



BILLY BUNTER'S "BIKE!"

By BOB CHERRY.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

FIRST prize—a magnificent bicycle, complete with three-speed gear and latest accessories. Guaranteed to last twenty years!"

Billy Bunter fairly rolled the words on his tongue, as if they were strawberry ices.

We were in the junior common-room—generally known as the Rag—when Bunter read that announcement.

The fat junior had either begged, borrowed, or stolen—probably the latter—a copy of "The Weekly Joker," which contained details of what it was pleased to call an absorbing and fascinating competition.

"I say, you fellows!" said Bunter, blinking at us, "I'm going to bag that bike!"

"Go hon!"

"There are twelve pictures here," continued Bunter, flourishing the paper, "and they represent the names of railway-stations in Great Britain. Of course, no ordinary fellow could be expected to solve even half of them. You want brains for that sort of thing."

"Then why're you competing?" asked Frank Nugent. And there was a general laugh.

"You can dry up, Nugent!" said Billy Bunter, with dignity. "I don't want any insults from a fellow of your low order of intelligence!"

"My hat!"

Bunter spread the paper out on one of the desks, and we glanced over his shoulder.

"Take the first picture," said Bunter.

"It shows a castle, with an elephant in the foreground. That's Cowes, of course!"

"Elephant and Castle, you ass!" said Johnny Bull.

Bunter sniffed.

"If you had studied your geography, Johnny Bull," Bunter said, "you'd have known there was no such place as Elephant and Castle."

"My only aunt!" said Peter Todd. "You'll be saying there's no such place as London next!"

"Well, there may be something in what Johnny Bull says," said Bunter, on reflection. "All the same, I shall stick to Cowes."

"Thereby losing any faint chance you might have had of bagging the bike," said Wharton.

"Oh, rot! The second picture's dead easy; it's a black pool of water. Even a fellow of dull intelligence, like Johnny Bull, can see that it's Waterloo!"

"Blackpool, you fat chump!" said Vernon-Smith.

"You're wandering in your mind, Smithy. Who ever heard of a place with a name like that?"

"You won't find a seaside resort in England to beat it!" said Mark Linley, loyal to Lancashire.

Bunter said he was convinced that the solution was Waterloo. However, he was careful to scribble the word "Blackpool" in his notebook.

"The third picture's a queer sort of archway," said Bunter. "Of course, you're all agreed that it's Whitechapel?"

"Trust you to make a hash of things, Bob Cherry!" said Bunter. "The next picture

shows a pen, a ton weight, and a small house. How's that for Swiss Cottage?"

"Right off the wicket!" said Nugent. "It's where you'll end your days, Bunty—Pentonville!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter continued to make entries in his notebook, until—thanks to our timely aid—he had completed the list of solutions. His fat face was beaming as he stowed the notebook in his pocket.

"I'm the winner all the way!" he said. "A magnificent bike, you fellows! Just think of it! Of course, it would have been more considerate of the editor to make the first prize a tuck hamper. Still, I shall be able to sell the bike, I expect, and have no end of fine feeds at the tuckshop. Mrs. Mimble will jolly soon play up to me when she sees the colour of my money."

"When?" grinned Wharton.

And we all joined in the chorus:

"When I get some money,
I'll be in the Upper Ten;
When I get some money,
When, when, when, when!"

"It'll be sooner than you fellows think!"
"Anybody got a stamp?"

"Better try Friardale Post-office," said Peter Todd.

"What! You think I'm going to fag all that distance for a mouldy stamp! Surely one of you fellows can oblige an old pal? Hi, Dutton! Have you got a stamp about you?"

"Certainly!" said Tom Dutton, the deaf junior.

And, stepping forward, he gave Bunter a box on the ears which sent him staggering.

The fat junior roared with anguish.

"Wharrer you up to?" he demanded, wrathfully.

"You told me to clout you," said Dutton in surprise.

"I didn't! I asked you if you had a stamp."

Dutton looked mystified.

"What on earth do you want a lamp for?" he said. "'Tain't dark yet."

"Oh, help!" moaned Bunter. "Have you got a stamp—a thing that you stick on letters?"

"So you think that I ought to know better, do you?" roared Dutton. "I'll jolly soon show you!"

And he boxed Bunter's ears again—harder this time.

We simply yelled.

"Ow! Pulverise him, somebody!" groaned Bunter. "Look here, how can I send in my entry for the competition unless I have a stamp?"

