



BRAVO, BUNTER!

A MERRY TALE OF THE FAMOUS FAT
SCHOOLBOY OF GREYFRIARS

By FRANK RICHARDS



Bunter's Bright Idea

"YOU'RE the best footballer in the Remove, Wharton," said Billy Bunter.

"Eh?"

"The best kick at goal we've got——"

"What?"

"Mind, I mean it," said Billy Bunter, blinking at the captain of the Remove through his big spectacles, while Harry Wharton stared at him in astonishment. "The other fellows ain't even also rans, compared with you."

"You fat ass!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"What are you buttering me for, you howling duffer?"

"I ain't buttering you, old chap," said Bunter. "Nothing of the kind. I've always admired your football. Smithy thinks a lot of himself, but he ain't in your street. Bob Cherry couldn't kick a goal like you to shave his wife—I mean to save his life. When it comes to Soccer, you've always got your shooting boots on. You're the goods, old fellow."

"Is that the lot?"

"I mean it, every word, old chap," asserted Bunter. "I ain't pulling your leg just because I want you to do something for me——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. I just couldn't tell you how much I admire your Soccer," said Bunter. "You're the best kick at goal at Greyfriars. You could land a ball anywhere you liked. You could land it on a beak's nut just as easily as in goal——"

"Wha-a-t?"

"That's why I've come to you," explained Billy Bunter. "I haven't asked Smithy, and he didn't say it was too risky. I've come to you because you're the best shot in the Remove. See? Fancy Quelch getting a muddy football right on the boko, what? He, he, he!"

"Oh, my hat! I'd rather fancy it than do it, you fat fathead," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Go to sleep and dream again."

"It's easy—for a splendid shot at goal like you!" urged Bunter. "You being such a first-class shot at goal——"

"Speech taken as read."

"Quelch is in the Head's garden now," went on Bunter. "You know he takes a walk there after class. He'd never see you over the wall. But you can see the top of his head. You kick the ball from the quad——"

"Do I?" grinned the captain of the Remove.

"You do, old fellow! You get Quelch on the crumplet, and bolt! He'll never begin

to know who did it. And when he gets it, perhaps he'll be sorry for making out that I was asleep in class, and giving me a hundred lines," said Bunter, knitting his fat brows. "You can get him on the coker-nut with a Soccer ball——"

"I don't think!"

"I've got the ball ready," urged Bunter. "I've bagged that old footer from Bob's study, and I've put it there ready. It's all muddy from a puddle—just right for Quelch. All you've got to do is to land it on his top-knot——"

"Fathead!"

"Just one kick—easy as winking for you, old fellow. 'Tain't much to ask a pal," said Bunter warmly.

"Better cut off and ask a pal, then," suggested Harry Wharton.

"Beast! I—I mean, look here, dear old chap, it's as safe as houses, and I only want you to put in just one kick——"

"You want me to put in one kick?"

"One will do the trick, of course," said Bunter. "That's all I want from you—just one kick——"

"Here goes, then!"

"Ow!" gasped Bunter, as the captain of the Remove suddenly grasped him by the collar and spun him round. "Wharrer you up to? Leggo my neck! I say—wow—leggo—yaroooooh!"

Thud!

"Whooo-hoop!" roared Bunter, as a foot landed on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars. "Wow! Wharrer you kicking me for, you beast?"

"Didn't you ask for it?"

"Wow! Beast!"

"Didn't you say you wanted just one kick from me——"

"Wow!"

"There's another coming——"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter dodged away in haste, without waiting for the other that was coming.

And Harry Wharton, hoping that his reception of Bunter's bright idea had banished that bright idea from the fat Owl's fat and fatuous mind, went on his way, and forgot Bunter's fat existence.

"Beast!" murmured Billy Bunter.

