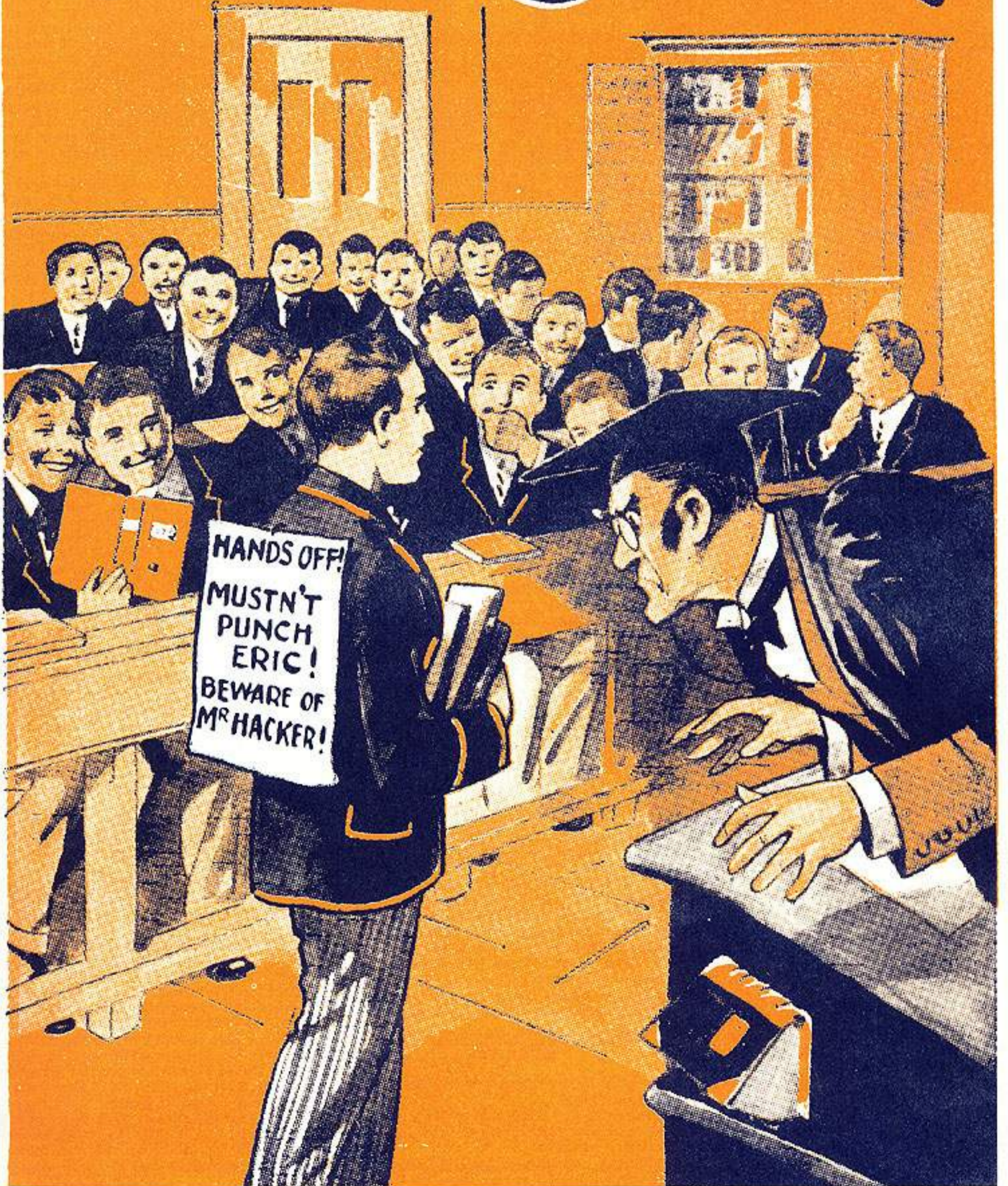


"The OUTSIDER!" Great Story of Harry Wharton & Co.

The Magnet **27**





COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

I SUPPOSE most of you at some time or other have heard a conjurer say: "There is nothing up my sleeve, boys and girls." Well, I'm going to start the ball rolling this week by saying just the opposite. Boys and girls there is

SOMETHING UP MY SLEEVE

—and what's more this something is going to make you all sit up and take notice!

Now put your thinking caps on, chums, and try to imagine the stupendous surprise which I've fixed up for you. I guess you'll all say

"MORE FREE GIFTS!"

Right in one! But what kind of Free Gifts? Ah, that's where I've got you all! It's my secret at the moment, and it's a secret I am going to keep to myself for this week, at any rate. I'll tell you this much, though, these coming Grand Free Gifts are going to be something really extra special. Doesn't that whet your appetite?

The best thing you can do, chums, is to ask your newsagent to deliver or reserve a copy of the good old MAGNET for next week. Because next week, as Fisher T. Fish would say, I'm going to "spill the beans"! Believe me, chums, these Free Gifts will be something out of the ordinary. If you miss 'em, you will feel like asking your pals to give you a kick. And when you see the—

Ah, I nearly gave the whole secret away then; and I don't want to do this until next week. Look out, then, chums, for next Saturday's MAGNET and full particulars of the ripping Free Gifts coming your way very soon.

ONE of my readers, who signs himself "Fatty," of Peckham, writes me this week to ask a few questions concerning New York, and, in particular

THE STATUE OF LIBERTY.

How high is it? he asks. The statue itself is about 200 feet high, and is one of the largest in the world. It was made by a French sculptor, who was commissioned to do so by the French Government. The statue was then presented to the American government in commemoration of the centenary of American independence. It was completed in 1884, and erected two years later on Bedloe's Island at the mouth of New York harbour.

"Fatty" also wants to know the height of the Empire State Building, in New York. This is the highest building in the world, and towers 1,248 feet above street level. Previous to the building of this enormous skyscraper, the record for height was held by the Crane Building, of Chicago, which is 1,022 feet. Next comes the Woolworth Building in New York, with a height of 792 feet.

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THERE are many of my readers who are like "Marcus Aurelius," who writes to me from Coventry.

HE WANTS TO GO ABROAD,

and asks me to tell him how he can get a job abroad on a coffee or tobacco plantation. Coffee plantations are not doing very well at the moment, and vast crops have had to be burned, owing to very poor demands. Many big coffee plantations have been closed down, with the result that experienced men have been put out of work. So I am afraid that my Coventry reader doesn't stand much chance in the coffee business.

Neither is there much scope on tobacco plantations. What is happening nowadays, especially in countries like Australia, is that men are settling on the land and farming their own tobacco. A system of small tobacco farms, with a co-operative marketing plan, has been carried out. Each smallholder farms his own tobacco, so there is not much chance for a youngster. There are many big tobacco plantations in various parts of the world, of course, but local native labour is generally used. The executive positions are filled by experienced men.

The best way for this reader to get information regarding a situation abroad is to write to the Crown Agents for the Colonies, 4, Millbank, Westminster, S.W.1. This department acts as business agents for the Governments of the Colonies, Protectorates, etc., and naturally knows all particulars of conditions abroad, the chances of employment, and so on.

My remarks, a little while ago, regarding curious place-names, have brought me a letter from a Northumberland reader, who sends me a list of

MORE QUEER PLACE-NAMES.

Near Newcastle-on-Tyne, he tells me, there are places called Wide Open, Pity Me, and Windy Nook. Make-em-Rich is another village in Northumberland. Here are some others: Tadley God Help Us (in Hampshire); Dead Maiden (Hampshire); Ugley (Essex); New Invention (Staffordshire); Fryup (Yorkshire); Cold Roast Hamlet (Bucks); and Come to Good (Cornwall).

I reckon that list will take a bit of beating! But if there are any curiously-named places round about your neighbourhood, send them along to me, and I'll publish them in this little chat of mine.

Towns and villages aren't the only things with names that are out of the ordinary. Quite a number of people have peculiar surnames. Here is another list of

CURIOUS SURNAMES AND THEIR MEANINGS.

I wonder if any of my readers bear these unusual names?

Whalebelly. Originally a nickname for the man who played the part of Jonah in medieval dramas.

Venus. Comes from "Fenhouse," meaning a dweller in the house by the fen.

Bacchus. The original bearer of this name must have been a baker, for the word is derived from "bakehouse."

Bannard. Comes from the Anglo-Saxon. It meant the chief horn blower to a king.

Tredger. Comes from the word "treader," meaning a walker.

Cogman. Was originally a sailor on a small vessel which was at one time known as a "cog."

Woolway. Despite its mild sound, comes from Anglo-Saxon words meaning "wolf-warrior."

That's sufficient to be going on with. I'll look up a few more for you in the near future.

Here's a curious bit of information which has just been unearthed. You'll find it hard to believe, but

THE GREAT WAR ISN'T FINISHED!

Seventeen years ago, peace was signed, and everybody imagined that everything had been squared up. But, by a curious error, the tiny republic of San Marino, in Italy, was not invited to join in the peace negotiations with Turkey. San Marino joined the Allies in 1915, and declared war on Turkey. As no peace negotiations have been carried out between these two countries, they are still technically at war with each other!

A little while ago a Turk who had paid a visit to San Marino was arrested, and charged with being a member of a country that was at war with San Marino. Needless to say, this state of affairs will doubtless be rectified soon, but it is certainly amazing to think that the Great War is still on!

JUST to finish up my chat, here is a selection of

RAPID-FIRE REPLIES.

to questions which have been fired at me by various readers.

Is there any Rocket Postal Service in Operation? Yes, in Austria, where rockets are used to fire a postal service over a high mountain. This service has its own particular postage stamps.

How does an Octopus Swim? It uses the "rocket" principle. It draws water in and then ejects it violently, thus pushing itself along in a similar manner to the way in which a rocket pushes itself through the air.

Which is the best Medium for Carrying Electricity? Cold. A gold thread will carry as much electricity as a four-inch copper cable.

Does Sound Carry Faster on Hot or Cold Days? On hot days. For every degree the temperature is raised there is a difference in the speed of sound of two feet per second. The air molecules are in more rapid movement and carry the sound waves faster.

Who Invented Unbreakable Glass? It was invented during the regime of the Roman Emperor Nero. The secret was then forgotten, but modern scientists have succeeded in rediscovering it.

Before space runs out, I must tell you what is in store for next week. First and foremost is:

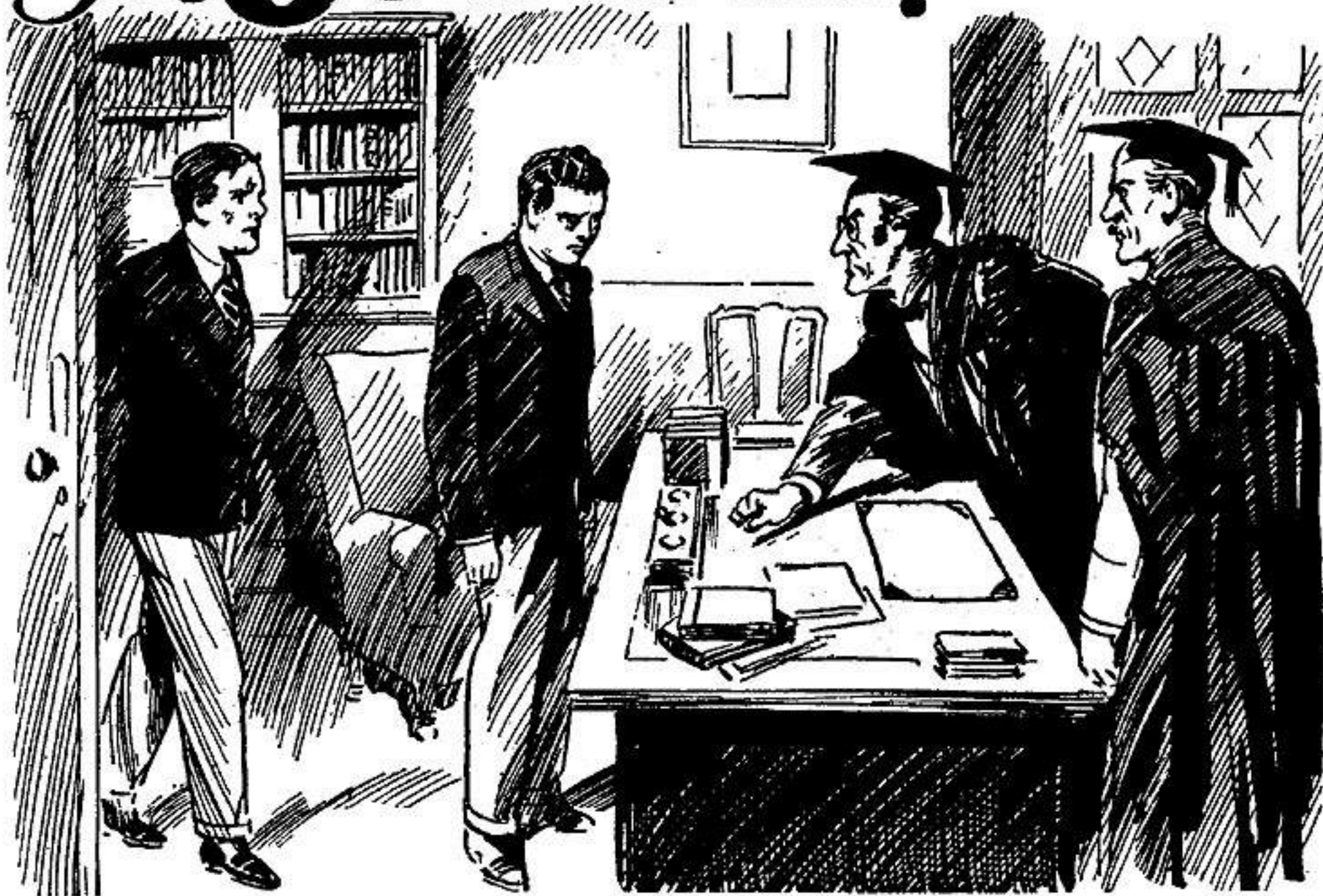
"THE FORM-MASTER'S FAVORITE!"

By Frank Richards,

another tip-top story of the chums of Greyfriars, featuring the new boy, Eric Wilmet. The title will give you some idea of the plot without my saying more. There will be another full-length instalment of David Goodwin's popular adventure story, not to mention the "Greyfriars Herald," our clever Rhymester's contribution and another cheery chat with your Editor. And don't forget the stupendous surprise I've promised to tell you more about next week!

YOUR EDITOR.

The OUTSIDER! By FRANK RICHARDS



Having been forced to leave his last school, one would naturally expect Eric Wilmot to lie low and say nothing. But Mr. Hacker's nephew is something new in new boys . . . bent on making himself as unpopular as he can in his new surroundings!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Orders are Orders!

LEAVE me alone!" "Sorry," said Harry Wharton, with sarcastic politeness; "but, you see, it can't be done."

Eric Wilmot, the new fellow in the Greyfriars Remove, stared at the captain of the Form for a moment, and then turned his back on him and walked across to the study window.