"I should let the Editor pay tuppence on the letter," said Skinner. "Editors are very generous sort of chaps, you know."

"Or you mark the envelope 'O.H.M.S.'," said Nugent thoughtfully.

"'O.H.M.S.'!" said Bunter. "What does that silly rot mean?"

"Oh, Help Me Somebody!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think you are a set of beasts!" said Bunter, blinking at us through his big window-panes. "You're all rolling in filthy lucre, yet you're too mean to dish up a stamp! I sha'n't let any of you ride my bike—when it comes!"

And Bunter rolled out of the Rag in high dudgeon.

He devoted the next hour or so to stamp-collecting.

Nugent minor came to the rescue with a halfpenny stamp, which he extricated with difficulty from a mass of toffee, crayons, and chewing-gum. Bunter took his word for it that it really was a half-penny stamp. It looked more like a paper pellet that had lost its way.

Another weather-beaten stamp—a penny one this time—turned up from the pockets of Sammy Bunter, who, as a return for handing it over, insisted upon being allowed to use his major's bicycle whenever the spirit moved.

That evening Billy Bunter posted his entry form.

A black cat was crossing the Close at the time, and Bunter hailed it as a symbol of good luck.

When the fat junior dropped off to sleep that

night in the dorm., we could hear him murmur, in between his snores :

"Magnificent bicycle . . . three-speed gear . . . latest accessories. . . Winner—
—W. G. Bunter, of Greyfriars!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

MR. QUELCH did not find Bunter a very attentive pupil next morning.

Bunter never was, as a matter of fact. He considered that a little learning was a dangerous thing; therefore, he acquired as little as possible. But on this particular morning he was the limit.

When Mr. Quelch asked him where King Charles the First was beheaded, Bunter replied, in an abstracted tone, "Clapham Junction, sir!" and received a hundred lines for his pains.

When he went on to tell Mr. Quelch that the Magna Charta was signed in Piccadilly Circus, the imposition

was doubled. Finally, when Bunter gave the startling information that William the Conqueror came over to England on a magnificent bicycle, with three-speed gear and latest accessories, he received a couple of stinging cuts on each hand, and came back to earth with a jerk; and his great expectations were forgotten.

But not for long.

Bunter had that bike on the brain. He bored us stiff by gloating over the good times he intended to have as soon as the machine arrived.

"Of course, I shall ride it for a bit," he said, "and when something goes wrong with the works I shall sell it for twelve quid or so. It will be simply great! I shall be able to buy Mrs. Mimble out of house and home! A

fellow can get a good many jam-puffs for twelve quid —"

"You've got to get the twelve quid first!" growled Johnny Bull.

"To say nothing of the bike!" I interjected.

"Don't talk rot! I've sent in twelve correct solutions, and, therefore, the bike's a cert. I believe you fellows are eaten up with jealousy because you know I'm going to win."

"You—you think we're jealous of a conceited bladder of lard like you!" stammered Wharton.

"I don't think—I know! It's this personal jealousy on your part that has kept me out of the cricket and footer teams. Why don't I kick runs and hit goals for the Remove? Jealousy, of course! Why haven't I been elected skipper of the Form? Jealousy again! You fellows know, in your hearts, that I'm a



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born leader, but you deliberately keep me under! Sheer bad sportsmanship, I call it."

"Oh, slay him, somebody!" ejaculated Nugent.

We were fed-up with Bunter. As the days advanced, we became still more so. He strutted about with his nose in the air, as if he owned the earth and all that therein is. In fact, you simply couldn't hold the fat beast.

He was soundly bumped on several occasions; but all the bumping in the world wouldn't stop him from swanking.

After a while we put our heads together, and decided to teach Bunter a lesson.

It was Sampson Quincey Iffley Field—commonly called Squiff—who suggested the most novel wheeze.

"Bunter thinks he deserves a bike," said Squiff, "and he sha'n't be disappointed! It would be too awful if all his castles in the air came tumbling down. He's thought and dreamed of a bike so much that he's genuinely convinced he'll get one. And so he shall."

"What!" yelled Peter Todd. "You're going to present Bunter with a bike?"

"Certainly!"

"Then you must be potty!"

"The pottyfulness of the esteemed Squiff," murmured Hurree Singh, "is terrific!"

"Wait!" said Squiff. "I haven't told you what sort of a bike. During my wanderings in Courtfield, I've discovered the whereabouts of an old-iron shop."