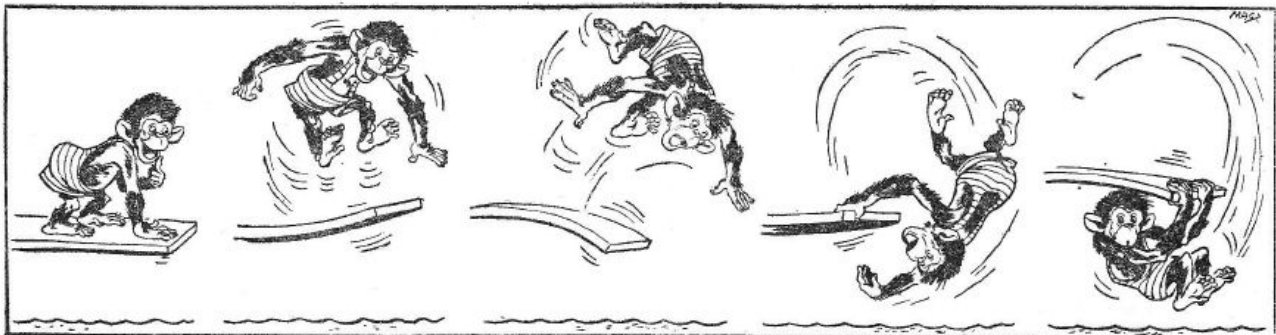
The fat Owl stood in the quad, near the wall of the headmaster's garden, blinking at that wall through his big spectacles, and frowning morosely. At his feet was a rather old and considerably muddy Soccer ball.

On the other side of that wall Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was taking his walk after class, as he often did in the afternoon.

Quelch was long and lean, and Bunter could see the top of his head over the wall. He had quite a good view of a mortar-board, as Quelch paced the garden path. Bunter was short and fat, and invisible from the other side of the wall.

If only Billy Bunter could have shot a goal like Harry Wharton, or Smithy, or Bob Cherry, he could have landed that muddy ball on Quelch's "top-knot," much to the surprise of the Remove master—and bolted for safety before Quelch had a chance of spotting the goal-getter. But Billy Bunter was no goal-getter.

Nevertheless, he was going to try it on, since no help was to be had from better shots. He had asked Smithy, who liked the idea but thought it too risky; he had asked Bob Cherry, who told him not to be an ass, and Peter Todd, who told him not to be an idiot: good advice, but of no use to Bunter.





"I say—wow—yaroooooh! Warrer you kicking me for, you beast, Wharton?"

Finally, he had asked Harry Wharton, who had delivered a kick, it was true, but not as desired by the fat Owl. And it was borne in upon Bunter's fat mind that if anybody was going to land that ball on Quelch's napper, it had to be William George Bunter himself. And, satisfied that, whether successful or not, it was as safe as houses, the fat Owl prepared to take his shot over the garden wall.

He placed the ball carefully for the kick. He blinked at the wall and at the mortar-board visible beyond it. He calculated carefully. Then he gave a cautious blink round to ascertain that no one was watching him.

Visibility was not good to Bunter, even with the aid of his big spectacles. The coast was clear, so far as he could see. He did not observe Loder of the Sixth leaning on one of the old elms at a distance. Loder was staring towards him, wondering what the fat junior was up to. Undoubtedly he observed Bunter—but Bunter did not observe him, so he had no doubt that the coast was clear, and that everything was as right as right could be.

Having satisfied himself upon this important point, Bunter proceeded to take the kick. Quelch, on the inner side of the wall, was pacing in a leisurely way, his mortar-board in view all the time: still, it required some care and calculation to hit him.

Bunter calculated with care: and finally, shot out his foot. It was quite a hefty kick, and the ball shot away like a bullet.

Why, instead of shooting over the wall and landing on Quelch's top-knot it shot away at right angles, Bunter did not know. A Soccer ball was liable to act in that odd way when Bunter kicked it.

Certainly, it did not go over the wall. There was no sign or sound from the Remove master pacing in the Head's garden.

"Blow!" hissed Bunter.

For a moment he wondered where the ball had gone. But only for a moment. The next, a frantic yell from a Sixth Form man leaning on a tree at a little distance apprised him that somebody had got it, if not Quelch.

"Oooooooh!" came a spluttering howl from Loder of the Sixth.

Bunter spun round.

His eyes almost popped through his spectacles at the sight of a Sixth Form prefect staggering, and clawing at mud on his face.

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Bunter.

It was his first intimation that somebody else was on the spot! It was perhaps fortunate for Bunter that he had not "got" Quelch, right under the eyes of a Sixth Form prefect, whose duty it would have been to report him. But it was very unfortunate that he had "got" Loder. Had he aimed at Loder he might possibly have hit Quelch—he had aimed at Quelch, and undoubtedly he had hit Loder! The muddy ball had plumped fairly into the prefect's face—and that face, where it was not black with mud, was red with fury.

"You young rascal!" roared Loder.

He made a rush.

There was no escape for Bunter. He might have escaped after getting Quelch: but he had no chance of escaping after getting Gerald Loder. He squeaked with apprehension as the prefect's grasp closed on him.