Wharton was standing in the doorway of Study No. 1 in the Remove. He had a coat on over his football rig, and a Soccer ball under his arm.

His face flushed, and a gleam came into his eyes as Wilmot turned his back. Really, that was hardly the way for a new fellow to treat the captain of his Form. Even Billy Bunter would have been offended. And the captain of the Remove was not to be treated like Billy Bunter! Not quite!

"Wilmot!" he rapped.

The new junior stood looking out of the window. His handsome face was marred by the expression of sullen sulkiness that seemed habitual to it. Harry Wharton stared at the back of his head.

"Wilmot!" he repeated, in rising tones.

"I've asked you to leave me alone!" answered the new junior over his shoulder, without looking round.

"You don't seem to catch on," said

Harry. "It's games practice to-day. You're wanted."

"I've told you I shan't play Soccer here."

"That's not a matter of choice," explained Wharton. "A fellow can slack and frowst about if he chooses, instead of playing games, but games practice is compulsory on certain days. This is one of the days. Now do you catch on?"

No answer.

"You see, you can't do exactly as you like here," said the captain of the Remove. "If you want to be as free and irresponsible as a stray dog, you shouldn't have come to Greyfriars."

"I never wanted to come."

"I guessed that one some time back," said Harry, smiling a little. "But you're here now, Wilmot. Why not make the best of it? You seem to have the rottenest, sulkiest temper ever. I've never met a fellow who asked so often to have his head punched. But—"

"Are you wound up?" inquired Wilmot, still over his shoulder and without turning his head.

"I'll cut it short," said Harry. "You've got to come down to games practice, whether you like it or not; and as captain of the Form, I have to see that you do. So come."

"I'm not coming!"

Harry Wharton breathed hard and deep. He wanted to be patient with a new fellow, especially a fellow who had been put in his own study. But his patience was very near the limit.

Frank Nugent came up the passage.

"Everybody's ready!" he said.

"What are you waiting for, Harry?"

"His Highness, Eric the First of Greyfriars," answered the captain of the Remove, "doesn't care to come, and the fact that he has to doesn't make any difference to his serene mightiness!"

Nugent stared for a moment, and then burst into a laugh. He looked into the study—at the back of Eric Wilmot's handsome head.

"Come on, Wilmot," he said good-naturedly. "Can't keep all the fellows waiting, you know."

No reply.

"If the chap's seedy, you can let him off, Harry," suggested Frank. He was always good-natured and tolerant.

"Are you seedy, Wilmot?" asked Wharton sarcastically.

"No."

"I've just heard from Bunter that he's got a pain and doesn't feel up to footer. Have you got a pain like Bunter?"

Nugent chuckled. Wilmot did not answer, or turn his head, but his ears were seen to redden. Apparently he did not relish being compared to the fat slacker of the Remove.

"Only cheeky, what?" went on Wharton.

Silence.

"Or is it funk? Are you afraid of getting a rap, or a tap? If you're a footer funk, you can say so."

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Wilmot's ears were burning now. Evidently he was not enjoying this conversation, addressed to the back of his head! But with the sulky obstinacy that seemed a part of his nature, he remained at the window, staring out into the quad.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came Bob Cherry's roar from the Remove staircase. "You men ever coming? Taken root, or what?"

Bob came tramping up the passage. Johnny Bull and Hurree Janset Ram Singh followed him. They all looked into the study—at the back of Eric Wilmot's head.

"Forgotten footer, Wharton?" asked Bob.

"No. I'm trying to persuade Wilmot to come."

"Eh? Doesn't he know he has to?" demanded Bob. "Wilmot, old bean, get a move on! You're not changed yet! Buck up!"

Harry Wharton glanced at the back of an immovable head—and then at his friends. He was getting very angry, and he was also perplexed. There were slackers in the Remove, and the football captain sometimes had a little trouble with them. Billy Bunter generally had a pain, or an ache, just in time for games practice. Skinner and Snoop would dodge it whenever they could. Still, they knew that they had to toe the line. This chap didn't seem to have assimilated that elementary fact.

Neither did he seem to be exactly a slacker, and he did not give anyone the impression of being a funk. It seemed to be sheer, sulky, wilful obstinacy—a thing rather new in Wharton's experience.

"What's a fellow to do, you chaps?" asked Harry. "He won't come. If I let him off, I shall get rowed by old Wingate! I can't let him off."

"If you let him off," said Johnny Bull, in a deep voice rather like the growl of the Great Huge Bear, "you'd better resign the captaincy. You ought not to keep on the job if you can't handle it."

"Do come along, Wilmot, and don't play the goat!" urged the pacific Nugent. "Wharton can't let a man off; he's responsible to the captain of the school. Every other slacker in the Form will be complaining if he's made to turn up and another man let off."

"What's the good of talking to him?" grunted Johnny Bull. "He's a cheeky ass! I suppose he fancies he can do as he likes because he's a beak's nephew!"

"Oh," ejaculated Wharton, "is that it, Wilmot?"

Wilmot made a movement. The contemptuous tone in Wharton's voice had stung him. He was nephew of Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, and it was said in the Remove that his uncle, crusty old stick that he was, was very much attached to that nephew. But if the new junior was thinking of banking on that relationship, he was not likely to have much success.

"Rotten tick," said Johnny, "and a fool, too! Hacker won't back you up in this sort of thing, Wilmot. He couldn't."

Wilmot turned from the window at last. His handsome face was flushed with anger.

"Nothing of the kind!" he snapped. "I want to be left alone, that's all. I never wanted to come to this rotten school. I'm fed-up with the place, and with you, too! You don't want me at the footer. I've no friends here, and don't want any. Leave me alone, then."

"Wouldn't touch you with a barge-pole, you sulky tick!" retorted Bob.

"Nobody wants you, if you come to that," said Harry quietly. "Nobody could be expected to want a sulky brute with a rotten temper. But you've got to come down to games practice, because I've no power to let you off, if I wanted to. Will you come down and change?"

"No, I won't!"

"That does it," said the captain of the Remove. "You'll either walk, or you'll be taken. Choose!"

"Oh, shut up!"

Wilmot turned his back again.

Wharton's eyes glinted.

"Help him along!" he said.

And the Famous Five stepped into the study, grasped the sulky fellow standing by the window, and hooked him across to the door by main force.

Wilmot struggled and panted.

"Hands off, you rotters!"

"Get him along!"

Five pairs of hands were on Wilmot, and they were sturdy hands. But even so, it was not easy to hook him out of the study. He was a fellow of slim and graceful build, but there was plenty of strength in him.

He struggled fiercely in the doorway, and again in the passage. The whole half-dozen went whirling and scrambling across the landing to the stairs. Wilmot's face was crimson with passionate temper, and Wharton's dark with anger; but the other fellows were grinning.

"Heave ahead, my hearties!" chuckled Bob.

"The heavefulness is terrific!" gasped Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Will you come now, Wilmot?"

"No!"

"Yank him along!"

On the landing the obstinate fellow put up a last fierce resistance. There was a scuffle, a scramble, a bumping and a thudding, and the whole mob of struggling juniors went rolling down the Remove staircase to the landing below.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Hacker Barges In!

MR. HACKER, master of the Shell at Greyfriars, gave an angry grunt.

He was standing near the big staircase talking to Prout, master of the Fifth, when there were loud sounds of uproar from somewhere above.

Whereupon Mr. Hacker grunted, and Mr. Prout shrugged his plump shoulders.

The din sounded as if it proceeded from the Remove quarters, and neither master doubted that it did. Both of them believed that they could have improved on Mr. Quelch's management of that Form.

Scuffling, bumping, gasping, shouting, sounded in the upper regions. Neither master doubted that a "rag" was on, or that Quelch's Form were mixed up in it.

"Scandalous!" remarked Prout.

"The Remove!" said Hacker bitterly.

"As usual!" said Prout.

"Oh, quite as usual! I wonder Quelch does not intervene. He must surely be aware that this din is going on."

"I believe he is out," said the Fifth Form master. "I think I saw him going with Dr. Locke—"

"His boys should not create this disturbance during his absence."

"Most certainly not!"

"Someone should intervene," said Mr. Hacker. "You, sir, as a senior master—"

Prout shook his head.

"Mr. Quelch is so—er—excessively touchy on that subject," he remarked. "He dislikes intervention by another master in the affairs of his Form. More than once, sir, Quelch has answered with acerbity—I can only call it acerbity—when he has been given well-meant counsel—"

"Is the House to be turned into a bear-garden?" snapped Mr. Hacker.

"Apparently, sir," answered Prout. "I shall not intervene. But you, sir, have a relative in Quelch's Form, I understand—a nephew, a new boy—you may consider that that gives you a right to intervene. Certainly this disturbance should end."

"It sounds," said Mr. Hacker, "as if a number of boys were rolling bodily down the upper stairs."

"It does," said Prout.

"My nephew, I am assured, would never take part in any such uproar," said Mr. Hacker. "He had the best of reputations at his last school. I have no doubt that he is the best-conducted boy in the Remove, which, certainly, is not saying very much."

"Quite!" agreed Prout.

Prout rolled ponderously away. Hacker stood listening to the din with a frowning, knitted brow.

Hacker was a conscientious and dutiful master, but afflicted with an acid temper and a somewhat interfering disposition. The sound of rolling downstairs was followed by a sound of scuffling on a mid-way landing. Certainly it was time the uproar was stopped. Quelch might be "touchy" on such matters—most Form-masters were. Hacker did not want any trouble with Quelch, especially as his nephew, Wilmot, was in that master's Form. But he was not going to let this go on.

He whisked up the stairs.

On the upper staircase a number of Remove men were gathered, most of them grinning. They were ready for football, but seemed more interested in what was going on below. Some of them looked rather startled as they saw the master of the Shell whisking up the stairs.

"Oh, gad, here's Hacker!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Peter Todd.

"Ware beaks, you men!" called out Hazeldene.

Frowning, Mr. Hacker made his way through the cluster of juniors, who gave him room to pass. He reached the landing.

On that landing something like a dog-fight seemed to be going on. One fellow was wriggling and struggling in the grasp of five others.

Mr. Hacker glared at the scene.

"Cease this disturbance immediately!" he thundered.

He recognised Harry Wharton & Co., but he did not recognise the fellow they were grasping, for the simple reason that Eric Wilmot's head was gripped under Bob Cherry's arm, and his face invisible.

Harry Wharton, panting for breath, looked round. He, like the fellows on the staircase, looked a little startled at the sight of Hacker. In the circumstances, Wilmot's uncle was not wanted on the scene.

However, it could not be helped. If Eric Wilmot had been related to the whole staff at Greyfriars, from the Head down to the French master, he

would still have had to toe the line in the Remove.

"Did you speak, sir?" asked Harry politely.

"I did, Wharton! I ordered you to cease this unseemly disturbance, and to cease it at once!"

Wharton looked at him.

"Who is that boy you are bullying?" asked Mr. Hacker acidly.

Wharton reddened.

"We are bullying nobody, sir, and we are not taking orders from any Form-master but our own!" he answered, very distinctly.

"What? Do you dare to be impertinent, Wharton?"

"Eric!" he exclaimed.

Wilmot panted for breath.

"So it is my nephew you are bullying, Wharton!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker, his face almost white with passionate anger.

"I've said that this fellow is not being bullied, sir," answered the captain of the Remove. "He knows why he was handled, and he can tell you, if he likes."

"There is no need for my nephew to tell me anything. What I can see with my own eyes is enough for me!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker. "Lay a finger on him again—any of you—if you dare!"

he was utterly winded, and could only gasp.

"Come with me, Eric," said Mr. Hacker. "I shall take you away from these young ruffians. I shall lay a complaint of this before Mr. Quelch. I shall allow no repetition of it!"

Wilmot, gasping, found his voice.

"It's all right, sir!" he panted. He was always careful never to address Mr. Hacker as "uncle" before others.

"What do you mean, Eric?" exclaimed Mr. Hacker sharply.

"Dear little Eric!" came a voice from the staircase. "Sweet little Eric!"

There was a laugh.



With a sudden wrench, Wilmot tore himself loose, and his flushed face and untidy hair came out from under Bob Cherry's arm. Mr. Hacker gave a jump as he recognised his nephew. "Eric!" he exclaimed, his face almost white with passionate anger. "So it is my nephew you are bullying, Wharton!" "He knows why he was being handled, sir," said Wharton, "and he can tell you, if he likes!"

"I'm ready to answer to Mr. Quelch, sir," said Harry. "You fellows, get on with it! Get him down to the changing-room!"

There was a chuckle on the lower stair.

"Meddlin' ass!" came a voice from the crowd, which was very probably the Bounder's.

"Go home, Hacker!" came another voice.

Mr. Hacker stood red and wrathful. He was exceeding his authority; and his position was very awkward if Quelch's boys did not choose to regard him. At that moment Eric Wilmot, with a sudden wrench, tore himself loose, and his flushed face and untidy hair came out from under Bob's arm. In the presence of a beak he was not held so tenaciously as before.

Mr. Hacker gave a jump as he recognised his nephew.

Harry Wharton stood undecided. His comrades waited for his word. The fellows on the staircase gazed on with breathless interest at the scene. A "row" with a beak was uncommonly exciting.

Wharton was acting within his rights—indeed, he was doing his bounden duty as everyone knew but Mr. Hacker. But a beak was a beak, all the same. It was a delicate matter, rowing with a beak.

There was a tense pause.

Eric Wilmot, crimson, untidy, panting for breath, stood untouched. Many eyes were on him—all of them contemptuous. A fellow who took advantage of relationship to one in authority was an object of scorn; and Hacker's interference was tactless—the worst thing he could have done for the fellow. Everyone expected Wilmot to make the most of it, and despised him accordingly. He tried to speak, but

Wilmot's face, already crimson, seemed to grow redder, if possible. Hacker never seemed to understand that he ought to call him Wilmot.

"It's all right, sir," he answered. "I don't want to be protected. It was all my fault, too. I only got what I asked for. There's no need for anyone to interfere."

"Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Hacker, taken quite aback.

"My hat! The chap isn't such a greasy tick as he makes himself out to be," murmured Bob Cherry.

"Oh, come on, you men!" said Harry Wharton abruptly. "We can't waste any more time. Leave Wilmot to do as he likes."

"Rot!" grunted Johnny Bull.

But he followed his Form captain, as Wharton went down the stairs. It was an unpleasant pill for the captain of the Remove to swallow. But handling Wilmot under his uncle's eyes was

rather too much of a good thing; and he gave it up at that. The rest of the Removites followed on, and Wilmot was left panting and gasping on the landing, under the acid stare of Mr. Hacker.

"Eric—" began the master of the Shell.

"I can't stop, sir; I've got to go and get changed for footer."

Wilmot went down the stairs, leaving Mr. Hacker staring. He hurried at once to the changing-room.

The rest of the Remove were changed already, and going down to Little Side. They arrived there, not expecting to see the new junior arrive in his turn. But two or three minutes later a slim but athletic figure in football garb came cutting down the field.

