

"BILLY BUNTER'S BLUNDER!" THIS WEEK'S SPECIAL STORY OF HARRY WHARTON & Co. OF GREYFRIARS—INSIDE!

The Magnet

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2^d

EVERY SATURDAY.

LIBRARY



CAUGHT IN THE ACT!

Listening at keyholes is one of Billy Bunter's little weaknesses. . . . But he doesn't get away with it this time!
(See the fine long school story inside.)



Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address:
The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

NOTE.—All Jokes and Limericks should be sent to
c/o "Magnet," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4. (Comp.).

SAILORS are a superstitious lot! I know, because I have a large number of them amongst my friends. Harry Taylor, of Herne Bay, has a sailor pal, too, and he has been telling Harry that many sailors swear that

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

actually exists, and many of them have seen it. Harry wants to know what I think about it. Well, let me tell Harry, first of all, of an experience which happened to one of my sailor pals. He was on watch on a torpedo-boat during the night, and suddenly sighted the light of another vessel bearing down right upon him. The light was almost right on top of him when he noticed it, and he immediately gave the order "Hard-a-port!" But, to his surprise, the light still remained right ahead!

He frankly admits that he got "the wind up," and rushed to the side of the bridge to see if the boat was obeying her helm, thinking, of course, that something had gone wrong with the steering gear, and that a collision was imminent. But the torpedo-boat had swung off her course, all right, yet the strange light remained straight ahead! You can't wonder at him thinking if all the yarns he had heard about

PHANTOM SHIPS

were true! Anyway, he jumped down and ran along to the fore-castle head, and then the light suddenly disappeared. There was no question of it being a reflection, or anything like that—it was a clear and bright, though rather weird light. He brought the boat back to her course, and then started to puzzle it out. There was no ship anywhere near him—that was evident, or there would have been a collision. And then he hit on the explanation! The strange light was caused by

ST. ELMO'S FIRE!

I don't know whether you've ever heard of St. Elmo's Fire—as it is called—but it is one of the most weird and wonderful of electrical manifestations. It is a weird, ghostly light which suddenly appears at the ends of yards, or on the top of masts on ships at sea. Sometimes it actually appears on the finger-ends of sailors working up aloft! No one knows exactly what it is, or how it is caused, except that the electricity in the air has something to do with it. Now, this torpedo-boat had a flagstaff right forward, and the weird light was nothing other than St. Elmo's fire appearing on the top of that staff!

Let's come back to the Flying Dutchman. My friend's theory—and I think he is right—is that the legend of the phantom ship came from some sailor or sailors who saw a similar manifestation

of this particular light. Probably there were peculiar cloud formations behind it, and the result was that they believed they had actually seen a phantom ship which vanished as they drew near to it.

HOW IS IT DONE?

A "Magnetite" who went to Paris for a brief holiday recently—lucky fellow!—describes a wonderful illusion which he saw there, and asks me if I can tell him how it was done. He and a lot of other people went into a large room which was decorated as an Eastern palace. The lights went out for a while, and then twinkled up again all over the place, making the room seem as if it were boundless in extent, and lit by millions of tiny globes. Again the lights went out, and when they came on again my chum and his friends found themselves in a vast forest, lit by glow-worms and electrical butterflies, with trees stretching into infinity. Once more the lights went out, and when they came on again everyone was in the famous palace of the Alhambra!

My chum hadn't time to discover what had happened, before, in a twinkling of an eye they were all back in the room from which they had started! How was it done? My chum must remember that in illusions of this kind

MIRRORS HOLD THE SECRET!

The room was composed of mirrors with a column separating each one. Only a third of these columns are seen at one time, and the mirrors do the rest and reflect the columns over and over again. When the lights go out the columns are turned one third, and the parts of them which are then seen represent trees. Hence the illimitable forest! The glow-worms and butterflies are lowered from the roof. Then the columns are turned again, and a third portion of them is reflected hundreds and hundreds of times. The room, of course, remains the same all the time; the illusion is created by the mirrors and the lighting effects!

Owing to the Whitsun Holidays your next issue of the MAGNET will be on sale Friday, May 17th.

MORE FREE GIFTS!

By the way, chums, don't lose sight of the fact that our splendid companion paper, the "Gem Library," is still going great guns with its free gifts of picture cards—printed in full colours—dealing with mechanical

MARVELS OF THE FUTURE!

This week's free picture card, a real corker, too, depicts a

200 m.p.h. LOCOMOTIVE,

another dream of the future. There will be in all sixteen of these "peeps into the future," and you will do well to collect the whole set. Pop round to your news-agent to-day and ask him to reserve a copy of the "Gem Library" for you every Wednesday.

CAN SAND SING?

is the question asked by B. G., of Cambuslang. I suppose he is referring to the "singing sands" which are found in parts of Australia. These sands give out a peculiar singing noise when anyone walks upon them, and I remember hearing a lecture some time ago in which the lecturer gave examples of how this particular sand could sing. He had tubes of different sands and pounded them all in turn, playing a simple little tune upon them. So the answer to this particular question is: Yes, it can, to a certain extent!

SMILE, BOYS, SMILE,

at this joke which earns a pocket-knife for George Goldfarb, of 5258, St. Urbain Street, Montreal, Quebec, Canada:

A young man took his aged grandmother to an art exhibition. They wandered about looking at the paintings with interest. Finally, they stopped before a portrait which showed a man sitting in a high-backed chair. Tacked to the frame was a small, white card.

"What does it say on the card?" asked the old lady.

"A portrait of T. M. Brown, by himself," answered the grandson.

The old lady went closer to the picture.

"What fools these art people must be," she muttered. "Anybody could see Brown is by himself. There's nobody else in the picture, anyway!"

Now that space is getting rather short I must turn to my little black book and see what's what for next week.

Topping the bill, of course, is another magnificent long complete school story dealing with the adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, entitled:

"THE SHYLOCK OF GREYFRIARS!"

By Frank Richards.

I won't divulge the name of the shylock—possibly you can guess his identity? Anyway, the yarn itself is the real goods, and will be acclaimed on all sides as one of Mr. Richards' best.

Next comes another laughable story of St. Sam's—the last of the "Bird-man" series:

"THE SKOOLBOY AIR-HEROES!"

Dr. Birchmall realises at long last that if you play with fire you're sure to burn your fingers in the end. That this yarn will raise roars of merriment I'm convinced.

And to wind up the programme there will be another gripping instalment of

"SPEEDWAY PALS!"

Carney Allan's thrilling dirt-track serial, together with another "Come into the Office, Boys!" Cheerio, chums!

YOUR EDITOR.



—featuring Harry Wharton & Co., the chums of Greyfriars. By Frank Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Awful!

"BUNTER!"

Mr. Quelch's voice rapped out through the stillness of the Remove Form-room with the sharpness of a knife edge.

Billy Bunter started guiltily as his name was called, and his podgy face broke into a weird mixture of contortions.

"Bunter!"

Mr. Quelch's eyes, often compared by the members of the Form to gimlets on account of their penetrating shrewdness, fixed on the Owl of the Remove in a terrific stare.

"Bunter! Boy! Stand up at once!"

William George Bunter rolled clumsily to his feet, his face working strangely.

The Remove were "doing" History English, and for quite twenty minutes their Form master had expounded the virtues of King Edward the Sixth. Mr. Quelch's class had listened to the words of wisdom that fell from his august lips with mixed feelings. Outside the Form-room windows a brilliant sun blazed down upon the quad. Inside the Form-room the minute hand of the clock on the wall seemed never to have moved so slowly to the Removites.

It still wanted ten minutes to morning "break," and the rapt expressions of attention on the faces of the juniors were gradually changing to a restlessness, accompanied by much scraping of feet and fidgeting that earned Mr. Quelch's deep displeasure.

As Harold Skinner remarked, "Old Quelch" was a demon for "wagging his chin," and there was no doubt that Mr. Quelch took English History seriously, as indeed he took all subjects in the curriculum. With the passing of the minutes the master had waxed quite eloquent on the merits of the boy king—an eloquence, if he had only known it, that was entirely lost upon the members of his Form. And whilst Mr. Quelch "spouted," the Removites with great caution had filled in the time with various devices.

While Mr. Quelch's back was turned to the blackboard upon which, with commendable care and exactitude, he

was drawing a genealogical tree of that period with which the lesson dealt, Harold Skinner, the cad of the Remove, improved the shining hour with a surreptitious study of "Winning Tips." Bob Cherry, who found it always a difficult matter to sit still for any length of time, began to shuffle his big feet. Lord Mauloverer, the slacker of the Remove, began to doze; Percy Bolsover, a trifle more daring, had ventured to relieve the monotony of his existence by slinging ink pellets at Ogilvy.

And William George Bunter gave up his entire attention to a bag of toffee which he had smuggled into the Form-room. Eating was the Owl of the Remove's besetting sin, the be all and end all of his life, so to speak. So whilst Mr. Quelch chalked on the big blackboard what were meaningless things to Billy Bunter, that cheerful youth had proceeded to cram large

Short rations for a week! That, to William George Bunter, is something really too awful to contemplate. Nevertheless, it is the punishment Bunter's Form-master sees fit to award him for eating in class. 'Sawful, isn't it?

quantities of toffee into his capacious mouth. For quite ten minutes the fat junior had managed to conceal the fact that his attention was on anything but the English History lesson. And then, with the swiftness of light, Mr. Quelch's suspicions had been aroused.

Wheeling round from the blackboard, he had caught William George Bunter in the act of putting a large piece of succulent toffee in his mouth. The Owl of the Remove, taken thoroughly unawares, had stuffed the toffee into his mouth, and had, with one gulp, endeavoured to swallow it. The result was disastrous. Half the toffee became fixed in his throat, the other half wrapped itself lovingly around his teeth.

"Bunter!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "You are not paying attention!"

"Mmmmmmmmm!"

"You are actually eating in the Form-room," continued Mr. Quelch acidly. "Eating during the English lesson!"

Judging from the tone of Mr.

Quelch's words, it almost seemed as if the Owl of the Remove had committed an unpardonable sin. Really, it was hard-lines on Bunter to be singled out like this!

"Bunter! Remove from your mouth at once whatever you are eating!"

"Mmmmmmmmm!" Billy Bunter's face worked spasmodically, and that was all.

Mr. Quelch's brow grew thunderous. He picked up the pointer.

"Boy! Do as you're told!"

Billy Bunter's eyes blinked, and his face went crimson. Indeed, a keen observer would have said that the fat junior was in danger of choking.

"Mmmmmmmmmmm!"

The Remove looked on interestedly, welcoming this unexpected deliverance from the subject of King Edward the Sixth's reign.

"Do you hear me, Bunter?" rapped Mr. Quelch.

Apparently Billy Bunter did hear, for he nodded his bullet head as a token, and made one more final attempt to get rid of that large piece of toffee. His fat face grew as red as a lobster as he tried to release his teeth from the toffee, then it changed suddenly to a sickly green.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "The boy is ill!"

"Shall I thump him on the back, sir?" asked Harold Skinner obligingly. And before Mr. Quelch could give any answer Skinner leaped to his feet and thumped William George Bunter hard and truly on the back.

"Mummmmm! Groooooough!"

Thump!

Harold Skinner again obligingly thumped the fat junior, and this time it had effect. The force of the blow induced Bunter to yell, and as he yelled his teeth, so long engaged in the toffee, came apart. Added to which the refractory piece of toffee that had lingered in his throat slid down with a gulp.

"Groooooough! Oh dear!"

Billy Bunter gasped and spluttered and spluttered and gasped as he clutched at the desk for support.

Mr. Quelch eyed him sternly.

"Bunter! You wretched boy!" he

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snapped. "This is what comes of your disgusting habit of gorging."

"Groooooough!" groaned Bunter pathetically.

"This is not the first time," continued Mr. Quelch, "that I have discovered you eating in class. This is not the first time that I have spoken to you on the subject of gluttony!"

"Wow!"

"It is disgraceful!" rumbled the master of the Remove. "Disgusting! And I will not tolerate it any longer!"

"Yow! Wow!"

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips.

"I am determined to put a stop to this gluttony, wretched boy!" went on Mr. Quelch. "But for the fact that you have made yourself ill by your greediness I would care you severely!"

"Oh, lor'!" groaned Bunter.

"As it is, you will take three hundred lines—"

Bunter's fat face brightened a trifle. After all, three hundred lines was better than a severe caning. But Mr. Quelch had not finished with the Owl of the Remove yet.

"And for the next week," added the master of the Remove, "the tuckshop will be closed to you. I will give Mrs. Mible instructions to that effect."

Bunter's face fell. The punishment hurt him more than three thousand lines would have done.

"Oh!"

"Furthermore," continued Mr. Quelch acidly, "you are forbidden to partake of tea in your study or in the study of any other member of the Form!"

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Bunter. "Groooooough!"

"Stop making those ridiculous expressions!" thundered the master of the Remove, and then he turned to the rest of the Form. "I forbid you boys to give Bunter food of any kind—that includes sweets and the like—for the space of a week from to-day. Any breach of that order will bring down severe punishment on the heads of the offenders."

The Remove listened with dutiful expressions. In the circumstances it would not be difficult to obey that command.

Billy Bunter, who was now practically recovered from the effects of the toffee looked lugubrious. To be barred from indulging in snacks between meals was a terrific blow to him, and already his heart was heavy within him. For one whole week he would have to "tea" in Hall on "doorsteps" and weak tea. For one whole week he would be able only to gaze upon the delicious jam-tarts that daily graced the little window of Mrs. Mible's tuckshop, whilst other juniors enjoyed them to their heart's content. Really, it was awful to contemplate.

Mr. Quelch bent a stern face on the Owl of the Remove.

"I trust this will prove a lasting lesson to you, Bunter," he said. "You understand, from to-day and onwards for a week, you are not on any account to eat anything other than that which is provided in the dining-hall."

Billy Bunter was silent. The blow seemed to have stricken him dumb.

"You understand?" Mr. Quelch's voice rose a little.

"Owl! Oh, yes, sir!" gasped the fat junior.

"You may sit down!" said Mr. Quelch. "We will now resume the lesson!"

But there the master of the Remove made a mistake. The diversion from English History to the gluttony of

William George Bunter occupied the few minutes left to morning "break," and even as he picked up the chalk and turned to the blackboard, Mr. Quelch, glancing at the clock, was reminded of the fact. With a slight frown of annoyance, he faced the Remove.

"You may dismiss!"

And the Removes lost no time in obeying that command. The unintentional services of William George Bunter had shortened the lesson considerably and the juniors were of the opinion that the subject of Billy Bunter, the boy gorger, was far more interesting than that of King Edward the Sixth, the boy king.

But Billy Bunter felt no glow of satisfaction for his unintentional services. His podgy face was woe-begone in the extreme as he rolled out of the Form-room. For him the world had ceased to move; had ceased to have any attractiveness, and he summed up the situation in one word:

"Awful!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter Tries It On!

"I SAY, Peter—"

William George Bunter ensconced in the single armchair that Study No. 7 boasted, looked pathetically at Peter Todd.

"I say, Peter, old chap—"

Peter Todd paid no heed.

It was tea-time and Peter Todd, together with Alonzo Todd, his cousin, and Tom Dutton, the deaf junior, was piling into the good things on the table with a goodwill prompted by an afternoon's healthy leather-chasing at the nets on Little Side.

Billy Bunter's mouth watered.

He had partaken of tea in Hall, such as it was, and like Alexander of old he was looking round for fresh worlds to conquer. Mr. Quelch's fiat had gone forth—it had spread throughout the entire school and on no hand was any sympathy extended to William George Bunter in his misfortune. Indeed, it seemed to the Owl of the Remove that all Greyfriars gloried in his plight, a circumstance that was inexplicable to such a fascinating, popular fellow as William George Bunter.

"I say, Peter, old chap—old fellow!"

Peter Todd paused in the act of cutting a large sultana cake.

"What's wrong, old fat man?"

Billy Bunter licked his lips.

"You might show a little sympathy with a fellow," he said plaintively. "Don't you think old Quelch has treated me unjustly?"

"No!" said Peter laconically.

"Beast!" exclaimed Bunter. "I say, that cake looks fine."

Peter Todd, his mouth full of cake, nodded.

"I think I'll just sample a bit of it," said Bunter, with well-assumed carelessness, and he reached out a podgy hand to take a portion of the cake from the dish.

Crack!

"Yoooop!"

Just as the fat junior's hand was about to close on the cake Peter Todd picked up the bread-knife and rapped the handle of it soundly on Bunter's fat fingers. Bunter's hand was withdrawn suddenly. He sucked his damaged knuckles and glared balefully at the cheerful Peter.

"Beast!" he exclaimed. "Yow! My knuckles!"

"Keep your fat paws off this table," said Peter unperturbed, "or you'll get another crack over the knuckles."

"Yah! Beast!"

Peter resumed his tea. It seemed to Bunter that Peter took a delight in seeing him suffer the pangs of hunger, so the Owl of the Remove turned his attention to Peter's cousin.

"I say, Alonzo, old fellow—"

Alonzo Todd, the duffer of the Remove, beamed.

"Yes, my dear Bunter," he said.

"You might feel sorry for a chap," said Bunter miserably.

"My dear Bunter, knowing you as I do," said Alonzo, "and your inveterate habit of demolishing large quantities of indigestible compounds I do feel sorry—"

"Oh, good!"

"That Mr. Quelch did not see fit to order you, my dear Bunter, a month's abstinence from such things," continued Alonzo, in his usual long-winded manner.

"Oh, really, Alonzo—"

Alonzo wagged a bony finger at his fat study mate.

"My Uncle Benjamin has always cautioned me as to the excessive over-charging of the stomach. All manner of disorders spring from the unwary consumption of foodstuffs that are unnecessary to the organism of mankind."

"Go it, Alonzo!" grinned Peter.

"And I concur with the view of our learned Form-master that you are inclined to gluttony, my dear Bunter. You have my good wishes that this week of abstinence will prove efficacious and beneficial in its effect upon your system. Try and be firm-willed in this matter. Whenever temptation to break the order Mr. Quelch has given you springs to your mind, counter it with a little self control. Say to yourself, my dear Bunter, 'I am not in need of this food. I have no liking for it! Say'—Yoop!"

Alonzo Todd had no intention of making that unintelligible ejaculation, but a cushion suddenly whizzed from the direction of Bunter and the armchair had the effect of proving it as the missile landed fairly and squarely on Alonzo's chin.

"Yah!" roared Bunter, his eyes gleaming. "You keep your long-winded sermons to yourself."

"My dear Bunter," remonstrated Alonzo. "I am shocked, nay disgusted at this want of appreciation in you. My uncle Benjamin—"

He broke off as Bunter made a movement to hurl a book, that lay close handy, at him. Really it was difficult to impress upon the intellect of William George Bunter the doctrines of Uncle Benjamin in the circumstances. So Alonzo, with a sigh, gave up the task and resumed his tea.

For some minutes Bunter watched his studymates, or rather the good things they were consuming. And, in desperation, he at last turned to Tom Dutton.

"I say, Dutton, old chap—"

Dutton glared.

"Who are you calling a Jap?" he demanded warmly. "If you're asking for a thick ear, Bunter, say so."

"I said, old 'chap,'" said Bunter loudly.

Tom Dutton pushed back his chair.

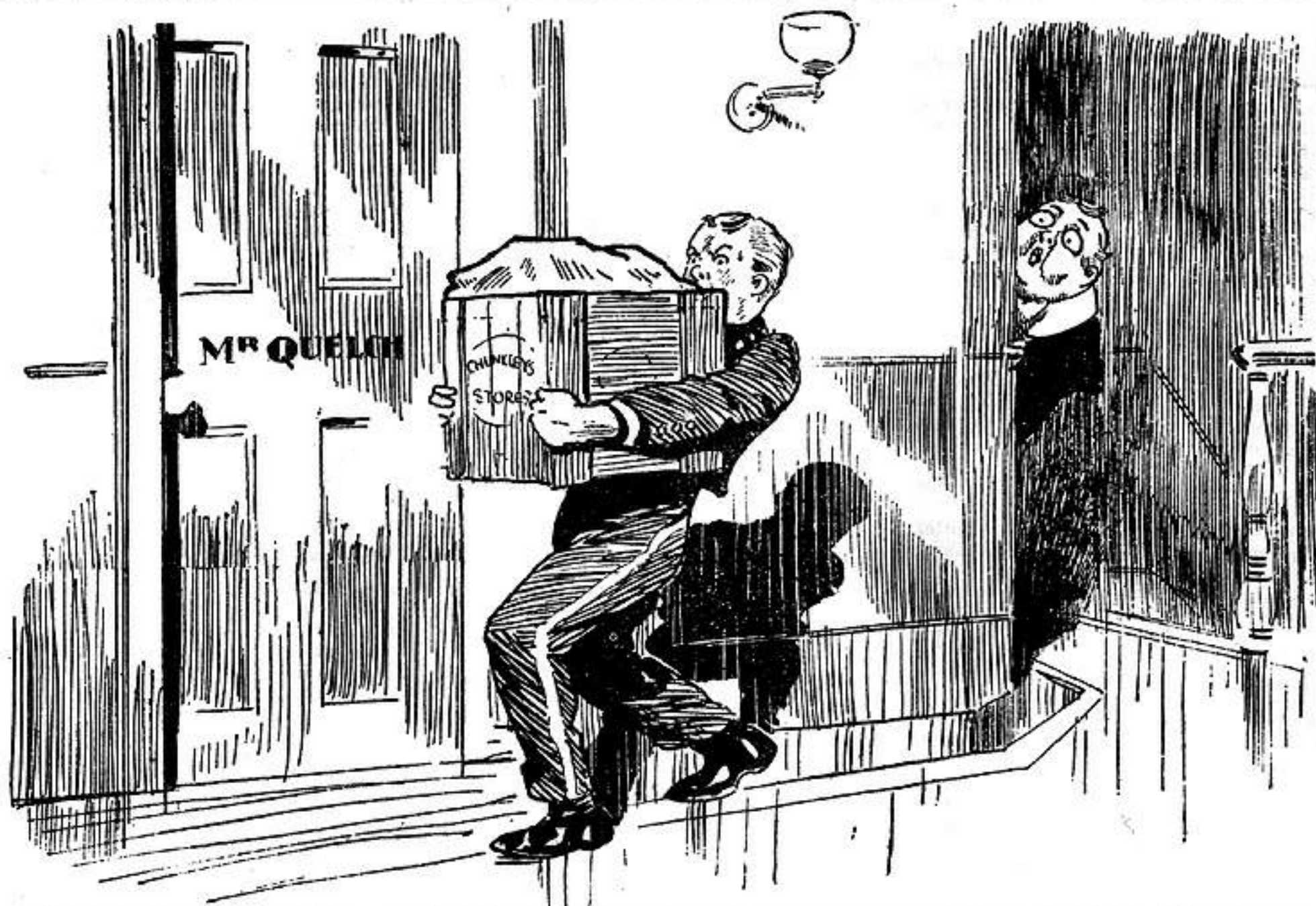
"You'll give my head a rap?" he asked, rolling up his cuffs. "Why I'd burst you!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Bunter. "I didn't say I'd give your head a rap, old fellow. I wouldn't think of it, really, I wouldn't!"