"I—I—I say, Loder, I—I didn't—I—I wasn't—wow! Stop smacking my head, will you? Wow! Ooooh! I say, I never meant—wow! I didn't mean—yoo-hooooop! Will you stop smacking my head? Oh, crikey! Yarooooop!"

Had Loder had his official ashplant with

him, no doubt he would have given Bunter "six" with the same. But his ashplant was in his study, and he smacked instead. Loder seemed quite excited, which was perhaps not surprising after receiving a muddy football fairly in the middle of his countenance. He smacked and smacked: and Bunter yelled and yelled.

"Ow! Wow! Will you stoppit! I never meant—ow!—wow! I didn't want never—wow! I tell you I—whooo-hoop!

Smack! Smack! Smack!

"Yow-ow-ow! Wow! Wooooogh!"

"There!" gasped Loder at last, rather breathless from his exertions. "That'll teach you not to buzz a footer at a Sixth Form man, you young rascal."

"Ow! Wow! Wow!"

Loder strode away, heading for the House, for a wash—which he needed. Billy Bunter was left wriggling and yowing and wowing, as he rubbed his fat head. For a good ten minutes he forgot all about Quelch and his bright idea of using his Form-master's napper as a goal.

BILLY BUNTER'S eyes gleamed behind his spectacles. On the other side of the wall a mortar-board had become motionless. Quelch, who had been pacing the garden path, had come to a halt. No doubt he was speaking to someone else in the garden whom Bunter could not see. At all events, he was at a standstill. This was a chance not to be lost. It was, as it were, a shot at a sitting bird. Bunter grabbed the Soccer ball and got on with it.

He had collected a considerable number of aches and pains from Loder's hefty smacks. That made him all the keener to "get" Quelch, if he could! And now that Quelch was standing still, Bunter fancied that he could. And this time he was safe from observation. Loder was gone—no doubt busy with soap and water in the House at that moment. There was no one else at hand. All was clear for the fat avenger.

He placed the ball carefully. He blinked at the mortar-board over the wall. And once more he kicked.

This time he had better luck. The ball

did not shoot off at right angles as before. It rose into the air, and shot over the wall into the Head's garden. Bunter's eyes, and spectacles, followed it as it flew.

Crash!

"Oh!" came a startled ejaculation.

"Goodness gracious—Dr. Locke—my dear sir——!" came another startled voice.

Billy Bunter stood for a moment petrified.

He had landed a goal—another unexpected one. Quelch had been speaking to somebody—that was why he had stopped in his walk. Evidently it was Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars! The whizzing Soccer ball had not landed on Quelch. It had missed Quelch and landed on the Head.

"Oooh!" gasped the terrified Owl.

For one moment he stood petrified and paralysed. Then he flew. By the time Quelch looked over the wall to discover who had landed a Soccer ball on the headmaster of Greyfriars School, William George Bunter had vanished into space.

"**B**UNTER!"

"Yes, sir!" mumbled Bunter.

Why Mr. Quelch had sent for him to his study Bunter did not know. It couldn't be about the incident of the Soccer ball. He was sure of that.

It was an hour since Bunter's exploit. All Greyfriars knew that somebody had "buzzed" a footer at the head of Dr. Locke, and there was tremendous excitement on the subject. That reckless goal-getter was booked for a dire flogging if discovered. But no one knew who it was. Billy Bunter was not likely to say anything on the subject. And if the fellows he had asked to take that pot-shot suspected Bunter, they were not likely to say anything, either. And no one had seen him—that was assured.

So the happy fat Owl was feeling quite safe. He was sorry that he had "got" the Head instead of Quelch. But that, after all, did not matter very much, so long as he was quite, quite safe. So when he was called into his Form-master's study he did not expect to hear about that Soccer ball, but only wondered what was wrong.

"I have sent for you, Bunter——" began Mr. Quelch sternly.



A spluttering howl from Loder of the Sixth told Bunter that he had scored a hit with the muddy football—though not on the target he had been aiming at!

“If—if it’s about a pie, sir——”

“A pie!” repeated Mr. Quelch blankly.

“Yes, sir—if it’s about a pie, it wasn’t me—I haven’t been anywhere near Coker’s study, sir——”

“It is not about a pie, Bunter.”

“Oh! If—if it’s the cake, sir, I never had it. I never knew that the matron had a cake in her room at all, and——”

“That will do, Bunter.”

“Yes, sir! Mum-mum-may I go now, sir?”