"I say, you fellows, here comes Wilmot!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

Everybody looked round. Wilmot came up, flashed and panting. Harry Wharton gave him a look.

"So you've changed your mind?" he said.

"Can't you see I have?" retorted Wilmot.

"Well, all right, so long as you're here."

"I shouldn't be here if my uncle hadn't barged in!" answered Wilmot, with a curl of the lip. "I don't suppose you understand it, but that's why!"

Wharton smiled.

"I think I do," he answered. "Get going, you men!"

It was clear enough that Wilmot had changed his mind because he disdained to reap advantage from his relationship to a beak. That, undoubtedly, was a point in his favour. Mr. Hacker's interference had had quite an unexpected result.

Now that he was on the football

ground, however, Wilmot did not seem to be of much use there. He played Soccer, as Bob Cherry described it, like a sack of coke. The juniors had heard from Hobson of the Shell, who had heard it from Mr. Hacker, that Wilmot had been considered a great footballer at his last school—wherever that was! But the fumbling and fozzling show he put up now did not seem much like it. It seemed that he took no interest in the game whatever, and was only anxious to get away.

When the practice was over he got away—by himself! And there were few fellows in the Remove who were not glad to see the last of him.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Very Mysterious!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter blinked in at the doorway of Study No. 1, and blinked round the study—with a disappointed blink. Wharton and Nugent were there—but their study-mate, the new fellow Wilmot, was not.

"I say, where's Wilmot?" asked the fat Owl of the Remove.

"Don't know!" said Nugent.

"And don't care!" added Wharton.

"Isn't he coming up to tea?" asked Bunter.

"Don't know!" said Nugent again.

"And don't care!" repeated Wharton.

Billy Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles. Wharton and Nugent, being busy, took no further heed of the fat Owl. Nugent was poaching eggs for tea, Wharton was buttering toast. The rest of the Co. were coming to tea, but had not yet arrived.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Look here, your precious pal Wilmot isn't here!" rapped Wharton. "If you want him, go and look for him!"

"I wish you fellows wouldn't row with my pal because he's in your study!" said Bunter peevishly. "I was going to ask him to tea in Study No. 7, but I've been disappointed about a postal order. Is he teasing in Hall?"

"Most likely; he's not likely to have been asked into any study in the Remove!"

"Well, I don't want to tea with him in Hall," said Bunter. "He can have all the doorsteps and dishwasher! I say, you fellows, I'll tea with you, if you like, though Wilmot isn't here."

"We don't like!" Wharton pointed out.

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter decided to take that remark as a joke. He rolled into the study.

Having been disappointed once more about his celebrated postal order, which had caused him so many disappointments, Billy Bunter had to bag a tea somewhere. Toddy of Study No. 7 was teasing out, and when Toddy tea'd out, there was nothing for Bunter in Study No. 7.

"I'll make some more toast, old chap!" he said. "All right, I'll slice the loaf; don't you take any trouble! I hope you've got plenty of butter—I like it on thick! I say, got any jam?"

"No!"

"Measly sort of tea to ask a fellow to—"

"Anybody asked you?"

"I mean, I don't care much for jam—it's not much I eat, as you know, at any time. Any marmalade?"

"No!"

"Well, look here, Ogilvy's got a jar of marmalade. I saw it in his study. One of you cut along and bag it, while I make the toast!"

The chums of Study No. 1 seemed deaf to that suggestion. Bunter did not act on it himself. He did not want to be the fellow responsible, when Robert Donald Ogilvy inquired later what had become of his marmalade!

He proceeded to make toast—a mountain of it! Wharton patiently buttered the mountain. Frank Nugent dished up five poached eggs—and added one more, for the additional guest. Bunter blinked at the dish.

"Good!" he said. "But aren't you fellows having any?"

"We are!" said Harry Wharton grimly. "Five of us are having one each. Shut up!"

"I think you fellows are silly asses to row with Wilmot," said Bunter crossly. "He's got lots of money!"

"Do you think we want his money, you fat tick?"

"Well, it comes in useful at tea-time," said Bunter. "You might think of me! But you fellows always were selfish! That's why I changed out of this study—I never could stand selfishness! Not that Toddy's much better, in Study No. 7. He's gone out to tea to-day, and never even asked me whether I was fixed up for tea! Selfishness all round! I wonder sometimes that I don't grow selfish myself."

"Oh crikey!"

There was a tramp of feet, and Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came in. Wharton and Nugent gave them welcoming grins—Bunter an uneasy blink. There seemed to be only poached eggs and toast for tea—and not too much of that! In these circumstances, Bunter would have been satisfied with a smaller party.



The Hit of the Month!

"THE STICK-AT-NOTHING SCHOOLBOY"

WHEN it comes to trickery Tom Merry, of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, is no match for Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth Form. Having at last attained the coveted position of junior captain of the school, Cardew sticks at nothing to gratify his spite against the ex-captain. This grand book-length yarn of the chums of St. Jim's is far too exciting to miss! You'll find it in No. 260 of the



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"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob. "Here you are!"

He slammed a pot of jam on the table. It was customary, on such occasions, for contributions to be made from all quarters.

"Oh good!" said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I'll stand a pot of marmalade! You don't mind if I do, Wharton?"

"Not at all!"

"Lend me eighteenpence, then——"

"Eh!"

"And you cut down to the shop for me, Bob——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Look here, are we having that marmalade, or not?" hooted Bunter.

"Not!"

"If Wilmot were here, he'd lend me eighteenpence——"

"Go and look for him!" suggested Wharton.

"I wish you fellows wouldn't row with him! Look at the way you were dragging him about yesterday!" said Bunter.

"You can't expect him to tea with you in the study after that."

"He gave up teeing in the study before that!" said Frank Nugent. "And I've a jolly strong suspicion that he did it because you came to tea so often, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Not much doubt about that," said Harry. "It was plain enough—though why he didn't kick Bunter out, I don't know! Nobody here would have stopped him, I know that."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"It's pretty queer," said Johnny Bull, as the juniors sat down to tea. "Wilmot's made no friends here, and doesn't seem to want to, and the only chap he's ever civil to is Bunter—a chap that nobody else will touch with a ten-foot pole!"

"Beast!"

"The queerfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the esteemed Wilmot is preposterously queer in many ways."

"Not such a worm as he makes out, though," said Bob. "He won't have Hacker butting in and making a beak's favourite of him."

"Hacker's a tactless ass!" remarked Nugent. "I suppose he ought to be attached to the chap, being his uncle, but he ought to know that a fellow's better left alone to find his own level."

"He can't know a lot about him," said Bob. "Hobby told us that he said Wilmot was a great gun at footer, at his last school. Well, the man can't play for toffee, or cakes!"

"He, he, he!" came from Billy Bunter. "Lot you know about it!"

"Perhaps you know more about footer than I do, you fat, frowsting, frowsy foozler?" hooted Bob, glaring at the Owl of the Remove across the table.

"Perhaps I do!" grinned Bunter. "I know that Wilmot could jolly well play your head off, if he liked."

"And how do you know that, Bunter?" asked Wharton.

"That's telling!" grinned Bunter.

Bunter's conversation, as a rule, did not get very attentive hearers. But now all the juniors at the tea-table in Study No. 1 looked very attentively at William George Bunter.

Nobody in the Remove knew anything about Wilmot, except that he had been to school before he came to Greyfriars. He never mentioned the name of his former school; but that caused no remark, for he never mentioned anything in connection with himself. Hardly ever, in fact, spoke at all, unless he was spoken to first, and his sulky

face did not encourage fellows to press conversation on him.

But some of the fellows had an impression that Bunter knew something about him, though how, they could not guess.

It was singular that a fellow who was not only unfriendly, but actually uncivil, should be civil to Bunter, and Bunter alone, in all the Form.

But that was the curious state of affairs, and during Eric Wilmot's first few days in the school Bunter had dropped in to tea with him, in Study No. 1, as regularly as clockwork.

Which Wharton and Nugent suspected to be the chief reason why the new man had taken to teeing in Hall. Though why he should tolerate Bunter, if he did not want to, was rather a mystery.

"Look here, you fat ass!" said Harry abruptly. "When Wilmot first came here you told a lot of fellows you knew him."

"So I did," said Bunter. "I hope you don't doubt my word, Wharton!"

"You said afterwards that you didn't know him—that he was quite another chap."

"Oh! Yes; so he was!"

"So you knew him, and didn't know him, both! Is that it?" asked Bob, staring at the fat Owl.

STOP!

LOOK!

LISTEN!

Something *unusual*, but *extra-good* in

FREE GIFTS

coming shortly!

Watch out for further particulars!

"Yes, that's it. I mean, no, that's not it. What I mean is, if you fellows think you're going to pump me about Wilmot you can have another guess," said Bunter. "I'm not letting anything out."

"We don't want to hear anything about the fellow," said Wharton, with a curl of the lip. "Whatever it is, you can keep it to yourself."

"I'm going to," said Bunter. "You see, I told Wilmot I would, and I'm a fellow of my word. Not that there's anything, you know! Absolutely nothing at all! I say, is there any cake?"

"No."

"Pretty measly spread! Wilmot would have stood something better than this if you fellows hadn't edged him out of the study with your bad manners. I think you might be decent to a friend of mine, after all I've done for you. Wilmot always had a cake when I came."

"So will we, when we want you to keep secrets for us!" said Wharton sarcastically.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Well, whatever Bunter knows about the chap, he can't know that he's a footballer!" said Bob. "Look at the way he fooled about yesterday! Of all the fumbling, fozzling duds I ever saw, he——"

"He, he, he!"

"Did you ever see him play footer, you cackling fathead?" roared Bob.

"Yes, I jolly well did!" retorted Bunter, "and I saw him score goals, one after another. And I'd like to see any of you do it!"

"What was he playing? An infants' school?" asked Bob.

"No, he wasn't. He was playing——"

Bunter broke off suddenly.

"Well, who?"

"Oh, nobody!" said Bunter.

That answer was so surprising that it caused the Famous Five to concentrate stares on the fat Owl again.

"Is that podgy ass potty?" asked Johnny Bull.

"I can jolly well tell you he was playing men who've beaten you more than once!" yapped Bunter.

"Men who've beaten us!" repeated Wharton blankly. "Well, every team we play has won sometimes, of course!"

"Not often," grinned Bob, "but sometimes."

"Do you mean that you've seen him playing a team that plays the Remove?" exclaimed Wharton. "Where and when?"

"That's telling!" chuckled Bunter.

"And why can't you tell us, fathead?" demanded Wharton. "If he was playing any team that we meet he must have been playing for some school. Is there any secret about that, you blithering ass?"

"Yes, rather! I mean, no," amended Bunter. "I know nothing whatever about the chap, as I've told you. If you think I knew him the day he came here, and that he asked me to keep it dark, you're simply mistaken. I've never seen him before, and never seen him play football, especially at any school anywhere near Greyfriars. I say, if there isn't any cake I may as well go—I mean. I want to go to see what's become of old Wilmot."

Bunter rolled to the door.

"All the same," he added, before he went, "he's a topping footballer, and he could play your silly heads off if he jolly well liked. You should have seen him bagging those goals!"

With that, the fat Owl of the Remove rolled away. He left the Famous Five in blank astonishment. Evidently, Bunter did know something about Wilmot, and what he knew appeared to be to the fellow's credit. Yet it seemed that Wilmot had made him keep what he knew a secret. It was all very mysterious.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Smithy Off The Deep End!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH came into his study—No. 4—in the Remove, and slammed the door, with a slam that woke every echo of the Remove passage.

Tom Redwing, who was jamming the kettle on the fire in the grate, jumped, and uttered an exclamation as a spurt of water from the spout went up his sleeve. He stared round at Smithy.

"What the dickens——"

He left it at that. The black look on the Bounder's face showed that he was in one of his savage tempers—as, indeed, that angry slam of the door indicated. Tom mopped his sleeve with his handkerchief, in silence. The Bounder gave him an angry stare. When Smithy was out of temper he was liable to quarrel with anyone, friend or foe.

"I'm not standin' it!" he growled.

"Anything up?" asked Tom mildly.

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"You know what's up, as well as I do!"

Tom made no reply to that. Chumming with the Bouncer was a matter that required patience.

Smithy waited for him to speak, with the obvious intention of taking whatever he said as an offence. As Redwing said nothing, the Bouncer went on:

"I've just seen Wharton about the footer."

"Yes?" said Tom.

"He's going over the men for the Rookwood match. I'm left out."

"Yes," said Tom again.

"Nothing to say?" jeered the Bouncer. "I suppose you're taking the side of that cheeky cad?"

"I shouldn't call Wharton names like that, Smithy," said Tom gravely. "And I'm taking his side no more than you are yourself."

"What do you mean by that, you fool?"

"I mean what I say, Smithy. You're off colour this term. You've played rotten football every time, and if you were skipper you wouldn't play a dud against Rookwood."

"So I'm a dud?"

"Just at present—yes," said Tom. "You're the best man in the team, as a rule—ahead of Wharton himself, in my opinion. But you're badly off your form now, and it's partly your own fault. What's the good of pretending you don't know it? You know it better than I do!"

Vernon-Smith gave his chum a glare and tramped restlessly about the study, his hands driven into his trousers pockets. He did know that he was badly off his form that term, and he did know that it was partly his own fault. But that made his exclusion from the Remove no more palatable to him.

"It's not as if the fellow had a big basket to pick from!" he snarled. "I own up that I'm not much class at the moment. But who's he got to stick in my place? That milksop, Nugent—"

"Nugent's not a milksop. I wish you had some of his good temper and his good nature!" said Tom. "He's a good man at the game. Nothing like your class when you're good, but ever so much better than you are now."

"Rubbish!"

"If you can't see that, Smithy—"

"Well, I can't!"

"There's none so blind as those that won't see!" said Tom. "Everybody else in the Remove can see it."

"Don't talk rot!"

"Well, I'd better not talk at all! Let's have tea!"

"Hang tea!"

Smithy, evidently, was not in a reasonable mood. He was sore and savage, and some barbed sympathy from Skinner had made him feel worse.

"Look at the rotten game Nugent played the other day!" he resumed. "The Remove were licked by Hobby and his crew of the Shell. It couldn't have been worse if I'd played."

"It wouldn't have been better!"

"Wharton's up against me this term!" said the Bouncer. "It's happened before, and now it's happening again. After we were all so jolly friendly in the Christmas holidays he's started the old trouble over again."

"Bosh!"

"You know it's so!" snarled the Bouncer.

"I know it isn't! Wharton's been as disappointed as you yourself by your rotten form this term. It's a blow to him."

"He's looking out for a chance to score over me. I know he was thinking

of that new man, Wilmot, to stick in my place. He can't get away with that, as the fellow's turned out such an absolute dud. But a lot of fellows know he was thinking of it."

"Quite naturally, too! Hobson of the Shell said that the chap was a tremendous footballer—he had it from Hacker, and Hacker ought to know whether his nephew can play Soccer or not. It's turned out that he can't—but Wharton thought he could, till he saw him play."

