping of the train.

He raised his head and blinked around him, and adjusted his spectacles on his fat little nose. He still had the carriage to himself. He sat up with a heavy yawn. The bumping had stopped, and the train was at a standstill.

"Hallo, we've arrived!" murmured Bunter.

"Why haven't those beasts called me? Just like them to leave me here; they know I always go to sleep in a train. I dare say they think they'll clear off before I wake up. I'll jolly well show 'em!"

He blinked out of the window on to the platform. There was something familiar about the place, but it did not look like Mudley.

"Only a stop," granted Bunter. "We can't be at Mudley yet, after all. I thought it was a through train, but I suppose it ain't. I'll soon see."

He pulled down the window and hailed a porter.

"Hallo! Is this the terminus?"

The man stared at him. He seemed surprised to see Bunter in the train.

"Do you hear?" bawled Bunter. "Is this Mudley-on-Sea?"

"Mudley!" ejaculated the porter in astonishment.

"Yes, Mudley-on-Sea!"

"My 'at! No, sir!"

"Haven't we arrived yet?"

"Oh, crumb! This 'ere train ain't going to Mudley, sir."

"What! Blessed if those silly chumps haven't got into the wrong train! Where does this train go, porter?"

"Chifford!"

"Chifford! Great Scott! Can we change for Mudley at Chifford?"

"Yes—if you want to," said the puzzled porter. "But it's quicker to take a train from here."

"Oh, good! What is this station?"

"This station?" gasped the astonished porter.

"Yes, what is the name of the station?" demanded Bunter, wondering whether the man was drunk.

"Courtfield, sir."

"Courtfield Junction?"

Bunter gazed at him open-mouthed.

"Wha-aa-aa are you talking about?" he gasped. "I—I got into this train at Courtfield over an hour ago. What do you mean?"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"What do you mean by saying this station is Courtfield Junction? Are you drunk? How can it be Courtfield?"

"It's Courtfield Junction, sir. That train hasn't started," gurgled the porter. "Twasn't going anywhere when you got into it. It's only been shunted."

"Shunted!" shrieked Bunter.

"Yes, and now it's been shunted back from there. And you can have sat there a while longer, sir, without seeing that the train wasn't going, beats me!"

"I—I—I've been asleep! I—I—oh, those beasts! They put me into the wrong train! And—and they've taken the right train themselves, of course!" roared Bunter. "Oh, the rotters! The beasts! I—I say, porter, you're sure this is Courtfield?"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"Look here, haw!"

"Jaw, jaw, haw!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of the train in a state of furious indignation. There was the name of the station on a sign. There was no doubt that it was Courtfield. The porter was almost doubled up with merriment. Bunter glared at him and rolled disconsolately away. It was only too painfully clear to him now why Bob Cherry had put him into a first-class carriage so obligingly. The train had been shunted—and Billy Bunter had been shunted, too! And Bunter's feelings, as he rolled home along the dusty road to Greyfriars, were almost homicidal.

A cheery party returned to Greyfriars just in time for locking-up that evening. They grinned generally at Bunter as they came in.

"Had a good time, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry affably.

"Enjoyed your journey, Bunter?"

"Was the joyfulness terrific, my esteemed Bunter?"

"We missed you at Mudley, Bunter. Where were you?"

But Billy Bunter did not reply to those affable questions. He only glared. His feelings were too deep for words.

THE END.

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