“You may not, Bunter! I have sent for you to question you about kicking a football at the headmaster in his garden,” said Mr. Quelch sternly. “Dr. Locke was struck by a muddy football, kicked over the wall from the quadrangle.”

“Oh, crikey!”

“If it was done by you, Bunter——”

“Oh, no, sir! I—I wasn’t there. I—I never——”

“You were seen there, Bunter.”

“I—I—I wasn’t, sir,” gasped Bunter. “I—I looked all round, and there wasn’t anybody there, sir! I—I give you my word, sir.”

“Bless my soul! Bunter, Loder of the Sixth has reported to me that you were on

that spot with a muddy football about ten minutes before the occurrence——”

“Oh, lor’!”

“That is why I sent for you to question you, Bunter. You have now admitted——”

“I—I haven’t, sir!” wailed Bunter. “I wasn’t there, sir. I—I was in my study when I was there, sir—I mean, when I wasn’t there—— I—I was doing my lines, sir. I was sitting in my study doing my lines when I kicked the ball over the wall, sir—I mean when I didn’t kick it——”

“You need say no more, Bunter! You will go to the headmaster’s study at five o’clock——”

“Oh, crikey!”

“I shall take you there. You will be flogged——”

“Oh, jiminy!”

“For the present, you may go, Bunter.”

“Oh, scissors!”

Billy Bunter tottered from his Form-master’s study. He tottered out into the quad. The bright March sunshine did not cheer him. He blinked up at the clock tower. It was half-past four. In half an hour Dr. Locke would be in his study—and Bunter was booked for that study, and a flogging! And the depth of woe in Billy Bunter’s fat face at that awful prospect

might have moved the heart of a stone image.

"I SAY, you fellows!" groaned Billy Bunter.

"Poor old Bunter!"

"I'm up for a flogging——"

"Sorry, old chap!"

"Quelch says he's going to take me to the Head at five and I'm going to be flogged——"

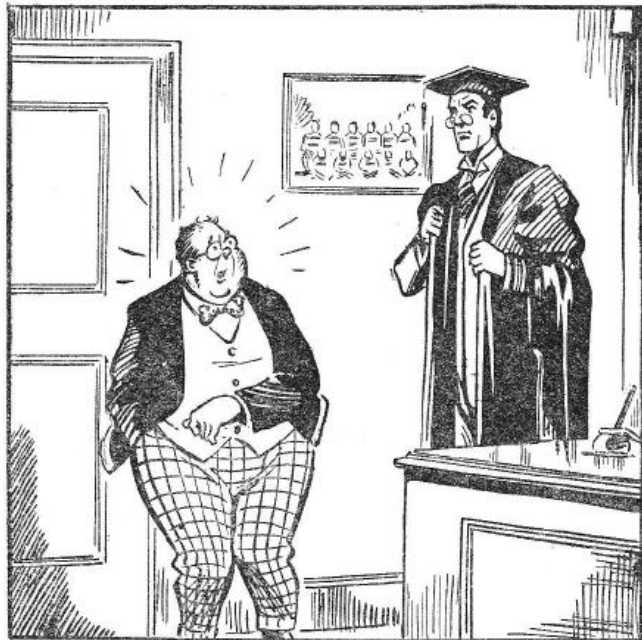
"The sorrowfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter."

Harry Wharton and Co. were sympathetic. There was no doubt about that. Billy Bunter was up against it—hard! They were truly sorry for poor old Bunter. But there was nothing they could do except sympathise.

Sympathy, no doubt, was grateful and comforting. But it was no present help in time of need. It did not seem to console the unhappy Owl of the Remove. His fat face was lugubrious. His little round eyes blinked dismally behind his big round spectacles. He was the picture of woe.

"I—I—I can't be flogged, you know," mumbled Bunter. "It hurts."

"It's meant to," remarked Johnny Bull.



"I—I don't know anything about it! I—I wasn't there! N-n-no one could have seen me because there wasn't anybody else there either, sir!"

"And I never did anything, you know," groaned Bunter, "and what I did was an accident, too."

"You buzzed a footer at the Head's napper," said Bob Cherry. "Can't expect the old bean to take it smiling."

"But I never meant it for the Head!" groaned Bunter. "I kicked it over the wall at Quelch, and it got the Head somehow, instead. Besides, I told Quelch that I never kicked it at all. He didn't believe me!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Quelch all over," said Bunter bitterly. "Doubting a fellow's word, you know. Making a fellow out to be a liar! That's what it comes to."