"Oh, you've got an answer to everything, of course!" sneered the Bouncer. "Wharton's right and I'm wrong—speech may be taken as read! Don't let's argue about it, or I shall be punching your head next! Let's have tea."

Smithy flung open the cupboard door with a crash. Then he gave an angry yelp:

"Where's the cake?"

"Isn't it there?"

"No, it isn't! That fat freak Bunter again, I suppose! By gum, I'll teach that frowsy frump a lesson about grub-raiding in my study!"

Tom glanced into the study cupboard. There had been a handsome cake among the other supplies for tea—Smithy's study was always well supplied. It was no longer to be seen.

Smithy, with gleaming eyes, made for the door. In his present mood he needed only a pretext for "rowing" with somebody. Now he had one—and quite a good one.

"Hold on, Smithy!" said Tom hastily.

"There's no proof—"

"I don't want any! Is there any man in the Remove who pinches a fellow's tuck except Bunter?"

"Well, no; but—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Vernon-Smith tramped out of the study, and the door closed with another slam that rang along the Remove passage. He tramped along to Study No. 7, and stared into that study. Peter Todd and Tom Dutton were at tea there, but Billy Bunter, the third member of the study was not visible.

"Where's Bunter?" snapped the Bouncer.

"Not knowing, can't say!" answered Peter affably. "If you want to catch Bunter—"

"Well, I do!"

"Make a noise like a jam tart!" suggested Peter. "That will fetch him!"

"You silly idiot!"

"Thanks! Same to you, and many of them!"

"Do you know where Bunter is, Dutton?" roared Vernon-Smith. It was necessary to put on a little steam in speaking to Dutton; who was deaf.

Dutton looked up.

"Eh?" he said. "Did you speak to me?"

"Yes, I did, you deaf dummy! Where's Bunter?"

"Grunter yourself!" retorted Dutton.

"Who's grunting?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Toddy.

"You deaf dunderhead!" hooted Smithy. "Do you know where Bunter is? Have you seen that fat owl?"

"Well, the way Bunter grunts is rather foul, I dare say; but if you're making out that I grunt like Bunter I—"

Slam!

Another terrific slam rang along the passage. Questioning Dutton was rather too slow a process for Smithy in his present mood. He slammed the door and departed.

"Seen Bunter?" he yapped, as he passed Study No. 1, where the Famous Five were talking in the doorway after tea.

The Famous Five were discussing what was, just then, a rather burning question in the Remove—making up the eleven for the match with Rookwood School. Smithy, on his way to his study, had stopped to ask the captain of the Remove whether his name was going up. He had received a brief reply in the negative.

So none of the juniors was surprised to see him in the worst of tempers at the present moment. But they were rather surprised to see that the object of his wrath was Bunter. Billy Bunter had nothing to do with football.

"Can't you answer?" snapped the Bouncer, without having given any of the five time to speak.

"Well, a fellow might try if you'd give him time to open his mouth, Smithy!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "We've seen Bunter—too much of him, in fact!"

"The too-muchfulness was terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a nod of his dusky head.

"Where did you see him?" snarled the Bouncer.

"In this study!" answered Wharton.

Vernon-Smith shoved roughly through the Co. and tramped into Study No. 1.

Johnny Bull gave a growl.

"Better manners, please!" he said.

"He's not here!" snarled the Bouncer, after one glare round the study. "What do you mean by saying he was here, Wharton?"

"I meant exactly what I said!" answered the captain of the Remove coolly.

"He's not here."

"Naturally, as it's nearly half an hour since he tea'd with us."

Vernon-Smith breathed hard and tramped out into the passage again. The Famous Five regarded him with cool equanimity. The Bouncer's fierce temper had no terrors for those cheery youths.

"Do you know where he is now?" hissed Smithy.

"He said he was going to look for Wilmot! That's the latest news of W. G. B.," said Bob affably. "Further details may be found in the Stop Press columns of our later editions—"

"You silly idiot!"

"What I like about Smithy," said Bob to his friends, "is the polished courtesy of his manners! Such graceful politeness—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith tramped away to the Remove staircase, leaving the Famous Five laughing.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Backing Up Bunter!

"WILMOT, old chap!" Billy Bunter had found his "pal."

Eric Wilmot was in the Rag. Some other fellows were there after tea, but Wilmot was not with them. He stood looking out of the window into the quad. In the quadrangle his uncle, Hacker, could be seen in conversation with his Form-master, Quelch. Wilmot's eyes were on them—perhaps he was wondering whether he was the subject of the talk between the two masters. A dark and gloomy frown was on his handsome face.

Nobody else in the room was near him, or taking any notice of him. The new fellow was so sulky and unsociable that the Removites had very soon fallen into the way of leaving him to himself.

He seemed to ask nothing better. And he looked far from pleased when Bunter rolled up and joined him at the window.



Billy Bunter was busy making toast, when Frank Nugent dished up the poached eggs. "Good!" said the fat junior, blinking at the dish. "But aren't you fellows having poached eggs?" "We are," said Harry Wharton grimly. "Five of us are having one each. Shut up!" "Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter.

He compressed his lips as he glanced round at the fat Owl.

"I've been looking for you, old fellow!" said Bunter with fat affability.

"Oh!"

"Did you tea in Hall?"

"Yes."

"I was going to ask you to tea in my study."

"Thanks."

The new fellow's manner was so exceedingly dry that even Bunter could not imagine that he was feeling friendly or cordial.

But the fat Owl did not seem to mind. Anything short of a kick was good enough for Bunter.

"Why don't you tea in your own study, old chap?" he asked.

"I don't care to."

"Why not?"

No answer.

"You don't pull with the fellows there," said Bunter. "But I'd always come, old bean! You could always have my company."

Wilmot looked from the window again. Even Bunter felt a little damped. He did not need his big spectacles to enable him to see that the new fellow wanted to be left alone.

"I dropped in, but you weren't there!" went on Bunter. "The fellows were talking about you."

Wilmot reddened slightly, but did not speak.

"I never let anything out," added Bunter reassuringly. "You rely on me, old chap! I said I wouldn't, and I won't."

Wilmot breathed hard. He had his own reasons for desiring Bunter to be silent about what he knew. But it was sheer torture to him to be under any sort of obligation to a fellow like Bunter. An obligation of any sort was

irksome to him—with Bunter, it was more than irksome.

"They think you can't play footer!" went on Bunter, with a grin. "I told them you could play their heads off, if you liked. He, he, he!"

"Oh, rot!"

"It isn't rot, old chap! You could! I've seen you play, haven't I?" said Bunter. "That day at St. Jude's, when you played in the team from Topham."

Wilmot cast a hasty glance round, the flush mounting in his cheeks. But no one was near enough to hear.

"Don't talk about that, Bunter!" he muttered.

"Oh, that's all right—I'm not letting anything out," said the fat Owl. "I say, though, you're a bit of an ass, Wilmot, if you don't mind a friend saying so. Wharton would jump at getting you into the eleven if he knew how you play Soccer. Lots of fellows would be glad."

"Very likely."

"Well, why don't you?"

"That's my business."

"Well, don't be shirty, old chap!" said Bunter. "I don't see why you shouldn't play for the Form, when every other chap would jump at the chance. Wharton would make you, if he knew!"

"Oh, rot!"

"He came jolly near knowing, too!" chuckled Bunter. "Did I ever tell you how I came to be at St. Jude's the day you played there for Topham?"

"I don't want to know."

"Oh, I'll tell you, old chap! You see, Wharton and his crowd were going over to see the match on bikes. I started later, and took a taxi. That ass, Cherry, was held up by a puncture, and they never got to St. Jude's at all. He, he, he! But for that, they'd all have seen you there."

"Oh!" gasped Wilmot.

"Of course, I never knew, then, that you were old Hacker's nephew—never knew Hacker had a nephew at all. I can tell you, I was surprised, the day you came, and I saw you. You've never told me why you left Topham and came here."

Wilmot's handsome face crimsoned, and he turned it away from Bunter.

"Nor why you don't want the fellows to know you were at Topham," pursued Bunter. "Why don't you, old chap?"

No answer.

"I mean, a chap who's played footer for his school the way you did, would generally swank about it a bit," said Bunter. "I can't see any reason for keeping it dark. I shouldn't."

Wilmot did not speak. It was quite a one-sided conversation. But Billy Bunter did not mind that. He was always prepared to take on more than his fair share of the talking.

"You've never told me what happened that day at St. Jude's, either," he remarked.

Wilmot started violently.

"What do you mean?" he breathed.

"Well, I know something happened," argued Bunter. "You got no end of cheers, the way you played in the match; and afterwards, you came away by yourself, looking awfully sick. Hardly knew you for the same chap, you looked so different. Did you have a row with your friends after the game?"

Bunter paused for a reply, but he did not get one. He rattled on cheerfully.

"And then you suddenly left Topham. You were a Topham chap one week, and a Greyfriars chap the next. It's rather unusual, you know. I mean, you must have gone back to Topham for the

new term, or you wouldn't have been playing for them. Then, in the second week of the term you leave, and go to another school. Never knew anything like that before."

Wilmot looked at Bunter searchingly. But there was no suspicion—only fatuous curiosity—in the Owl's podgy face.

Bunter was puzzled, and, as usual, inquisitive. But it had not crossed his fat mind that Wilmot might have had to leave his school for reasons he would not care, or dare, to make known at his new school.

After that searching stare, Eric Wilmot turned his glum gaze on the window again. Friendliness from Bunter was little short of torture to him; but he was glad, at least, that the fellow who knew about him was the most obtuse ass at Greyfriars.

"Still, I'm glad you came here, old top!" went on Bunter. "I like you, you know! Still, I wish you'd tea in your study, as you did at first. I rather miss you there, old chap."

The door of the Rag was flung roughly open, and three or four fellows looked round as the Bounder tramped in.

Some of them grinned.

Displays of temper were not considered the thing at Greyfriars. A fellow who had a jolt was expected to bite on the bullet, as it were, and keep smiling. Smithy was a fellow to do things that were "not done"—which was one reason why he had been given his nickname. Plainly, he was in a very bad temper now; and nobody doubted that it was because his name was missing from the football list for the match at Rookwood.

"Bunter here?" he rapped out.

"I believe so," drawled Skinner. "What's jolly old Bunter done?"

"Bunter didn't drop you out of the eleven, Smithy!" remarked Hazeldene. And the fellows round the fire laughed.

Smithy gave Hazel an evil look. Then, staring round, he spotted Bunter at the window with Wilmot, and strode across to him.

Bunter was blinking round through his big spectacles. He seemed rather alarmed by the sight of the Bounder, in a towering temper. No doubt he had his reasons. As Smithy strode at him, with obviously hostile intentions, the fat Owl dodged round Eric Wilmot.

"I say, Smithy, you keep off!" he exclaimed. "I never had it!"

"You never had what?" hissed Smithy.

"Oh! Nothing! I haven't been in your study at all! I say—Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as the angry Bounder grabbed him. "Ow! Leggo! If you kick me, you beast, I'll—Yoo-hoop! I say, draggimoff! Rescue! I say, Wilmot, back me up! I say, pull him off!"

Eric Wilmot stared at the scene.

The other fellows in the Rag were laughing. Bunter yelled wildly in the Bounder's angry grasp. Wilmot hesitated a moment, then he stepped towards the two, and laid a hand on Smithy's arm.

"Chuck that!" he said quietly.

In sheer surprise, Vernon-Smith stared at him. In the week or so that Eric Wilmot had been at Greyfriars Smithy had hardly exchanged a dozen words with him. He had nothing to do with him, and wanted nothing. He looked on him as a sulky ass, and let it go at that. He was taken quite by surprise by the new fellow barging in like this.

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"You cheeky ass!" he panted. "Take your paw off my arm!"

"Well, let Bunter alone!"

"I'll please myself about that! If you want to know, the fat rotter's pinched a cake from my study, and I'm going to boot him for it!"

"I haven't!" yelled Bunter. "Leggo! Make him leggo, Wilmot!"

Vernon-Smith jerked his arm away from Wilmot, and pushed the new junior roughly back. Then, grasping Bunter with both hands, he spun him round, preparatory to booting him. Bunter yelled in dire anticipation.

But the boot did not land. Wilmot, with a flash in his eyes, grasped the Bounder by the shoulders and dragged him back. Smithy, already delivering the kick, had a foot in the air; and, standing on one leg, he overbalanced as he was dragged back. He sat down on the floor, with a gasping howl and a heavy bump.

Bunter jerked away, spluttering.

Smithy sat panting. Wilmot stood looking at him. And from the group of juniors at the fire came a loud laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Row in the Rag!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came into the Rag. They had, in point of fact, followed the Bounder down, with the idea—quite well founded—that the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove might require some protection if Smithy found him. That Bunter had asked for a booting was very probable; but Smithy looked in a mood to exceed the limit.

They stared as they came in—at the sight of Vernon-Smith sitting on the floor, gasping, and the other fellows in the room laughing. As they stared, Smithy leaped to his feet, rather like a jack-in-the-box, and hurled himself at Eric Wilmot.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What—"

"Hold on, Smithy!" exclaimed Wharton hastily.

Smithy neither heeded nor even heard. He was attacking Wilmot with right and left, his eyes blazing with fury; and the new fellow was backing away, with his hands up in defence.

He backed—but it was clearly not from fear of anything that the Bounder could do, for his face was perfectly calm, and a faint smile of contemptuous amusement flickered on it. As plainly as looks could speak, the new junior was expressing his disdain for a fellow who could not keep his temper.

It was clear, too, that he was a good boxer. He had to give ground before the fierce attack, but his guard was perfect, and not one of the Bounder's furious blows reached his cool, disdainful face.

Wharton ran hastily between them.

"Hold on, Smithy!" he repeated.

"Stand aside, you fool!" panted the Bounder. "I'll knock you spinning if you meddle here!"

Wilmot dropped his hands as the captain of the Remove interposed. The Bounder, mad with rage, struck at Wharton.

Harry knocked the blow aside, and gave Smithy a push on the chest that sent him back. He would have rebounded in a second, but the whole Co. pushed between him and his adversary.

"Easy does it, old bean!" said Bob Cherry soothingly.

"Will you get out of the way?"

shrieked the Bounder. "I'll knock you out of it if you don't!"

"Go it!" grunted Johnny Bull. "If you can handle five fellows at once, Smithy, I'll be interested to see you do it!"

"The interest will be terrific, my esteemed and absurd Smithy!" grinned the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Smithy stood panting. He was in a mood to hurl himself at the Famous Five, hitting out right and left. Still, that would have effected no purpose, and it was Wilmot he wanted to handle.

"What are you meddling for, you meddlin' fools?" he panted. "Have you taken that cad under your wing? Has he asked you to protect him?"

"I don't see why you fellows are barging in," said Wilmot in a cool, drawling voice. "Why not let the fellow get on with it? I suppose you're not under the delusion that I need any protection?"