"Oh couldn't I!" roared Dutton. "Put up your hands and we'll see if I can't!"

"Hold on!" bellowed Bunter. "I only wanted to ask you to sympathise—and—"

"What!" said Dutton angrily. "A



"My heye!" grumbled Trotter. "Old Quelch oughter be made to carry this 'ere blinking box hisself!" And the page, quite unconscious that Billy Bunter had watched his every movement, sighed with relief when the door of Mr. Quelch's study came in sight at last. (See Chapter 5.)

fat porker like you black both my eyes. Why, I'll smash you!"

And he advanced on William George Bunter with clenched fists.

Peter Todd grinned and intervened. Really Tom Dutton's affliction was on occasions more of an affliction to his Form fellows than to Dutton himself.

"Hold on!" bellowed Peter, dragging the excited Dutton by the arm. "Bunter didn't say he'd black your eyes. He said 'sympathise'!"

"He could have six tries," said Dutton indignantly, "and I'd fight him with one hand, too. Black my eyes. Why—"

"Bunter's trying to enlist your sympathy!" bellowed Todd at the top of his voice. "Quelch's forbidden him to eat in the study—"

Dutton glared at Peter this time.

"Well, your own face isn't so jolly clean," he said warmly. "And I don't see why you should say my face is muddy."

"I never said anything about your silly face," shrieked Peter, turning crimson in his efforts to make himself understood.

"If you say I go the pace, Peter Todd," retorted Dutton, clenching his big fists. "You can come in the gym and prove your words."

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Peter. "This is awful!"

"You silly ass!" said Dutton disdainfully. "It isn't lawful, not here anyway, to play the giddy goat and go the pace. You ought to know better than that, Peter Todd. I'm surprised at you!"

Peter Todd took a deep breath. At times he found his deaf studymate very trying.

"You've got it all wrong," he shouted at the top of his voice. "Bunter was trying to enlist your sympathy to give him some cake."

"Then, why on earth didn't you say so before," said Tom Dutton warmly.

"I did!" bellowed Peter, in despair.

"There's no need to shout," replied Dutton. "I may be a trifle deaf; but there's no need to shout!"

And he turned on his heel and stalked out of the study.

Peter fanned himself when Dutton had gone.

"Ye gods!" he gasped. "I don't know how I stand that chap in this study."

And Peter and Alonzo resumed their tea under the watchful, hungry eyes of Billy Bunter. Only one more attempt did the fat junior make to sample the sultana cake and that ended disastrously for him, for Alonzo, turning sharply with a cup of hot tea half-raised to his lips, collided with Bunter's podgy hand.

Swoosh!

The contents of the cup swamped down over Bunter's outstretched hand with scalding effect. He withdrew his hand for the second time as if he had been shot.

"Yaroooooh! Oh, dear! You've scalded me!"

Peter Todd grinned.

"Serve you right, old fat man," he said callously. "I hope it hurts."

"Yah! Rotter!" roared Bunter. "Mean rotter! I'm fed-up with this rotten study! I'm going somewhere else where I'm appreciated! Yah!"

And William George Bunter rolled from the study, staying at the doorway for a second only to glare at the cheerful Peter with a glare that threatened to crack his big spectacles.

But that terrific glare, which should have shrivelled him up on the spot had no effect on Peter. He went on eating his tea regardless of William George

Bunter and his grievances, and Alonzo, who usually took his cue from his Cousin Peter, did likewise.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Other Quelch!

"BEAST!"

Billy Bunter paused outside the door of Mr. Quelch's study as he made that muttered ejaculation.

In the hand of the Owl of the Remove was a pile of paper covered with his usual straggling caligraphy and a plentitude of blots and smudges. The papers represented the three hundred lines he had been awarded for eating in the Form-room that morning.

Mr. Quelch had stated that the impot was to be handed in by six o'clock, and, lazy as Billy Bunter was he had not dared to disregard that command.

Tap!

After the muttered uncomplimentary epithet the fat junior knocked on the door of Mr. Quelch's study.

There was no answer.

Billy Bunter quietly pushed open the door and peered in. The study was empty, therefore the Owl of the Remove had no further need to mutter beneath his breath.

"Beast!" This time the epithet was quite audible.

Bunter rolled up to the desk and placed his lines on it. That was the usual procedure in the absence of the master of the Remove. Then he peered round him inquisitively, inquisitiveness being a marked quality in his make-up. On the desk was a pile of manuscript neatly written in Mr. Quelch's hand-writing—the result of Mr. Quelch's

literary efforts to compile a History of Greyfriars. All the Remove knew that this history was one of the Form master's pet hobbies, and that it had taken him years to collect and set down, and for a moment William George Bunter was tempted to seize the manuscript and burn it.

Fortunately, perhaps, for the vengeful Owl of the Remove, he dismissed the idea as being too dangerous. And it was while he lingered in the study, turning over in his mind wild plans for making "old Quelch sit up" that the telephone-bell rang.

Buzzzzzzzzzz! Buzzzzzz!

After a few moments' delay William George Bunter rolled towards the instrument and picked up the receiver, an action not prompted by thoughtfulness, but sheer inquisitiveness.

"Hallo!"

"Is that Mr. Quelch?" came a voice, with businesslike brusqueness.

"Mr.—Mr. Quelch—" began Bunter, when the businesslike voice broke in again.

"This is Chunkley's Stores speaking."

"Oh! Ah!" mumbled Bunter.

"We are sending you the hat you asked for by our delivery-van first thing to-morrow, sir. We trust, Mr. Kelch"—the Chunkley's employee apparently found difficulty in deciphering the Form master's name—"that it will meet with your full approval."

"Oh!" mumbled Bunter. "Yes."

"If there is anything further you require, Mr. Felch," went on the businesslike young gentleman at the other end of the telephone, "we shall be most happy to serve you."

He waited for a few seconds, evidently expecting some sort of reply to that magnanimous offer. And in those few moments Billy Bunter's fat brain worked at double speed. So far he had confined his replies over the telephone to monosyllabic ejaculations. This time a little cough escaped him before he spoke. Anyone who knew William George Bunter well, would have read in that slight cough sure sign that the fat junior was contemplating either a spell of ventriloquism, or the imitation of another person's voice.

"There are several things I require, as a matter of fact!" The voice was that of Mr. Henry Samuel Quelch to a nicety, and the stores assistant became most deferential on the spot.

"If you will be so good as to give me a list of the articles you require, Mr. Quelch, we shall be delighted to send them, together with the hat. I need hardly say that Chunkley's prices, sir, bear most favourable comparison with the foremost London stores."

"Ahem!" grinned Bunter. "Quite, quite. Now, lemme see. I mean, I want a lot—that is to say, a quantity of grub—ahem—I mean foodstuffs—"

"Certainly, sir!" came the "Chunkley's voice." "I have a pencil and paper here, sir."

Billy Bunter's fat face broke into a grin.

"Kindly send me a large sultana cake, with icing—plenty of icing. Six dozen eclairs, three dozen jam-tarts, a dozen rabbit-pies—"

There was an audible gasp of surprise from Chunkley's assistant. What a Form master wanted with such a quantity of foodstuffs puzzled him. Still, business was business, and the zealous assistant already saw his commission from that order in advance, so to speak.

"Yes, sir. Certainly, sir. Is there anything else you will be requiring?"

"Of course," said Bunter, thoroughly

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prepared now to go the full hog, so to speak. "Two dozen pork pies; a couple of dozen two-pound jars of jam, of mixed variety; a dozen tins of pineapple and peaches; a dozen tins of apricots and pears—"

"Yes, sir!" came the very respectful answer. "Anything else, sir?"

Billy Bunter paused a moment.

"Better make that three iced cakes, my man," he said. "I shall want at least three while that beast Quelch—"

"I beg your pardon, sir?"

"Ahem! I mean put in some fruit—bananas, apples, oranges, a dozen of each. And a dozen slabs of toffee, creamy toffee; and a dozen boxes of chocolates—four pound boxes."

"Yes, sir!" There was awe as well as deference in the voice now. A Form master who could afford to order things on such a lavish scale as this was well worth preserving amongst the thousands of Chunkley's shoppers.

Billy Bunter's fat face creased up into a thoughtful frown.

"I wonder if I've forgotten anything?" he muttered, in his own voice.

"I beg your pardon, sir?" said Chunkley's man. "I did not quite catch that."

"Ahem!" coughed Bunter. "That will be all, my man."

"Thank you very much, sir. I will instruct our man to deliver these goods together with the hat to-morrow morning."

Billy Bunter's brain worked quickly. What on earth Mr. Quelch would say when that terrific order of food arrived at Greyfriars on the morrow the fat junior trembled to think. But he grinned cheerfully as he recollected that it was Mr. Quelch's invariable habit to take a walk with Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, every Wednesday afternoon. The obvious thing to do was to ensure that the goods were delivered when Mr. Quelch was absent from the school.

And Bunter took the obvious course.

"Please send the goods in the afternoon," he said, in a perfect imitation of Mr. Quelch's voice, "as near three o'clock as you can conveniently manage."

"Certainly, sir! I will see to it myself that the goods are delivered to you punctually at three o'clock. The bill will—"

Bunter jumped. He hadn't thought of the bill. What would Mr. Quelch say or do when a formidable bill for things he hadn't even ordered, let alone received, confronted him?

It was a hitch in the glorious programme Billy Bunter had hastily mapped out to defeat the order of Mr. Quelch. But his podgy brain proved equal to the occasion.

"Lemme see, as I shall be wanting several things from your stores, I think I had better open a quarterly account with you."

"Oh! Certainly, sir! We shall be pleased to accommodate you, sir. The bill, including the hat you inquired about this morning, comes to eight pounds seventeen shillings and ninepence-halfpenny—"

Billy Bunter started, and then he grinned.

"I take it, sir, you will wish this amount to be placed to your quarterly account?"

"Yes, yes, of course!"

"Very good, sir, and thank you very much. I am sure you will derive full satisfaction from the quality of our goods, sir."

And Chunkley's rang off.

Bunter replaced the receiver, and grinned a fat grin. Already he saw

that huge consignment of grub arriving; already he pictured himself having the feed—a series of feeds, in fact—of his life. That his action in using the name of his Form master in such circumstances was distinctly criminal. Billy Bunter did not see, for Bunter's conscience was of the elastic variety common to those who are more fool than rogue.

What William George Bunter did see, however, was a terrific score over Mr. Quelch, the "beast" who had cut down his rations, as it were, and the more the fat junior pondered over the situation the more cheerful he became. Really, he had chosen to enter the study of the Remove Form master at a propitious moment. Chunkley's had elected to ring up at a most propitious moment, too. But whether the results would be propitious for the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove only the future could prove.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Shock for Billy Bunter!

"COMING down to the cricket, you chaps?"

Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, strolled into the Common-room after dinner the following day, with a cricket bat under his arm.

It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and the Remove cricket eleven were due to play Cecil Reginald Temple's team from the Upper Fourth.

Most of the cricketers had changed, and were waiting for Harry Wharton before they proceeded to Little Side.

"We're all ready, old bean," said Bob Cherry. "Waiting for you."

"The waitfulness is terrific," purred Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, with a dusky smile.

"Come on, then!" said Wharton, with a grin. "And let's wipe up the floor with Temple's crowd!"

"What-ho!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. "Here's our tame porpoise!"

Billy Bunter rolled into the Common-room.

"He looks a shade thinner already, I do believe," remarked Johnny Bull, running a critical eye over Bunter's ample figure.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" said Bunter. "You're a lot of meat beasts! Yah!"

"Isn't he nice?" smiled Bob Cherry.

"I say, old fat man, would you like a jam-tart?"

And, much to the surprise of Harry Wharton & Co., Billy Bunter merely sniffed. Usually the mention of the words "jam-tart" would be sufficient to interest him. On this occasion the fat junior actually sniffed in such a fashion as to suggest that jam-tarts were the last things on earth for which he had any longing.

"Hold me up, someone!" gasped Bob playfully. "Bunter doesn't want a jam-tart!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What about some fresh eclairs?" suggested Johnny Bull. "Mrs. Mumble's just made a fresh lot. They look jolly tempting. I can tell you!"

Billy Bunter treated the Famous Five to a lofty stare.

"I'm not interested in jam-tarts or eclairs," he said. "And if you'll follow my advice, you chaps will leave such indigestible things alone. I've often noticed how greedy you are. Take an example in me and leave grub alone."

"Oh, my giddy aunt!"

"Carry me home, to di!"

And, leaving Harry Wharton & Co.

gasping with amazement, Billy Bunter rolled out of the Common-room. Once outside the door of that apartment, however, he grinned. It was nearing three o'clock. And then—

Bunter's mouth watered at the thought.

It continued to water for the next half-hour, and then a spasm of alarm ran through Bunter's podgy frame. The delivery van from Chunkley's was expected at three sharp. It now wanted five minutes to three o'clock, and so far Mr. Quelch had shown no sign of leaving his study. Really, it was most inconsiderate of the master of the Remove, Bunter reflected.

From a convenient corner of the passage Bunter kept a wary eye on the door of Mr. Quelch's study. At length he saw Mr. Hacker approaching, and further doubts assailed the fat junior; for the master of the Shell was not dressed for walking out.

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter. "Supposing the beasts don't go out for their walk!"

The thought sent a shiver down his spine as he pictured the wrath of Mr. Quelch when that huge parcel ordered in his name arrived. That the master of the Remove would make inquiries would follow as a matter of course, and that William George Bunter's guilt in the matter would be discovered was a certainty.

Billy Bunter detached himself from the corner of the passage and rolled towards Mr. Quelch's study. Outside the door he adopted a kneeling posture—that being a most favourable position for bringing his fat ear on a level with the keyhole of the door—and made a feeble pretence of fastening his shoelace.

From within the study came the murmur of voices, now distinctly audible to Billy Bunter.

And what he heard caused further shivers of apprehension to course through Bunter's being.

"I'm awfully sorry, Quelch!" Mr. Hacker was saying. "But, you know—duty first."

"Never mind," replied the master of the Remove. "I myself have a lot of Latin papers to go through; we'll postpone our walk for this week, my dear Hacker."

"Oh lor!" Bunter's jaw dropped.

From the conversation it was easy to see that the usual walk was "off" for that afternoon. That meant Mr. Quelch would be in his study when Chunkley's delivered the goods ordered in his name the previous day.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Bunter.

But the fat junior's cup of woe was not full yet.

"BUNTER!"

The Owl of the Remove started guiltily as that deep, stern voice fell upon his ears, and, wheeling, he saw the awe-inspiring figure of Dr. Locke before him.

"Bunter!" said the Head of Greyfriars sternly. "I have been standing here for a few moments—"

"Oh dear!"

"And, although you are making a pretence of tying up your shoelace, it is obvious to me that you are deliberately eavesdropping!"

"Oh, nunno, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I wouldn't dream of listening at a keyhole, sir! Really, I wouldn't!"

"Bunter—"

"Besides, sir, I didn't hear anything. I mean my shoelace came undone, and I stopped to fasten it."

"Don't add fabrications to your offence, boy!" said the Head severely. "You were distinctly eavesdropping!"

"Oh, really, sir! I wouldn't dream

of doing such a thing! Besides, I only heard old Hacker—ahem!—I mean Mr. Hacker—"

"And what did you hear Mr. Hacker say?"

"N-n-nothing, sir! I didn't hear him say that he couldn't go out for a walk with old Quelch—I mean Mr. Quelch this afternoon."

"Boy!" said Dr. Locke sternly. "You are incorrigible!"

"Am I, sir?" muttered the fat junior feebly, being quite unacquainted with the word.

"Come with me!"

And Dr. Locke strode off down the passage, with rustling gown. Bunter rolled after him with a lugubrious expression on his fat face. He knew he was booked for a caning, and that, as a preliminary to what might follow when Mr. Quelch discovered the awful truth, fairly made him shiver.

Billy Bunter followed Dr. Locke into that august gentleman's study. He did not stay longer than five minutes; but it was five minutes too long, in the

ANOTHER "MAGNETITE" RAISES A SMILE AND WINS A USEFUL POCKET KNIFE.

Orders had been received by a certain regiment instructing them to march to another town about twelve miles away. On arriving at their destination the colonel said that the order had been misconstrued and that the regiment would have to march all the way back again. "If anyone is too tired to walk back," he finished, "let him take one step forward." All the men stepped forward with the exception of one old soldier. "And what is your name?" asked the colonel, stepping up to the man. "Baker, sir," came the reply. "Well, Baker," said the colonel, patting the man on the back, "I'm very proud of you! You are the only man to volunteer to walk back again." "What!" exclaimed the old soldier in surprise. "Me walk back twelve miles? Why, I haven't the strength to take one step forward!"

A penknife has been forwarded to :
Leonard Chapman, 22, Spring
Gardens, Reading.

opinion of Billy Bunter. For when he emerged from the study the fat junior was tucking his arms under his armpits in a vain attempt to assuage the ache in his palms.

Dr. Locke had not spared the rod. After delivering a short lecture to Billy Bunter on the enormity of his offence, he had proceeded to drive home the lesson with four applications of a pliant cane. Bunter had not objected to the lecture; that could be compared with so much water running off a duck's back. But he had strongly objected to the application of the cane, as was witnessed by his agonised yells.

Really it seemed that Billy Bunter's luck was out.

And, what was more dreadful, Mr. Quelch was in!

With his podgy face contorted in lines of suffering, the Owl of the Remove rolled off down the passage and ensconced himself in the window-seat at the top of the School House steps. From that vantage point he held a view of a stretch of the road that ran by the gates of Greyfriars. And along that road he expected to see Chunkley's van appear at any moment now.

He was not disappointed.

The clock in the old tower struck the hour of three, and even whilst its sonorous notes were echoing over the quad the green-painted van of Chunkley's stores approached the school.

"Oh crikey!" Bunter watched the approach of the van with eyes that threatened to start out of their sockets. "If Quelch—"

Once again the fat junior's wits began to work overtime. At all costs, Mr. Quelch must not be present when that terrific parcel arrived.

Bunter glanced about him cautiously. The House was practically empty—most of the juniors having sauntered down to the cricket, or gone out of gates for a ramble in the spring sunshine.

Bunter rolled towards the prefects' room. In that room was a telephone, and in the space of a few seconds Billy Bunter was being put through to the master of the Remove.

"Hallo!" came Mr. Quelch's acid voice—the master of the Remove detested the telephone and all its works. "Hallo!"

At the telephone in the prefects' room Billy Bunter coughed.

"Is that you, my dear Quelch?"

The acidity in the voice of Mr. Quelch as he made reply was noticeably absent; for he and the Rev. Lambe, the vicar of Friardale, were great friends. And it was the Rev. Lambe's voice to perfection that Billy Bunter transmitted over the telephone.

"Is that you, Mr. Lambe?" said the master of the Remove pleasantly. "I was thinking of giving you a look-in this evening for a game of chess."

"Oh, ah!" said Bunter, alias the Rev. Lambe. "But I particularly want you to come over now, my dear Quelch, for a game of golf and—and tea."

Mr. Quelch looked at the stack of Latin papers on his desk, and paused before he replied.

Billy Bunter, scenting the reason for the pause, again chimed in with the Rev. Lambe's voice:

"I should deem it a personal favour if you could come over, my dear Quelch!"

Mr. Quelch's indecision departed.

"Of course I'll come over, my dear Lambe."

"At once?" asked Bunter, a trifle eagerly and then relapsed into the drawling voice of the Rev. Lambe. "We want to make the most of the light, you know."

"Of course," agreed Mr. Quelch. "I'll come over right away!"

He replaced the receiver, and rubbed his hands with satisfaction. He and the vicar hit it off very well, and the thought of an afternoon's golf and a pleasant chat cheered Mr. Quelch considerably. He reached for his hat, took his bag of golf clubs from the corner of his study, and departed.

And by the time he reached the window seat at the top of the School House steps William George Bunter was sitting there, with an expression on his face which he fondly imagined was angelic.

"He, he, he!" Once Mr. Quelch's rather angular figure had disappeared from view the Owl of the Remove gave vent to an unmusical exclamation. "He, he, he!"

The trick had worked. Mr. Quelch was now safely out of the way. Already Bunter had visions of the wonderful spread that was to come within the space of the next few moments.

That sending the master of the Remove out on a fool's errand was playing it "rather thick," Billy Bunter did not give a thought to. In his opinion, the

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end would justify the means, and he felt a glow of triumph and satisfaction surge within him as he saw Mr. Quelch stride off along the road to Friardale, passing on his way the green van of Chunkley's Stores, which was heading for the gates of Greyfriars.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Tuck Unlimited I

"WELL, I'm blowed!" William Gosling, the school porter, stood at the gates of Greyfriars, and scratched his ancient head.

Before him stood the man from Chunkley's, resplendent in a green livery, with a huge box of goods addressed to Mr. Quelch.