"Oh, scissors!"

"But I—I say, I—I just can't be flogged," moaned Bunter. "I say, it's a quarter to five now. What—what's going to be done, you fellows?"

"You've got it coming, old chap," said Frank Nugent. "Can't be helped."

"Brace up and take it," advised Johnny Bull.

"What cannot be cured must go longest to the well, as the English proverb remarks," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, shaking his dusky head.

"I—I say, you fellows, suppose—suppose I told the Head I meant it for Quelch, think he would let me off?" asked Bunter hopefully.

"Not likely," said Harry Wharton. "A beak's nut is a beak's nut, old fat man. Mustn't buzz Soccer balls at a beak's nut."

"Suppose—suppose I told him you were there, Harry, old chap, and I buzzed the ball at you, and it went over the wall by mistake?"

"But I wasn't there, and you didn't."

"Do keep to the point, old chap! It's getting jolly near five. Suppose you come with me to the Head and say you were there, and——"

"But I wasn't!"

"Will you keep to the point?" yelled Bunter. "What's the good of arguing like that when a fellow's up for a flogging? You tell the Head you were there, and saw the whole thing, and——"

"You fat villain!"

"Beast!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here comes Wingate!" said Bob Cherry.

Wingate of the Sixth came towards the group of juniors in the quad. He beckoned to Billy Bunter, and called:

"Bunter!"

"Oh, lor'!"

"You're to go to your Form-master's study, Bunter."

"Oh, crikey!"

Wingate walked away, leaving Billy Bunter to go to his Form-master's study, thence to be conducted by Mr. Quelch to his headmaster. But Billy Bunter did not roll off towards the House. His fat legs seemed to refuse to take him in that direction. He blinked dolorously at the Famous Five.

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I ain't going to be flogged—"

"Better cut off," said Bob.

"I tell you I ain't going to be flogged!" wailed Bunter. "I—I—I'd rather run away from school!"

"Fathead!"

"It's just on five, Bunter! Better go in," said Harry.

"I—I can't."

"You must, old chap."

"I—I won't! I—I'm going to cut!"

"Bunter, you ass!" roared Bob Cherry, as the fat junior made a sudden bolt for the open gateway.

"Bunter! Come back, you fathead!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Bunter did not heed. The prospect was too awful. Billy Bunter simply could not face it. He shot out of the gateway and vanished from sight, leaving Harry Wharton and Co. staring.

"WHERE is Bunter?"

Mr. Quelch rapped that question in at the doorway of the Rag, a little later. There was a grim frown on Quelch's brow, and a glint in his eyes, as he scanned a crowd of juniors in search of the fattest member of his Form.

"O where and O where can he be?" murmured Vernon-Smith, not loud enough for his Form-master to hear.

"Bunter is wanted," rapped Mr. Quelch. "He should have come to my study, to be taken to the headmaster, ten minutes ago. Where is he? Do you know, Wharton?"

"I—I think he's out of gates, sir!" stammered Harry Wharton.

"Out of gates!" repeated Mr. Quelch.



"Come back, you fathead!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, but Bunter did not return—he just could not face a flogging.

"I am waiting for him—the headmaster is waiting for him—and you say he is out of gates! Bless my soul!"

Mr. Quelch, grimmer than ever, turned away. He was waiting—even Dr. Locke, the majestic headmaster himself, was waiting—for a mere Lower School junior! And they had to wait! Billy Bunter, with the sword of Damocles impending over his fat head, had bolted out of gates!

Five minutes later Wingate, Gwynne, Walker and Loder of the Sixth Form issued from the school gates to look for Bunter and bring him in, to take what was coming to him.

"OH, lor'!" moaned Billy Bunter.

He was a mile from Greyfriars School. His fat little legs had carried him thus far, but no farther. A mile was more than enough for Bunter, even with a Head's flogging behind him. He had sat down to rest on the gate of the level crossing near Friardale. The gate was shut across the road, a train being signalled up the line. That did not interest Billy Bunter: he was not going to cross the line. A mile had tired him out. He did not waste a blink on the puffs of smoke in the distance along the railway track.

Bunter was plunged into the deepest pessimism. By this time, the flogging would have been administered had he remained at the school to take it. He had escaped it, so far. But where he was going on from there, the fat Owl did not know. He couldn't stay out of gates for ever. On the other hand, he couldn't face a flogging. It seemed to be a problem without a solution.

"Oh, crikey!" moaned Bunter.