"You can hold your cheeky tongue!" snapped Wharton. "I dare say you've asked for a thrashing; you've asked for it in my study a dozen times! But we do things according to rule here. Baro knuckles are barred."

"The barfulness is preposterous, my worthy, sulky Wilmot."

Wilmot shrugged his shoulders.

"If you're going to scrap with the fellow, Smithy—"

"I am!" snarled Smithy.

"Then put the gloves on! Neither of you wants to turn up in Form to-morrow looking like a battered prizefighter, I suppose?"

"I don't care!"

"Nor I!" said Wilmot.

"Well, whether you care or not, you'll toe the line here!" said the captain of the Remove sharply. "I don't know where you've come from, Wilmot, but it was clearly a school where cheeky cads weren't booted enough! You'll put on the gloves, or you'll go over that table and take six with a fives bat!"

"Do you happen to be a prefect, or have they made you headmaster by any chance?" asked Wilmot.

"I happen to be captain of the Form, and that's enough for you! I'm not stopping Smithy; I hope he'll give you the thrashing of your life for your cheek!" said Wharton savagely. "Get the gloves out, Franky!"

Vernon-Smith cooled down a little. He realised that the sympathy of the Famous Five was on his side. They did not know what the quarrel was about as yet; but the disdainful smile on Wilmot's handsome face irritated them almost as much as it enraged the Bounder. Wharton was strongly tempted to wipe it off with a smack.

Nugent brought the gloves, and Skinner hastily closed the door of the Rag. Masters or prefects were not wanted to look in just then. Smithy threw off his jacket and put on the gloves, with a black and bitter face.

"Keep cool, Smithy!" said Harry in a low voice. "That chap is no dud; and if you lose your temper, you're asking for it!"

Vernon-Smith gave a curt nod.

"But what's the row about?" asked Bob Cherry.

"That cheeky rotter laid hands on me!" said the Bounder, between his teeth.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I say, my pal Wilmot stopped that beast pitching into me!" exclaimed Billy Bunter indignantly. "And if Wilmot doesn't lick him, I jolly well will, so there!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, rather taken aback. "Is that it? Smithy, you hot-headed ass—"

"Oh, shut up!" snapped the Bounder. "Is that cad ready? I'm not waiting long!"

"Ready when you are!" drawled Wilmot.

Something of the sulky sullenness was gone from the new fellow's face now, and he looked quite keen. The excitement of a row and a scrap seemed to have roused him from his gloomy mood.

"Better take your jacket off," said Bob.

"Not worth the trouble!"

Bob compressed his lips. If this fellow—a nobody from nowhere, as it were—fancied that he could beat one of the heftiest fighting men in the Remove without an effort, Bob could not help hoping that he would find out that he had made a mistake.

"Swank!" grunted Johnny Bull.

Wilmot's lip curled, but he gave no other sign of having heard that remark.

Wharton was looking worried. Having come down to the Rag himself to see that the angry Bounder did not handle Bunter too severely, he found that the new man had forestalled him. This row was on because Wilmot had intervened to protect Bunter—as Wharton had intended to do. It was disconcerting and exasperating to find that a fellow he disliked was in the right.

"Look here, Smithy, you'd better wash this out!" said Harry abruptly. "If you were pitching into Bunter—"

"No bizney of yours!"

"I came down to stop you!" snapped Wharton.

"If you had, you'd have had a scrap on your hands instead of that new tick!" retorted the Bounder.

"You cheeky ass—"

"You've jawed enough! Get out of the way!"

"Oh, go ahead!" exclaimed Wharton angrily. "You're a pair of ill-tempered rotters, and it may do you good to hammer one another!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned Bob. "Six of one and half a dozen of the other! Let them rip, and be blowed to them both!"

"You keep time, Mauly."

"Pleased!" drawled Lord Mauleverer, slowly uncoiling his lazy form from an armchair. "Ready? Shakin' hands? I gather not! Time!"

The word was hardly uttered before the Bounder was springing forward hitting out. Eric Wilmot's hands flashed up, and he met the attack coolly and steadily. His handsome face was keen and alert; his dark eyes gleaming. He gave ground, backing before the fierce attack. But suddenly he stopped, side-stepping a fierce rush, and closed in, hitting out. Right and left crashed on the Bounder, almost lifting him from the floor, and Vernon-Smith went sprawling helplessly and crashed.

"Man down!" said Hazel, with a whistle.

"He, he, he!" came from Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, Smithy's done! He, he, he!"

"Shut up, you fat Owl!" growled Johnny Bull.

"He, he, he!"

Bob Cherry picked the Bounder up. Lord Mauleverer called "Time!" and Smithy sank, almost dazedly, on a chair. Wilmot, looking very handsome with a flush in his cheeks and as disdainful as ever, stood and waited.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Grateful Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER grinned, rejoicing in the victory of his champion.

Bunter had no doubt that the Bounder was "done." But Bunter, as usual, was an ass; the Bounder was not done—he was very far from done. He was hard hit, but hard hitting only roused his fierce and desperate temper. Smithy was the man to fight till he fell, and he was very far from that as yet.

When Lord Mauleverer called "Time!" again, the Bounder leaped up actively. He was a little dizzy, but as determined as ever—or more so.

A breathless circle of juniors watched the second round.

It was not uncommon for the Bounder's unreliable temper to lead him into a row, and he always gave a good account of himself. Every man in the Remove knew what a tough nut he was to crack. Of Wilmot nothing was known, except that he was a sulky ass and a dud at footer. But Eric Wilmot was getting special attention now. Whether he could play football or not, it was clear that he could box, and that he was no funk. But nobody except Bunter hoped that he would get the upper hand. His disdainful look put many backs up as well as Wharton's.

Smithy did better in the second round, to the general satisfaction. He kept his temper better in control, which helped him, and he understood now that he was dealing with a fellow up to his weight, which was another help. There were some lively exchanges in that round, and at the end of it Wilmot's handsome, well-shaped nose was red and rather raw, and did not look so handsome. Even with the gloves on, hard punches did damage, and it was lucky for both that they had not been allowed to scrap with bare knuckles.

"Time!"

There was another minute's rest. In that interval Wilmot threw off his jacket. No doubt he, like the Bounder,

realised by that time that he was not handling an easy proposition.

Third round was hard and fast. Punishment was given and taken, and all the Remove knew that Smithy was the man to take punishment without turning a hair. But Wilmot seemed able to take it as equably. One of his eyes was winking after that round, and his nose looked less handsome than ever.

In the fourth round, however, fortune visibly swayed in favour of the new fellow. Vernon-Smith, attacking hotly, received a jolt on the jaw that spun him over, and he landed with a heavy bump.

Lord Mauleverer glanced at him, as he lay, and began to count.

"One—two—three—"

Smithy, dazed and dizzy, made a frantic attempt to rise. But he dropped back on his elbow.

"Four—five—six—"

The Bounder got on his knees.

"Seven—eight—"

"Why not chuck it?" broke in Wilmot's cool voice. "I'm satisfied, if you are, Smith—if that's your name! Let's call it a day!"

Harry Wharton gave the new fellow a curious look. He knew quite well that Wilmot made that suggestion because he had the upper hand, and was willing to let the Bounder off the humiliation of a defeat. It showed a generous impulse in the fellow who was regarded as a sullen, sulky ass in the Remove.

"You're interruptin' me, Wilmot!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Eight—nine—"

Vernon-Smith scrambled up somehow.

"Come on!" he breathed.

He knew that he would have been counted out, but for Wilmot's interruption. He knew that the fellow was willing to spare him—and both circumstances added to his bitterness.

He had called the Bounder "Smith." Possibly, knowing and caring so little about fellows in his Form, he did not know that Smithy's name was Vernon-Smith. But to the Bounder it seemed one more sample of his insolence—in keeping with the disdainful smile on his face. In a white fury, the Bounder scrambled at him, attacking savagely.

Wilmot stalled him off.

Every fellow there saw that he could have knocked Smithy out, for the dizzy Bounder could hardly keep his legs. But he contented himself with a lazy defence, till Mauly called time again.

Redwing came quietly into the Rag. By that time news that something was "on" was spreading, and the door had

(Continued on next page.)

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opened and shut several times. Tom Redwing hurried at once to his chum.

"Smithy!" he muttered.

The Bounder sat gasping.

"I'll beat that cur yet!" he muttered hoarsely.

Redwing fanned his blazing face. Lord Mauleverer looked at his watch.

"Time!"

The effort the Bounder made to toe the line was visible to all eyes. But he made it and stood up to his adversary.

"You won't call it a draw?" asked Wilmot.

"Shut up, you cad!" hissed the Bounder.

And he followed up the words with a blow.

That blow was easily warded. The Bounder strove hard to get through his enemy's defence, but in vain. Then, as he slowed down, almost exhausted, Wilmot came on, his hands flashing like lightning, so swift were his blows.

Thud, thud, thud!

The gloves came on the hapless Bounder, and he went headlong.

"Time!"

Tom helped his chum to a chair. The Bounder fell on it. One of his eyes was closed; the other blinked dizzily. It was plain to all now that the Bounder was beaten—plain to all, but Smithy!

When Mauly called time again, he dragged himself up.

Redwing caught hold of his arm.

"You can't go on, Smithy!" he whispered.

"Shut up, you fool!"

Smithy tottered into the ring.

"Smithy, old man!" exclaimed Harry Wharton anxiously.

The Bounder did not heed. Almost blindly he barged towards the cool, steady, Wilmot, punching. Wilmot did not punch in return. He put out a hand and pushed the Bounder, and Smithy sat down on the floor with a bump.

There was a chortle from Billy Bunter, and some of the other fellows grinned.

Redwing helped his chum out of the ring. Even the Bounder realised now that he would be only making himself ridiculous by going on. He sat and panted for breath.

Wilmot put on his jacket. He did not glance at the sea of faces round him. Not a fellow there, except Bunter, was glad to see him win. But it was clear that he cared nothing for what the Remove thought or felt. He walked away quite steadily to the door, and went out of the Rag.

"I say, you fellows, Smithy's whopped!" grinned Billy Bunter. "I say—Yaroooh! Leave off kicking me, you beast!"

Instead of leaving off, Bob Cherry continued

Billy Bunter cut for the door and scooted out of the Rag.

Eric Wilmot had gone up to the Remove passage. Under the tap at the end of that passage he bathed his face. He looked in the glass, and shrugged his shoulders at the sight of the bruises that marred his good looks. He had won the scrap; but he bore a good many signs of it—signs that were not likely to fade out for some time.

He went back down the passage to Study No. 1. Wharton and Nugent were still downstairs, so he expected to find his study empty. But it was not empty. Billy Bunter was there—and, to Wilmot's surprise, a large cake lay

on the study table. Bunter had already started on it.

Bunter grinned at him affably.

"Have some, old chap?" he said.

Wilmot shook his head.

"I say it's a jolly good cake! Smithy always has jolly good cakes!" said the fat Owl, with his mouth full.

Wilmot started.

"Who—what?" he exclaimed.

"Not that this is Smithy's cake, of course," said Bunter hastily. "I got this cake from Bunter Court—it came to-day. Have some?"

Wilmot looked at him.

"Suspicious beast, you know, making out that a fellow snaffled his cake!" said Bunter. "As if I'd touch a fellow's tuck! I'm above it, I hope! I say, old chap, have some! I've brought it here to whack out with you, because you stood by me, you know! Smithy can't make a fuss about it now—now you've whopped him! He, he, he!"

"Smithy!" repeated Wilmot.

"Not that it's his cake, you know! I know nothing whatever about his cake—don't believe he had one! Just his temper, you know, at being left out of the football! Just like him to fancy that a fellow snaffled his cake and hid it in the box-room till he stopped looking for it! It's all right now that you've whopped him, though! I'd like to see him kick up a fuss after that whopping! He, he, he!"

"You fat rascal!" roared Wilmot.

"Eh?"

"Get out!"

"What?"

Wilmot grabbed the fat Owl by the collar with one hand, and picked up the cake with the other. With a swing of his arm he twirled the Owl of the Remove through the doorway into the passage. As Bunter staggered there, spluttering, he hurled the cake after him.

"Whoop!" roared Bunter.

The cake smote him on the back of the head, broke into fragments, and dropped round him in a shower.

"Wow!" roared Bunter. "I say—Beast! Wow! Catch me whacking out a cake with you again! Yoop!"

Slam!

The door of Study No. 1 closed with a slam, and Billy Bunter was left, spluttering with wrath and indignation, in the midst of a sea of scattered fragments of cake!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Hacker Again!

"MR. QUELCH!"

The master of the Shell snapped out the name as if he had bitten it off. Prep was going on when Mr. Hacker presented himself in the Remove-master's study.

Quelch, sitting at his table, busy with a pile of papers, looked up, raised his eyebrows slightly at the expression on Hacker's face, and rose to his feet.

"Pray come in, Mr. Hacker," he said, with formal politeness.

Hacker whisked in.

"My nephew, sir—" he barked.

Mr. Quelch's face hardened. Hacker's nephew had been a week in his Form. In that space of time Mr. Quelch had had enough of Hacker's nephew—and enough of Hacker!

"Is anything the matter?" he asked, with an acidity equal to Hacker's own.

"Most certainly, sir, something is the matter. I caught sight of my nephew

a few minutes ago—I believe he was trying to avoid my observation, but I saw him distinctly—on the staircase. His face, sir, is battered and bruised—"

"Indeed!"

"Yesterday, sir, I found him struggling with a mob of boys of your Form—Wharton and his friends. To-day I see him battered and bruised. It appears to me, sir, that Eric is receiving ill-usage in your Form—a matter, sir, for your attention as his Form-master!"

"Undoubtedly," said Mr. Quelch. "If any boy in my Form is receiving ill-usage, I am not likely to overlook the fact. I have not seen Wilmot since class—"

"If you saw him, sir—"

"I shall certainly send for him, and see him. But I must remark, Mr. Hacker, that if Wilmot has found trouble in my Form, the fault is very probably his own. I have observed the boy very carefully, sir, since he has been here—and a more sulky, sullen, and evil-tempered boy I have never seen!"

Mr. Hacker snorted.

"At Topham, sir, my nephew was popular. He had a host of friends! He was the most popular boy in the school!" he barked. "There never was a boy more generally liked. He had many friends, and no enemies, at Topham!"

"It is a pity he did not remain there, in that case," said Mr. Quelch dryly. "For certainly he has made no friends here—neither, it appears to me, does he desire to do so. So far as I have observed, he keeps entirely to himself, and repulses any friendly advances!"

"You are aware, Mr. Quelch, that he would have remained at Topham had it been possible. But the terrible misunderstanding that arose in connection with the incident at St. Jude's School on the occasion of a football match there—"

"Very terrible—if it was a misunderstanding!" said Mr. Quelch, with intensifying dryness of manner.

"Sir! You do not hint—"

"I hint nothing, Mr. Hacker! I say plainly that the judgment of the headmaster of Topham appears to me to be a sound one. After what occurred at St. Jude's, he refused to allow Wilmot to remain at Topham. I fail to see that he could have come to any other decision."