We began to see what Squiff was driving at.

"In the yard at the back of the shop," he went on, "there's a very ancient bike, thick with cobwebs, and rusty as old Quelchy when he's on the warpath! The bike was invented over a hundred years ago, and it's about the most weird-looking thing you ever struck. The front wheel stands higher than I do, and the handle-bars are the last word."

"Then it is a thing of booty and a toy for ever, as your English proverb has it?" said Hurree Singh.

"Exactly. And it'll suit Bunter——"

"Down to the ground," chuckled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I propose that we collar the ancient 'bus," said Squiff, "and leave it at Friardale Station,

addressed to W. G. Bunter, Esq., 'to be called for.'"

"Ripping!" said Wharton.

"And we'll concoct a letter, presumably from the editor of the 'Weekly Joker,' stating that Bunter has been awarded the first prize. How's that?"

"Top-hole!" said Peter Todd. "There's just one point, though. This bike will cost money, and we're all on the verge of being stony."

"Set your little mind at rest, Teddy," said Squiff. "Instead of our having to pay the proprietor of the shop, he'll pay us—for removing a dangerous obstruction from his premises."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

We fell in with Squiff's idea at once.

When afternoon lessons were finished we biked over to Courtfield, and rescued the ancient contrivance from the scrapheap.

The proprietor was only too glad to see the back of it. He told us it had been a positive eyesore to the place, and had lost him a lot of custom.

Then we piloted the prehistoric bike to the railway-station at Friardale, and left instructions with the porter.

Two mornings later there was a letter in the rack for Bunter.

Letters for the fat junior were not as plentiful as blackberries, in spite of all his high talk about titled relations and fat remittances.

Bunter pounced on the letter at once.

Quite a crowd of fellows drifted up to see the fun.

"Hallo!" said Bolsover major. "Letter from Lord Bunter de Bunter?"

"It's not from one of my titled relations this time," said Bunter. "There's no crest on the back."

"Perhaps it's from the uncle who keeps the Bunter Arms?" I suggested. "Trot out the joyful tidings, Billy."

Bunter inserted a fat forefinger in the fold of the letter, and ripped it open.

The next moment his little round eyes were positively gleaming with delight.

"It's come!" he exclaimed.

"Not the postal order, surely?" said Skinner, in surprise.

"No, it's the letter announcing that I've won the first prize in the picture-puzzle competition."

"Gammon!"

"Read it yourself, then," said Bunter.

And we all crowded round to see the letter. It ran as follows:

Editorial Office,
THE WEEKLY JOKER,
London.

"W. B. Bunter, Esq.,
Greyfriars School,
Friardale, Kent.

"Dear Sir,—I have much pleasure in informing you that you have been awarded the first prize in our recent picture puzzle contest.

"The magnificent bicycle, complete with three-speed gear and latest accessories, awaits you at Friardale Station.

"I congratulate you most cordially upon your success, which I sincerely trust may be the forerunner of many more in this respect.

"I am,
dear sir,

"Yours faithfully, "THE EDITOR."

Squiff had compiled that letter, and he had sent it to a pal in London to post on. Most of us knew it was a fake, of course; but Bolsover major and Skinner, who weren't in the know, were frankly astenished.

"Congratulations, Buntty!" said Skinner, when he had recovered from the shock. "You're a much cleverer fellow than I imagined."

"Yes, rather," said Bolsover. "This does

you credit, I must say. You're a giddy genius!"

"I always said Bunter had some brains stowed away somewhere," said Russell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fellows needn't toady up to me now that you know I've won," said Bunter. "I don't mind telling you in advance that only two people are going to use my bike—and they're me and Sammy."

"Can I ride on the step if I'm very good?" asked Nugent.

"No, you can't. You've often refused me the loan of your bike Nugent, and this is where I get my own back. You fellows are

jealous of me more than ever now, I can see.

It sticks in your gills to know that I've won the first prize. Why don't you go and cultivate some brains?"

"You'll cultivate a thick ear, if you're not careful," said Bolsover major.

And then the bell rang for morning lessons.



Tom Dutton stepped forward and gave Bunter a box on the ears which sent him staggering. The fat junior roared with anguish.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

JUST as we were going strong

with Roman History, Billy Bunter rose in his place.

"If you please, sir——"

"Sit down!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, really, sir! I——"

"If you have any request to make, Bunter, kindly defer it until afterwards."

"But it's important, sir."