On the opposite side of the line the little

gate beside the big gate opened and a plump gentleman came through. There was time to cross the line before the train arrived, and the plump gentleman was going to do so. Bunter knew him by sight—it was Mr. Lambe, the vicar of Friardale. He blinked at Mr. Lambe without interest.

"Oh, crumbs! What's a fellow going to do?" moaned Bunter. "Oh, lor'! Oh, crumbs! Oh, dear!"

Mr. Lambe came briskly across the metals. The puffs of smoke were quite near now: the engine was in sight. But there was ample time, if the vicar had kept on. But his foot slipped suddenly as he trod on polished metal, and Bunter gave a jump and a squeak as the plump gentleman toppled over and fell heavily on the track.

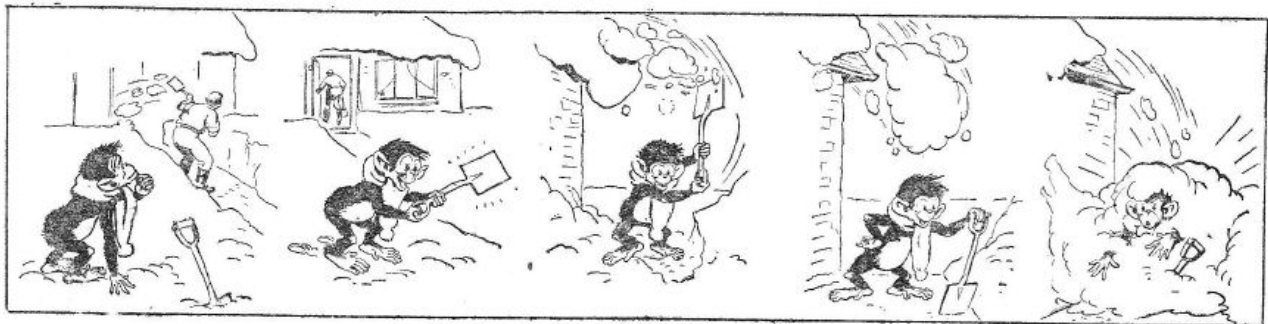
"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

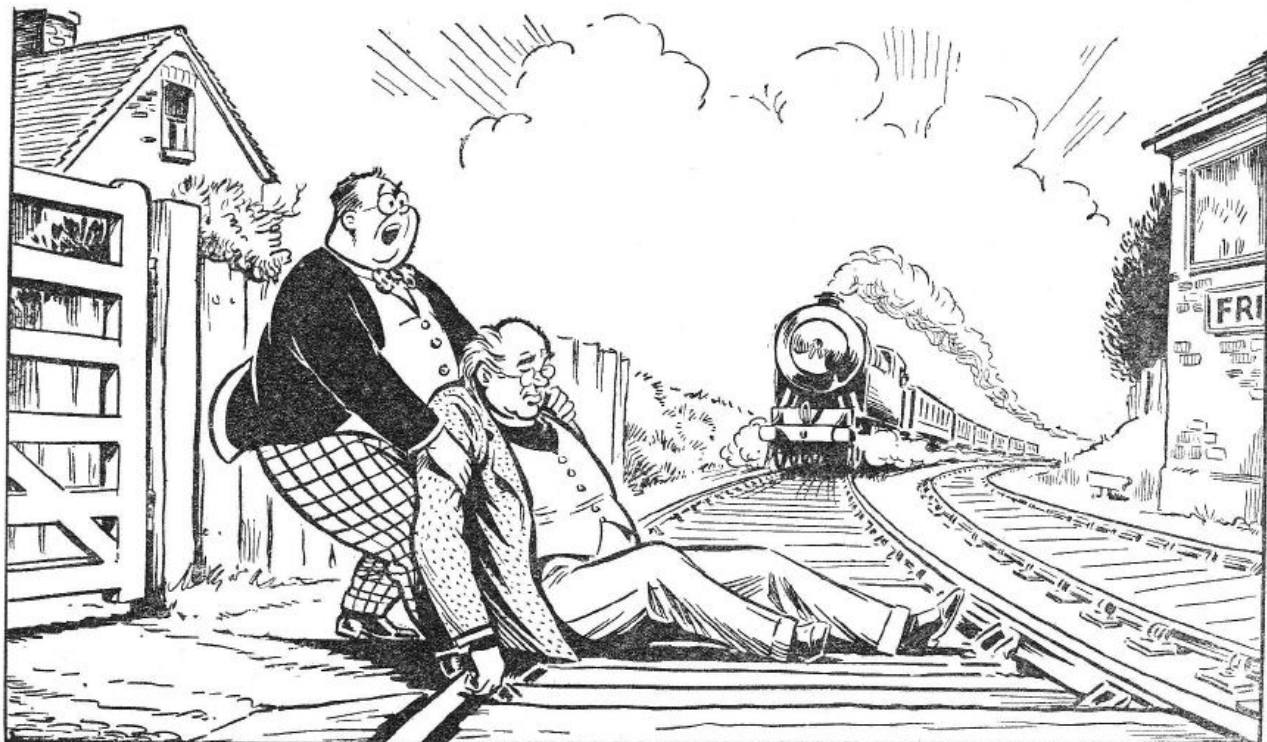
For a moment the fat Owl of the Remove forgot his own troubles, weighty as they were. His eyes almost popped through his spectacles at Mr. Lambe, sprawling on the track in the path of the oncoming train. For Mr. Lambe did not rise. He had knocked his head as he fell, and he lay dazed, helpless for the moment.