"Which I don't know what this 'ere school is coming to," murmured the porter.

The delivery-man had confided in William Gosling the nature of the parcel—a circumstance that had caused the porter some amazement.

What a Form master wanted with a huge consignment of tuck, enough to feed an army, as Gosling had remarked, was beyond his comprehension. That, in any case, it was no concern of Gosling's never entered the porter's head. He stood there mumbling, and scratched his head.

"You might sign this delivery receipt, mister," said the delivery-man.

And, still mumbling to himself, William Gosling did so.

The Chunkley's van drove off, and the school porter proceeded to look for Trotter, the page, with the charitable intention of assigning the task of taking that hefty box of goods to Mr. Quelch's study.

Trotter was found at last, and to him Gosling gave instructions in a lordly voice.

"Which this 'ere parcel has got to be taken to Mr. Quelch's study, Trotter," he said loftily. "Which you'll proceed to do same hat once and immedjate!"

Trotter, in turn, scratched his head. The size of the parcel was very nearly as big as himself, but it was a case of needs must, and, amid much puffing and grunting, Trotter at last managed to lift his burden and stagger off with it.

William Gosling watched the unsteady departure of the page-boy with the eye of a general who has dictated the moves of a battle, and then retired to his lodge and his "cold tea."

Meantime, grumbling with the same eloquency as his superior, Trotter staggered on the School House steps. From the region of the doorway Billy Bunter watched, and his mouth watered as he saw the size of the parcel he had so generously booked in the name of Mr. Quelch.

Trotter, by reason of the fact that the size of the box successfully obscured his vision ahead, and totally unaware of the interest his passage aroused in the podgy breast of William George Bunter, staggered on.

"My heyl!" he muttered. "Old Quelch oughter be made to carry this 'ere blinkin' box hisself!"

The door of Mr. Quelch's study came in sight at last, and, with a sigh of relief, Trotter shoved open the door and entered. He dumped the box of goods on the table, stood eyeing it curiously for a moment or two, and then tramped out of the room to resume his interrupted reading of "The Case of the Missing Duke; or, Betrayed by His Uncle!"—Trotter's taste in literature being of the lurid variety.

The moment his heavy footsteps had died away a fat face, adorned with a pair of large spectacles, peered round the corner of the passage.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "Now for it!"

He gave a cautious glance up and down, but there was no need for it. The Remove were out of doors to a man. Even Skinner & Co., the black sheep, were conspicuous by their absence.

With no show of caution now, therefore, the Owl of the Remove rolled towards Mr. Quelch's study, and boldly entered.

For a few moments Bunter allowed his mind and his gaze to fix on that wonderful parcel, in idle thoughts of anticipation. Then, conscious of the pangs of hunger, for the fat junior had only eaten enough for three fellows at dinner, Bunter gathered up the box and decamped with it.

Trotter had found that loaded box anything but a convenient shape and size to handle, and Trotter, an active youth, was accustomed to carrying things. Bunter found it a very irksome task indeed, for he hated anything in the nature of exertion.

"My hat!" he murmured. "This is jolly heavy!"

He rolled down the passage, puffing and grunting like a porpoise. Like Trotter, he could not see exactly where he was going, and it was unfortunate that some careless junior had deposited a piece of banana-skin right in Bunter's path.

Swoooooop!

Bunter found that slippery piece of banana-skin with his right foot. The result was disastrous. One of his feet went to the left, the other insisted on going to the right. The parcel, meantime, left Bunter's tight embrace and completed the tableau.

Thud!

Bump!

Bunter and the box of tuck landed on the floor of the passage with but the space of a second between them.

"Yoooooooooop!"

The Owl of the Remove sat on the cold, hard, unsympathetic linoleum and roared. Then he caught sight of the offending piece of banana-skin and shook a podgy fist at it.

"Groooooogh! Oh, dear!"

Even Bunter realised that, in the circumstances, it was hardly a wise thing to linger in the passage. So far his raid had been carried out without a soul being the wiser. It, therefore, behoved him to proceed with all haste.

He did.

Scrambling to his feet, he seized hold of the box once again, and bore it off in triumph to the box-room on the second landing. Dumping it on the floor, he pumped in breath.

"He, he, he!" he chuckled. "I'll show the beast! Stop my food, would he? Starve me to death! Yah!"

And with that valiant ejaculation Billy Bunter proceeded to lock himself in. Then he seated himself on a large trunk belonging to Lord Mauleverer, and, with feverish haste and with eyes that glistened greedily, began to investigate the box of tuck.

All the things he had ordered came to view and, without loss of time, the Owl of the Remove began to make a concentrated attack on them. Rabbit-pies and jam-tarts disappeared at a great rate; one iced cake speedily followed, and Bunter followed up this glorious start with a few tins of preserves.

In the midst of his exploration of the contents of the box he came across a cardboard box of a fair size.

With eager anticipation on his fat and

shiny face Bunter cut the string. Then the expression on his face gave way to disgust, for the box contained a hat—a new silk hat!

"What a sell!" murmured Bunter, and the hat not being by any manner of means edible, he unceremoniously dumped it back in the cardboard box, tossed it into the corner of the box-room, and completely forgot it.

Thereafter, for the next hour nothing could be heard in that box-room save the steady munching of the fat junior's jaws.

Mr. Quelch had put Bunter on short rations, in the fond hope that this severe measure would prove a lasting lesson to him.

Could Mr. Quelch have seen his fat pupil at that moment he would have received the shock of his life, for Bunter was piling into the good things with a will and vigour that surprised almost himself.

But even Bunter had his limits, and at last his attack on the parcel began to waver. There was a feeling underneath the fat junior's waistcoat that was already causing him grave doubts as to the wisdom of proceeding any further.

His breath was rather laboured and his fat face was shiny and sticky when, ultimately, he decided to "take it easy." But the decision came rather late in the day for those uncomfortable feelings under his waistcoat persisted, and at last Bunter felt as if the world was going round. His plump face turned a sickly shade of green, and then changed to yellow. Weird rumbling sounds came from him, and then in desperate haste Bunter unlocked the box-room door and bolted for the nearest bathroom.

For the next quarter of an hour the Owl of the Remove repented him of his gluttony, but the lesson was of short duration, for he returned eventually to the box-room, and his store of tuck suffered under a second onslaught. This time Bunter did not go too far; he contented himself with demolishing a dozen jam-tarts, two boxes of chocolates, and a dozen eclairs. Then even Bunter pronounced himself satisfied; and, after locking up the remains of that terrific parcel in Lord Mauleverer's trunk, he rolled from the box-room and made his way downstairs, thoroughly pleased with the world in general and with William George Bunter in particular.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Quelch is Annoyed!

MR. QUELCH strode along the dusty lane to Friardale thoroughly at peace with the world, and inwardly blessing the Rev. Lambe for having phoned him.

A game of golf, a pleasant chat with his old friend, and a refreshing cup of tea, offered to the master of the Remove an ideal way of spending that half-holiday.

"Is Mr. Lambe in?" asked Mr. Quelch of the maid at the vicarage who answered his knock. "He is expecting me."

The maid started.

"Did you say the master was expecting you, sir?"

Mr. Quelch nodded, and smiled genially.

A shadow of perplexity crossed the pretty face of the maid.

"That is rather surprising, sir," she remarked.

"Indeed!"

"Mr. Lambe is out playing golf, sir," added the maid. "He left no message—"

Mr. Quelch jumped, and the genial smile froze on his face.



"How dare you insinuate, sir, that I have been drinking?" snapped Mr. Quelch. "How dare you?" "But, Mr. Quelch——" began the vicar. "Pah!" exclaimed the master of the Remove. "You are an idiot, sir!" And, leaving the vicar gasping, Mr. Quelch strode off in high dudgeon. (See Chapter 6.)

"Do I hear you aright? Did you say that Mr. Lambe is out—that he is playing golf?"

The maid nodded.

"Impossible!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "He distinctly asked me to come over. I'm sure he is not the sort of gentleman to treat a friend with such discourtesy."

The maid gave an expressive gesture, intimating that the situation was as she had explained it, whatever ideas to the contrary the master of the Remove entertained.

"Doubtless you have made a mistake," said Mr. Quelch, trying hard to bring back to life the pleasant smile. "Do me the kindness of looking for Mr. Lambe and advise him of my presence."

"But he's not in the vicarage, Mr. Quelch," exclaimed the maid.

Mr. Quelch began to get angry, and in his agitation he let fall the bag of golf clubs he had been carrying.

"Yoooooooooop!"

Next moment the maid was treated to the spectacle of a middle-aged gentleman dancing about on one foot and clasping the other in a tender embrace.

"Oh! Ooooooh! My toe!"

Really, such a scholarly and learned man as Mr. Henry Quelch, M.A., should have known more of the forces of gravity than to let fall a heavy bag of clubs on to his pet corn. But even the wisest of us make mistakes.

"Mr. Quelch——" began the maid, in some alarm.

Mr. Quelch tried hard to forget that his pet corn was giving him the very dickens, and lowered his damaged foot to the ground. He realised that he had cut rather an undignified figure in the

presence of the maid. But gone was now that pleasant smile. A really ferocious expression had seized hold of the Remove master's hatchet features.

"You will kindly tell Mr. Lambe that I am here," he said icily.

"But, Mr. Quelch, I keep on telling you that the master is out of doors. He's gone golfing with Major Thresher," protested the maid.

And there was such a ring of conviction in her voice that even Mr. Quelch began to be assailed by doubts.

He snatched up the bag of clubs, with an expression on his face that seemed indicative of a desire to hurl the offending bag over the vicarage wall, and then slung it over his shoulder.

"You will tell your master on his return," he said coldly, "that if this is his idea of a practical joke, I quite fail to see the point."

And before the astonished maid could make any sort of reply the master of the Remove, with grim, tight-set lips, strode off down the gravel path.

"Monstrous!" he ejaculated to himself. "The very idea! Lambe ought to be ashamed of himself."

In his ignorance of the facts, Mr. Quelch completely misjudged the innocent Mr. Lambe. That he should go to the trouble of phoning the master of the Remove, and asking him specially to come over for a round of golf and a cup of tea, and then deliberately absent himself from the vicarage, when he knew his guest was to be expected, was, to Mr. Quelch, the height of discourtesy.

"Ridiculous! Such lack of courtesy!" Mr. Quelch stamped on, with a face black with anger.

"What behaviour! Monstrous!"

And while the infuriated master of the Remove tramped the return journey to Greyfriars, the very subject of his thoughts hove in sight.

The Rev. Lambe, a cheery smile on his face, and with a bag of golf clubs swung over his shoulder, barred the way.

Mr. Quelch, with a glitter in his eyes, came to a halt.

"Mr. Quelch——" began the Friar-dale vicar affably.

"Mr. Lambe——"

Mr. Quelch's tone conveyed a wealth of hostility.

"So delighted to meet you, my dear Quelch," went on Mr. Lambe; and then the expression on the Remove master's face told him eloquently that the "delight" was all on one side.

"Mr. Lambe!"

For the moment, that seemed to be the limit of Mr. Quelch's vocabulary.

"I never expected to see you here," went on the Rev. Lambe, still continuing to keep up a friendly air.

Mr. Quelch drew himself up to his full height.

"I don't expect you did, sir!" he snapped.

Mr. Lambe, spotting the golf bag Mr. Quelch carried, tried to turn the subject into more amiable channels.

"I see you have been golfing, my dear Quelch——"

But the look the Greyfriars master gave him made him leave his remark unfinished.

"Is—is anything the matter?"

"How dare you, sir, ask such a question?" stormed the master of the Remove. "A man of your standing

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should know better than to indulge in such discourtesy!"

The Rev. Lambe started.

"Discourtesy?"

"You heard what I said!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

The Rev. Lambe passed a dazed hand over his brow.

"Mr. Quelch—" he said coldly.

"Mr. Lambe—"

"I'm afraid I don't understand you," said the vicar. "I trust you are not ill?"

"Pah! Don't waste any more of my time!" stormed Mr. Quelch. "I am disgusted with you, Lambe—disgusted!"

The Rev. Lambe peered anxiously into the Remove master's face.

"My dear Quelch," he said kindly, "I beg of you not to be seen in this condition—"

Mr. Quelch started.

"This condition!" he thundered.

"How dare you insinuate, sir?"

The Rev. Lambe held up an admonishing finger.

"S'h, my dear Quelch! You are not used to drinking. Really, you should be more careful at the nineteenth hole—"

The Rev. Lambe smiled at his own joke. Really, he considered he had handled that part of the conversation with extreme tact. He had seen, many a time and oft, in his fellow-men the result of too lengthy a stay at the "nineteenth hole" at the golf club. But his humour seemed only to infuriate the Greyfriars master.

"How dare you, sir, insinuate that I have been drinking!" stormed Mr. Quelch, who seemed in danger of an apoplectic fit. "How dare you!"

"Not so loud, my dear Quelch," replied the Rev. Lambe, with a hasty glance round. "People may see you. May I offer you the hospitality of the vicarage for an hour or two, until you have thrown off the ill effects?"

"Pah!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "You are an idiot, sir!"

And he began to stride off towards Greyfriars in high dudgeon.

The Rev. Lambe's face crimsoned. After all his good offices, and his concern for a friend whom he was convinced was a trifle the worse for drink, to be called an "idiot" was really a little too thick! He hurried after Mr. Quelch and caught him by the arm.

"I beg your pardon! How dare you call me an idiot?" he rapped.

Mr. Quelch wagged a lean and bony finger under the nose of his old friend.

"I have come to the conclusion that you are not in your right mind, Lambe," he said angrily. "Never have I been treated like this before."

"But, Mr. Quelch—"

"You have deliberately gone out of your way to insult me—"

"But, Mr. Quelch—"

"You have slighted me," continued the master of the Remove, who had got the bit between his teeth, so to speak. "You have made me appear ridiculous in the eyes of your servants—"

"But, Mr. Quelch—"

"Who are doubtless at this moment deriving great enjoyment from my humiliation!" wound up the infuriated master of the Remove.

Mr. Lambe held up his hands in horror.

"But, Mr. Quelch, I do not understand—"

Mr. Quelch, having drawn a deep breath, got going again.

"Understand? Pah! I counted you a friend, until a short time ago," he continued, his words tumbling out with

the speed of a machine-gun spitting bullets. "In future you will kindly remember that I am simply Mr. Quelch whose duties at the school sometimes bring me into contact with you."

The distress in the Rev. Lambe's face gave way to annoyance.

"Mr. Quelch, I will not tolerate this attitude. I will not suffer this wholesale condemnation. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. You a master of a great school like Greyfriars in a condition the worse for drink. I am amazed, shocked!"

Mr. Quelch's eyes gleamed like pin-points of light. He was convinced now that the Rev. Lambe, having once started to perpetrate a silly practical joke was now trying to evade the consequences by insinuating that he, Mr. Quelch, a strict teetotaler, was the worse for alcoholic liquor. Really, that was adding insult to injury!

"Mr. Quelch!" It was the Rev. Lambe's turn again now. "I am disgusted! I shall complain to Dr. Locke! Never in all my life have I been treated with such disrespect. I can only think that you are not aware of what you are saying, and because of that I shall give you until to-morrow morning to apologise."

Mr. Quelch gulped down something in his throat.

"Apologise!" he almost shrieked. "Do you think a walk out here on a fool's errand, followed by a number

of the master of the Remove striding in at the gates, with a brow that was black and bitter.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Missing—a Hat!

MR. QUELCH perambulated the carpet of his study with a persistency that indicated he was very much perturbed. Truth to tell, the rupture between him and the Rev. Lambe had really upset him.

Knowing only one side of the circumstances, the master of the Remove considered that he had been very badly treated, and he was righteously indignant.

"Monstrous!" he kept repeating to himself. "Monstrous!"

He tried to dismiss the matter from his mind by checking some Form papers on Latin. But even that failed to appease his wrath. Then he thought him of Chunkley's.

"Bless my soul!" muttered Mr. Quelch, as he recollected having ordered a hat from the Courtfield Depot the day before. "Really, Chunkley's are very lackadaisical."

Some of the irritation he felt through the affair with the Rev. Lambe was manifest in his voice when he took up the telephone and gave Chunkley's number.

After what seemed an interminable wait, but which was in reality only a matter of a few seconds, an answering voice came through:

"Who is it speaking?"

"Mr. Quelch—"

"What name?" asked a puzzled voice.

"Mr. Quelch!" snapped the Remove Form master. "I ordered a hat from you yesterday—"

He was interrupted by the voice at the other end of the telephone.

"Did you say a hat?"

Mr. Quelch gulped something in his throat.

"I did say a hat. I hope I make myself clear. H—A—T! Hat!"

A laugh echoed over the wires.

"Just a moment. It sounds as if you've got the wrong number. This is Courtfield 543."

Mr. Quelch started.

It had never occurred to him that he had been speaking to anyone else but one of Chunkley's assistants.

"Bless my soul!" stuttered the master of the Remove. "Are you not Chunkley's?"

"No; they've given you the wrong number. Ha, ha!" The recipient of the call seemed to find Mr. Quelch rather amusing. "I'll ring off!"

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

"Please do!"

Courtfield 543 rang off.

Mr. Quelch then commenced to play irritably and frequently with the receiver hook of the telephone, and with the passing of the seconds his impatience grew. At last a feminine voice came through.

"Number, please!"

"You gave me the wrong number, miss!" snapped Mr. Quelch, his eyes gleaming. At the best of times he could hardly endure the telephone and all its vagaries. "Kindly listen a little more carefully."

"I'm sorry, sir," came the contrite voice. "Would you mind repeating the number?"

Mr. Quelch did mind; but if he wanted Chunkley's that was the only way of getting them. He repeated the number after the fashion of a father

WHAT NAME?

The following letters have been jumbled together purposely. Put in their proper order, they spell the name of a well-known junior at Greyfriars.

LOKNRANHIERDS

Who is it? The answer will appear in next week's MAGNET.

Last week's solution was—
William Frederick Greene.

of insults, demands an apology from me? Lambe, you must be mad!"

"Mr. Quelch—"

"Mr. Lambe—"

There was no knowing how much longer this discourse would have continued, for both gentlemen were now hot with rage. But at that moment two of the Rev. Lambe's parishioners came in sight. Really, it was hardly the thing for the Friardale vicar to be seen in a heated altercation in public. So he chose the obvious course and retreated.

"Mr. Quelch, you will hear more of this!" was his final shot.

And the master of the Remove was about to make a more biting reply when his pet corn gave a sudden twinge. With a spasm of pain crossing his lean features, Mr. Quelch stood gazing after the retreating figure of the Rev. Lambe. Then, muttering something uncomplimentary on the subject of a man who poses as a friend and who is in reality a wolf in lamb's clothing—Mr. Quelch was not aware of the pun—he turned on his heel and strode off towards Greyfriars a disillusioned man.

Billy Bunter had succeeded in sending off his Form master on a fool's errand; he had also succeeded in breaking up a friendship of many years' standing. What the consequences would be William George Bunter had not even given a thought to; but he would have trembled with apprehension could he have seen the angular figure

teaching his child a first lesson in the twice-times-table.

And this time he had the satisfaction of getting the requisite number within the space of three or four seconds.

"Chunkley's!" It was another feminine voice.

"Mr. Quelch speaking—" began the master of the Remove.

"Mr. Kelch?" came the query.

"What can we do for you, Mr. Kelch?" The master of the Remove ground his teeth with rage. Really, this was very hard to bear!

"My name is Quelch—Quelch!" he said testily.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Squelch!" The feminine voice cheerfully accepted the revised name of the caller.

"QUELCH!" bellowed he. Form master. "Q—U—E—L—C—H!" he added, spelling the name in a deep voice.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Quelch!" came the "pologetic" reply. "The line is not very clear. What can I do for you, sir?"

"I ordered a hat from you yesterday!" began Mr. Quelch. And again the feminine voice, doubtless eager to make up for the earlier inefficiency, began to speed up.

"A mat, Mr. Quelch? That will be in the 'Household Goods Department.' Hold on, please, and I'll put you through."

Mr. Quelch nearly threw several kinds of a fit.

"I did not say 'mat'!" he bellowed. "I said a 'hat'! I don't want the 'Household Goods Department'!"

But it was too late. The Chunkley's system of efficiency in dealing with their customers beat him by a split second. He was put through to the 'Household Goods Department.'

"Chunkley's—Household Goods Department. What can I do for you, sir?"

Mr. Quelch nearly tore his hair. "I don't want the 'Household Goods Department'!" he shrieked.

"I'm sorry, sir," came the business-like reply. "What is it you require exactly?"

Mr. Quelch breathed hard. Really, this was too bad. Once more he went to the trouble of explaining that he had ordered a hat from Chunkley's the previous day. Again the efficiency system became apparent.

"A hat? Very good, sir. That will be in the 'Sports Department.' Hold the line, sir, and I'll put you through."

"I didn't say 'bat.' I said 'hat'!" bellowed the master of the Remove, now almost crimson in the face.

But once again he was too late.

Another voice echoed across the wires. Apparently there seemed no end to the number of exchanges and departments in the firm of Messrs. Chunkley's.

"Sports Department?"

Mr. Quelch felt like hurling the telephone through the window.

"I don't want the 'Sports Department'!" he raved.

"What department do you want, sir?"

"I ordered a hat from you yesterday," explained Mr. Quelch for the third time.

"A hat? Oh, that will be the 'Gentlemen's Outfitting Department.' Hold the line, please."

The master of the Remove breathed hard and deep.

"Chunkley's!" came another voice.

"This is the outfitting department."

"Ah!" Mr. Quelch's eyes gleamed.

"My name is Quelch."

"Felch!"

"Quelch!" bawled the master of the

Remove; and he ground his teeth with rage. "Quelch!"

"I beg your pardon, sir," came a contrite voice. "What can I do for you, Mr. Felch—Quelch?"

"I ordered a hat from you yesterday—" began the master of the Remove.

And then a voice from the exchange interrupted.

"Have you finished?" it inquired sweetly.

"No!" roared Mr. Quelch, almost beside himself with rage. "I have not finished. Kindly keep off the line."