"It cannot be more important than your Form-work, Bunter."

"You really must listen to me, sir."

"Sit down!"

Mr. Quelch's voice resembled the booming of breakers on the beach.

"If you utter another word, Bunter, I shall cane you!"

Billy Bunter dropped into his seat with a groan.

He was restless and uneasy as lessons proceeded; and presently, when Mr. Quelch had his back to the class, and was writing on the blackboard, Bunter slipped from his seat and moved towards the door.

We stared at him with fascination—almost with awe.

It was unheard-of for a fellow to walk out of the Form-room in the middle of morning lessons.

Bunter was half-way to the door, and Mr. Quelch was still engaged at the blackboard.

We held our breath, wondering if Bunter would succeed in getting clear in time.

But the luck was against him.

As he moved forward on tiptoe, his eyes were fixed upon Mr. Quelch. Consequently, he failed to notice an obstruction in his path, in the shape of Bolsover major's boot, which protruded from the end of the desk.

Bunter cannoned into it, and pitched forward into space.

Crash!

The fat junior landed in a heap at the door of the Form-room.

"Yarooooop!"

Mr. Quelch spun round from the blackboard.

For a full minute he stood petrified, unable to move or speak.

When he did find his voice, it resembled the rumble of thunder.

"Bunter!"

"Ow! Yessir!"

"How dare you grovel on the floor in that ridiculous manner?"

"Yow! Some silly ass stuck his feet in the way, sir——"

"Get up at once! How came you to be near the door?"

"Ahem! I—I was on the point of opening it, sir. We want some fresh air in the room. 'Tain't healthy, sir."

"You are prevaricating, Bunter!"

"Nunno, sir! Certainly not, sir! I wouldn't dream of telling an untruth, sir."

"Good old Georgie Washington!" murmured Squiff.

Mr. Quelch picked up a cane.

"Tell me the truth at once, Bunter!" he rapped out.

"I—I—well, you wouldn't listen to me in the first place, sir!" said Bunter wildly. "I wanted to go and get my bike, and you wouldn't let me explain. So I thought I wouldn't worry you again, sir, and I was just—ahem!—slipping out of the room."

Mr. Quelch could scarcely believe his ears.

"You were in the act of leaving the Form-room without permission, for the purpose of getting your bike, as you call it?" he thundered.

"Ow! I—I didn't think you'd mind, sir."

"You are a perverse and wicked boy, Bunter! I shall flog you most severely!"

Mr. Quelch strode towards Bunter, and the cane came into play. It rose and fell with deadly accuracy, and Bunter's yells fairly awoke the echoes.

"There!" panted Mr. Quelch, when he had finished. "Let that be a lesson to you, Bunter."

"Yow-ow-ow! M-m-may I go and fetch my bike now, sir?"

"No, you may not!" roared Mr. Quelch. "Go to your place at once, or I will administer a further castigation."

Billy Bunter limped back to his seat, and the lesson proceeded. There was no further attempt on the part of the fat junior to sneak out of the Form-room.

Directly lessons were over, however, Billy Bunter rushed away like a whirlwind.

There was no stopping him. He was hot on the track of that magnificent bicycle, complete with three-speed gear and latest accessories.

"I should like to see Bunter's face when he gets to the station," said Nugent. "It will be worth a guinea a box."

"Let's go along and meet him," said Wharton. "We'll give him a rousing reception as the winner of the first prize."



Mr. Prout resumed his attack upon Bunter. "As soon as you have removed those evil-smelling components from your person," he bawled, "you will wait upon me in my study!"

"Hear, hear!"

Quite a crowd of us started off for the railway station. Some had brought mouth-organs, and others, for want of better instruments, had armed themselves with combs and tissue-paper.

"When I give the order," said Wharton, "we'll strike up 'See the Conquering Hero Comes.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

We got to the station just in time to see Billy Bunter pushing the ancient bike out

into the roadway. His fat face was a picture.

He had certainly got his bike—but what a bike! Instead of a smoothly-running modern cycle, it was a dreadful-looking monster. Only a skilled acrobat could have climbed up on to the seat; and as for steering it—well, very few of us would have cared to run the risk.

"I say, you fellows, I've been spoofed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This ain't a bike at all—it's a beastly gridiron!"

We roared.

"I shall write and tell the editor of the 'Weekly Joker' what I think of him!" snorted Bunter. "How the dickens does he suppose I'm going to ride this old creak?"