"Oh!" repeated Bunter, in a gasping squeak.

There was the shriek of a whistle from the train. Bunter gave it a blink—it came roaring on, and seemed terribly close. And the dazed man on the line was struggling feebly to rise. The tragedy that impended almost stunned Bunter: he could only gaze in horror.

Then suddenly he moved. Somewhere under Billy Bunter's layers of fat there must have been a spot of British pluck. He hardly knew what he was doing, or why he was doing it. But what he did was to jump





Bunter heaved frantically in an effort to drag Mr. Lambe clear of the track. The train was pounding towards them—was there time?

down from the gate and rush across the line, seize Mr. Lambe's plump shoulders with fat hands and drag at him frantically.

He was on the line—the train was coming—was there time? Bunter did not know whether there was time or not. Exerting all the strength and energy in his fat limbs he dragged at Mr. Lambe, and the vicar, at the same moment, made an effort.

They were just clear of the line as the engine roared down—and the engine-driver, with a white face, stared for a second as the train thundered on. Billy Bunter, hardly aware whether he was on his head or his heels, sprawled beside the line, his fat brain swimming. The train clattered by, passengers staring from the windows.

"Brave lad!" The vicar's voice came to Bunter's dizzy ears, and a plump hand helped him, tottering, to his feet. He blinked dazedly at Mr. Lambe, set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose, and blinked again.

"Ooooooh!" gasped Bunter.

"Are you hurt, my boy?"

"Eh? Oh! Yes! No! I say—oh, crikey!" gurgled Bunter.

"I see that you are a Greyfriars boy. What is your name?"

"Eh? What? Oh! Bunter."

"Bunter? I shall remember that." Mr. Lambe, rubbing a bump on his head with one hand, shook hands with Bunter with the other. "Bunter! You may have saved my life! I think you have! I shall not forget this! Are you all right now, my boy?"

"Oh! Yes!" gasped Bunter.

The good vicar had more to say. Evidently he was grateful. Bunter listened like a fellow in a dream. Finally, Mr. Lambe shook hands with him again and went on his way, leaving the fat Owl blinking.

Billy Bunter sat on the gate again, still gasping for breath. He was, for some minutes, conscious of a glow of satisfaction. Seldom, if ever, had Billy Bunter been called a brave lad before. It was music to his fat ears. But—

But he remembered! He was out of gates, dodging a flogging! He had to go back and take that flogging! And he couldn't, and wouldn't, go back to take that

flogging. Satisfaction departed from his fat visage and he groaned.

"Oh, lor'! Oh, crikey! Oh, dear!"

What was he going to do? The problem was still without a solution, and the hapless fat Owl sat on the gate, the picture of woe. His glum and gloomy meditations were suddenly interrupted.

"Bunter! You young rascal!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

It was Wingate of the Sixth. Bunter gave him a startled blink, slipped down from the gate, and ran. He ran about a yard before the Greyfriars captain's grip closed on a fat shoulder.

"Come along, you young ass!" snapped Wingate.

And the hapless Owl of the Remove, as there was no help for it, came along.

"**H**ALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Here he comes!"

"Wingate's got him!"

"Poor old Bunter!"

Quite a crowd of fellows watched as Billy Bunter was marched in, and marched up to the House. Skinner and Snoop were grinning, but most of the fellows looked serious, many sympathetic. The woe in Billy Bunter's speaking countenance might have moved a heart of stone.