"Sorry!" was the reply.

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

"Is that Mr. Quelch?" It was the Chunkley voice again. "You were saying that you ordered a hat from us yesterday."

"I did!" barked the master of the Remove. "And it hasn't arrived. Really, I think it is lamentable that a big stores such as Chunkley's cannot pay more close attention to the requirements of its customers."

"But, Mr. Quelch—"

"Yesterday morning I ordered that hat," went on Mr. Quelch, now thoroughly wound up. "And yet it hasn't arrived."

"But, Mr. Quelch—"

"Such lack of efficiency—"

"But Mr. Quelch—"

"Such dilatoriness—"

"But, Mr. Quelch, we—"

"Is lamentable—deplorable!" finally said the master of the Remove biting.

The assistant at the other end of the wire jumped in quickly, so to speak.

"Mr. Quelch, we sent you the hat this afternoon."

The Remove master jumped.

"What? Do I understand you to say that you despatched the hat this afternoon?"

"Yes, sir."

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "That is very remarkable! The hat isn't here!"

"We delivered it, sir, in the region of three o'clock as requested. We have a receipt here with the signature of a Mr. Gosling."

Mr. Quelch jumped. Having lashed the Chunkley methods with his tongue it was rather unfortunate to find that after all they had not deserved it.

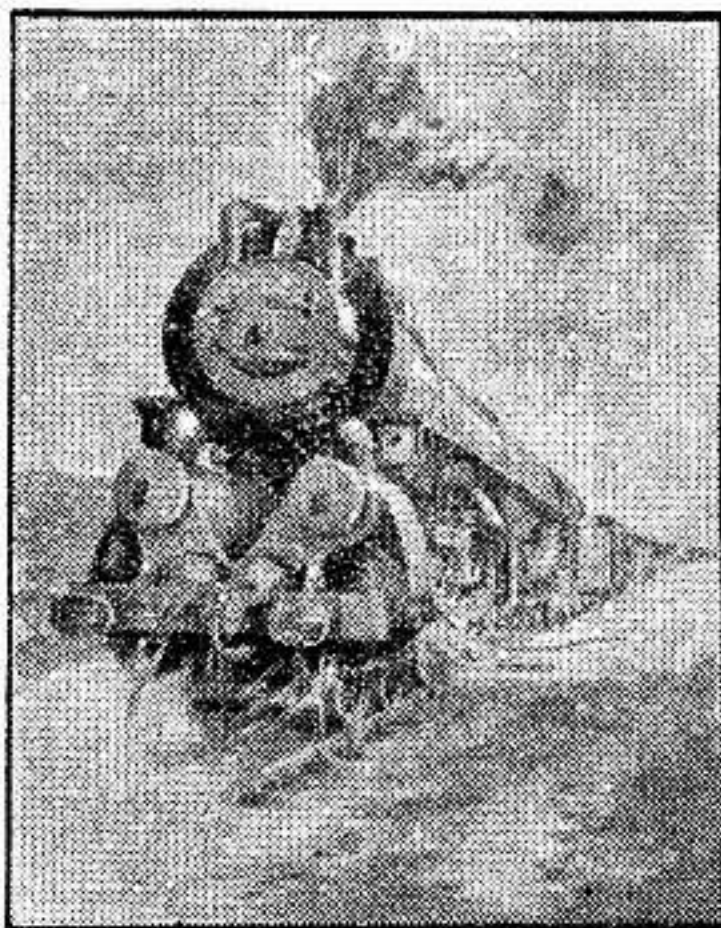
"I trust you will find the goods to your complete satisfaction," said the Chunkley assistant.

"Oh! Ah!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"I'm sorry to have—"

(Continued on next page.)

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His words trailed off unintelligibly, and the Chunkley's assistant rang off. Mr. Quelch replaced the receiver with a look on his hard countenance that boded ill for someone. That hat, according to Chunkley's, had been delivered at three o'clock. Then why wasn't it in the study?

Buzz!

Mr. Quelch rang for Trotter, the page. That individual, once more disturbed from the pleasures of following the exciting adventures of "The Missing Duke" laid down his book regretfully, and tramped upstairs to Mr. Quelch's study.

"Yes, sir?"

The master of the Remove eyed Trotter ferociously.

"Chunkley's declare that they delivered a hat at three o'clock this afternoon!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Why is it not here?"

Trotter's eyes opened wide. A hat? According to the size of the parcel he had deposited in the study soon after three o'clock it must have contained at least five or six dozen hats.

"Well?" barked Mr. Quelch. "Have you lost your tongue, Trotter?"

"Nunno, sir!" gasped the page. "I dumped a parcel here."

"You what?"

"I dumped—" began Trotter again. Mr. Quelch glared.

"Do not use such ridiculous expressions, Trotter!" he said severely. "Do you mean you brought a parcel here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then kindly say so!" snapped Mr. Quelch acidly.

"Yes, sir! Suttingly, sir! I dumped—that is to say I brought a parcel here just after three, sir."

"Indeed!" Mr. Quelch's eyes glittered. "Then where is it?"

Trotter looked round the study. But there was no sign of that huge consignment from Chunkley's.

"Search me!" he ejaculated. And then, catching sight of the stern disapproval in the Remove master's face: "I mean—blessed if I can see it, sir! I put it on this 'ere table, sir."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir! Hindeed!" said Trotter. "It don't seem to be 'ere, sir!"

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"It certainly does not, Trotter," he remarked. "However, if you are positive that you placed it here, there is nothing more to be said. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!"

And Trotter, only too glad to get out of sight of Mr. Quelch's scowling face, departed in great haste for the servants' quarters. Once there, he proceeded to tell the cook and the maids that old Quelch was in one of his "tantrums," after which he returned with zest to his lurid novel of "The Missing Duke."

In the meantime, Mr. Quelch was tramping up and down his study in a royal rage. He felt that an afternoon had been wasted—that everything had combined to irritate him. That the hat had been delivered after all there was now no possible doubt, no possible probable shadow of doubt—no possible doubt whatever.

But where was the hat? Trotter had declared that he had placed it on the study table. Yet the hat wasn't there now. It couldn't have disappeared into thin air. Then where was it?

"This is most annoying!" snapped Mr. Quelch, with a gleam in his eye. "If this is a practical joke on the part of some misguided junior he shall be made to see the folly of it!"

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And by the look in Mr. Quelch's eye that misguided junior would, when discovered, get it hot and strong. Once more Mr. Quelch rang for Trotter, and requested that indignant youth to summon Harry Wharton to his study.

A few moments later the captain of the Remove presented himself.

"You sent for me, sir?" said Wharton, noting the stern lines in his Form master's face.

"I did!" said Mr. Quelch shortly. "Chunkley's delivered a hat to me this afternoon," he added, without beating about the bush.

"Oh, sir!"

"Trotter has informed me, Wharton, that he placed the parcel on this table. It has disappeared."

"Oh!"

"You will kindly summon the Remove at once in the Form-room," went on the Form master coldly. "I have more than a suspicion that my hat has been abstracted by some member of my Form with a misguided sense of humour. Call the boys together at once!"

"Yes, sir!" Harry Wharton hastened to obey.

In a few moments the news spread, but the only one who seemed alarmed was William George Bunter. In a flash he remembered that he had dumped the hat in the box-room.

"Oh, lor'!" gasped the fat junior, wondering how he was going to survive the coming ordeal.

The chattering and shuffling of feet faded away when Mr. Quelch swept into the Form-room, and all the juniors, with the possible exception of Billy Bunter, congratulated themselves that they knew nothing of the missing hat, when they glimpsed the savage expression on Mr. Quelch's face.

The master of the Remove explained matters in biting tones.

"I ask the boy, therefore, who has been foolish enough to abstract my hat to return it at once," he concluded.

"If the hat is returned to my study within the next hour the culprit will escape with a severe caning. If the hat is not returned within that time the whole Form will be detained for the next half-holiday, and, moreover, further investigations will be made. I need hardly say that the culprit, in that case, will be taken before Dr. Locke for a flogging."

"Oh, lor'!" groaned Bunter.

"You may dismiss!" said Mr. Quelch curtly.

And the Remove, only too glad to do so, filed out of the Form-room in a noisy throng.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Brain-wave!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter rolled up to the Famous Five.

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

The Owl of the Remove did not "buzz off." His fat mind was full of the subject of the missing hat, and the alternatives Mr. Quelch had given to the culprit to return it.

"I say, about old Quelch's hat—"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked interested. Like everyone else in the Remove the Famous Five were wondering what the outcome of the missing hat would be. That the affair was a complete mystery to them was obvious, for they, in company, with most of the Form, had been out of the House during the afternoon. Inquiries up and down had failed to elicit the name of the practical joker, but Harry Wharton & Co. felt sorry for him for all that. A

severe caning from Mr. Quelch in his present mood, was no light matter.

"What do you mean about Quelch's hat?" asked Wharton, fixing a stern gaze on Billy Bunter's excited face.

"N-nothing," said the Owl of the Remove quickly.

"You don't mean to tell us that you're the giddy joker, do you, old fat man?" asked Bob Cherry suspiciously.

"Oh, really, Cherry," said Bunter. "I know nothing about the hat. I didn't see Trotter bring up the rotten thing with the grub—"

"Eh? What on earth are you burbling about?"

"Nothing," said Bunter hastily. "If you think I pinched old Quelch's hat you're mistaken. I know absolutely nothing about it."

"Well, I shouldn't think you'd have enough nerve to raid a hat from Quelch's study," said the captain of the Remove.

"That's it," said Bunter eagerly. "I wouldn't dream of such a thing. But I know something about the hat."

"Then get it off your chest, old fat bean," advised Bob Cherry. "You heard what Quelch said. The Form's detained for the next half if the blessed hat doesn't turn up."

"And if the hat is returned there's a severe caning for me," said Bunter.

"For you? Do you know where it is, then?" asked Harry Wharton suddenly.

Bunter grinned.

"That's telling," he said. "Besides I don't want a severe caning. My idea is that one of you chaps ought to return it."

"Eh?"

"Be manly, you know," said Bunter. "Take in the hat to Quelch and—"

"Get a severe caning?" asked Bob Cherry. "Not likely, old fat man."

Billy Bunter blinked.

"Oh, really, Cherry, you're always talking about the honour of the Form and that sort of rot. It's up to you to return the hat and save the Form from a gating."

"Why, you fat idiot!" breathed Bob. "I don't know anything about the blessed hat. I've been out of doors all the afternoon."

"But if I tell you where it is—" began Bunter.

The Famous Five looked at Bunter curiously. That he knew more about the missing hat than he cared to tell was very apparent.

"Look here, Bunter," said Wharton severely. "If you're the blessed culprit you'd better get busy and find that hat. If it's not returned within an hour it'll mean a Head's flogging for you."

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bunter. "I don't want a Head's flogging."

"Well, have the 'severe caning' instead, old fat barrel," said Bob Cherry. "Of two evils always take the lesser, as some wise Johnny once said."

"Look here, Bunter. Did you take Quelch's hat?" asked Wharton.

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Bunter. "I wouldn't dream of touching his mouldy hat with a barge pole. Besides, they had no right to pack it with the grub."

"What? What grub?"

"Eh! Oh, nothing," said the Owl of the Remove quickly. "But do you think old Quelch would wash out the caning if I returned that hat?"

"Not if you took it in the first place," said Wharton, half laughing.

"Then I didn't take it," said Billy Bunter quickly. "I know nothing about the rotten thing. Never saw Trotter bring it up either. Besides Chunkley's had no right to pack it in with my things."

"What on earth are you talking about?"



Click! There was a faint sound from the darkness ahead of Billy Bunter. Then suddenly a light blazed out, and the fat junior blinked dazedly in the glare of an electric torch. "Ah! Caught you!" It was Loder's voice, and as Bunter heard it, he groaned. (See Chapter 12.)

"Nothing," said Bunter promptly. "If you chaps think I know anything about the hat or the grub you're wrong. See?"

"Blessed if I know what the silly ass is talking about," said Bob Cherry.

"My idea is that one of you chaps ought to return the hat to old Quelch," went on Bunter. "You can stand a licking better than I can."

"But why should we?" asked Wharton. "None of us pinched the hat."

Bunter sniffed. "Oh, if you're going to make a fuss over trifles we'll let the matter drop," he said, blinking at the Famous Five. "Quelch will have to hunt for his blessed hat."

The captain of the Remove took Bunter by the arm.

"Look here, you silly ass," he said severely, "it's pretty obvious that you pinched the hat—"

"But I didn't!" protested Bunter. "I didn't know it was in the parcel—"

"What parcel?" demanded Wharton curiously.

"Quelch's parcel—I mean my parcel," blinked the Owl of the Remove. "That is to say, I don't know anything about Chunkley's parcel. And if you think I do you're wrong. See?"

Bob Cherry tapped his forehead significantly.

"Mad!" he exclaimed. "I've seen it coming on for a long time now."

"Oh, really, Cherry!"

"Bunter," said Harry Wharton, "I can't make head nor tail of this parcel business, but it's quite clear that you know all about Quelch's hat. If you'll take a tip from me you'll return it at once."

"And put some exercise books in your bags before you go," advised Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent."

Famous Five. Really the situation was awkward. If he returned the hat within the time allowed his reward would be a severe caning. If, on the other hand, the hat was not returned, a flogging awaited the practical joker when investigations drew to light his identity. Billy Bunter quailed at both thoughts. But his fat brain rose equal to the emergency. Suddenly he cackled.

"He, he, he! I've got it! He, he, he!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, looking round. "Have one of you chaps an alarm clock in your pockets?"

"He, he, he!"

"Oh, it's Bunter," said Bob Cherry. "Sounded to me like a cheap alarm clock at first."

"Oh, really, Cherry," blinked Bunter.

"He, he, he!"

"Oh, come on," said Bob shortly. "I can't stand that awful row. Let's get along to the study and have some tea."

"Good egg!"

"The goodness of the esteemed and ridiculous Bob's suggestion is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Let us partake of the teaful tea."

And leaving Bunter still cackling his unmusical cackination the Famous Five proceeded to Study No. 13 to partake of the "teaful tea" as Inky expressed it.

When the Famous Five were out of sight Billy Bunter blinked about him cautiously. Then he rolled towards the stairs and the box-rooms. In the second box-room he found the cardboard box containing Mr. Quelch's silk hat, and with it under his arm he descended the stairs and rolled towards Mr. Quelch's study.

A wheeze to escape the awful ordeal of a severe caning had presented itself to Billy Bunter's brain, and with his usual fatuousness he proceeded to put it into operation.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Reward!

"COME in!" Mr. Quelch looked up irritably as William George Bunter appeared in his study with the hat box under his arm. Then, when the master of the Remove guessed what the hat box contained, his hard features assumed a most terrifying expression.

"Bunter!" he snapped. "Is that my hat?"

The Owl of the Remove gulped something in his throat. At that moment he was almost repenting him of bearding Mr. Quelch in his den, so to speak.

"Yes, sir," he said falteringly.

"Kindly hand it to me," snapped Mr. Quelch.

Bunter did so.

Mr. Quelch opened the box to assure himself that the hat was inside it and then reached for his cane.

"Bend down!"

Billy Bunter jumped. This was not according to programme.

"Oh, really, sir," he protested. "You're not going to cane me for returning the hat are you. I'm not the p-p-practical joker, sir—"

"Oh!" Mr. Quelch paused.

He was angry, very angry; but the master of the Remove was a just man. To Bunter's great relief Mr. Quelch placed the cane on the desk again.

"You are not the boy with a misguided sense of humour?" said Mr. Quelch tartly. "You are not the practical joker?"

"Nunno, sir!" answered the Owl of the Remove, being able to answer those questions quite truthfully. Certainly he had not taken the hat for a practical joke. It was upon a literal translation

(Continued on page 16.)



(Continued from page 13.)

of those words that his brainwave had evolved. But it behoved him to tread warily.

"Then kindly explain how you came to be in possession of my hat," said Mr. Quelch, with acerbity.

"Suppose—suppose—" began Bunter.

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"Speak up, boy!" he snapped.

"Suppose a fellow saw another fellow with a hat that belonged to his Form-master, sir," said Bunter hopefully.

"Well?"

"Suppose that fellow saw the other fellow place the hat in the box-room," continued the Owl of the Remove.

Mr. Quelch jumped.

"Are you putting a suppositious case to me, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir," said Bunter quickly. "A syrriptitious—that is to say what you said, sir."

"Proceed!"

Billy Bunter proceeded, now feeling fairly safe that his brain-wave was going to do the trick.

"Suppose a fellow knew that the whole Form was going to suffer if the hat was not returned," the Owl of the Remove continued. "What ought he to do?"

Mr. Quelch considered for a moment.

"It would be his duty to report the guilty party at once," he said firmly.

Billy Bunter blinked.

"But wouldn't that be sneaking, sir?" he ventured.

Mr. Quelch opened his mouth to reply, and then set his lips grimly. Undoubtedly, as Bunter had suggested, such a course would be sneaking; a practice, in common with most Form masters, that Mr. Quelch abhorred.

"Wouldn't that be sneaking, sir?" Billy Bunter pressed his point.

"I suppose it would," admitted Mr. Quelch, rather amazed that Bunter, of all people in his Form, should display such a keenness in the schoolboy code of honour. "I suppose it would."

Billy Bunter grinned. He had gained his point.

"Well, sir, if it's wrong for a fellow to sneak, suppose—suppose he thought he would put the matter right by returning the hat himself?"

"That is very commendable in its way," said Mr. Quelch; "but it still leaves the guilty party unpunished."

"Well, sir, I've brought the hat back," wound up Bunter virtuously.

"So I perceive," admitted Mr. Quelch. "Now, let me have this matter right. Do I understand that you saw a boy secret my hat in the box-room?"

"Yes, sir!" Bunter was quite truthful there.

"And that, rather than the Form should suffer, you abstracted the hat from its hiding-place and brought it to me?"

"Yes, sir!" Again Bunter was truthful, or very nearly.

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips. Really, the situation was rather difficult.

"You know the name of the guilty party?"

Again Bunter replied in truthful affirmative. He knew the name of

William George Bunter very well considering it had walked with him, so to speak, ever since his christening days.

"Have you remonstrated with him?" was Mr. Quelch's next question.

Bunter was taken aback.

Mr. Quelch eyed him shrewdly.

"Nunno, sir—tha is to say, yes, sir. I didn't want a severe caning—I mean, he didn't want a severe caning."

Mr. Quelch's eyes gleamed.

"Bunter, will you kindly tell me how you knew in the first place that it was my hat the guilty party purloined?"

The Owl of the Remove jumped. The question startled him, although a more level-headed disciple of Ananias would have found it quite easy to answer.

Bunter blinked at his Form master in dismay.

"Well?" said Mr. Quelch, and his voice was ominous.

"I—I—I—" stammered Bunter, now thrown thoroughly off his balance.

"Well?"

"I—I—I—I—"

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"Have you no word in your vocabulary other than the first personal pronoun, boy?"

Billy Bunter ha', of course, but at that moment his fat brain was in a whirl.

Mr. Quelch reached for his cane again. "I feel convinced, Bunter," he said sternly, "that your suppositious case is intended to deceive me!"

"Oh, no, sir!" stammered Bunter, finding his tongue at last. "Nothing of the kind, sir. If you think that I put that syrriptitious case in order to escape a severe caning, you're wrong, sir. Really, sir!"

"I do think so!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "And by your attitude now you convince me more than ever."

"But I didn't take the hat, sir!" protested Bunter, realising, now that his brain was falling to pieces, as it were, "I didn't shove it in the box-room, sir. I don't know anything about the hat, sir. Never seen it, in fact. Perhaps Trotter put it there," he added hopefully.

"What?"

"Trotter, sir!" said Bunter eagerly. "You know what a forgetful chap he is, sir!"

Mr. Quelch's brow grew thunderous.

"I am quite satisfied that Trotter did not place my hat in the box-room, Bunter!"

"Are you, sir?" gasped the Owl of the Remove. "Then perhaps it was Wharton."

"Wharton?"

"Yes, sir, or Cherry—"

Mr. Quelch held up his hand, and Billy Bunter's cheery suggestions as to the possible identity of the miscreant who had purloined Mr. Quelch's hat came to a stop.

"BOY!" Mr. Quelch's deep voice quite made Billy Bunter jump. "Wretched boy! Did you not say that you knew the name of the guilty party who took my hat?"

"Yes, sir," stammered Bunter.

"Did you not say," continued Mr. Quelch, "that you remonstrated with him?"

"Ye-es, sir!" replied Bunter wildly. "That is to say, nunno sir. I mean I—"

"Then why do you suggest that his name is either Trotter, or Wharton, or Cherry?" demanded Mr. Quelch acidly.

Billy Bunter's face fell.

"Oh dear!" he murmured. "Did—did I say that?"

"You did!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Bunter, you are incorrigible! I honestly believe you are more fool than

rogue, but your behaviour, your deception, is the limit. Touch your toes!"

"But, really, sir!"

"TOUCH YOUR TOES!"

"Oh, lor'!" Billy Bunter gave a helpless look round the room. But there was no escape. How Mr. Quelch had "rumbled" his brain-wave Bunter did not know. That he had indeed rumbled it there was not the slightest doubt. Reluctantly, very reluctantly, the Owl of the Remove bent over to the required position.

And for the next few moments the study walls rang to the sound of Mr. Quelch's cane and the howls of anguish that floated from the lips of William George Bunter. Really, it was a very unhappy ending to Billy Bunter's brain-wave.

Mr. Quelch paused at last. He replaced the cane on the desk, breathing hard.

"I trust that will prove a lesson to you, Bunter!" he said grimly. "A lasting lesson!"

"Yow-wow!"

Billy Bunter wriggled and groaned, and groaned and wriggled. It was a lesson to him, but whether it would prove a lasting lesson was another matter. Still, Mr. Quelch now had his hat, and William George Bunter had his "severe caning," so in the main, the master of the Remove was satisfied. Needless to say, William George Bunter was anything but satisfied.