"You are prejudiced against the boy—"

"Naturally, considering the circumstances in which he came here. Dr. Locke acceded to your request, and asked me to give the boy a chance in my Form. I have done so, and intend to continue doing so. But there is no doubt, sir, that the boy has something on his mind—which does not look as if his former headmaster made a mistake!"

"His misfortune at Topham, no doubt, is on his mind. That he has any guilt on his conscience, I do not and cannot believe."

"I trust that your faith in him may be justified, sir. At all events, he will have every opportunity of making good here. He will have fair play, and will be judged by his conduct!"

"He is not getting fair play, sir! It appears to me that your Form have made a set against him—he is ill-used and—"

"If so, he has not failed to give provocation by his sullen and offensive manners!" retorted Mr. Quelch. "But



Vernon-Smith spun Bunter round, preparatory to booting him. Wilmot, with a flash in his eyes, grasped the Bounder by the shoulders, and dragged him back. Smithy, already delivering the kick, had a foot in the air; and, standing on one leg, he over-balanced as he was dragged back. "Yaroooh!" he gasped.

I will assuredly inquire into this matter. I will send for him!"

Mr. Quelch rang for Trotter. That chubby youth was dispatched to summon Wilmot from prep to his Form-master's study.

Mr. Hacker stood with a frowning brow while he waited. Mr. Quelch was frowning also. Both masters were intensely annoyed.

In a few minutes, Wilmot entered the study.

He gave a slight start at the sight of his uncle there, and compressed his lips. Wilmot owed much to Mr. Hacker, and no doubt he was grateful. But that tactless gentleman's fussy interventions were a torment to him.

"You sent for me, sir!" he said to his Form-master.

"Look at him, sir!" said Mr. Hacker, before the Remove master could speak.

Mr. Quelch was looking. He was looking at a swollen nose, a bruised cheek, and a discoloured eye. Evidently Wilmot had been in the wars.

"You have been fighting, Wilmot?" said Mr. Quelch severely.

"Yes, sir!" answered Wilmot quietly.

"With whom?"

"A Remove fellow, sir!"

"His name?"

Wilmot was silent.

"Answer your Form-master at once, Eric!" barked Mr. Hacker. "Tell him, immediately, the name of the boy who ill-used you in this manner!"

Wilmot breathed hard.

"I have not been ill-used, sir!" he answered. "I quarrelled with a fellow, and had a scrap with him—he is more knocked about than I am. And it was my fault from beginning to end!"

"Nonsense!" barked Mr. Hacker.

"It is the truth, sir!"

Mr. Quelch gazed very curiously at that new member of his Form. Wilmot's

statement took him rather by surprise.

"You were not in this constant trouble at your former school, Eric!" said Mr. Hacker. "You were never in trouble for fighting there!"

"I had a fight with Crawley once, sir—a fellow in my Form there!"

"I will not allow you to take the blame on yourself, Eric, from a mistaken sense of chivalry. Your Form-master is prepared to give you protection—"

Wilmot crimsoned.

"I am not in need of it, sir!"

"Nonsense!"

"Really, Mr. Hacker, the boy's word must be taken!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch sharply. "He admits that he was to blame. However, I will inquire. Wilmot, I command you to tell me the name of the Remove boy with whom you have been fighting!"

Wilmot's lips set obstinately.

Mr. Quelch's eyes began to gleam. But Hacker weighed in again—he could not keep silent.

"You foolish boy, answer your Form-master! In any case, Mr. Quelch will see the boy in question in the morning, and see for himself!"

Wilmot realised that that was true. The moment Mr. Quelch's eyes fell on the Bounder, he would know.

"Vernon-Smith, sir!" he said.

"A quarrelsome boy," said Mr. Hacker. "I have noticed him—a boy with a far from excellent reputation."

"That, sir, is not the affair of the master of another Form!" said Mr. Quelch acidly. "I will send for Vernon-Smith!"

Trotter was dispatched again.

Wilmot stood crimson with discomfort. Mr. Quelch, understanding the boy's feelings much more accurately than Hacker did, could not help pitying him. But there was no help for it.

On Hacker's complaint, the matter had to be gone into; and they waited for Vernon-Smith to arrive. And it was like the Bounder to keep them waiting.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Just Like Smithy!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH was seated in the armchair in his study. Redwing was at prep—but the Bounder gave prep no attention. He was not, in fact, in a state to do so. He sprawled in the armchair, tired out, badly damaged, bitterly humiliated, and in the worst temper ever.

He was angry with everything and everybody—himself included. He reflected bitterly that had he kept cooler—had he only kept his passionate temper in better control—the fight in the Rag might have ended differently.

He was a match for the rotter—more than a match for him—he was convinced of that. And he had thrown away his chances—he had never had a real chance after that crashing knock-out in the first round—and he had practically made Wilmot a present of that. So the Bounder told himself, with bitter regret that came too late. It was no use telling anybody else; a fellow who was licked was a fellow who was licked; and "ifs and ahs" would only make fellows smile. The Bounder had been defeated—beaten to the wide—and he had to chew on it, and he found the flavour very bitter!

Redwing attempted no consolation. It was useless, and would only have drawn savage words from his chum. He worked in silence, while the Bounder

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(Continued from page 13.)

sat and scowled, and occasionally gave an involuntary gasp.

Then came a tap at the door, and Trotter's chubby face looked in.

"Master Vernon-Smith!"

"Oh, get out!" snarled Smithy.

Trotter gave quite a jump at the sight of the Bounder's face. Scrapping was not exactly uncommon in the Greyfriars Remove. But it was seldom—very seldom indeed—that any fellow was seen with so highly decorated a visage as the Bounder's at that moment.

"Mr. Quelch, sir—" gasped Trotter.

"Bother Mr. Quelch!"

"He says, sir—"

"I don't want to hear what the old ass says!"

"But, sir—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Trotter looked nonplussed. He had to deliver a master's message; and now that he saw the Bounder, he could guess why the message had been sent. Trotter compassionated a fellow, sent for by his Form-master in such circumstances. He was rather glad that he was not a Greyfriars man himself, with such interviews to go through. He stood in the doorway, staring at the Bounder—who turned his back on him and stared at the study fire.

"Smithy, don't be an ass!" said Redwing. "If Quelch has sent for you, you've got to go!"

"Rot!"

"What did Mr. Quelch say, Trotter?" asked Tom.

"I don't want to hear what he said!" snarled the Bounder.

"Well, I do. Weigh in, Trotter!"

"He said that Master Vernon-Smith was to go to his study at once, sir!" said Trotter, getting his message delivered in that oblique manner.

"Tell him he can go and eat coke!" snarled the Bounder.

Trotter grinned. He was not likely to tell Mr. Quelch that!

"I say, sir, the other young gentleman's there," said Trotter, by way of comfort. "If you've been fighting with Master Wilmot, sir, he's getting it, too!"

"Oh, Wilmot's there, is he?" said the Bounder, looking round.

"Yessir! I think I'd go, sir, if I was you," said Trotter. "Mr. Quelch is looking very ratty, sir, and so is Mr. Hacker."

"Hacker! Is Hacker there?"

"Yessir!"

"What the thump is Hacker there for?"

Trotter grinned again.

"He didn't tell me, sir. But he's looking very bad-tempered, sir, like Mr. Quelch! Hadn't you better go, sir?"

Trotter was really kindly concerned for the angry, obstinate fellow in the armchair. He had had many liberal tips from the wealthy Bounder. Smithy

had to go, that was certain; he was, in fact, only blowing off steam. But delays were dangerous in dealing with a master like Henry Samuel Quelch.

"It's about the scrap, Smithy," said Redwing. "You and Wilmot will both get into a row for getting your faces marked like that. It's no worse for you than for Wilmot."

"Isn't it?" said the Bounder, with a sneer. "It seems that Hacker's there. Looking after his dear little Eric. Has that cur been sneaking to his uncle?"

"I don't think he's that sort."

"Don't you?" jeered Smithy. "What is his precious uncle doing there, then?"

"Barged in, I dare say. He's always making Wilmot look a fool by barging in. Look here, Smithy, cut off, like a sensible chap!"

"I'd go, sir," said Trotter quite anxiously; and receiving only a scowl in acknowledgment of that well-meant advice, he departed, leaving the wilful Bounder to his own devices.

Vernon-Smith rose slowly from the armchair. He had to go, and he knew it, but it pleased him to take his time about it. But he left the study at last, and went down the passage, several minutes after Trotter had gone.

Even then he did not head direct for Masters' studies. He kicked open the door of No. 1 in the Remove, and scowled in.

Wharton and Nugent looked up from prep.

"Dear little Eric's gone?" sneered the Bounder.

"Wilmot! Trotter came up for him," answered Wharton. "I suppose Quelch has heard of the scrap. You sent for?"

"Oh, yes! Trotter came up for me, too, a few minutes ago."

"If it's a few minutes ago, Smithy, hadn't you better get a move on?" asked Nugent. "Quelch doesn't like being kept waiting."

"Quelch can go and eat coke! Besides, he's got Hacker's company to entertain him!" said the Bounder sardonically. "They're pow-wow-ing over sweet little Eric getting his beautiful nose punched. I forgot that he was a beak's relation when I went for him."

"Oh, rot!" said Wharton uneasily. "Wilmot wouldn't take any advantage of that. He's an ill-tempered brute, but—"

"What's his uncle doing there, then?"

"I don't suppose he's there at all. Rubbish!"

"I had it from Trotter."

"Oh!" said Harry, rather taken aback. "Well, Quelch isn't the man to let another beak butt in in affairs of his Form. The more Hacker barges in, the better it will be for you."

"Somethin' in that!" said the Bounder, with a grin. "I'll make the most of that. Thanks for the tip."

"I didn't mean—"

"I do!"

And there was a grin on the Bounder's bruised, discoloured face as he went at last down the Remove staircase.

He arrived at long last at his Form-master's study. By that time the atmosphere in that study was quite electric. Quelch did not like being kept waiting—especially with another beak present to see him carelessly treated by a boy in his Form. Hacker was fuming, and Wilmot was standing almost overwhelmed with discomfort and humiliation. Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes fairly glittered at the Bounder as he came in.

"Vernon-Smith! Why did you not come at once when you were sent for?" rumbled Mr. Quelch. "You have wasted my time."

"You have wasted my time also, Vernon-Smith!" barked Mr. Hacker.

Hacker's intervention saved Smithy from having to answer his Form-master. It was easier to answer Hacker.

"Did you want to see me, sir?" he asked. "I had no idea that I was sent for by any Form-master but my own, or I should certainly not have left my preparation."

"What? You are insolent, Vernon-Smith!"

"I hope not, sir," said the Bounder meekly. "I have always understood, sir, that a fellow here is under his own Form-master's orders, and nobody else's except the Head's. If I am mistaken, my Form-master will set me right."

"You impertinent—"

"Mr. Hacker, will you allow me to speak in dealing with this boy of my Form?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, in great exasperation.

"That insolent boy, sir—"

"That boy, sir, is perfectly correct in his statement. It was, however, I that sent for you, Vernon-Smith. I regret to have interrupted your preparation, and I shall make allowance for it in class to-morrow. It appears, Vernon-Smith, that you have been fighting with Wilmot."

"I'm awfully sorry, sir," said the Bounder, with the same meekness. "I quite forgot that Wilmot was Mr. Hacker's nephew. I will remember another time that Mr. Hacker's nephew must not be touched."

Wilmot winced.

"The fact that Wilmot is Mr. Hacker's nephew has nothing whatever to do with the matter, Vernon-Smith!" snapped the Remove master.

"Oh, sir, I thought it had, from Mr. Hacker being here, waiting for me. I suppose he was waiting for me, as he said I had wasted his time."

Mr. Quelch bit his lip with vexation. "Vernon-Smith," exclaimed Mr. Hacker, "you—"

"Sorry to interrupt you, sir," said the Bounder, with cool impudence, "but I am answerable to Mr. Quelch, sir, not to you. You have no right to speak to me on the subject, sir."

"What?" stammered Mr. Hacker, gasping. "You impertinent young rascal, I—"

"I don't think it impertinent, sir, to point out that I am under the authority of my own Form-master, and no other."

"Mr. Quelch, I—I—"

"Mr. Hacker, will you, or will you not, leave this matter in my hands?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch with the greatest acerbity. "Both these boys, sir, belong to my Form, and unless I am left to deal with them, I will dismiss them, sir, and leave the matter where it is."

"Mr. Quelch, I have a right to insist upon justice being done. That insolent young knave, sir—"

"Are you applying that expression, sir, to a boy of my Form, who has made no statement that is not absolutely well-founded and exact?"

"If you uphold this boy in his audacious insolence, sir—"

"I uphold this boy, sir, or any boy in the Remove, in obeying my commands, sir, and those of no other person but his headmaster. Indeed, I forbid him to reply to any remarks you may address to him, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"If you take that view, Mr. Quelch—"

"Most certainly I take that view, sir!"

"Then," exclaimed Mr. Hacker, "I am bound to say, with the very strongest emphasis—"

"What you have to say with such

emphasis, sir, had better be said in private!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Vernon-Smith! Wilmot! Each of you will take two hundred lines for appearing in so disgraceful a state. Both of you leave my study instantly."

"Mr. Quelch—"

"Mr. Hacker—"

"I insist, sir—"

"It is quite futile to insist, sir, upon overstepping the line of another master's authority."

Wilmot, with burning face, the Bounder with a suppressed grin, left the study. The door closed on the two deeply annoyed and angry Form-masters. Their voices went on after the juniors had left—argument waxing warm.

"You haven't done yourself a lot of good by greasing to a beak," said Vernon-Smith in the passage, with a scornful laugh.

"You know I did not!" panted Wilmot.

"I know you did!"

Wilmot gave him a black look, and the Bounder walked away, and lounged up to the Remove studies. He looked in at the door of Study No. 1 again, with a grin on his discoloured face.

"It worked!" he remarked.

Wharton looked at him rather grimly. "What rotten trick have you been up to now?" he asked gruffly.

"Taking your tip, old bean! It worked!" chuckled the Bounder, and he went on to his own study—in quite a good humour now, in spite of his defeat and his damages.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

What Did Bunter Know?

BILLY BUNTER gave Wilmot a stern blink in the Remove dormitory that night.

Billy Bunter was shirty.

He was so shirty that he had very nearly made up his fat mind to throw the fellow over, and have done with him.

Like the prophet of old, W. G. Bunter was very angry, and felt that he did well to be angry.

He had been friendly with that new tick. He had kept his secret for him, though without having the faintest idea that it was a secret, and why it was to be kept. That alone was a considerable thing, for it was not easy for Billy Bunter to keep anything he knew to himself.

Besides that, he had talked to the chap—when hardly anybody else did. Wilmot, certainly, had never shown any sign of enjoying the delights of his conversation. Still, he had done it—indeed, extensively.