He blinked dolorously at the Greyfriars fellows as he rolled in under convoy of Wingate of the Sixth. His brief respite was over. In the doorway of the House stood Mr. Quelch, grim as a Gorgon.

"Here he is, sir," said Wingate.

"Thank you, Wingate! Bunter, come with me."

"Oh, lor'!"

Billy Bunter cast a wild blink round him, as if thinking desperately of dodging again, at the last moment. Mr. Quelch, with knitted brows, grasped a fat shoulder and led, or rather propelled, the Owl of the Remove onward. In grim silence he marched him to the door of the headmaster's study, whereon he tapped with his disengaged hand. And Bunter's fat knees knocked together as he was marched into the Head's study. All was up now.

"Here is Bunter, sir," said Mr. Quelch.

Dr. Locke peered at the fat junior over his glasses.

"Bunter! I have been waiting for you, Bunter. I have been waiting a considerable time. How dare you leave the school when I was waiting for you, Bunter? Upon my word! However, you are here now, and I shall administer——"

"Oh, crikey!"

"What? What did you say, Bunter?" exclaimed Dr. Locke.

"I—I—it wasn't me, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I never kicked that footer over the garden wall, sir. I never got it from Bob Cherry's study. I never knew he had an old footer in his study—and I never kicked it, sir, and I didn't mean it for you, sir, I meant it for somebody else all the time, and I never did it at all sir—— I wasn't there—I was somewhere else when I was there, sir, and I never didn't wasn't——"

"Upon my word! Mr. Quelch, will you kindly hand me the birch? Bunter, you will bend over that footstool."

"Oh, lor'!"

"Immediately!" rapped the Head.

BZZZZZ!

It was the telephone-bell. Dr. Locke laid down the birch and turned to take up the receiver. It was one more respite for Bunter.

"**B**LESS my soul!" said Dr. Locke faintly.

Mr. Quelch gazed at him. Billy Bunter blinked at him. What was said on the telephone they did not hear, but both could see that it was something that had considerably startled the headmaster.

"You are sure of this, Mr. Lambe?" The Head was speaking. "You are sure it was Bunter? Bless my soul! Thank you, Mr. Lambe! I trust you feel no ill effects. I am glad—deeply glad—that a Greyfriars boy was of such service at such a moment—I am very glad you have reported the incident to me—very. Yes, I shall certainly commend Bunter for his action. Bless my soul! Good-bye, Mr. Lambe."

Dr. Locke put up the receiver. Then he

sat gazing at Bunter. He did not pick up the birch again. Mr. Quelch gave him an inquiring look.

"It was Mr. Lambe speaking," said the Head. "He tells me that about an hour ago, crossing the railway line at the level crossing, he fell—and would have been run over by a train had not a Greyfriars boy very pluckily dashed on the line to his aid."

"Indeed, sir——"

"That boy was Bunter!" said the Head.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Bunter! You did this courageous action during your unauthorised absence. I was about to flog you with the greatest severity——"

"Wow!"

"Now I shall not do so——"

"Eh?"

"Mr. Quelch! In the circumstances, I can scarcely punish this boy in view of his brave action, which Mr. Lambe thinks may have saved his life."

"I agree, sir," said Mr. Quelch.

"Mr. Lambe has asked me to commend you for your action, Bunter. I do so most cordially. I shall pardon you, and you may leave my study."

"Oh, jiminy!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked at the Head. He blinked at Mr. Quelch. For the moment he could not

believe his fat ears. Then he made a jump for the door. The door flew open and Bunter flew down the passage, anxious to get off the spot before the Head could change his mind.

"**B**RAVO, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter blinked and grinned. They could hardly believe it, in the Remove, when they heard. But it was true, and they had to believe it. And when Billy Bunter rolled into the Rag later he had a quite unaccustomed greeting.

They cheered him in the Rag. The Famous Five led the cheering, and all the Remove joined in. And Billy Bunter grinned a happy wide grin—so wide that it almost looked like meeting round the back of his fat head, as his fat ears tingled joyously to the shout of "Bravo, Bunter!"

And later in the tuckshop chaps were actually buying Bunter cream buns and other scrumptious morsels.

It was like a mad, gay, delirious dream—and like all dreams, it came to an end at last after one of the most remarkable "stuffings" ever known to the Bunter family.

The fat Owl will never forget those glorious moments, that vision of peace and plenty, when the order of the day was: "Another cake?" and "Bravo, Bunter!"

THE END