When he crawled from his Form master's study the Fat Owl of the Remove felt as if there was nothing in the world worth living for, until he suddenly bethought him of his hidden hoard of tuck. That afforded him some slight consolation, however, and, groaning feebly, he rolled towards the box-room.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

"Hard Lines" for Cherry!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry's stentorian voice rang out along the Remove passage.

Bob was just emerging from his study, a camera under his arm, when he sighted Billy Bunter.

"Groooooogh!" moaned Bunter.

"What's up, old fat man?" asked Bob cheerily. "You look as if you've been through a mangle."

"Groooooogh!" groaned Bunter. "That beast Quelch laid it on!"

Bob looked surprised.

"Did you take the hat back to him?" he asked.

Bunter nodded and groaned.

"And got a severe caning?"

Again Bunter nodded and groaned.

"The rotten thought it was me who pinched the blessed thing," he said.

"And wasn't it?"

"Groooooogh! No!" groaned Bunter. "How was I to know the rotten hat was in the grub?"

"The grub?" Bob Cherry looked perplexed. "What grub?"

Billy Bunter did not reply to that question; he merely groaned, and continued on his way to the box-room.

"Aren't you going into Hall for tea?" asked Bob.

Bunter shuddered. The thought of teaing in Hall on bread-and-butter and weak tea, when his wonderful spread awaited him in the box-room was unthinkable.

"Nunno. I don't feel like tea," he replied.

"Ye gods!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Fancy our old fat man not feeling like tea!"

And Bob commenced to leap up the Remove staircase three steps at a time in his usual exuberant fashion. Bunter rolled up after him in more leisurely style. The pair of them halted outside the door of the second box-room, a circumstance that brought a spasm of alarm to Bunter's podgy breast.

"Where—where are you going?" he asked suspiciously.

"In here," replied Bob, exhibiting his camera.

"What for?" demanded Bunter.

"You're very inquisitive, old fat bean," said Bob, with a grin. "But it may interest you to know that I've taken up photography, and I'm going to spend the next hour developing some rolls of films."

Bunter's jaw dropped.

"In the box-room?"

Bob nodded.

"Yes; I shall be out of the way there. I tried it last week, and got on all right. You see, I shove a blanket over the window to shut out the light; and if I keep the door locked, so that no silly ass bumps in and lets in the light, it makes an ideal dark-room."

"Oh lor!" Billy Bunter's face went quite white.

"What's the matter?" asked Bob, with some concern.

"Feeling ill, old fat bean?"

"Nunno!" gasped Bunter. "I say, Bob, old fellow—"

"Well?"

"Couldn't you do your developing somewhere else?" asked Bunter rather feebly.

Bob stared.

"Why should I?" he asked. "This makes an ideal place."

"I don't think so," said Bunter, with a forced smile.

"It—it's too crowded with boxes and things—"

Bob Cherry laughed.

"Oh, that's all right!" he answered. "I shove all the boxes in one corner of the room."

Billy Bunter glared. Really it was too bad to be baulked of a handsome feed at the last moment like this—and baulked he would be if Bob Cherry persisted in using the box-room as a dark-room. In the circumstances it would be well-nigh impossible for William George Bunter to tuck into the good things he had laid in there with Bob Cherry close at hand.

"Can't you use the box-room on the first floor?" asked Bunter.

"Why should I?" asked Bob, with a frown. "This one suits me all right."

And he made to turn the handle of the door and open it.

Billy Bunter's piggy little eyes glittered.

"Hold on, Cherry! I say—"

"Well?" asked Bob, looking at the fat junior curiously.

"Would you do me a favour?"

"That depends," grinned Bob. "If it's a question of raiding someone's study cupboard, I'm afraid the answer must be in the negative."

Billy Bunter worked up a smile of sorts.

"Will you—will you get me my 'Holiday Annual' from the study?" he asked. "I think I'll go and lie down; I don't feel well. Perhaps if I read I'll drop off to sleep."

Bob eyed him up and down critically.

"Well, you've got a nerve!" he said. "But I'll get your blessed 'Annual' for you. You look pretty seedy, I must say."

"Groooooough! I feel rotten!"

"You cut off to the dorm, old fat man, and I'll bring your 'Annual' up to you," said the good-natured Bob, without suspecting for a moment that Bunter had an ulterior motive in wanting to get rid of him for a few moments.

And, leaving the Owl of the Remove standing by the box-room door with a fat grin on his face, Bob Cherry scudded down the staircase three steps at a time.

"Beast!" said Bunter ungratefully. "The rotter thought he'd have this blessed box-room, did he? We'll see!"

And next moment Billy Bunter had turned the handle of the door, entered the box-room, and turned the key in the lock on the other side.

"He, he, he!" he cackled. "I'll show the rotter!"

He unlocked the big trunk belonging to Lord Mauleverer, in which he had secreted his store of tuck, and long before Bob Cherry's returning footsteps sounded on the staircase the Owl of the Remove was piling into a rabbit-pie with rare good will.

He chuckled to himself when he heard Bob go tearing past the door en route for the Remove dormitory.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter between mouthfuls. "Cherry's soft!"

(Continued on next page.)



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2

WEEKLY

THE WORLD'S LARGEST CYCLE DEALER, 205, COVENTRY.

In the direction of good nature Bob Cherry was undoubtedly "soft." But at the moment Bunter was catechising him Bob was growing exceedingly angry. He had burst into the Remove dormitory like a cyclone, a volume of the "Holiday Annual" under his arm.

"Here you are, old fat man—Why, where are you?"

Bob stared round him. Billy Bunter's bed was unoccupied. Indeed, save for Bob himself, the dormitory was deserted.

"Well, I'm blessed!" grunted Bob. "If that fat worm was pulling my leg I'll burst him!"

The thought became a certainty as Bob Cherry waited for five minutes and Billy Bunter did not put in an appearance.

"The fat oyster!" breathed Bob furiously. "Why, I'll—"

He shied the "Holiday Annual" at an inoffensive pillow and ramped down the stairs again, his usually sunny face dark and angry. A suspicion as to Bunter's reason for dispatching him on that errand for the "Annual" came into Bob's mind as he neared the box-room.

As he half expected, Bob found the door locked. He thumped furiously at the panels.

"Open this door, you fat rotter!"

"He, he, he!" Bunter's unmusical cackinnation came by way of reply.

Bang, bang, bang!

Bob thumped lustily.

"Open this door, or I'll burst you!" he roared.

"Yah! Go and eat coke!" retorted Bunter valiantly.

"You fat frog!" hissed Bob. "You fat spoofer! I'll skin you! Open this door!"

Really it was not surprising that William George Bunter did not comply. Fatuous as he was, Bunter had enough "savvy" to know that it was more than his life was worth at that moment to open the door of the box-room.

Thump, thump, thump!

Bob banged and banged on the door in alarming fashion, and Bunter began to entertain the fear that the noise would bring either a prefect or a master on the scene. At all costs that had to be avoided.

"Open this door!" shrieked Bob.

Bang! Thump! Bang!

From inside the room came the sound of a little cough—Bunter's usual preliminary to a ventriloquial effort. Then, seemingly from the lower landing, a voice floated up to Bob Cherry.

"Cherry! Boy!"

"Yes, sir?" Bob wheeled sharply at the sound of Mr. Quelch's voice.

"How dare you make that terrible noise—"

"I—I—I—" began Bob lamely.

"How dare you damage the school property in that disgraceful fashion!" rapped Mr. Quelch's voice.

"I—I—I—" stammered Bob, looking towards the stairs and expecting to see the figure of Mr. Quelch appear at any moment.

"Take a hundred lines, Cherry!" continued Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Bob crimsoned, gave the door of the box-room a terrific glare, and tramped down the stairs dismally.

At the landing he fully expected to meet Mr. Quelch; but, naturally, that gentleman was not in the offing, so to speak; and Bob concluded that he must have entered one of the dormitories.

Breathing threats of fury on the devoted head of William George Bunter, Bob Cherry proceeded to write the imposition of a hundred lines. It took him an hour, and with the passing of the

minutes Bob's anger grew. It was all through Bunter. Really, things would have gone hardly with the Owl of the Remove had Bob been within reach of him just then.

Fortunately for Bunter, he was some distance away, performing a service that was very dear to his fat heart—namely, that of feeding a hungry fellow by the name of William George Bunter.

"This is prime!" said the fat junior, as he began operations on the second iced cake. "He, he, he!"

His fat face was sticky and shiny, but his heart was happy; for Bunter was having the feed of his life. Of the consequences he never gave a thought; the fat junior's motto being, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

And in the meantime a very astonished Bob Cherry was confronting his Form master.

"Lines, Cherry?" Mr. Quelch was saying. "I have no recollection of awarding you lines."

Bob jumped.

"But you gave me an impot for banging on the—ahem!—box-room door, sir, about an hour ago."

Mr. Quelch started.

"Indeed, I did not, Cherry!"

"But—"

Bob Cherry was about to reiterate his statement, when he remembered—rather late in the day—Billy Bunter's powers as a ventriloquist. Bob knew then in a flash that Billy Bunter had spoofed him twice that evening.

"You must be mistaken, Cherry," went on Mr. Quelch, eyeing the red-faced Removite curiously. "However, as you admit that you were causing a disturbance by banging on the box-room door, these lines do not come amiss; for I strongly disapprove of such conduct, and would have awarded you an imposition in any case. You may go."

And Bob Cherry went. In the passage, outside the Form master's study, he proceeded to spar with an imaginary Billy Bunter with such ferocity and energy that his bunched knuckles came into violent contact with the passage wall. And as the passage wall was made of brick and plaster, and Bob's knuckles merely of flesh and bone, the result was painful in the extreme for the aforesaid knuckles.

"Yooooooop!" gasped Bob, sucking away at his damaged knuckles frantically. "Yow-wow!"

Thereafter Bob did not indulge in any sparring; he contented himself with promises of what he would do to Bunter when next he saw him—futile promises, for Bob's anger at any time was fleeting; and by the time bedtime came round, and with it, incidentally, Bunter, Bob had almost forgotten the events of the early evening.

When he did remember them his anger had evaporated, and with it the desire to take it out of Bunter. So Bob contented himself with knocking the Owl of the Remove's bullet head against the wall playfully; but, playful as it was, that action drew a loud wail from William George Bunter.

"Whoooooooop! Beast! Yaroooo!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Reconciliation!

"B LESS my soul!"

Mr. Quelch made that ejaculation the following morning after breakfast, as he was taking an airing in the quad.

Striding towards him was the Rev. Lambe.

The colour came and went in Mr. Quelch's sharp features, for he felt the

position that had sprung up between him and the Friardale vicar keenly. What the Rev. Lambe wanted at this early hour, in view of what had transpired between them, puzzled the master of the Remove considerably.

Mr. Quelch was not a moral coward, but at that moment he was sorely tempted to turn on his heel and disappear into the House. He suppressed the impulse, however, and, like Felix kept on walking in the direction he had first planned. This meant that he and the Rev. Lambe were bound to meet.

Mr. Quelch's lips set in a thin, straight line. His head seemed elevated a trifle more than was usual, otherwise he was still the Mr. Quelch whose custom it was to take an airing in the quad before morning lessons.

"Good-morning, Quelch!"

Mr. Quelch jumped as the Rev. Lambe, coming abreast of him, smiled beamingly and uttered that friendly greeting.

"G-good-morning!"

Mr. Quelch's tone was very cold and distant, but it was obvious at a glance that the Rev. Lambe was out to effect a reconciliation.

"I'm afraid we both were a trifle hasty and hot-tempered yesterday."

"Indeed!"

The Form master's tone was not at all encouraging.

"I have made inquiries up at the vicarage," went on the Rev. Lambe, "and from my maid I gather the fact that you were under the impression that I was expecting you at the vicarage yesterday."

Mr. Quelch eyed the Rev. Lambe coldly.

"I do not see the necessity of making those inquiries," he remarked bitingly, "considering you yourself invited me to the vicarage; neither do I see anything to be gained by pursuing this discussion. I bid you good-morning, Mr. Lambe!"

And Mr. Quelch, with his head erect, strode on.

"My dear Quelch!"

The Rev. Lambe rustled after the Form master and caught him by the arm.

Mr. Quelch stopped; he had to, more or less.

"My dear Quelch," said the reverend gentleman, with some show of agitation, "please allow me to explain."

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows in token of consent, but the hard expression on his face remained the same.

"From the inquiries I instituted," said the Rev. Lambe, "it is obvious that you thought I had invited you to the vicarage—"

"You did invite me," said Mr. Quelch, with a dark frown.

"Pardon me, sir, I did not invite you!"

"What?" barked Mr. Quelch. "Are you going to tell me that I dreamed that you spoke to me over the telephone?"

"What?"

"That I dreamed that you asked me to come over at once for a game of golf and a cup of tea?"

"But, my dear Quelch, I do assure you that I never spoke to you over the telephone yesterday," said the Rev. Lambe.

Mr. Quelch looked more grim than ever.

"Really, my dear sir, if you persist in that statement, I can only say that your memory is failing you."

"Indeed, Mr. Quelch!" The Rev. Lambe's affability was beginning to change to hostility. "There is nothing

the matter with my memory. There is some mistake somewhere."

Mr. Quelch shook his head. "There is no mistake," he said coldly. "I answered the telephone; I heard your voice. You asked me to come over at once for a game of golf. And what do I find when I reach the vicarage? Why, sir, that you are gone out—that you have made a fool of me!"

The Rev. Lambe shook his head. "Nothing of the kind," he said. "I did not phone you, Quelch. I had been with Major Thresher since ten o'clock. At what time was it you allege I phoned you?"

The master of the Remove pondered for a while.

"Ah! It would be in the region of three o'clock," he replied at length.

"Ah!" The Rev. Lambe's voice rose in his excitement. "At a quarter to three I was lunching with the major. We did not rise from the table until at least twenty minutes past three, my dear Quelch. If you doubt my words, Major Thresher will doubtless be pleased to substantiate them, I feel sure."

Mr. Quelch jumped. The Rev. Lambe's earnestness was beginning to impress him, added to which his mention of Major Thresher seemed pretty conclusive proof that Mr. Lambe had not phoned his old friend at Greyfriars.

"Then who did phone me?" said the master of the Remove.

The Rev. Lambe shrugged his shoulders.

"That I cannot say," he retorted. "But I didn't, my dear Quelch. I trust you will believe an old friend?"

Mr. Quelch gazed hard and long at his old friend. Then he spoke.

"I do believe you," he said. "I'm afraid I rather jumped to a hasty conclusion, but who would not have done that in the circumstances?"

The Rev. Lambe smiled and nodded. "It is fairly obvious that some practical joker has been imitating my voice," he said, at length.

"Obviously!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "And I would like to have that practical joker in front of me for a few moments, just to tell him what I thought of him."

"My wish as well," agreed the Rev. Lambe.

The icy expression on the face of the master of the Remove began to thaw, so to speak.

"My dear Lambe," he said, "I owe you an apology—"

"Not at all, my dear Quelch," smiled the vicar.

"But I do," insisted the Form master, holding out his hand. "I apologise to you for being so disloyal to a friend of so many years standing as to believe him capable of deliberately slighting me."

"Tut, tut!" smiled the Rev. Lambe. "It is I who owe you an apology, my dear Quelch."

"Not at all, my dear Lambe—"

"But I insist, my dear Quelch," went on the Rev. Lambe. "I was foolish enough yesterday, and unkind as well, to think that you had—hem—hem—been indulging in alcoholic liquor to an unwise extent."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "We all make mistakes, my dear friend."

"That is your chivalrous nature ready to excuse me," said the Rev. Lambe. "My dear Quelch, I hope you will forgive me for my hasty words of yesterday."

"They are forgotten and forgiven already, my dear Lambe!"

"You are a good friend, Quelch,"



Peering in at the window Wharton saw Billy Bunter crouching near the wall. "Help! Save me!" shrieked Bunter. "Help!" "Hold on, Bunter!" panted Wharton. "I'll have you out of there in a jiffy!" (See Chapter 13.)

said the Rev. Lambe, with a pleased little sigh.

"And I could wish for no better friend than you, my dear Lambe!"

How long these two "old friends" would have ladled out compliments to each other it is difficult to say, but at that moment the bell rang for first lesson.

"I must be going," said Mr. Quelch. "I'm so glad you came over, my dear Lambe."

"And I could not be more glad," smiled the vicar. "My mind is now at rest, my dear Quelch. If only I could discover the identity of the gentleman who perpetrated that silly and ridiculous hoax—"

"If only!" echoed Mr. Quelch.

But little did either of these gentlemen know that the perpetrator of that hoax was a member of the Remove Form at Greyfriars. This was due to the fact that the voice Mr. Quelch had heard over the phone had sounded like that of an adult. Certainly Mr. Quelch never for one moment connected it with the fat squeak of William George Bunter. Which was, perhaps, fortunate for that cheerful youth.

When Mr. Quelch took his Form that morning he was in quite a genial mood, a circumstance that made his class very curious to know the cause. Even such slackers as Bunter, Skinner & Co., and Lord Mauleverer were only mildly reproved when their "construe" was sadly at fault. And when morning classes came to an end, not one member

of the Remove Form had received either a caning or an imposition. A surprising state of affairs, and certainly a very unusual one.

And for it, indirectly, the Remove had to thank William George Bunter, which was more surprising still.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Trapped!

"YOU fellows awake?"

Billy Bunter sat up in bed as he whispered those words and peered about him in the darkness.

"Any one awake?"

Save for the regular breathing of the sleeping Removites all was still.

Billy Bunter grinned to himself in the darkness and rolled out of bed. It wanted a quarter of an hour to midnight. Bunter was hungry, which was not very surprising in the circumstances, for the Owl of the Remove was always hungry.

"Groooough! It's cold!"

The fat junior shivered a little as the night air caught him, but even the warm comfort of the bed he had left was not comparable with the wonderful "feed" that awaited him once he reached the box-room. The thought of that made Bunter smack his lips in anticipation.

On tip-toe he crept towards the door

of the dormitory and out on to the landing beyond. Then, with all caution, for the prefects and masters had not yet retired, the fat junior padded his way towards his hidden hoard of tuck. His mouth was watering as he went; a glorious feed was almost within his grasp. Almost—

Click!

There was a faint sound from the darkness ahead of him. Then suddenly a light blazed out, and Bunter blinked dazedly in the glare of an electric torch.

"Ah! Caught you!"

It was Loder's voice.

Billy Bunter groaned.

Gerald Loder was the most unpopular prefect at Greyfriars, and the Owl of the Remove knew that he had little mercy to expect from him.

The prefect had an ashplant under his arm, and he allowed it to fall down into his palm. Then he switched on the passage lights and gripped Bunter by the shoulder.

"Caught, my fat pippin!" he said unpleasantly.

"Oh, really, Loder—"

"And where were you off to, my lad?"

Billy Bunter's wits worked swiftly.

"I was going down to the study to get some toothache mixture," he said glibly. "I've got an awful tooth! Kept me awake, you know. It's awful!"

And Bunter assumed a very pained expression to bear out his statement.

Gerald Loder sneered.

"Can't you think of a better tale than that?" he asked.

"Oh, really, Loder—"

"Bend over!" commanded the prefect.

"But I say—"

"Bend over!"

"But— Leggo! Yooooop!"

Billy Bunter bent over; he had to, for Loder's iron grip was on his collar. Next moment Loder's ashplant came into free play.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yooooop! Yaroooooh! Yow-wow!"

Billy Bunter's howls awoke the echoes.

"Stop making that awful row!" said

Loder harshly. "Do you want to bring a master here? You'll get worse than a prefect's licking if you do!"

"Wow!"

Bunter's yells died a sudden death. He did not desire to bring a master on the scene. Of the two evils he preferred Gerald Loder.

"Now get back to your dormitory, you little rotter!" snapped Loder. "And if I catch you out of it again I'll take you before the Head!"

"Groooough!" mumbled Bunter.

And with Loder's grip still upon his collar he rolled back to the Remove dormitory. Really, it looked as if Bunter was to pass the night tuckless, so to speak. The prefect departed, having assured himself that no other Removite was out of his bed, and Billy Bunter was left alone with his thoughts, which, centred round the unpopular Sixth Form prefect, were almost homicidal.

"The beast!" mumbled Bunter. "The rotter!"

For quite half an hour the Owl of the Remove lay awake scarifying Gerald Loder. At the expiration of that time his thoughts, for want of a better subject, returned to grub, glorious grub. And within a very few minutes the fat junior was clambering out of bed for the second time that night.

On this occasion he was more fortunate. No one in the shape of authority was encountered en route, and, with a fat chuckle of triumph, Billy Bunter slid round the door of the box-room, turned the key on the inside, slipped the key in his pyjama jacket pocket, and then applied a match to the single gas-bracket the box-room boasted.

"This is prime!" muttered Bunter. "He, he, he!"

There was a rug lying in one corner of the room, and the fat junior pounced on it, and managed to fix it over the window so as to prevent the light from being seen. Then he settled down to enjoy himself.

For the space of the next hour William George Bunter's jaws worked

overtime, and the wondrous box of tuck from Chunkley's grew beautifully less. Jam-tarts, eclairs, iced cake, tins of preserves followed one another with alarming rapidity into Bunter's capacious stomach. Then, by way of a change, Bunter started on the chocolates and the jam.

His fat face was shiny and exceedingly sticky, but he felt contented; perhaps the only disturbing thought being that Nature had not endowed him with a greater capacity.

Bunter sighed, and gave up the attack on the good things at last. Then, for the first time, he became aware of a thin wreath of smoke that was rising from the floor.

"Oh dear!" he muttered. "What's that?"

Really the question was superfluous. Smoke was smoke, and even Bunter knew that there could be no smoke without fire.

Fire!

The thought sent a shiver down his spine.

He gazed about him frantically. The smoke, increasing in volume with the passing of the seconds, was rising from the flooring in a steady stream. That meant something was burning in the room below that in which Bunter sat crouching like a fat jelly.

With a white, terrified face the Owl of the Remove dashed to the door of the box-room and jerked at the handle.

