

KNOCKOUT FUN BOOK 1955



I'LL HAVE THE LOT!

IT'S AN ILL WIND THAT BLOWS NOBODY ANY GOOD! BUT BOB CHERRY
DIDN'T BELIEVE IT AT FIRST!

CHERRY'S LUCK

The Chums of Greyfriars in
Another Merry Story

BY FRANK RICHARDS

"QUELCH is in a temper!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Quiet, you ass!" breathed Harry Wharton.

But it was too late!

Bob certainly had not intended that whisper to reach Mr. Quelch's ears. But Quelch's ears seemed sometimes as keen as his gimlet eyes. He turned his head, and those gimlet eyes fixed on Bob Cherry with a dismaying stare.

It was after class at Greyfriars. Mr. Quelch was walking in the quad, heedless of the sharp winter wind. Something had happened to stir Quelch's deepest ire. Some of the juniors knew, or guessed, or surmised what it was. Quelch had been with the Head, and there was a rumour that there had been "words."

Anyhow Quelch was, as Bob so unfortunately whispered, in a temper. There was no doubt on that point. The frown already dark on his brow intensified as he fixed his eyes on Bob.

"What did you say, Cherry?" he rumbled.

"Oh! Nothing, sir," stammered Bob.

"I—I mean——"

"Did you make a disrespectful remark referring to your Form-master, Cherry?"

"I—I—I——"

"Take a hundred lines, Cherry!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

Mr. Quelch stalked away towards the House. The Famous Five watched him as he went, rather glad to see his back.



"Lucky Quelch hadn't his cane with him," murmured Frank Nugent, when the Remove master was safe out of hearing. "Might have been a six, if he had."

"The luck was terrific," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, he's in a rage," remarked Johnny Bull. "Bunter says he heard him rowing with the Head——"

"Rot!" said Harry Wharton. "As if they'd row! But Quelch has his back up, no mistake about that."

"Right up, and then some!" said Bob Cherry ruefully. "We shall have to be jolly wary with Quelch, and—— Oh, crumbs!" Bob broke off suddenly, as the winter wind snatched the cap from his head, and blew it away, tossing it high into the air. Bob rushed off in pursuit of his cap, leaving his chums discussing the new and

rather alarming state of their Form-master, Henry Samuel Quelch.

SLAM! It was quite unlike Mr. Quelch to slam a door. But on this occasion, as he went into his study, he did slam the door: with a slam that echoed along the passage.

With a grim brow Quelch sat at his table, and drew paper and pen towards him. He had made up his mind! He had been thinking it over, walking in the windy quad, and now it was settled. He was going to resign!

It was all about nothing, really, or next to nothing: little more than a storm in a teacup. Bunter, of the Remove, had played a trick, idiotic as most of Bunter's tricks. Mr. Prout, master of the Fifth, taking the matter with what Quelch considered undue seriousness, had complained to the head-master. Dr. Locke had requested Mr. Quelch's presence in his study, and had spoken about the matter. Quelch had felt like a schoolboy called up before a "beak." Certainly he had little to say for the fattest and most troublesome member of his Form. But Bunter had been caned, and that, in Quelch's opinion, should have been the end of the affair. Instead of which, he was practically called over the coals!

And the more he thought about it, the more he resented it, and the more his indignation grew. A friendly word from his respected old Chief would have washed it all out. But the Head had left the matter where it was: and in his deep vexation and resentment, the bitter thought came into Quelch's mind that he was no longer valued as a member of the Staff: that perhaps the Chief thought it time for him to go. And if that was the idea——

With set lips, Quelch wrote:

"Dear Headmaster,—In view of the fact that we no longer see eye to eye, and in view also of my fixed resolution to tolerate no intervention in the management of my Form, even from a headmaster, I feel that no useful purpose can be served by my remaining longer in this school. I beg,

therefore, to place my resignation in your hands, to take effect immediately.

"H. S. QUELCH."

Mr. Quelch read that note over after he had written it. His grim brow did not relax. He knew that he was burning his boats behind him. But his determination was fixed. He sealed the note in an envelope addressed to the Head. All that remained was to dispatch it to Dr. Locke—and abide by the result!

CHERRY!" "Oh!" gasped Bob in dismay.

In chase of his elusive cap, the sport of the winter wind, Bob was red and a little breathless. The wind had whirled it hither and thither and finally landed it on the window-sill of Mr. Quelch's study. Bob made a plunge at it there to capture it: and just as he plunged, the sash shot up, and Mr. Quelch looked out.