"We'll give you a hand, Bunt," said Bolsover major, obligingly.

"Here, hold on! I—I mean, leggo!" yelled Bunter, in alarm.

Skinner held the bike, while Bolsover and several others, grunting and groaning under Bunter's weight, lifted the fat runior up on to the seat.

"Now," said Bolsover. "One to be ready—two to be steady—three to be——"

"Off!" chuckled Skinner.

Bunter lurched forward. He was clutching the handle-bars as if his life depended upon it—as, indeed, it did. For if Bunter relinquished his hold there was no telling what might happen.

"Strike up, you fellows!" gasped Wharton, in between his sobs of merriment.

And then the band started, "See the Conquering Hero Comes."

"Goes would be more correct," gurgled Nugent. "Good-bye, Bluebell!"

Nugent had reached the brow of a hill by this time; and he disappeared over the top.

We raced along in the rear to see the fun.

Bunter careered down that hill at a most alarming pace. He gathered impetus as he went, and he hung on like grim death.

Labouring up the hill, at that moment, came Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth.

Mr. Prout was taking a constitutional; and when Bunter loomed on his horizon he stopped short, wondering if he had suddenly been transplanted into the eighteenth century.

Billy Bunter lifted up his voice.

"Stand clear!" he yelled.

Mr. Prout declined to stand clear. In the days of the Great War he had faithfully served his country as a special constable, and it had been part of his duty to stop cyclists—and others—who were riding in a manner dangerous to the public.

Accordingly, Mr. Prout stepped into the middle of the road, with a fierce frown on his florid face.

Boy! Bunter! How dare you imperil the lives of pedestrians in this reckless manner? Stop! Stand clear! I command you!"

Billy Bunter saw that Mr. Prout was a fixture—that wild horses would not drag him away from what he conceived to be his duty.

The fat junior swerved to one side, in the hope of avoiding Mr. Prout; but the latter swerved at the same time, and there was a grinding collision.

"Oh, my aunt!" sobbed Squiff. "I—I'm sure I shall bust a boiler in a minute!"

Mr. Prout lay on his back in the roadway, blinking up at the heavens, and wondering why the stars should suddenly appear at midday.

We rushed up to render first-aid; but beyond a few bruises the Form-master was unhurt. But he was consumed with a wrath which equalled that of Jove of old.

"That young villain! That depraved hooligan!" spluttered Mr. Prout. "Stop him!"

"Afraid he's gone too far now, sir," said Nugent solemnly.

Bunter had.

By a miraculous stroke of good fortune, he had survived the collision with Mr. Prout; but it seemed that he had merely passed out of the frying-pan into the fire.

He continued his headlong flight down the hill, at the foot of which lay a green and slimy duckpond.

Bunter's nerves were in such a state by this time that he had lost all control of his machine.

He headed straight as a die for the pond, pitched over the handlebars like a fat fowl in flight, and turned a complete somersault into the water.

"A fitting climax to such harebrained tomfoolery!" snapped Mr. Prout.

A moment later, a fat and slimy porpoise rose up from the bottom of the pond. Reeds and mud clung lovingly to his face and neck, and he bore a distinct resemblance to the Wild Man of Borneo.

"Groooooogh!" spluttered Bunter, gouging frantically at his eyes and mouth. "Ow! Yah! I'm dying! I've busted both arms, and fractured my spinal column!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Prout hurried to the spot, and we followed.

"You have only yourself to blame for this, you errant and foolish young rascal!" stormed Mr. Prout. "How dare you attempt to defile the King's Highway by riding such an absurd and clumsy contrivance as that?"

And Mr. Prout pointed to yе ancient grid-iron, which lay half-submerged in the slimy ooze.

Bunter staggered out of the pond. His clothes were full of water, and he was blown out like a balloon.

"Anybody got a pin?" inquired Peter Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Prout resumed his attack upon Bunter.

"As soon as you have removed those evil-smelling components from your person," he barked, "you will wait upon me in my study. I will endeavour to teach you that practical jokes of this sort are not in good taste!"

"How could I help it?" roared Bunter, squelching mud all over the place. "I wasn't riding the beastly thing for fun!"

"That's so, sir," said Bolsover major. "It was I who suggested Bunter should ride the bike, sir."

"Then you will take five hundred lines, Bolsover," snapped Mr. Prout. "And I will acquaint your Form-master with what has occurred."

"Thank you, sir!"

A general move was made in the direction of Greyfriars.