The door did not budge, for the simple reason that Bunter had locked it.

"It's locked!" he muttered to himself, and his trembling fingers sought the place where the key should be.

It was not there!

In his terror Billy Bunter forgot that he had pocketed the key on his entry into the room.

He was trapped!

Already the little room was filling with smoke; already the fat junior's eyes were smarting and watering; already he felt the inclination strong upon him to cough.

"Help! Fire! Help!"

Billy Bunter's terrified voice rang out through the silence of the night, echoing and re-echoing:

"Fire! Help! Fire!"

Again and again his voice shrieked out, but it seemed to the terrified Owl of the Remove an interminable time before any answer came.

Clang, clang, clang!

But the furious ringing of the alarm bell now effectively swamped Billy Bunter's cries.

Clang, clang, clang!

Bunter gazed about him wildly. Only the four walls and the window met his gaze. They seemed to mock him. Escape from that room, for William George Bunter at least, seemed impossible.

"Help, help! Fire! Help!" screamed the terrified fat junior, now thoroughly losing his nerve.

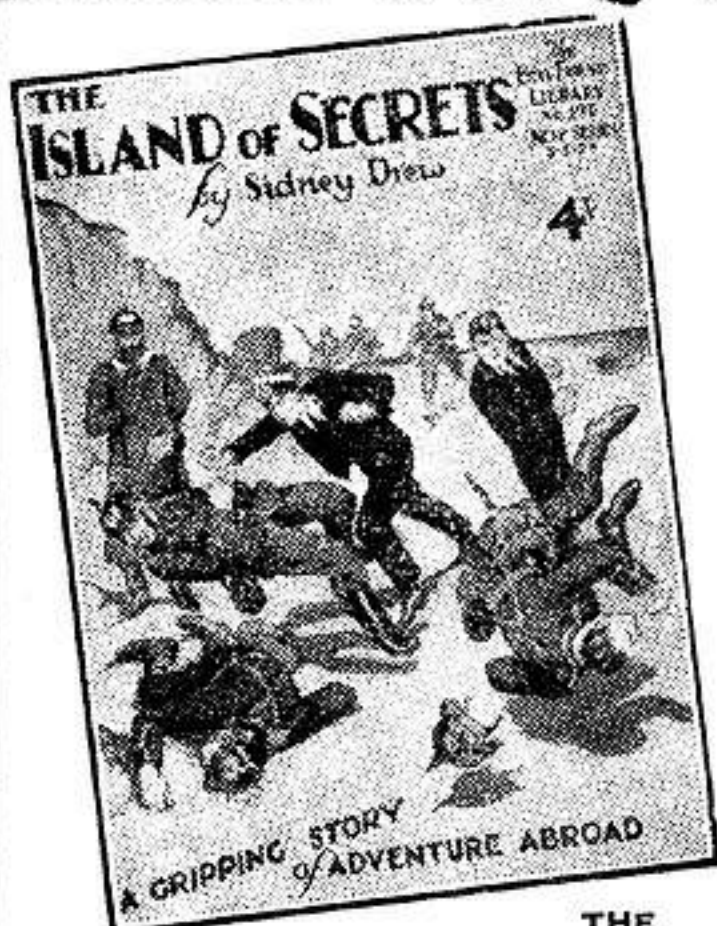
Once again he rushed to the door and tugged at the handle. The door did not budge. Then, in a fresh paroxysm of terror, the Owl of the Remove rolled towards the window. In his agitation he did not see the big trunk that lay in his path, and tripped over it with a wild yell.

Crash!

Bunter landed in a heap on the floor well-nigh breathless. Clouds of smoke were gushing up through the floorboards, almost enveloping him as in a garment.

Choking and spluttering, with the water streaming from his eyes, Bunter

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scrambled to his feet and rushed towards the window once again. His trembling fingers snatched the rug away from the window. Next minute he looked down into the quad. And once more, at the top of his voice, Billy Bunter yelled:

"Help! Fire! Help!"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

"Bravo, Wharton!"

CLANG, clang, clang!
Harry Wharton awoke with a start as the clanging of the fire bell pierced his dreams.

Clang, clang clang!

Next moment the captain of the Remove was scrambling out of bed and awaking his Form fellows.

"Wake up!" he roared, at the top of his voice. "Fire bell!"

He did not feel alarmed, for at various periods of the year the Head would call an unexpected fire drill, and Wharton's first thoughts were that this was simply one of those occasions.

He went from bed to bed, and shook the sleeping juniors into wakefulness. The Removites tumbled out and hastily dressed themselves. Wharton, as captain of the Remove, took charge.

"Don't get panicky," he said; but the words were hardly out of his mouth before Mr. Quelch rustled into the dormitory, clad in a dressing-gown.

The Form master's face was serious. "There is a fire in the lower box-room," he said quietly. "This is no practice drill, boys. You will have to leave the dormitory by way of the chute."

"Oh!"

Wharton and Bob Cherry immediately ran to the aperture in the wall which held the chute. The canvas was thrown out to the quad below in double-quick time.

"Smartly done, boys!" said Mr. Quelch encouragingly. "Now get down without any excitement or panic."

The Form master's calm words reassured the juniors, who were inclined to take fright. Already billows of smoke, wafted up the well of the staircase from the box-room and thence into the dormitory, despite the fact that the door was closed, made it evident that this was a serious outbreak. Descent by the staircase, therefore, was neither safe nor practicable.

One by one the juniors slid down the canvas chute, and arrived safely in the quad below. Prefects with torches were hurrying backwards and forwards assembling the various Forms, whilst the Greyfriars Fire Brigade, under the leadership of Mr. Lascelles, the maths master, was already attempting to subdue the flames.

To many of the Removites the fire was merely something exciting—a spectacle which they had often thought about but scarcely dreamed would ever come to pass. Yet it had come to pass. The flames were spreading from the lower box-room, and a gentle wind added to their hungry advances. Wingate and his fellow prefects were doing all they could to limit the outbreak, and their task was no easy one. In the meantime, shivering in the quad the various Forms were lined up to answer the roll.

Notebook in hand, Mr. Quelch proceeded to call the roll of the Remove.

"Cherry!"

"Adsum!"

"Peter Todd!"

"Adsum!" sang out Peter.

"Alonso Todd!"

"Adsum!"

"Bunter!" sang out Mr. Quelch.

There was no reply.

"Bunter!" repeated the master of the Remove sharply.

Still there was no reply.

Mr. Quelch's face grew anxious.

"Bunter!" he said for the third time.

Silence!

The Removites looked at each other blankly. Where was Bunter?

Mr. Quelch rushed through the remainder of the roll call. No one but Billy Bunter was absent from parade.

"Has anyone seen Bunter?" asked Mr. Quelch anxiously.

Apparently no one had, for a stony silence greeted the Form master's words.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Where can the boy be? I saw every one out of the dormitory myself."

"Now I come to think about it," said Harry Wharton, with a pucker in his brow, "I don't seem to remember seeing Bunter in the dormitory at all."

Mr. Quelch started.

"Someone gave the alarm," he said. "Surely—surely that wasn't Bunter? Surely—"

And while Mr. Quelch lingered over the word a fat face appeared at the window of the upper box-room and gazed wildly down into the quad.

It was William George Bunter!

If there was any doubt at first that was soon dispelled for in the fat

A useful leather pocket wallet has been awarded to: Peter Mason, 152, Herrick Road, Loughboro, for the following limerick:

Mr. Prout, while out hunting in Chile,
A country decidedly hilly,
On mopping his brow
Said he: "I'll allow
That to call this place Chile is silly!"

Now have a 'shot at a Limerick yourself, chum. There're plenty more pocket wallets waiting to be won!

junior's familiar voice came the frantic appeal:

"Help, help, help!"

"Bunter!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Good heavens!"

Mr. Quelch singled out a dozen of his boys, and beckoned them to follow him. At a run he approached as near as he could to the burning portion of the building. In breathless accents, the Remove master explained matters to Mr. Lascelles, who was in charge of the fire brigade.

Looking up to the second box-room, the maths master became aware, for the first time, of William George Bunter's presence in that blazing room.

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Lascelles. "The boy will be burnt to death! The blaze has got a fair hold of that upper box-room!"

His face blanched.

"You have a sheet, Lascelles?" asked Mr. Quelch tremulously.

The maths master nodded.

In a moment he had dragged a canvas sheet from the fire manual.

"You keep your brigade at work!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "My boys will look after the sheet. Bunter will have to jump for it!"

That appeared to be the only solution.

Bunter's face again appeared at the open window. Terror was in every line of it.

"Help, help! Oh, help!"

Mr. Quelch cupped his hands. The dozen juniors had seized the canvas sheet and were standing ready.

"Bunter!" roared Mr. Quelch. "You will have to jump!"

"Help! Help!" shrieked Bunter.

"Jump for it!" yelled the master of the Remove. "You will be quite safe, my boy!"

But Billy Bunter was too terrified to pay heed to that advice. He had lost all control of himself. The heat of the room was unbearable; the smoke was choking him, and already livid tongues of flame were shooting up from the flooring upon which he stood.

Again and again Mr. Quelch beseeched Bunter to jump into the sheet; but he might have saved his breath, for the Owl of the Remove, even if he had heard his Form master's advice, would not have adopted it. He was thoroughly frightened.

"The boy will be burnt to death!" muttered Mr. Quelch, his face white and strained. "Can't we do anything to help him?"

"The ladder won't reach that window," said Mr. Lascelles, on whose smoke-begrimed face were standing beads of perspiration. "Wingate and Gwynne have tried to reach that unfortunate boy from the staircase, but they had to give up on account of the smoke and the flames."

Mr. Quelch wrung his hands and hastily explained the situation to Dr. Locke, who had just arrived on the scene.

"Good gracious!" said the Head, strangely moved. "We must do something for that poor boy. A ladder—"

"Won't reach!" said Mr. Lascelles shortly.

"But can't we join two ladders together?" said Dr. Locke, and Mr. Quelch jumped at the suggestion.

Mr. Lascelles shook his head.

"I'm afraid not," he said. "We could only tie them together. And no two ladders secured in such a fashion would stand the weight of myself or a prefect, for instance, let alone the additional weight of Bunter. I am prepared to try out such a ladder as a last resource if we cannot persuade Bunter to leap into the sheet," he added.

"Help! Oh, help! Help!"

Once again Billy Bunter's cries rang out. His smoke blackened face peered down beseechingly into the quad. Behind him rose a wall of flames and smoke.

"Jump into the sheet!"

Bunter took no heed of Dr. Locke's shouted advice.

"This is terrible!" gasped the old doctor. "That poor boy—"

He broke off as someone brushed against him with a ladder. It was Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove. Whilst Mr. Lascelles had been explaining the futility of attempting a rescue by means of two ladders roped together, the captain of the Remove, assisted by Bob Cherry, had quietly and quickly found a length of rope, with which they had fastened two of Gosling's ladders together. It was a makeshift affair, and looked anything but secure.

Even Bob Cherry was dubious.

"You can't risk your neck on a thing like that, Harry," he said.

"Don't jaw so much," said Harry Wharton shortly. "Help me run it up against the wall."

With Bob at one end of the "double" ladder, and himself at the other, the captain of the Remove rushed it across to the school wall,

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almost knocking over the Head as he did so.

Then, to the consternation of masters and seniors alike, Wharton and Bob raised the ladder. The flames and smoke almost hid them from sight, but Dr. Locke, through the lifting clouds of smoke, saw enough to give him the fright of his life.

Harry Wharton was mounting the improvised escape.

Bob Cherry, loyal and plucky, was standing at the foot of the ladder, steadying it as best he could, hoping with a fervour that only the sight of a bosom pal in danger can engender, that Harry would come through that terrifying ordeal with his life.

"Come back!" Dr. Locke's voice rose above the general tumult. "Come back!"

Harry Wharton did not heed.

With set face he mounted the rungs of that improvised escape, each step bringing him nearer the staring, smoke-begrimed face of Billy Bunter at the upper box-room.

Flames, curling from the lower box-room, engulfed the intrepid captain of the Remove, but he kept on. It was a neck or nothing venture. The two ladders, bound together only by rope, wobbled precariously. The flames licking at the ropes which held the ladders together pursued their relentless journey. It was a matter of time. If Wharton could reach the trapped school-boy in the box-room and bring him down from that blazing inferno before the flames snapped the ropes that held the ladders together all would be well. If not—

It meant a drop of thirty feet!

"Come back!" Mr. Quelch added his voice to that of Dr. Locke. Still, the captain of the Remove did not heed. With all haste, blended with a commendable amount of caution, he mounted higher.

The swirling smoke hid him from sight at frequent intervals, but he could hear the murmur of the Greyfriars fellows gathered below as they saw, between the lifting smoke, that he was still safe.

"The boy will be killed!" said Mr. Lascelles. "Even if he reached the window, the ladders will never stand the strain. Look! The flames are already licking—"

He broke off and pointed upwards. Tongues of flame were leaping about the ladders, despite the deluge of water the brigade brought to bear upon them. If only rope held them together, what chance would the brave captain of the Remove stand of reaching terra firma alive? What chance had he of rescuing Bunter?

What chance, indeed? Even Wharton himself knew that this was the adventure of his life. That success, that life, depended on Providence.

And Providence served the plucky captain of the Remove in his hour of need.

The wind shifted:

The flames that had once seemed so threatening as to make it impossible for the intrepid Removite to reach his objective, let alone reach the quad again with a whole skin, now drifted away from the ladder. And as the crowd of Greyfriars fellows saw this a hearty, encouraging cheer rang out.

The fellows with the canvas sheet stood as near to the blazing building as was possible. But their services, fortunately, were never needed.

Wharton at last reached the window-sill of the upper box-room.

Of Bunter, at first there was no sign.

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Then Wharton, peering in at the window, well nigh choked with the smoke, saw Bunter crouching against the wall.

"Help! Save me!" shrieked Bunter.

"Help!"

"Hold on, Bunter!" said Wharton, as calmly as he could. "I'll have you out of there in a jiffy!"

It was easier said than done.

The captain of the Remove clambered in at the window, and Bunter, the moment he knew that deliverance was at hand, fainted.

Clawing his way through the smoke, Harry Wharton reached the unconscious junior. Then, with Bunter slung over his shoulder, fireman's lift fashion, the plucky Removite slowly made his way back to the window. His breath came in short gasps; his eyes were running with water; his strength was beginning to fail him, for Bunter's inert figure was literally a dead weight. How Wharton managed to clamber over the sill he did not remember. But he accomplished it, and as he came into the view of the anxious crowd down below a thunderous cheer broke out:

"Bravo!"

Wharton, however, never heard it. More by instinct than anything else he descended the ladders, with the unconscious form of William George Bunter slung over his shoulder. Willing hands went out to relieve him of his burden.

Then the captain of the Remove, thoroughly exhausted, fell back in the anxious arms of Bob Cherry, unconscious.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter's Bargain!

"GROOOOOUGH! Yow! I'm hungry!"

Those were the first words Billy Bunter uttered when he came to.

Dr. Locke smiled.

Mr. Quelch smiled.

The matron smiled.

Billy Bunter blinked.

He was in the sanatorium, and, but for a slight headache, felt none the worse for his adventure.

"Don't be alarmed, my boy," said Dr. Locke kindly. "You are safe now!"

"And Wharton?" It was to Billy Bunter's credit that, next to remembering that he was hungry, he remembered the gallant junior who had come to his rescue in the nick of time.

Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch smiled reassuringly.

"The brave boy is quite well," said the former. "Happily none the worse for his gallant act."

"Oh!" said Bunter in relief. "I'm glad of that. I say, sir—"

"Yes, my boy?"

"I feel awfully peckish, sir," said Bunter plaintively. "Simply famished, sir!"

The Head smiled again, and Mr. Quelch and the matron, taking their cue, doubtless, from Dr. Locke, smiled, too.

"We will soon put that right, my boy," said Dr. Locke. "But if you feel well enough to talk, I'd like to ask you a few things."

"Oh!" Bunter's fat face fell.

"In the first place," said Dr. Locke, "was it you who gave the alarm?"

Billy Bunter grinned.

"Oh, yes, sir!" he answered. "The moment I saw the smoke I yelled for all I was worth!"

"That was very commendable," said Dr. Locke, with a kind smile. "But tell me, Bunter. How was it you were out of your dormitory?"

"I wasn't, sir. That is to say, I saw the smoke, sir," said Bunter, drawing on his imagination.

The Head started.

Mr. Quelch started.

The matron smiled. She knew Bunter.

"But, my dear boy, how could you have seen the smoke from your bed in the Remove dormitory?" asked Dr. Locke.

Billy Bunter blinked.

"It was a sort of instinct, sir," he said. "That is to say, I wasn't in the dorm, sir."

"So I gathered," said Dr. Locke patiently. "Come, come, Bunter! You need not be afraid. Your timely warning to-night, when you gave the alarm, was providential, an undoubtedly the means of saving the school, to say nothing of possible loss of life."

"Oh!" Billy Bunter sat up in bed.

"You may speak quite frankly, Bunter," said Dr. Locke. "You need not be afraid."

"You won't—you won't flog me if I tell you the truth?" asked Bunter, his fat wits again coming to his assistance.

Dr. Locke looked at Mr. Quelch and smiled. The master of the Remove looked across at the matron, and she smiled. She, in turn, looked fixedly at William George Bunter and he smiled.

"I give you my word that you will not be punished for your transgression of the school rules, Bunter," said the Head. "for a transgression there was is very evident from your own words."

"Oh!" Billy Bunter turned to Mr. Quelch. "And—and will you promise not to punish me, sir, if—if I tell you the truth about the grub? I mean the truth, the whole truth, and—and—"

"Go on, my boy!" said Mr. Quelch. "You need not fear anything from me."

Billy Bunter heaved a sigh of relief. Really, his luck was proverbial. From the Head and Mr. Quelch himself he had received a promise that he would not be punished if he told the truth. Never had the truth offered such wonderful prospects to the Owl of the Remove.

"Go on, my boy!" said Dr. Locke encouragingly.

And Billy Bunter, taking a deep breath, took the plunge.

"Mr. Quelch put me on short rations for a week, sir," he explained to Dr. Locke, who, turning to the master of the Remove, received confirmation of that remark by a nod. "and I was very hungry, sir. Simply famished, sir."

"Well?"

"Mr. Quelch also gave me an impot, sir, for eating in class—"

"Which you thoroughly deserved," said Dr. Locke mildly.

Billy Bunter blinked.

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Pray continue, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, wondering where on earth all this was leading.

"Well, sir, when I took the lines to 'Quelch's—hem!—Mr. Quelch's study, he wasn't there—"

"Oh!"

Billy Bunter grinned. He was enjoying the situation.

"And just as I was leaving the study, sir, the telephone-bell rang. Being an obliging sort of fellow, I answered the call."

The smile that had been lingering on Mr. Quelch's face faded away. He felt that he was on the verge of making an unpleasant discovery—as, indeed, he was.

"From whom was the call, Bunter?" asked the Remove Form master.

Billy Bunter hesitated; and then,



"Go on, my boy," said Dr. Locke. "You have my word that you will not be punished." Billy Bunter grinned. "I—I was feeling peckish, sir, so—so I ordered a spread from Chunkley's—" "Yes?" "In the name of—of Mr. Quelch!" concluded Bunter. It was out at last! (See Chapter 14.)

emboldened by the promise the Head and Mr. Quelch had made to him, he proceeded.

"From Chunkley's. They were speaking about your—your hat, sir."

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips and nodded. Dr. Locke, knowing nothing of the circumstances attached to that hat, kept on smiling.

Bunter glanced at the doctor, and then looked at Mr. Quelch. Of the two expressions he preferred that of Dr. Locke.

"Well—"

Again Bunter gulped.

"You promised that you wouldn't punish me?" he asked.

And the Owl of the Remove received in reply two nods—from Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch respectively.

"I was feeling awfully peckish, sir," said the fat junior; "so I—I—I—I—"

"Well?"

"I—I—I—I—I—" Billy Bunter felt himself at a loss for words.

"Go on, my boy!" said Dr. Locke. "You have my word that you will not be punished."

"But Quelch, sir—I mean Mr. Quelch," said Bunter—"he promised, too, didn't he?"

Mr. Quelch found his voice.

"I did!" he barked. "Pray proceed!"

"I was feeling awfully peckish, sir," recommenced Bunter—"starving, in fact! So I—I—I ordered a spread in—in—Mr. Quelch's name, sir!"

It was out at last.

And Bunter, gazing at the changing expressions on the faces of the two masters, almost began to wish that he hadn't confessed to that heinous sin.

For a few moments there was a

deathly silence in the sanby. Then Dr. Locke spoke. Gone now was his kindly expression. His face was set and stern.

"Continue!"

"I was simply famished—" began Bunter, when the Head cut him short.

"We have heard that, boy," he said coldly. "Kindly continue without any further reference to your—ahem!—hunger."

Billy Bunter again took the plunge.

"I got the goods, sir, the following day," he explained haltingly. "And—and hid them in the box-room."

"Oh!" Mr. Quelch and Dr. Locke uttered that ejaculation in unison.

"Of course, I'll pay for them," went on Bunter quickly. "I hope I'm not the sort of fellow to run up credit in another chap's name without intending to settle matters. The bill—"

Mr. Quelch started at the mention of the bill.

"How much was the bill, boy?" he asked quietly.

Billy Bunter considered.

"I think it was for eight pounds odd—" he began.

"Wha-at?"

Billy Bunter quaked.

"That—that included your—your hat as well, sir," he said, by way of softening the blow.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Dr. Locke.

Mr. Quelch said nothing. He fixed a pair of glittering eyes on the Owl of the Remove.

"Boy!" snapped Dr. Locke, recovering from his first astonishment. "Are you really serious? Do you seriously declare that you ordered that terrific quantity of foodstuffs in the name of your Form master?"

Bunter nodded.

"You promised, sir—" he reminded.

The Head pursed his lips. Mr. Quelch looked daggers at the Owl of the Remove. Really Mr. Quelch wished he hadn't given that promise.