Neither had Wilmot seemed to realise properly what an inestimable boon Bunter's friendship was. In fact, the friendship had been all on Bunter's side. The new fellow had tolerated him—barely.

The bare toleration had grown barer and barer. Wilmot had never said no when Bunter had asked himself to tea in his study. But he had taken to teeing in Hall! He never actually walked away from Bunter when the fat and fatuous Owl joined him. But he always got away as soon as he could, and never, on a single occasion, sought Bunter out. He never refused to answer Bunter when he gabbed, but his answers were always as curt as he could make them, and he never volunteered a remark. Really, it was uphill work being friendly with such a fellow, and now that tea in the study seemed to be a thing of the past, it was hardly

worth while keeping it on, for the sake of an occasional loan of a bob or two! And now, after all Bunter's patient friendliness, Wilmot had heaved him out of his study, and heaved a cake at his head!

A bang on the head from a cake was disagreeable. Worse than that, the cake had been wasted! Even Bunter had not felt disposed to gather up the fragments from the floor of the Remove passage.

Altogether, Bunter considered that it was too jolly thick, and he was shirty, and he blinked at Wilmot in the dorm with a stern and accusing blink, designed to let the fellow see that he was shirty.

Bunter was a peaceable fellow. He was willing to come round. Wilmot had only to make the advances.

But he didn't. So far from appearing to feel the loss of Bunter's friendship, he seemed to have forgotten Bunter's existence.

He did not even observe Bunter's accusing blink. He did not observe Bunter at all.

It was just as if he regarded Bunter as a fellow who did not matter, and

the episode of the cake, as an episode of a trifling nature, to be lightly forgotten!

Which added to Bunter's resentful indignation!

If the fellow supposed that W. G. Bunter could be treated like that, the fellow was making a mistake. Bunter, after all, knew what he knew, so to speak! He did not know why Wilmot wanted to keep Topham dark—but he knew that Wilmot jolly well did!

A smile, a nod, or a cheery word would have been enough for Bunter. But he was utterly ignored. Wilmot, indeed, seemed plunged into even a blacker mood of sulks than was his wont—doubtless the result of that painful interview in Quelch's study. In the dorm he took no heed of anyone, least of all, William George Bunter. And Bunter, knowing what he knew, determined to let the fellow see what he would see!

Wingate put lights out in the Remove dormitory, and left the Form to repose. There was the usual buzz of talk from bed to bed that followed lights out, the coming game with Rookwood being the

(Continued on next page.)

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

(1)

Under the spreading chestnut tree
The Greyfriars tuckshop stands,
Where Mrs. Mimble welcomed me
And waited my commands;
She works, as busy as a bee,
With energetic hands.

(3)

And there within her humble shop
These treasures are displayed,
Her cakes, with icing on the top,
Are guaranteed home-made.
And aren't they fine with ginger-pop
Or fizzing lemonade?



(6)

Now when I asked Dame Mimble for
A little interview,
The shop was filled with quite a score
Of hungry fellows, who
Demanded foodstuffs with a roar.
She talked, and served them, too.

(8)

"Yes, strange to say—A macaroon!
They're all the finest sort!
Yes, Master Coker, here's a spoon—
Well, these are what you bought—
Yes, that is what—Good-afternoon!
Yes, that is what I thought!



"It's like trying to get blood out of a stone!" was the remark passed by our long-haired poet, after having done his level best to interview the busy

MRS. MIMBLE.

the Lady of the Tuckshop.

(2)

Week in, week out, from morn to night,
She tempts our eager eyes
With lovely pastries, brown and white,
And cakes of every size;
With sausage rolls, so crisp and light,
And juley rabbit pies.

(4)

And Mrs. Mimble, bless her heart,
Is ready when we call,
To serve a doughnut or a tart
To fellows short or tall!
She only asks us all to part
With sordid cash—that's all!



(5)

Ah, would that tuck were only free,
Or given us on trust!
If that occurred, we shouldn't see
The Bunter bird for dust!
He'd have a really ripping spree,
He'd eat until he bust!

(7)

"An interview! Well, strange to say—
Some tarts? Yes, Master Stott!
Now, Master Bunter, go away—
Yes, strange to say, that's what—
Mind, Master Fish, you'll have to pay—
That's all the buns I've got.

(9)

"Well, if you want an interview—
That's one-and-threepence, please—
Now, Master Bunter, that will do—
You'll have a pound of these?
Yes, Master Kipps, the tarts are new!
They're jam and lemon-cheese.

(10)

"Well, if you want—well, that's a
joy!
They're acid drops, not lime—
Now, Master Bunter, you annoy—
Oh, yes, the tarts are prime!
An interview—oh, bless the boy!
Come back some other time!"



chief topic. Football matches were taken seriously in the Greyfriars Remove; and football matters were rather at sixes and sevens now, with the Bounder out of the team, and cutting up rusty about it.

"I say, you fellows, talking about football——" said Bunter.

"Don't you talk about football, old fat bean!" said Bob Cherry. "Talk about jam tarts and cream puffs, old porpoise. Keep to subjects you understand!"

"Oh, really, Cherry!"

"Better still, shut up!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Yah! Lot you know about footer!" said Bunter. "You should have seen those Topham men playing at St. Jude's a week or two ago."

In the dark Bunter could not, of course, see Wilmot, but he knew perfectly well that the mention of Topham gave him a jolt. It was Bunter's kind intention to give him a jolt, in return for heaving Smithy's cake at his head!

A fellow who did not value Bunter's friendship couldn't jolly well expect Bunter to keep rotten secrets for him! That was how the fat Owl looked at it.

Not that he was going to let it out. He was only going to give Wilmot the uneasy impression that it was coming out, just to show the cheeky fellow where he got off, as it were!

"Oh, blow Topham!" said Bob. "We don't play Topham!"

"Lucky for you, you don't!" jeered Bunter. "Take some of the swank out of you if you did!"

"Fathead!"

"I saw them walking all over St. Jude's. There was one chap bagged four goals in the game."

"Well, if that's true, he was a good man, for St. Jude's can play Soccer," said Harry Wharton. "But I'll believe that when I see it."

"I saw it!" hooted Bunter.

"Perhaps you saw double, with those specs of yours," suggested Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's Topham, anyway?" asked Bob. "I've never heard of the show, except through St. Jude's having a fixture with them."

"In Surrey, I believe," said Nugent, "but I've never heard much about them."

"Only Bunter knows what wonderful men they are!" said Johnny Bull sarcastically. "And Bunter knows such a thumping lot about footer! Sort of authority on the game."

"I fancy I know more about it than you do, Bull——"

"What a fertile fancy!" chuckled Bob. "What's the difference between a goalkeeper and a goalpost, Bunter? See if you can answer that."

"Too deep for Bunter," said Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle," said Bunter, "but that Topham chap I saw bagging goals at St. Jude's was a regular corker. As good as I am myself, at my very best."

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell from the whole row of beds.

Even Lord Mauleverer opened his eyes to chortle at that remark.

"Must be a regular International!" chuckled Bob. "If he plays in Bunter's style he ought to be selected for the Colney Hatch eleven."

"We must try to fix up a game with Topham, if they're such hot stuff!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Oh, they'd beat you!" said Bunter disdainfully. "Not that the chap I was

mentioning would be playing for them now. He's left Topham."

"They must be weeping over the loss, if he was a footballer like you, old fat man."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How do you know he's left Topham? How do you know anything about him at all, you fat gasbag?" asked Hazel-dene.

"Well, I jolly well do!" said Bunter.

"You jolly well don't! You don't know anybody at Topham, wherever that may be."

"Perhaps I do, and perhaps I don't," said Bunter mysteriously. "That's telling. I can tell you I know that man jolly well that scored the goals."

"What's his name?" asked Squiff.

"Let's see! I—I forget! I dare say Wilmot knows. Wilmot knows fellows at Topham, don't you, Wilmot?"

"Shut up, you fat fool!" came a voice from Wilmot's bed.

"Oh, really, Wilmot——"

"Well, nobody here wants to hear what Wilmot knows or doesn't know," said Johnny Bull dryly. "You've talked enough, Bunter; go to sleep!"

"Yah!"

However, Billy Bunter let it go at that, and closed his little round eyes and went to sleep.

Further conversation in the Remove dormitory went on to the accompaniment of Bunter's snore. Bunter went to sleep, satisfied that he had let that cheeky tick, Wilmot, know where he got off!

He was not aware that long after slumber had descended on the dormitory the new fellow lay awake, unresting, his eyes sleeplessly on the starlit windows.

Mr. Hacker had done a big thing for his nephew when, after his disaster at Topham, he had obtained for him admission at Greyfriars. But the unhappy fellow wished, from the bottom of his heart, that Mr. Hacker had not done it.

At his old school the finger of scorn had been pointed at him. Even in the darkness his cheeks flushed hotly at the remembrance of the fellows' looks the day he had left Topham School. And if the story came out at Greyfriars, and cold indifference was changed into open contempt and scorn—and it might all come out, if Bunter gave the clue!

Billy Bunter had intended to let the fellow learn where he "got off," but the obtuse Owl was far from guessing how hard he had hit!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Hands Off!

THE Bounder grinned.

It was the following morning, in break. Smithy's eyes were on his Form-master, and on the master of the Shell.

Both those gentlemen were taking a little walk in the quad, in the keen, frosty air. Coming along from different directions, they looked like meeting on the path, near the fountain. Each of them, sighting the other, paused for a jerky moment, and then moved on more slowly.

Which made the Bounder grin.

Excessively annoyed words had passed between the two masters in Mr. Quelch's study the previous evening.

Hacker felt that his nephew was not getting justice from Quelch. Quelch considered that Hacker was fussily interfering in affairs of his Form. Smithy had done his best to add fuel to the fire—with some success. The two masters—temporarily—were not on speaking terms.

It was, of course, impossible for one member of the staff to "cut" another member. Such a happening could have caused too much comment in the school. At the same time, they did not want to speak, or to acknowledge one another's existence.

So it was rather awkward, meeting face to face, and it amused the malicious Bounder.

He watched them with interest. So did Eric Wilmot who, alone as usual, was loafing by the House steps with his hands in his pockets. But where the Bounder found amusement, Wilmot seemed to find worry and distress.

More and more slowly the two masters marched on, approaching one another nearer and nearer. And the amused Bounder wondered whether they would pass one another with an icy stare, or a pretence of not seeing one another.

Quelch settled the difficulty by halting, taking a letter from his pocket, and becoming deeply interested in the same.

While his eyes were fixed on that letter, Hacker passed him.

Hacker having passed, Quelch ceased to be interested in that letter, returned it to his pocket, and resumed his walk.

Smithy chuckled, greatly entertained by that little comedy. Then he glanced round at Wilmot's dark, clouded face.

"Amusin', ain't it?" grinned Smithy. Wilmot did not seem to think so. He gave the Bounder a black look.

"Your own doing!" said Smithy. "And I can tell you it won't buy you anything. Greasing to a beak doesn't pay here."

Wilmot gave him a disdainful stare, but no other reply.

"Even if the beak's a chap's relation," sneered the Bounder. "Quelch isn't the man to stand for it. He's the man to put Hacker right in his place—as I dare say you've found out by this time."

"You really think that I dragged my uncle into our row yesterday?" asked Wilmot quietly.

"I don't think—I know!" answered the Bounder coolly. "And you know you did!"

"You may think as you please!" said Wilmot contemptuously. "I shouldn't like to have a rotten, suspicious mind like yours."

He walked away before the Bounder could answer, leaving Vernon-Smith biting his lip.

Skinner came out of the House and glanced round.

"Seen that new tick, Smithy?" he asked.

"Bother the new tick!" grunted Smithy.

"I've got something for him."

Skinner sighted Wilmot's receding form, and cut after him.

The Bounder watched him curiously. Skinner appeared to have some joke on. He ran after Wilmot, stumbled just as he reached him, and caught hold of him for support.

Wilmot glanced round, annoyed.

"Oh, sorry!" gasped Skinner. "My foot slipped."

He let go and stepped back. Wilmot, without a word, walked on, and the Bounder burst into a chuckle as he saw the trick that Skinner had played. In the moment or two that he had been holding on to Wilmot, Skinner had stuck a card on his back, hooking it there with a fish-hook. It was not a very large card—not large enough for Wilmot to discover it there himself. But it was large enough to be seen



Side-stepping a fierce rush, Wilmot closed in, hitting out. Right and left crashed on Vernon-Smith, almost lifting him from the floor; and the Bouncer went sprawling helplessly and crashed. "Man down!" cried Hazeldene. "He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, Smithy's done! He, he, he!"

from a distance, and it was written on in big capital letters:

**"HANDS OFF!
MUSTN'T PUNCH ERIC!
BEWARE OF MR. HACKER!"**

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Bouncer. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the jolly old joke, Smithy?" called out Bob Cherry.

"Seen the latest notice?" grinned Smithy.

"On the board?"

"No; on the new tick."

"Wha-a-t?"

Bob stared round; then, catching sight of the card on Wilmot's back, he roared:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who on earth has done that?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Somebody who doesn't like a fellow greasing up to beaks," said the Bouncer, laughing. "It will be a tip to the cad not to carry tales to his uncle."

"I don't believe he does," said the captain of the Remove, frowning. "In fact, I'm pretty sure he doesn't."

"You love him in your study—what?" sneered the Bouncer.

"No fear! I'd be glad to make any other study a present of him. But he's no sneak, Smithy," said Wharton, shaking his head. "An ill-tempered brute, if you like! Never saw a sulkier brute, but—"

"Rats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell across the quad.

Many eyes were on that placard hooked to the back of Wilmot's jacket.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "Look! He, he, he!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mustn't punch Eric," chuckled Peter Todd. "Dear little Eric!"

"Sweet little Eric!" chortled Bolsover major.

"Beware of Mr. Hacker!" howled Snoop. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess that the bee's knee," sniggered Fisher T. Fish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wilmot heard the loud laughter from many directions, but it did not occur to him to connect it with himself.

He walked on slowly, his hands driven deep into his pockets, his face wearing the usual sulky expression that had earned him the aversion of the whole Form.

The Remove fellows were not likely to guess that it was the memory of a day of shame and humiliation, the breaking of all his boyish hopes that made Eric Wilmot what he appeared to be. He seemed to them a sulky, disdainful, unsociable outsider, and they regarded him accordingly. And it was widely rumoured in the Form now that he "greased" to a beak, which added contempt to aversion.

Billy Bunter's fat face was suffused with grins. Had the fat Owl still been on friendly terms with Wilmot, he might have tipped him that he was being "guyed" before all the school. But Wilmot could not expect friendly tips from a fellow after heaving a cake at his head.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "I say, you fellows! He, he, he!"

Some of the fellows, like Wharton, thought that it was rather too bad. But they could not help laughing.

Wilmot's unconsciousness of the card on his back, his total obliviousness of the fact that he was the object of the roars of laughter, added to the absurdity of the situation.

He walked on, his head held high as usual, his look giving its usual impression of sulky pride. Howls of merriment followed him as he went.