Bob, dismayed, missed the cap which sailed away on another gust. But he did not heed it for the moment. He blinked at his Form-master at the open window. He did not see that he was to blame for charging up to a master's window in chase of his cap. But in Quelch's present mood, he wished that he hadn't.

"I—I—sorry, sir," stammered Bob. "My cap blew on the window-sill, sir, and—and—and I—I was after it—I—I——"

"Take this note, Cherry."

"Oh!" gasped Bob again.

He realised that Quelch was not wrathful with him. Quelch had merely called to him because he was there, having need of a messenger.

Considerably relieved in his mind, Bob held up his hand for the note. Mr. Quelch passed it out to him.

"Take that note to Dr. Locke, in his study, Cherry!" said Mr. Quelch. "If the Head is not there, leave it on his study table."

"Certainly, sir."

"That is all, Cherry! There will be no reply."

"Very well, sir."

Slam! The sash shut down! Bob Cherry was left with the sealed envelope in his hand. He had to go round to the door of the House, and go in to the headmaster's study. But first, naturally, he made a rush after his cap, which had fallen about a dozen yards away. He did not want to leave it blowing about in the wind, and a minute or two could not matter.

But that cap was rather elusive in a strong wind from the sea. Just as Bob reached it, a sharp gust lifted it and blew it on across the quad. After it went Bob, in breathless chase. Twice he almost had it, and twice it whirled away from his finger-tips, and then a gust stranded it on

into the august hands of the headmaster of Greyfriars School—soaked with water, the writing wet and blotched.

"Oh, gosh!" murmured Bob. That was all he could say. He stood staring at the note glimmering under the water, with feelings too deep for words.

THE telephone bell rang in Mr. Quelch's study, and he knitted his brows as he took up the receiver. He was in no mood for telephone calls. He was, in fact, in a very troubled mood.

His anger had culminated in the despatch of that note to his Chief, tendering



the granite rim of the fountain in the middle of the quad.

Bob made a desperate bound to save it going into the water. He clutched at it just in time as it was on the move, rather unfortunately forgetting for the instant Mr. Quelch's note in his hand. That note slipped from his fingers as he clutched the cap.

"Oh, scissors!" howled Bob, in dismay.

He captured the cap! But the note went into the water! He made a wild grab at it as it sank. But it sank before he could grab it. He jammed the cap on his head, and stood staring in utter dismay at the note glimmering under the water at the bottom of the granite basin.

That water was not very deep. That note could be recovered. But when recovered it would be in an awful state for delivery

his resignation in terms which were quite final. There was no going back now: the deed was done. But, during the half-hour that had elapsed since the despatch of the note, Mr. Quelch had been thinking—and the more he thought about it, the more he wondered whether he had acted hastily. He did not want to leave Greyfriars—his life was bound up in the school. He would miss the Head, he would miss the other masters in Common-room: he would miss his Form: indeed he would miss even Billy Bunter! And yet, if the Head meant him to take it as he had taken it——

"Well?" rapped Quelch into the mouth-piece.

"My dear Quelch——"

"Oh! Is—is—is that the Head?" Quelch fairly stuttered. It was Dr. Locke, speaking from his study! That was really the last

voice Quelch would have expected to hear—if the Head wished him to go—

"Yes! I am afraid, my dear Quelch, that you had some impression that I was finding fault, in our discussion a short while ago—"

"I—I—I—"

"But even so, my dear Quelch, we are surely too old friends for a slight difference of opinion on a matter of Form discipline to matter in the least."

"Oh! I—I—I—"

"Come, come! If you had such an impression, Quelch, pray dismiss it at once. I should be deeply pained to think that I had inadvertently given the slightest cause of offence to so valued a member of my Staff."

"Dr. Locke!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"You are aware, my dear Quelch, that I am somewhat perplexed over a passage in Sophocles, which puzzles me as it has puzzled many commentators. Can you spare ten minutes to discuss it with me?"

Quelch gazed at the telephone. The kind voice of his kind old Chief went direct to his heart. His doubts and suspicions had been entirely unfounded. So far from wanting him to go, the Head was only anxious that there should be no rift in the lute!

"Oh, sir!" gasped Quelch. "I—I—I—"

"Come to my study, Quelch! I shall expect you."