"You incorrigible boy!" said Dr. Locke at last. "You young rascal! And what has all this to do with your presence in the upper box-room?"

Billy Bunter explained, and awaited the verdict hopefully. There was a cheeky grin on his face when Dr. Locke spoke at last.

"Well, well!" said the Head. "I hardly know what to say. Both Mr. Quelch and I have given our word that you shall not be punished. But really I have never heard of anything so audacious in my life. Bunter, you are a thorough young rascal! You—you are—"

Words failed Dr. Locke at that moment—as, indeed, they did Mr. Quelch.

That gentleman looked as if he were in danger of having an apoplectic fit. The thought that Bunter, in his name, had ordered vast quantities of food, had arranged for delivery of same, and had actually managed to secret it in the box-room without Mr. Quelch being any the wiser, was overwhelming.

And yet, but for the amazing sequence of events springing from Bunter's audacious act, it was pretty certain that the alarm when the lower box-room had caught afire would never have been given, but for that huge consignment of tuck from Chunkley's. Really the situation was unheard-of.

(Continued on page 28.)

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The Silver Wheel!

JIMMY BERESFORD wheeled his bike across the ramp and took up his position in line with four other riders. These were not particularly formidable, and only one of them could lay claim, with Jimmy, to having defeated Ben Stevenson.

Yet the race which ensued was exciting enough, for every man was keyed up for the honour of reaching the final. To the first bend of the fourth and last lap the quintet remained in a compact bunch, with Jimmy slightly in the lead, but one of the riders crashed badly on the curve, and brought another man down with him.

Jimmy rode on, with the remaining pair close behind him, but on the last corner he made victory sure by a long, raking skid, that took him into the home-stretch five lengths ahead of his rivals. He had increased his lead still more when he crossed the finishing-line, qualifying to meet Dorgan and the winners of the other heats in the final.

The following event in the programme was a match-race, that had drawn many thousands of "fans" to the Speedway. It was between "Flying" Jack Gillies, of Australia, and "Tornado" Rossiter, of Britain, and Rossiter's lack of popularity was made evident during the daredevil race. The "Aussies" always had a sporting reception at Elsenham Park, but, naturally enough, the home rider was generally the favourite. It was not so to-day, for throughout the event Gillies was encouraged by a continuous roar of applause.

Rossiter, however, was first across the line in a close finish, the small amount of cheering that greeted his triumph being a striking indication of the crowd's opinion of him.

Then came the interval, and after the interval the final of the Silver Wheel.

There was an anticipant fidgeting on the part of the spectators in the stands, a fluttering of programmes to consult the colours of the riders.

Once more Jimmy Beresford wheeled

his speed-iron across the ramp, a red slip over his leather racing suit. He was placed next to Dorgan, who received the inside position. The other two, whose names were Lang and Smithson, were on Jimmy's right in the line-up.

The four bikes were pushed forward, and the riders made the preliminary round of the track. Occasionally one or another of them switched open the throttle—"turned up the wick," in the language of the dirt-track—and when Dorgan did this Jimmy noted how his machine forged on in response.

Swinging round the bend that turned into the front straight, the four of them

flag and then he came up with a rush. He was beautifully in line with his rivals as he passed the starting-post, but actually he had the advantage of an extra five miles an hour in speed, and the advantage was quickly made evident, for immediately after crossing the line he dashed ahead to take the lead.

Jimmy's lip curled as he saw the effect of Dorgan's ruse. Yet it made him the more determined to beat the man—to beat him in spite of any advantage that he might snatch, legitimately or otherwise. Crouching forward, with his helmeted head poised above his handlebars, he twisted the throttle-grip of his bike hard round.

The Beresford "twin" tore forward with her spouts thundering a savage challenge to the Volson machine. Jimmy felt the power that was underneath him, and exulted in that power. Ron was right, for, working on her as he had never worked before,

he had tuned the speed-iron to the limit, and she was answering the throttle in magnificent style.

Yet in the short stretch before the first bend Jimmy knew Ron was right as regards Dorgan's machine, too. The Volson's acceleration was superb. It was tremendous, and with her exhaust-ports ripping out a deafening engine-note, she increased her lead from one length to two.

Dorgan dashed into the bend and tore up the cinders with a swinging skid. Jimmy followed him an instant later, and to the right of him Lang and

With toe-plates burning, the spouts of his speed-iron blazing riotously and belching stabbing jets of flame, young Jimmy Beresford goes all out to add to his long list of successes by winning the coveted Silver Wheel!

endeavoured to form a line, and then they accelerated—not too violently, so that they might remain abreast for the flying start.

But out of the corner of his eye Jimmy saw that Dorgan was lagging behind, and Jimmy had been in the game long enough to know why.

"Laggards" were well-known offenders on the dirt-track, and sometimes they were clever enough to deceive the starter with their trickery.

Dorgan was clever enough to do so. He kept slightly to the rear until the other three were almost level with the

A. CARNEY ALLAN

Smithson hit the curve almost simultaneously.

Lang turned the corner in a well-controlled slide, and beat Jimmy to second place, coming on to the back-straight to take the smoke from Dorgan's machine. Dorgan was now three lengths ahead of Jimmy, and two ahead of Lang.

With Smithson riding abreast of him, Jimmy clenched his teeth. He had lost ground on the bend as well as the straight, and realised that he was in for the race of his career if he were going to win the Silver Wheel.

There was Lang to overtake as well as Dorgan, and Jimmy cut in with the throttle. The spouts blazed riotously and belched stabbing jets of flame. Storming along the back-stretch, he managed to outstrip Smithson and make up on Lang. But with the extra speed of his bike, Dorgan had increased his lead still farther when he made the second bend.

Dorgan hurtled into the corner with his toe-plate digging at the dirt to steady himself. Lang and Jimmy launched their machines after him, and Jimmy used the "cut-out" button to wrench the Beresford "Twin" into a slashing broadside.

Heeling far over, with his knee six inches above the cinders, he took the spray of grit that was avalanched from Lang's back wheel. It peppered his tank and smothered his face-mask and goggles, but he was well-nigh level with his rival when the front-straight was reached.

Once more the exhausts roared as the riders opened up for the dash along the stretch. Jimmy humped himself to and fro in the saddle to force extra speed out of his bike, and his front wheel thrust somewhat ahead of Lang's.

Lang fought desperately for second place, but it was on the figure of Dorgan that Jimmy's attention was riveted.

Dorgan crossed the line for the second lap with a five-length lead, and he was still holding that lead when he gained the bend.

Jimmy and Lang hurled their speed-irons into the curve a moment after him, and once more Jimmy ripped up the cinders with a fearsome broadside. The crowd rose as one man when he tipped precariously and for an instant looked as if he were down. But his toe-plate scored through the dirt and his gauntleted fists struggled against the handlebars, and he swung on to the back-straight safely.

His engine bellowed as it cut in on full-throttle, and the savage jerk of motive-power helped to steady the speed-iron. He was now a length ahead of Lang, and he had cut down Dorgan's lead to three lengths.

Every rider had his section of admirers, and Jimmy's yelled his name delightedly amidst the general storm of applause that greeted his effort. It stirred Jimmy to hear the cheering, and with his hands clenched hard on the grips, he chased Dorgan.

But the Volson's acceleration was saving Dorgan, and Jimmy realised too well that he must win the race on the curves, for when Dorgan reached the far corner he had increased his advantage to four lengths again.

Jimmy rushed the bend at reckless speed. He was taking a chance, but he had got to take chances or play "second fiddle" to his rival.

Again he slashed round the curve in a tear-away broadside. It was a skid almost beyond his control, and it took him away from the white line on the inner edge of the track. Within a yard or two of that line he scrabbled and struggled to avert a crash.

Lang made a desperate effort to regain second place, and likewise took a chance. With a long, raking slide, he scraped round the bend, and tried to push past Jimmy on the inside. But Lang had over-reached himself, and in the act of overtaking Jimmy he came to grief.

He dived out of the saddle and landed on the turf. His machine, crashing amidst a cloud of grit, swung round in a complete circle.

Jimmy saw the wreck spinning into his path, and with all the strength in his muscular arms he wrenched on his handlebars, jerking his front wheel clean into the air and twisting it aside.

The other machine struck against his boot as he switched clear, and, narrowly escaping disaster, he wobbled into the straight again.

Next moment he heard the impact of a collision behind him, and, with a quick glance over his shoulder, he saw that Smithson had dashed into Lang's bike and was falling with hands outstretched.

The race was left to Jimmy and Dorgan, and Dorgan was now only two lengths in front of the youngster. Superior acceleration gave Dorgan the advantage of another length when he crossed the line for the third lap, but Jimmy was chasing him determinedly as he gained the bend.

Both of them raked round the wide sweep of track, but Jimmy was chancing his arm on reckless riding, and if he was in arrears on the straight-stretches, he won the hearts of the crowd with his superior daring.

On the back-straight he was again within two lengths of Dorgan, and the "fans" were yelling themselves hoarse in their excitement.

A screaming skid on the second bend carried him to within a yard of his rival, and Dorgan had to keep his machine hard at it to recover a two-length lead on the straight. Storming at full-speed across the line, the pair entered the last lap of the race.

At the bend Jimmy excelled any previous recklessness that he had shown, rushing the corner in dare-devil style. A skid took him close to the safety fence, and he only controlled the side-slip when he seemed within an ace of hitting the wire. Curving round on the outer edge, he swerved into the back-straight dead-level with Dorgan.

Thunderously the spouts blazed out again, and the two machines flashed for the last bend. Dorgan was flattened

INTRODUCTION.

Jimmy Beresford, a cheery, athletic youngster, is the son of Gordon Beresford, the head of Beresford Motors. Mr. Beresford is considering the plans of a new motor-cycle engine invented by Ron Connolly, Jimmy's pal. Mainly owing to an encounter with his cousin Otto, Jimmy is told by his irate father that he will either have to take a position in the works or fend for himself. Jimmy decides to do the latter and, helped by Ron's expert mechanical knowledge, wins several thrilling races at the Elsenham Park Speedway. The youngster discovers that, by fair means or foul, his scoundrelly cousin Otto is determined to inherit Beresford Motors. Following an unsuccessful attempt on Jimmy's life, Otto, helped by agents of Volson Motors, Beresford's unscrupulous rivals, plans to kidnap Mr. Beresford, who is recovering from a serious illness. Too late, Jimmy and Ron become aware of this plot, and despite their desperate attempt to frustrate it Mr. Beresford is carried off to an unknown destination. Jimmy's hands are tied, for to bring the police into the affair and expose Otto's treachery might cause his father to have a fatal relapse. Meanwhile, making his way slowly but surely to the top of the tree in the dirt-track racing world, Jimmy is entered for the biggest race of his career, the Silver Wheel, an event which brings him one step nearer his great ambition—a match with "Tornado" Rossiter, the mystery champion of the track!

(Now read on.)

along his tank, his throttle-grip twisted round to the limit. Jimmy was doing his utmost to keep abreast of him, kicking at the track-surface to help his machine till sparks and cinders sprang from under his foot.

Dorgan had drawn slightly ahead of him when the corner was reached, and as he swung his speed-iron into the curve the dirt from his back wheel struck Jimmy in a stinging hail.

The youngster had rushed the bend, and as he juggled with the "cut-out" button the spouts ripped flame and smoke. Round came his back wheel, and he twisted his front wheel to meet the grinding skid. The crowd gasped as the bike gave an ugly lurch, but once again Jimmy was ready with his toe, and he dug deep into the cinders to steady himself.

For a moment he was smothered by the dirt that was sprayed up by the Volson machine, and then he was past Dorgan. With his speed-iron bucking underneath him, he came on to the home-stretch and let in the throttle. A split second later, he heard the blurring roar of his rival's bike, and knew that Dorgan was making a last bid to win the race on acceleration.

He drew within a length, within half a length. Out of the corner of his eye Jimmy saw his front wheel nush level with the gauze shield of the Beresford's engine. But the finishing-post was nearer, nearer, until—

Jimmy crossed the line, and the checked flag dropped for him, the gun signalling the finish in the same instant. He had won a tremendous race, literally by inches, and as he heard the crowd's uproar of enthusiastic applause he knew that he had added to his army of admirers.

The announcer, in declaring the result, gave Jimmy's time as 90.5 seconds—far from a record, but commendable for a youngster who had been in the novice class not so long ago.

After the usual triumphant ride round the track, Jimmy made his way to the pits with the cheers of the spectators ringing in his ears. And in the pits he found Ron Connolly awaiting him.

Jimmy went towards him, grinning happily, but the grin faded from his lips as he saw the expression on Ron's face. It was not the expression of approval with which Ron usually greeted his chum after fresh laurels had been won. It was an expression of wild excitement.

"Jimmy!" Ron gasped. "I've learned something that may concern your father! Look at this!"

Black Ness!

IN Ron's hand was a copy of the "Dirt-Track News," on sale at Elsenham Park, and he had it open at the gossip page.

"Read what it says here, Jimmy," he went on. "Second column—third paragraph."

Jimmy took the booklet from him, located the third paragraph of the second column and began to read.

"We understand that Mr. Bernard Volson, of Volson Motors, whose bikes have been doing so well on the Speedways, has rented a house at Black Ness. This house, the Towers, is one which dates back to Tudor times, and stands on the cliffs, not far from Westleigh.

"Mr. Bernard Volson has been invited to present the prize in the Silver Pennant event, to be run at Westleigh Speedway on Saturday—"

Jimmy read no more, for already he

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had divined the reason for Ron's excitement.

"You think, Ron, that—that that's where they took dad," he stammered—"the Towers at Black Ness?"

"I'd stake all I had on it," Ron declared. "We know for a fact that Otto and Brown carried him off to the South Coast; and then, on top of that, I come across this casual notice in the 'Dirt-Track News.' We'll take a chance on it, anyhow, and go down to Black Ness. As it is, you've entered your name for the Silver Pennant at Westleigh on Saturday."

"You'll come with me, then—to Black Ness?" said Jimmy.

"Of course," was the staunch answer. "You didn't imagine I was going to stay here while you ran your head into danger, Jimmy, did you?"

"Come on, then," said Jimmy. "It's late, but I think there's a fast train leaving for Westleigh in half an hour or so. We'll go to the Towers to-night."

It was a non-stop, quick-time run to the South Coast resort, and when the two youngsters stepped off the train it was ten-thirty. They hailed a taxi, and told the driver to take them out to Black Ness.

The coast road from Westleigh ran close to the edge of the cliffs. It was a dark night, with a gusty wind blowing in from the sea, and carrying a suspicion of drizzle. Down below they could hear the breakers pounding on the rock-strewn beach.

Black Ness proved to be a grim-looking headland that jutted out to sea, and near the point of it a dark pile of stone rose against the gloomy sky. On approaching this, the youngsters perceived several slender turrets reaching upward from the main structure, and the taxi-driver answered in the affirmative when they asked him if the place were the Towers.

Jimmy told the fellow to stop the cab, feeling that it would not be wise to advertise their arrival.

Alighting, the youngsters completed the journey on foot, and in a little while found themselves at a pair of imposing iron gates.

One was open, and the two chums slipped through. A magnificent stretch of lawn separated them from a stone gallery that fronted the house, and along the edge of the lawn there were thick shrubs. Keeping to the shelter of these, Jimmy and Ron reached the gallery, and stole across it to a pair of tall windows, in which a light showed.

They looked through the windows, and they saw, seated at a table and engrossed in some documents, the heavily-built figure of Bernard Volson.

Jimmy drew Ron back out of sight.

"I don't think we'd manage to get inside simply by knocking and asking to be admitted," he said. "Volson would tell us to go to blazes, and would probably call a few menservants to keep us out. All the same, I'm going to see if dad's here. I want to know where he is, how he is, and what's going to happen to him."

"By Jove, Jimmy, it's almost ludicrous!" As Ronald spoke his brow was knitted with a frown. "Here you are with enough evidence to start a court case that might land Bernard Volson, Otto, and Brown behind the bars, and yet you daren't act. You've even got to turn housebreaker to see your own father!"

"Things are going to be different when dad is his old self," said Jimmy grimly. "But let's give the place the

once-over, Ron, and see if there's any way of getting inside it."

The two chums made a complete circuit of the house, and discovered that not a single ground-floor window was open; and at first they could find no means of climbing to the floor above, where several windows did happen to be open. But in the west wing there was a lofty turret covered with ivy, and they began to drag themselves up by the aid of the creeper plant.

Jimmy went first, Ron following. Their objective was a small window away near the very top of the turret, and as they ascended higher and higher they began to feel the force of the wind that tore in from the sea.

With their feet seeking some hold on the tendrils of the ivy, and their hands clutched on the foliage, they pulled themselves up the dark face of the tower; but when they were only a yard or two from the window, Ron gave a sudden exclamation.

"Jimmy! Jimmy!" he panted. "There's someone watching us! Look down below!"

Jimmy glanced downward, but saw nothing except the ivy-clad column beneath him and the ground at the foot of it. The altitude seemed greater than it actually was, and he felt a dizziness sweep over him, so that for the moment he well-nigh lost his hold.

"Can't see anything!" he gasped, quickly removing his eyes from the drop and clutching at the ivy more firmly.

"It was a man's face," Ron told him, "looking up at us from a bed-room window in the main part of the house. At least, it—it looked like a man's face."

"You just fancied it, perhaps, Ron," said Jimmy, beginning to recover his self-assurance by now, and resuming the climb again.

He reached the window that had been their objective, and managed to squeeze through. Then he turned and assisted Ron to clamber in.

The two chums found themselves on a spiral staircase, and they descended this without delay, eventually coming to a door at the foot of the steps. They pushed this open, and emerged on to a long, dimly-lit corridor, which they judged to be in the main portion of the house.

Moving along this, Jimmy and Ron finally reached the head of a broad, carpeted flight of stairs that led into a pretentious hall. A large electrolier was suspended from the ceiling, and in the brilliant light of this they saw three men make their way from a room on the right.

One was Bernard Volson. With him was Brown. The third was a manservant.

"You say you saw them," Volson was asking the manservant, "on the west-wing turret? What were they like?"

"I don't know that, sir," the fellow answered. "It was so dark, you see, and I was a good way away—in old Beresford's room."

Jimmy and Ron looked at each other, and then dodged back out of sight as Volson raised an arm and pointed up the stairs.

"Find Morgan and Watkins, Dobbs," he said to the manservant, "and go to the west-wing turret. When you've got the two intruders, bring them here to me."

Dobbs went off, presently reappearing with two other minions. The three of

them hurried up the stairs, turned sharply to the left, and then strode with all haste along the corridor that led to the turret door.

When they had disappeared, Ron and Jimmy slipped out of a dark room into which they had darted an instant before.

Volson and Brown still stood in the hall, and Volson was speaking again.

"Unless these two whom Dobbs saw were burglars," he said, in his harsh-toned voice, "I think we'll shortly be face to face with young Beresford and his friend Connolly. They must have discovered the whereabouts of the old man, Brown."

Brown nodded.

"What do you intend to do when Hobbs and the others bring young Beresford and Connolly down here?" he asked.

"That's what I've been wondering," Volson answered, with a peculiarly ominous note in his voice. "This is an old house, Brown, and there are secret places in it. Supposing young Beresford and Connolly were to be found to-morrow washed up by the sea—"

"Ah, that is one way, Mr. Volson," Brown commented, "and a good way, too! And when young Beresford is gone, we tell the old man the news. The shock is bound to be fatal, our friend takes over Beresford Motors as the next-of-kin, and then the two firms amalgamate—Volson & Beresford!"

Bernard Volson smiled with satisfaction—an evil and unpleasant smile.

"Exactly," he said. "Exactly—"

But all at once his voice trailed away into silence, and the smile on his thin lips faded.

For he had happened to raise his head to look thoughtfully at the ceiling, and with the movement he had discerned two figures standing at the top of the staircase—the figures of Jimmy Beresford and Ron Connolly.

The youngsters, aware that they had been observed, remained quite motionless for a spell. Jimmy was the first to stir, and began to descend boldly towards the hall, Ron following him almost at once. When they were within a yard or so of Brown and Volson they stopped, and Jimmy spoke.

"You've got everything nicely planned, haven't you?" he remarked, his eyes fixed on Volson.

Volson made no answer, but met the youngster's stare without wavering, his gross face granite-like in its merciless hardness.

A light diversion was caused by the reappearance of Dobbs and the other menservants. They had obviously returned to tell Volson that the intruders could not be found. They stopped uncertainly on the landing, however, when they saw Jimmy and Ron in the presence of their employer.

Volson had shot a glance in their direction, but now he looked at Jimmy again.

"What do you want here?" he demanded.

"I have come to see my father," the youngster answered quietly. "And don't try to bluff, Volson, for I know he is here—though I'd lay a thousand to one that he doesn't know you're here!"

Volson shrugged his shoulders, and there was a moment's silence. Then the big man spoke, his glittering eyes bent on Jimmy with a very shrewd expression.

"Your father is very possibly asleep," he said, "and I presume you would not

wish to disturb him. I'll send Dobbs along to see."

He pushed past Ron and Jimmy, and hurried upstairs to where Dobbs was standing with the other two servants. Taking Dobbs aside, he addressed him, and the fellow went off to do his bidding, Volson returning to the hall.

A few minutes later Dobbs put in an appearance again.

"Mr. Beresford is awake, sir," he said to Volson. "Shall I show the young gentlemen to his room?"

Bernard Volson nodded, and Jimmy turned to follow the manservant, accompanied by Ron. But Jimmy felt ill at ease. Volson had taken their intrusion so calmly that the youngster wondered what was at the back of his mind.

He nudged Ron as they walked along the landing, and gave him a look that said, as plainly as any words, "Be on your guard!"

Dobbs led the way along the corridor that connected with the turret-door, and in that dimly-lit passage Jimmy's qualms were accentuated. Neither did he like the appearance of Dobbs, a saturnine individual whose face bore not a trace of colour.

Halfway along the corridor the manservant stopped beside a door.

"In here," he said, thrusting the door open.

The room beyond was in darkness, and Jimmy glanced at their guide narrowly.