"Not going to leave your bike behind, Bunter, surely?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Especially when you can get twelve quid for it," chuckled Johnny Bull.

Billy Bunter turned, and flourished a fat fist in our faces.

"Beasts!" he muttered. "I don't believe that letter came from the "Weekly Joker" at all. This is a jape, at my expense."

"Go hon!"

"Pride goeth before a fall," said Nugent.

"You shouldn't have swanked so much about your blessed bike, then this wouldn't have happened."

Bunter said no more.

When we reached the school he made hurried tracks for the nearest bath-room, and for quite an hour afterwards came a sound as of much rubbing and scrubbing.

Billy Bunter hated soap and water; but he realised that a liberal application of both was necessary on this occasion, unless he wished to smell like a duckpond for the rest of the term.

"Poor old Bunter!" I remarked. "He'll dry up about his precious bike after this."

But I was wrong.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

NEXT day, Billy Bunter was crowing again as loudly as ever.

He had left the bike of yesterday to rust in the duckpond. Bunter was finished with it; and it had nearly finished Bunter.



The cane rose and fell with deadly accuracy, and Billy Bunter's yells fairly awoke the echoes!

But the bike of to-morrow—the bike he yet hoped to obtain from the “Weekly Joker”—formed his main topic of conversation. He chattered about it in his sleep, and he never let us hear the end of it by day.

A few mornings later Bunter received a letter—a genuine one this time—from the Editor of the “Weekly Joker.” The name and address of that periodical were printed on the top of the notepaper, so there was clearly no hoax this time.

The letter ran thus :

“Weekly Joker” Office,
Fleet Street, London.

W. G. Bunter, Esq.,
Greyfriars School,
Friardale, Kent.

Dear Sir,—It is my pleasure and privilege to inform you that you were successful in solving the whole of our picture puzzles correctly.

“A further communication on this subject will be sent you in due course.

“Meanwhile, with hearty congratulations on your good fortune,—I am, yours faithfully,
“THE EDITOR.”

“There you are!” said Bunter triumphantly. “I told you merit would tell! I’ve won the bike, after all, and I think some of your fellows ought to go down on your knees and apologise.”

We were certainly very much taken aback.

Was it possible that Bunter had really won the magnificent bicycle awarded by the “Weekly Joker”?

If so, our practical joke would have fallen flat, and Bunter would have the laugh of us at the finish.

We all waited, in a state of great suspense, for the “further communication” to arrive from the Editor.

Bunter always made it a point to waylay Bogg, the postman, on his way to the school. The fat junior was almost bursting with impatience and excitement.

At last the letter came. The fellows swarmed round Bunter like bees as he opened it.

“Read it out, Billy.”

“Have you won the bike?”

“Is it waiting for you at the station?”

Bunter pulled out the letter, and read it aloud to us.

“Dear Sir,—I am writing you again, as promised, on the subject of the picture puzzle competition.

“You will be glad to learn that you, in company with seven hundred and ninety-nine other competitors, have qualified for the first prize, namely, a magnificent bicycle, complete with three-speed gear and latest accessories.

“As it is hardly feasible to divide the bicycle into eight hundred parts, and send you a pedal or a brake-block, it has been decided that the sum of £20 shall be divided equally among the successful competitors. This being so, I have pleasure in enclosing herewith postal order for 6d. (sixpence).

Yours faithfully,

“THE EDITOR.”

Bunter went purple.

“It’s a swindle!” he yelled. “A swindle from beginning to end!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Instead of a bike they’ve sent me a mouldy postal order—for sixpence!”

“And it’s made payable to W. G. Bunter at Courtfield Post Office,” chuckled Nugent. “That means you’ve got to tramp all the way to Courtfield to cash it.”

Bunter’s face worked convulsively.

He was not a fighting man, but if the Editor of the “Weekly Joker” had put in an appearance at that moment, Billy Bunter would have scalped him.

“Sixpence!” gasped Bunter.

After all his boasting, all his puffed-up vanity, all his great expectations, he had received, not a magnificent bicycle, but the princely sum of sixpence!

“Competitions,” said Billy Bunter, “are a snare and a delusion. I shall never go in for ‘em again—never!”

“Hadn’t you better get your postal order cashed, Bunter?” said Wharton.

“I suppose so,” grunted the fat junior. “It means some tarts and a ginger-pop at Uncle Clegg’s, anyway.”

And he started off on the long, long trail to Courtfield.

THE END.