The Head rang off with that. Mr. Quelch stood, overwhelmed. How gladly he would have accepted this olive branch—how happily he would have hurried to the Head's study, to join in exploring that obscure passage in Sophocles—but for that fatal note! But that note of resignation stood like a lion in the path. Long ago it must have reached the headmaster's study. Obviously Dr. Locke had not read it yet—it would have offended him deeply, and he had been kindness itself on the telephone. But it must be there, on his table—doubtless he had been absent from the study, and Cherry had left it on the table as instructed. He had not opened it yet—but he would open it—he might be opening it, reading it this very moment.

The unhappy Remove master could have groaned!

If only he had kept his temper—had been more patient—if only he had never written that fatal note! But—he had! He paced his study with a cloudy brow and heavy heart, till a tap at the door interrupted his gloomy meditations. He spun round—dreading to see the Head with a letter in his hand and wrath in his brow. But it was not the Head who entered.

"**H**ERE it is!" said Harry Wharton.

Five fellows had gathered round the fountain, fishing for the letter that lay under the water. Billy Bunter watched them through his big spectacles, grinning. But Harry Wharton and Co. were not feeling like grinning. It was going to be a serious matter for Bob Cherry.

It was not easy to recapture that note. But Harry Wharton fished it out at last. And the Famous Five gazed at it—in horror. It was soaked and drenched and dripping. The envelope had come unstuck. The note within was visible—but not legible. Quelch's hard clear writing was always plain to read—but the ink had run and smudged, and that note was simply a mass of smudgy blotches. No doubt it could have been deciphered. But it would not have been an easy task.

"Oh, my hat!" said Johnny Bull. "You can't take that to the Head, Bob."

"He couldn't read it, if you did," said Nugent.

"Oh, suffering cats and crocodiles!" groaned Bob Cherry. "I—I can't take it back to Quelch—you know the temper he's in—he will think I was careless with it—"

"Well, so you were, old chap," said Johnny Bull, doubtless by way of comfort.

"Ass!" said Bob. "Fathead!"

"You couldn't hand that to Dr. Locke, Bob," said Harry Wharton decidedly. "He would have to ask Quelch about it, so it would come to the same thing. Take it back to Quelch!"

"It means six of the best!" groaned Bob.

Obviously, the best thing to be done was to take that note back to Quelch, and

explain. Quelch would have to re-write it—no doubt after giving poor Bob "six of the best" for his carelessness. It could not be helped, and Bob made up his mind to it—but his footsteps were very slow as he went to the House, and slower still as he approached Mr. Quelch's study.

He reached it at last, and tapped at the door, and opened it.

M^{R.} **QUELCH** stared—first at the red, confused, contrite face of the junior, then at the dripping wreck of a note in his hand, and then at Bob's crimson face again.

"Cherry—what——"

"I—I—I'm sorry, sir," stammered Bob. "Your note, sir——"

"My note?"

"The note you gave me to take to the Head, sir! The—the—the wind—I—I mean—I—I—it fell into the fountain, sir, and—and—and I—I thought I—I'd better not take it to the Head like this, sir—so—so——"

Bob broke off, in sheer astonishment at the expression on Mr. Quelch's face. He had expected a thunderstorm. He was ready to bend over and take six. To his utter amazement, Quelch's face brightened up suddenly, like the sun coming out from behind a cloud.

"Cherry!" Quelch seemed to gasp. "Cherry! That—that is my note—you did not take it to the Head's study——"

"No, sir! You see, in the state it's in, I—I thought——"

"Dr. Locke has not seen it?"

"No, sir, not yet. You see——"

"You have not been to his study?"

"No, sir! I——"

"Give it to me." Mr. Quelch took the wet, blotched letter, glanced at it and drew a deep, deep, breath. That note had not, after all, gone to the Head and he was saved!

"Cherry! I gave you a hundred lines an hour ago. You need not do them," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Thank you, sir!" stuttered Bob.

Quelch waved him away, and he left the study like a fellow in a dream. His friends gazed at him inquiringly as he rejoined them in the quad.

"Had it bad?" asked Harry.

"Can you fellows guess this one?" said Bob, almost dazedly. "Quelch never licked me—never jawed me—and he's let me off my lines! Can anybody guess that one?"

Nobody could! It was just a mystery to the chums of the Remove. Almost anything might have happened to Bob after what he had done: and all that had happened was that he was let off his lines! Nobody could possibly "guess that one." And the next time they saw Mr. Quelch—coming away from the Head's study after a happy hour spent in probing the mysterious obscurities of that great Greek, Sophocles—he looked in the best temper ever, and gave Bob Cherry a pleasant nod and a smile!

So they just gave it up!

THE END

**HENRY
the
HUNTER**