"Put the light on," he ordered.

The manservant did so, and Ron and Jimmy crossed the threshold.

There was a thick rug just inside the doorway, and, as the youngsters stepped on it, it gave way underneath their feet. Next instant they were plunging downward—far downward into the black depths of a seemingly-bottomless pit.

A Desperate Venture!

IT seemed to Ron and Jimmy that they hurtled through space for an eternity. Actually, some seconds elapsed before they struck a sheet of water with a great splash.

They sank swiftly, and finally came into collision with a rock bed appreciably below the surface. Nevertheless they would have been badly bruised—and probably stunned and drowned—but for the rug. For it was still underneath them, and it broke the impact for them as they hit the water.

When Jimmy and Ron rose to the surface of the water their mouths were filled with brine and their eyes were blinded. But when they fought back their nausea and brushed the water from their lids they realised that eye-sight was of little value to them, for the place was pitch-dark.

Jimmy first assured himself that Ron needed no help; and then, treading water, he tried to figure out their situation.

He saw very clearly how they had been tricked, by Dobbs leading them to an empty room that possessed a trap-door, and it was easy to surmise that he and Ron had been plunged into some subterranean inlet of the sea.

Volson, of course, had hoped that the mere fall would be sufficient to knock both of the youngsters senseless, if not kill them, and that the water would make things sure. But Volson's hope had not been realised. Here were Ron and Jimmy, very much alive; a little dazed perhaps, but conscious, and able to deliberate on their plight.

"We must be in some kind of a tunnel, Ron," said Jimmy, "and there must be a way out. This is sea-water, and if the sea can enter the cavern, then we ought to be able to leave. Stick close to me and we'll swim along."



As Jimmy and Ron stepped on the thick rug just inside the doorway it gave beneath their feet. The next moment they were plunging downward into the black depths of a seemingly bottomless pit! (See this page.)

Side by side the two youngsters struck out, and after some time they sensed that the roof of the cavern was not so far above their heads as it had at first been. Soon, by raising his hand, Jimmy was able to touch the roof, damp and clammy and dimly reflecting the rippling motion of the water.

At last they reached what seemed to be the mouth of the cavern above which the water had slightly risen.

"I'm for taking a chance," Jimmy declared. "We don't know how long we'll have to swim under water, but I'll swim until my lungs burst, rather than float around until I sink through sheer exhaustion. If I'm going to be finished, I'll darn'-well finish with a kick in me."

"Me too," said Ron, between his teeth, "and let's go right now. For the tide's rising, and if we wait we'll have to swim under water longer still."

Filling their lungs with air, the two youngsters dived. Both Ron and Jimmy had been in a local water-polo team, and they ploughed through the murky depths valiantly. But they had reached almost the end of their tether when they suddenly emerged from the cavern and shot upward to break the surface of the water with their heads.

Stars twinkled above them, and the driven spray from wave-crests was in their faces, while behind them loomed the headland. They were out in the sea.

Taking in deep breaths of the wholesome, invigorating air, Jimmy and Ron turned to search for a landing-place.

There was none on the headland, and they were compelled to strike towards Westleigh.

Ron was somewhat distressed, and Jimmy, the stronger swimmer, lent him a hand. A minute or two later they dragged themselves on to a desolate strip of beach, and, after lying flat on their backs until they had recovered from their exertions, the two youngsters began to climb a narrow cliff-path.

Gaining the summit of the cliffs they found themselves on the coast road, which ran very close to the edge at this point. Ron was still showing signs of exhaustion, and the fresh wind that blew in from the sea was beginning to make him shiver so that Jimmy was anxious for him. He wished that some vehicle would come that way so that they might obtain a lift, for he felt that Ron ought to change out of his wet clothes as soon as possible.

Then, as if in answer to his wish—or so he imagined at that moment—the lights of a car swept into view round a bend.

The car was coming from Westleigh, but Jimmy reckoned that the driver would turn back for them if he had any humanity in him. So the youngster stood in the middle of the road, supporting Ron with one arm, and, with the other, waved to attract attention.

(There's a big disappointment awaiting Jimmy and Ron did they but know it! You'll read all about it in next week's instalment, chums.)

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"BILLY BUNTER'S BLUNDER!"

(Continued from page 23.)

Mr. Quelch gave Bunter one look—which almost wilted that fat junior—and strode out of the sanatorium, unable to trust himself to speak.

Dr. Locke frowned.

"Bunter, by means that come under the heading of sharp practice, you have managed to extract from both Mr. Quelch and myself a promise that you will not be punished. To those promises, of course, we will adhere. But you may think yourself very fortunate. Very!"

With that Dr. Locke rustled out of the sanatorium with majestic dignity.

The next day William George Bunter came out of the sanatorium, none the worse for his experience. To a chortling crowd he gave details of his bargaining with the Head and Mr. Quelch; and one and all agreed that for sheer nerve Billy Bunter fairly took the biscuit.

How the box-room fire had started—for with it had started the first phase in Bunter's bargaining—no one ever knew; but it was noticeable that Skinner & Co., who had previously showed a tendency to use that box-room for a surreptitious smoke, kept well out of the way when the subject of the fire was being discussed.

Whatever the cause of the fire which had threatened to do great damage to the school—and which, thanks to Billy Bunter's alarm, had been averted—the fact remained that the Owl of the Remove owed his salvation to it. That he would have been expelled for using his Form master's name and his credit when the facts became known—and known they would have been when the bill was sent in—was a practical certainty.

As it was, Billy Bunter was still a very unimportant member of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, although in his own estimation a very important one.

And with his importance Bunter's tongue wagged more than ever. The news of his bargaining was made the subject of much comment amongst juniors, seniors, and masters; and, as was natural in the circumstances, Mr. Quelch's anger grew and grew, rather than diminished.

But an outlet was awaiting the outraged master of the Remove, and that occurred to his mind the next time he encountered the Rev. Lambe.

Could it have possibly been Bunter who had mimicked the voice of the Friardale vicar and sent Mr. Quelch on that fool's errand? Could it be Bunter who had been the cause of that "split" between two old friends?

The more Mr. Quelch thought about it the more he was convinced that William George Bunter was, indeed, the guilty party.

Thus, when Bunter was questioned on the matter about a week after the incident of the fire, the truth came out. This time, however, truth was not so welcome to the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove as it had been on a previous occasion.

"Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, when giving judgment, "you are the worst boy in my Form—the worst boy in the school! I am going to punish you severely for using the name of such a respectable gentleman as Mr. Lambe, and deceiving your Form master!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"You will touch your toes, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch coldly.

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Touch your toes!" barked Mr. Quelch.

Billy Bunter no longer hesitated. He adopted the required position; and for the next ten minutes the master of the Remove wielded his cane with a vigour that he had seldom shown in his life before.

That William George Bunter deserved all he got—and more—was the opinion of the Removites when, later, the fat junior crawled out of Mr. Quelch's study and told his tale. But, in the opinion of Bunter himself, he was a very hardly-done-by individual. Really, he began to wonder whether he had, after all, struck a fine bargain.

Certain it was he took his tea standing up that day, and even the following day he showed a marked disinclination to sit down.

The way of the transgressor is hard; even William George Bunter was prepared to admit that whenever the subject of Chunkley's and their bill for eight pounds odd was mentioned.

True, Bunter never paid that bill in cash; but, in a way, he more than paid for it in kind.

Mr. Quelch saw to that!

THE END.

(Look out for another rattling fine story of Harry Wharton & Co. in next week's MAGNET, chums, entitled: "THE SHYLOCK OF GREYFRIARS!" It's a peach of a yarn.)

"KAPTURED BY AIRMEN!"

(Continued from page 15.)

The party got into the Head's car again and started on the return journey.

Half-way home, Jack Jolly gave a sudden egg-sited yell.

"Grate pip! The forriner!" he egg-sclaimed, pointing to a figger skulking in the woods at the side of the road.

Mr. Lickham, who was driving, jammed on the brakes.

"Would you boys like to chase him while I stay and mind the car?" he asked.

"It's no use now, I'm afraid, sir," answered Jack Jolly reluctantly. "The rotter mizzled as soon as he spotted us. I wonder if he is making his way to St. Sam's with the idea of leaving the country by airplane?"

"My giddy aunt!" remarked Mr. Lickham. "That's a branewave!"

"But he can't get away with half the skool looking on," said Bright.

"Ass! What's wrong with his breaking into the skool grounds in the dead of nite, and escaping then by the airplane?" asked Jack Jolly.

"Oh, my hat!"

"It's not impossibul," remarked Mr. Lickham seriously. "I must ask the villidge policeman to keep an eye open to-nite!"

Jack Jolly larfed skornfully.

"Fat lot of good a villidge policeman will be against a desprit forrin spy," he said. "If you want to capture this spying scoundrel, sir, the only thing is to form a guard of fellows with plenty of intelligence and heaps of pluck."

"An egg-sellent idea!" nodded Mr. Lickham. "Whom do you suggest, then, Jolly?"

"Little us!" replied Jack Jolly, modestly.

Mr. Lickham larfed.

"Bravvo, Jolly! Since you suggest it, then, I will allow you to mount guard over the airplane to-nite. Should danger threaten during the nite, let me know immejately, and you may rely on my displaying my usual curridge."

"In that case, sir, we shan't see you for dust," grinned Jack Jolly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Merry and Bright.

"Oh, rats!" said Lickham, rather crossly. "Anyway, I don't suppose for a moment that anything will happen."

But Jack Jolly & Co. felt sure that something was going to happen. It remained to be seen who was right.

THE END.

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss the final yarn in this humorous "bird-man" series, entitled: "THE SKOOL BOY AIR HEROES!" which will appear in next week's bumper MAGNET.

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WHEN ANSWERING ADVERTISEMENTS PLEASE MENTION THIS PAPER.

WAPTURED by ARMY MEN!

by DICKY NUGENT

Arrested as a spy in the pay of a foreign country. . . That's the predicament in which Dr. Birchmell, the Head of St. Sam's, finds himself this week, boys. What will be the outcome of it all?

I. AM monarch of all I survey,
My right there is none to dispute!

Dr. Birchmell, the revered and skilfully headmaster of St. Sam's, yelled out that famous quotation at the top of his voice, as he tore through the clouds at a dizzy speed in his airplane.

The Head was in his most jovial mood. Far beneath him, the boys of St. Sam's were toiling and grinding in the dusty, dusty, old class-rooms; and properly speaking, the Head also should have been there, instructing the Sixth in Zorophon and other Greek orthoses. The Head, however, preferred the wide, open spaces to the stuffy old Sixth Form room. Consequently, he was airing himself, instead of airing his nostrils of Greek.

Certainly, it was very pleasant, flying about in the bright spring sunshine, and the Head was quite enjoying the egg-penitence. As he whizzed along, he drank in deep draughts of pure fresh air, and followed that up by drinking a couple of bottles of ginger-pop he had thoughtfully brought with him.

"This is something like!" he muttered to himself, smacking his lips with a noise that almost drowned the roar of the engine. "That mysterious former certainly did me a good turn when he left me in charge of his machine. I'll take jolly good care he duzzent get it back!"

And the Head chuckled sinically into his beard.

Several days had passed since the Head had caused such a sensation at St. Sam's by descending into the quad in an airplane. By this time he had become quite an eggspert aeronaut.

It was still a bit of a mystery why the stranger with the forin accent had given the Head such a magnificent machine to mind, and Jack Jolly, openly egg-

a forin spy who had come to England to eggsplore the secrets of Potshot Camp, the local Air Force deppo.

Dr. Birchmell, however, was not the kind of gentleman to trouble about trifles, and he simply didn't bother his head about the matter. As to the suggestion that the plane might be the property of a forin spy, he had treated it with scornful contempt.

"Bosh!" he had said. "Likewise piffle and balderdash—or, as the vulgar would put it, nonsense!"

And that had closed the argument. Forin spies were the last things the Head was thinking of as he buzzed along on this bright spring morning. He was in the gayest of spirits as he circled over Potshot Camp and blinked down with keen interest at the busy scene beneath him.

"What a lack to chuck these ginger-pop bottles at that officer and see if I can hit him on the nape!" eggsplored the Head gleefully, as he spotted a feeble-looking officer giving orders to some of the men.

Not many people, of course, would have seen anything very funny in such a trick. But the Head of St. Sam's had often shown that he had a peculiar sense of humor, and he evidently thought it a ripping wheeze.

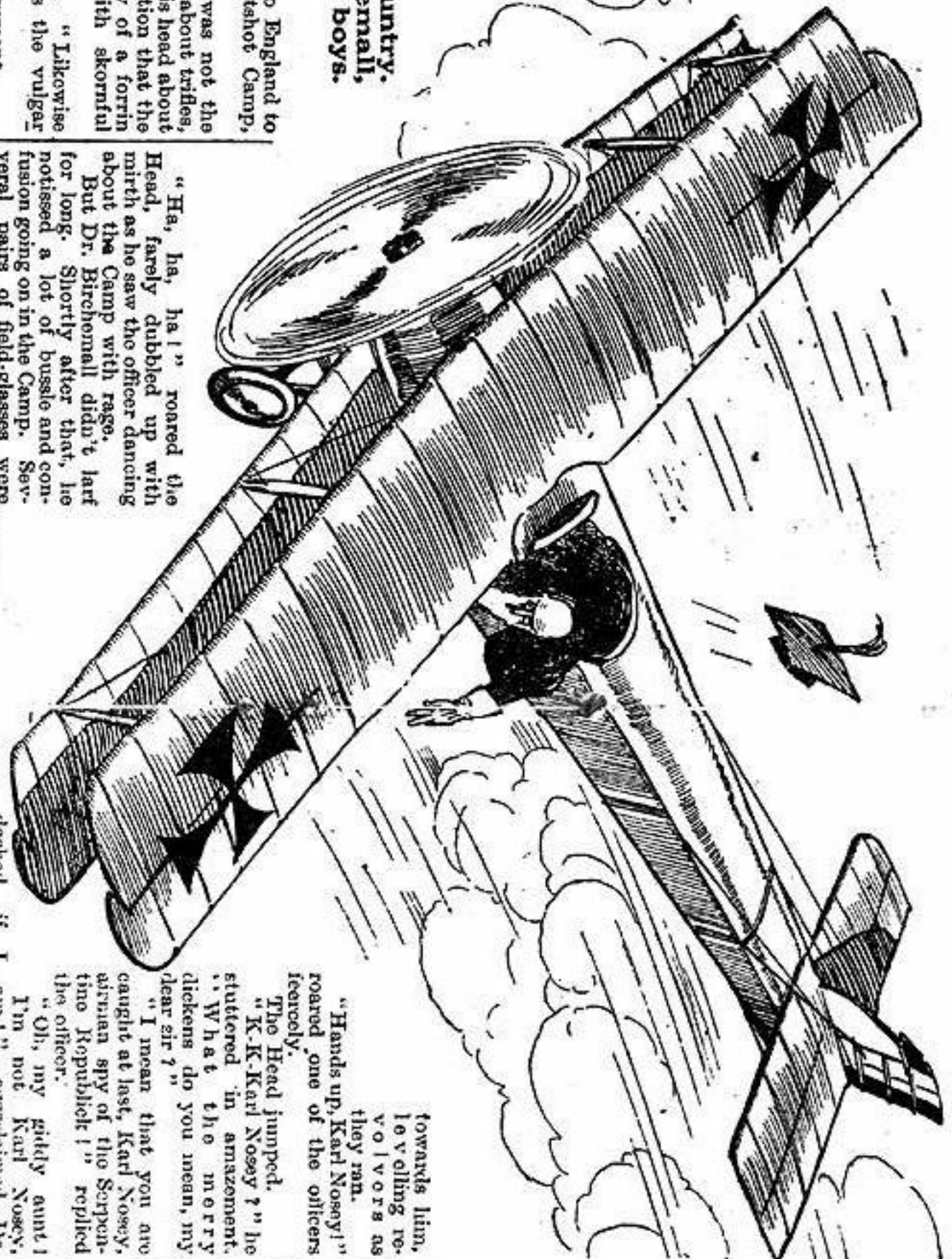
Picking up one of the bottles, he took careful aim, and aimed it out.

The bottle flew out of his hand like a bullet from a gun, and travelled straight as a die to its target, catching the unfortunate officer an awful bash on the nape. The Head just caught the faint echo of his feendish yell of rage and agony.

"Yarooooo!"

"Well aimed, sir!" chorled the Head, giving himself a harty pat on the back. "Now what about this?"

He flung out the other bottle, and succeeded in hitting the officer right in the middle of his boko.



"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Head, fairly doubled up with mirth as he saw the officer dancing about the Camp with rage.

But Dr. Birchmell didn't tarry for long. Shortly after that, he noticed a lot of busle and confusion going on in the Camp. Several pairs of field-glasses were being trained on Dr. Birchmell's airplane, and half-a-duzzen machines were being wheeled out of their hangars.

"Grate pip!" I wonder what they're going to do?" murmured the Head, becoming rather alarmed.

He wasn't left in doubt for many minutes. As the planes rose one by one in the air, it pennytrated even the Head's wooden noodle that they were coming after him.

As soon as Dr. Birchmell realized that, he turned tail and flew off in the direction of St. Sam's. Six Air Force machines roared venomously after him, and the Head blanched as he saw them drawing closer and closer.

Reaching St. Sam's, Dr. Birchmell suddenly dived, then glided gracefully down over the old college, to alight with a bump in the quad. He fully expected that his pursuers would now buzz off.

Much to his dismay, however, they swooped down after him, and one by one came to a halt in the quad beside his own machine.

"Cheeky rotters!" grunted the Head as he climbed out. "What do they mean by invading privit property in this high-handed manner? Hallo! What the thump!"

Dr. Birchmell gave a gasp of dismay as the pilots of the Air Force machines tumbled out of their planes and rushed

on half-a-duzzen airmen armed with revolvers.

Dr. Birchmell, struggling furiously, was placed in the passenger seat of one of the airplanes, then the pilots got back into their respective machines and one by one took to the air again.

The droan of their engines dyed away in the distance.

And St. Sam's was left in a buzz of eggsplored. Their own Head had been arrested as a spy in the pay of a forin country! Never before had there been such a sensation in the old skool!

II.

M. R. LICKHAM paced the floor of his study, his brow wrinkled with thought. He was wondering what was the best thing to do in this unexpected emergency.

Crash! Bang! Wallop!

"There was a slight tap on the door. 'Trot in, fathered!" said Mr. Lickham, in his deep, cultured voice.

Three cheery juniors obeyed the invitation. Needless to say, they were our heroes, Jack Jolly and his pals, Merry and Bright.

"Good-afternoon, sir," said Jack Jolly, with a nod. "We thought we'd better come and give you the benyfit of our advice. It stands to reason that as you haven't the brandes of a rabbit—"

"Jolly!" roared Mr. Lickham, turning as red as a pogy.

"You won't be able to think out a plan yourself," went on Jack calmly.

Mr. Lickham rubbed his chin reflectively.

"Well, I must say I am a little non-plused, Jolly," he admitted reluctantly. "If you have a wheeze, by all means coiff it up."

"Thank you, sir. Our idea is to go to Potshot Camp, and eggsplored fully to the Commanding Officer how old Brightly got hold of the airplane," said Jack Jolly.

"As you are probably aware, sir, we were with the old buffer when that mysterious forin handed it over to him."

"Indeed!" murmured the master of the Forwith, with interest.

"It's our opinion, sir, that the gentleman we saw that day is this scoundrel Karl Nosey, whom the Air Force are looking for."

"My hat! It certainly looks suspiciously like it!" remarked Mr. Lickham, with a thoughtful frown. "Possibly if we eggsplored all this to the officer in charge he may release Dr. Birchmell. Let's go to Potshot Camp at once."

Mr. Lickham led the way out of the Skool House, and got out Dr. Birchmell's old motor-car, and the entire party jolted and rattled away towards Potshot Camp without further delay.

On arriving at the famous Air Force deppo, they were conducted to the office of Colonel Flyhard, the Commanding Officer, a fierce-looking gentleman who glared at them savagely.

"Please, sir, we've come about the gentleman you arrested this morning," murmured Mr. Lickham nervously.

"You mean Karl Nosey, the spy of the Serpentine Repub-lick?" rasped Colonel Flyhard.

"No, sir; that's just where you're wrong. The man you've got is Dr. Birchmell, headmaster of St. Sam's."

Colonel Flyhard snorted.

"Rats! He's Karl Nosey, without a shadow of doubt. One glances at the man's fizzog will tell you that he's a criminal of the worst type."

"Well, you're right there," grinned Mr. Lickham. "Nevertheless, the fact remains that he's our headmaster."

"In that case, how the thump did he get hold of Karl Nosey's airplane?" asked the Air Force commander.

"I can eggsplored that, sir," said Jack Jolly. "A forin gentleman gave it to him to look after for a week or so."

"Ton to one he was in league with him, then!" grunted Colonel Flyhard. "Anyway, the fact remains that he was flying over this camp this morning in an airplane belonging to a forin spy. Furthermore, he made a savage attack on an officer by chucking ginger-beer bottles at him."

"Oh, crykey! Just like the silly ass to do that!" eggsplored Mr. Lickham. "Anyway, can't you overlook that, and let him off, sir?"

"Not likely!" replied the officer, with a harsh lart. "In spite of what you say, I still think we've got the right man."

"Then what are you going to do?" asked Mr. Lickham.

"Have him court-martialed this afternoon," replied Colonel Flyhard.

"Oh, grate pip! But—suppose he is found gilty, sir?"

"In that case he will be shot at dawn!" Good day, sir!

And with that, the Colonel signed to a man to speed the parting guests.

Outside the camp, the St. Sam's party looked at each other in dismay.

"Well, if this isn't the giddy limit!" murmured Mr. Lickham. "Fancy the Head being shot at dawn, boys! It's too terrible to contemplate!"

"It's certainly a bit thick!" nodded Jack Jolly. "But what the dickens can we do?"

"Goodness knows! Let's get back to St. Sam's and have some tea. I'm simply famished!"

(Continued on page 28.)

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