Coker and Potter and Greene of the Fifth were talking in a group when Wilmot passed them. They stared round, wondering what was the cause of that outburst of hilarity. When Wilmot had passed, they saw. Coker burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! Look at that, you men! Is that the kid who's Hacker's nephew? Look! Ha, ha, ha!"

Wilmot heard Coker's words and looked round at him. Potter and Greene were grinning, and Coker roaring.

The new junior gave them an angry, disdainful stare. But he walked on again. His ears were burning. It dawned on him now that he was the cause of the merry outbreak in the quad, though he could not guess why.

The bell rang for third school, and the fellows trooped away to the Form-rooms. With the Remove went Wilmot, still unconscious of the card on his back, but only too keenly conscious that he was the object of general amusement and mockery. His handsome face was flushed, his lips set. The Removites were almost in hysterics at the idea of Wilmot going into the Form-room, under Quelch's eyes, with that card on his back. That, evidently, he was going to do.

"Look here! Enough's as good as a feast!" said Bob Cherry. "I say, Wilmot—"

"Shut up!" snapped the Bouncer.

"Rats to you!" answered Bob cheerfully. "Here, Wilmot, I say—"

He broke off as Wilmot, giving him a cold stare, walked on to the Form-

room door. Bob coloured. His intended warning remained unuttered.

Mr. Quelch came up, and let his Form into the Remove-room. Quelch could see the unusual hilarity among the Removites, but he could not see the cause, which was behind Wilmot's back. He frowned. Quelch did not approve of too much in the way of hilarity, especially in Form.

It was not till all the Remove had gone in that the Remove master spotted the card on the back of the new junior.

He stared at it, and almost jumped. "Wilmot!" he stuttered.

Wilmot looked round at him.

"Come here, Wilmot!"

"Yes, sir."

"What are you doing with that absurd card stuck on your jacket?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"A card—on my jacket!" repeated Wilmot blankly.

"I suppose you were unaware of it!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Come here; I will remove it. Ridiculous!"

He unhooked the card. Wilmot glanced at it and crimsoned. He understood the whole thing now.

He stood rooted to the Form-room floor, staring at the card. His eyes flashed round at Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"You rotter!" he shouted. "You did that!"

"Wilmot, if you dare to use such expressions in the Form-room I shall cane you!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Vernon-Smith, did you pin this card to Wilmot's back?"

"No, sir."

"Someone in this Form must have done so, I presume," said Mr. Quelch, frowning. "If such a thing should occur again I shall detain the whole Form for a half-holiday. Now be silent! You may go to your place, Wilmot."

Wilmot went to his place with burning cheeks. Mr. Quelch tore the card across and threw the fragments into his wastepaper-basket. Skinner sighed. Quelch had "put paid" to his little joke; it was not worth a half-holiday's detention to repeat the performance. Still, one performance had been quite a success, judging by the hilarity in the

Remove and the crimson discomfort of the victim.

When the Remove went out after third school Hazeldene pushed by Wilmot in the passage, and Skinner gave a yell of warning.

"Look out, Hazel!"

Hazel stared round.

"What—" he began.

"Mustn't touch Eric!"

"Eh? Oh! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beware of Hacker!" chortled Bolsover major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The whole crowd of fellows, entering into the joke, walked round Wilmot with ostentatious care, avoiding contact. The new fellow went out into the quad with a burning face.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Talking About Topham!

"**T**ALKING about Topham—" remarked Billy Bunter.

Nobody was talking about Topham—or thinking about Topham. Bunter was dragging the subject up by the heels, as it were.

It was nearly tea-time, and a number of fellows were in the tuckshop, when Wilmot came in.

Wilmot had ceased to "tea" in Study No. 1—whether from a dislike of his study-mates, or from a fear of Bunter dropping in, or both. But fellows who "tea'd" in Hall were allowed to take in any reasonable quantity of comestibles to eke out the school fare, which the juniors generally described as "doorsteps and dishwater." Wilmot had come into the school shop for some supplies of that sort, and found plenty of fellows there on the same errand.

It was for Wilmot's benefit that Bunter dragged up Topham. As the fellow had made no advances towards reconciliation, it seemed to the fat Owl that he had not yet learned where he "got off." Bunter was the fellow to show him.

"Who's talking about Topham, fat-head?" said Bob Cherry. Bob was engaged in the careful expenditure of a half-crown.

"I am!" answered Bunter.

"Well, don't! We're fed-up on Topham, old fat bean!"

"But, I say, talking about Topham—" persisted Bunter.

Wilmot stood at Mrs. Mimble's counter, waiting his turn to be served, with an expressionless face. No doubt he understood the object of the fat and fatuous Owl; but to appear to ask any favour of a fellow like Bunter was more than his pride could stoop to.

Bunter was far from realising that he was a proper object for contempt. He was, in his own estimation, a very admirable fellow indeed—one of the very best!

"Here, look out, you men!" called out Skinner. "Make room for Eric! You'll have Hacker on your trail!"

Some of the fellows laughed.

"Skinner, old man, that's getting a bit stale," said Harry Wharton. "Dig up a new one, old scout."

"I say, you fellows, talking about Topham—"

"What is that fat ass gabbling about Topham for?" asked Bob in wonder. "He seems to have only one record lately—and that's Topham. Can't you jaw about something else, Bunter?"

"Better still, don't jaw at all!" suggested Wharton.

"The jawfulness is truly terrific," remarked Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh.

"Wilmot knows fellows at Topham," said Bunter. "Don't you, Wilmot?"

Wilmot did not seem to hear.

He was selecting one or two things to take away and losing no time. Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles, with a fat grin.

Bunter's friendship was, so to speak, on offer. It was Wilmot's if he chose to accept the inestimable boon.

If he didn't, he couldn't expect Bunter to be pally.

Bunter did not realise that he was tormenting the new junior. He had not the remotest idea that the mere mention of Topham cut Wilmot like a lash.

The barest possibility of his disgrace at Topham becoming known at Greyfriars made the new junior quiver. It was, indeed, partly for that reason that he had wrapped himself in a defensive armour of sulky pride. If the truth came out there would be no friend to turn him down, as he had made no friends. It was better to be a disliked outsider than to face the possibility of fresh humiliations. So it seemed, at least, to the boy whose little world had fallen in ruins round him so short a time ago.

"I say, you fellows, Wilmot knows the name of that Topham chap who scored the goals at St. Jude's!" declared Bunter.

Nobody wanted to speak to Wilmot; but that declaration from Bunter drew a little attention.

Harry Wharton & Co. had narrowly missed seeing that football match at St. Jude's. If a Topham man really had scored four goals against men like Lunn and his team it was a matter of considerable interest to the Remove footballers.

"Is that so?" said Harry. "I don't know anything about Topham, but I'd like to hear of a chap who could bag four goals against Lunn's crowd. Sounds steep."

"Well, I saw him do it," said Bunter.

"But Wilmot didn't, I suppose," said the captain of the Remove. "Wilmot wasn't at St. Jude's that day, was he?"

Bunter chuckled.

"Perhaps he was!" he answered.

Eric Wilmot felt a chill at his heart. It was all coming out now!

"Oh, was he?" said Harry, quite interested, and little dreaming of the

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facts. "Did you see that game, Wilmot?"

Wilmot did not answer.

His heart was like ice. It was at St. Jude's, after the match, that the disaster had happened—the incident that had blackened the very sunshine for him. Bunter had not the faintest idea of it; nobody at Greyfriars had, so far. He could not speak.

His silence puzzled the captain of the Remove. A sulky temper was all very well, but surely a fellow could answer a civil question.

"I spoke to you, Wilmot," said Wharton, his colour rising a little.

"Well, don't!" snapped Wilmot.

He did not want to make that answer, but it was the only answer he could make—unless he answered the question.

"By gum!" said Harry Wharton, with a deep breath. He clenched his hands, but he unclenched them again. "You sulky, disagreeable rotter, I've a jolly good mind— Let's get out of this, you men; that fellow makes me feel ill."

He left the school shop with his friends.

"Well, that's the limit!" said Skinner. "Fancy the new tick having the neck to snub his Lofty Magnificence Wharton!" Skinner grinned. He rather enjoyed seeing the captain of the Form taken down a peg.

"Cheeky cad!" grunted Bolsover major. "I'd have punched his cheeky face if I'd been Wharton!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Too tough for Wharton to punch!" grinned Skinner. "He doesn't want to punch a man who could lick Smithy!"

Wilmot looked round at him.

"That's a lie, Skinner," he said very distinctly, "and you know it!"

Skinner stared at him, quite taken aback. Wilmot turned contemptuously away from him—having made one more enemy! He began to collect his purchases.

"I say, you fellows, you ask Wilmot; he knows the name of that Topham man who beat St. Jude's—" Bunter was going on.

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!" growled Squiff. "Nobody wants to speak to that sulky brute!"

"Well, let's see, I fancy I could remember the name if I tried," said Bunter. "Let's see, was it Wilson, or Wilkins, or—"

"Carry some of these things in for me, will you, Bunter?" asked Wilmot. "I suppose you're coming in to tea."

Billy Bunter beamed. Friendship, evidently, was on its old footing. The Topham stunt had worked.

"Yes, rather, old chap!" grinned Bunter.

"But what's that name you were going to tell us?" asked Squiff.

"I forget."

"You fat chump!"

Bunter carried Wilmot's purchases out of the shop, and walked across to the House with the new junior.

Wilmot had come round! He had put his pride in his pocket—he had had to! Bunter grinned cheerfully as he trotted by the side of the new junior. He did not know how near Wilmot was to booting him across the quad!

At the tea-table in Hall, Bunter sat down by the side of the glum-faced junior, and helped him to dispose of the supplies from the tuckshop. Bunter had even more than the lion's share that he had marked out for his own. Eric Wilmot ate little, and that hastily, and got away. But Bunter did not mind. he was left to finish the supplies, which he duly did to the last crumb.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Called Over The Coals!

"WHARTON!"
"Hallo, Hobby!"
"Hacker wants you!"
Harry Wharton stared at Hobson of the Shell.

"Hacker wants me?" he repeated. "What the thump does your beak want a Remove man for?"

"Blessed if I know!" answered Hobby. "But he told me to tell you! Perhaps it's something about that darling nephew of his! Haven't you tucked him up nicely in your dorm of a night? Or have you forgotten his hot-water bottle?"

Hobby was sarcastic!
"Something serious like that, I fancy, from Hacker's look!" went on Hobby, still sarcastic. "I hear that Hacker butts in every other day to see that jolly old Eric isn't badly treated. He got Smithy, of your Form, into a row for punching him, I hear."

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Wharton knitted his brows. Whether Eric Wilmot "greased to a beak" or not, Mr. Hacker certainly seemed bent on making it look as if he did! The captain of the Remove most certainly did not want to see Hacker on that subject. Since that talk in the school shop, a day or two ago, his feelings towards Wilmot had been less amicable than ever. He liked neither Wilmot nor his uncle, and wanted to have nothing to do with either.

"Your beak and my beak hardly speak now, I hear," went on Hobson. "Dear Eric seems to have set them by the ears! And the worst of it is, I never see the chap without wanting to punch his cheeky head, and I can't do it, because it means a row with Hacker! Rotten, ain't it?"

Hobby of the Shell walked on, and Wharton slowly made his way to the House.

Vernon-Smith met him as he was going in.

"Thinking it out?" he asked.

"Eh! What?" asked Harry.

"I mean, we're pretty close on the Rookwood date now," said the Bounder. "If you're going to do the decent thing, instead of giving a good man's place to Nugent because he's your chum—"

"Oh, don't talk rot!" interrupted Wharton angrily. "You're out of the team for Rookwood, because you're off your form, and I've got a strong suspicion, too, that you're off your form chiefly because you've been losing sleep through breaking bounds after lights-out, and smoking filthy cigarettes! If

that's the case, you've let us down; and the less you say about it, the better!"

"You're not goin' to play me, then?" sneered the Bounder.

"Not unless you show a big change before the date!"

"That's not what you were wrinkling your face about, then?"

"Was I? No; I've got to go to see Hacker, and I don't want to, but I suppose I must!" grunted the captain of the Remove.

"You've got to go to see Hacker!" repeated Smithy.

"He's just sent Hobby to tell me."

"Don't go!"

"I must, fathead!"

"You needn't! I told Hacker to his face the other day that I wouldn't come at his orders, and Quelch stood by me, too!"

"I'm not so keen on making mischief as you are, Smithy!" answered Wharton dryly, and he passed the Bounder, and went into the House.

He went very slowly to Masters' studies.

Hacker could only want to see him about his nephew in the Remove; he could think of no other reason. Had the fellow been carrying complaints to his uncle, as the Bounder believed? It looked like it, but Wharton could not quite think so.

But he was almost tempted to act on the Bounder's advice, and decline to obey the summons. Hacker had no right to send for one of Quelch's boys—it was some more of his fussy interference!

However, he continued on his way, and tapped at Hacker's door. He was not surprised to find the master of the Shell with a frown on his acid face.

"You sent for me, sir?" said Harry respectfully.

"Yes, Wharton! I sent for you!" said Mr. Hacker. "I desire to see you on the subject of my nephew in your Form."

Wharton did not reply that he had guessed that one! But that was the thought in his mind.

"You are, I understand, football captain in your Form," said Mr. Hacker.

"Yes, sir," said Harry, in utter wonder. It had never occurred to him that Hacker intended to speak about footer. Hacker was well known to take little or no interest in the game. Seldom or never did he roll down to see his Form play, as other masters did.

"Quite so," said Mr. Hacker. "So I understood! That is why I require an explanation from you, Wharton."

"I don't understand you, sir," said the bewildered junior.

"My nephew, Eric—I should say, Wilmot—was considered the finest junior footballer at his last school!" said Mr. Hacker. "Yet I find that he is entirely left out of your Form games. Why is this?"

Wharton could only stare blankly.

Apparently Hacker had been looking into Remove football matters—entirely on his nephew's account, that was certain.

He had learned that Wilmot was taking no part in the Form games. He had not, evidently, learned that that was Wilmot's own fault. Certainly he was not aware that, so far from desiring to play footer, Wilmot had tried to get out of even compulsory practice—which no fellow was allowed to do.

Hacker did not know that, on the occasion when he had come on the Famous Five hooking Wilmot downstairs, they had been getting him down to the changing-room by main force.

Since that date, the new junior had turned up on compulsory occasions—but only on those occasions, and had always got away as soon as he could, and never shown anything like quality. Of all this Hacker, obviously, was unaware.

Wharton said nothing. He did not want to tell Hacker that his nephew was a dud and a frowsting slacker. And really, there was nothing else to tell him.

"You will explain this, Wharton," said Mr. Hacker, after having paused, like Brutus, for a reply, and received none, like Brutus. "I am aware that you are not on friendly terms with Eric—hem!—my nephew. I trust that this unfriendly personal feeling has not led you to disregard the just claims of a boy in your Form."

"Not at all, sir!"

"I believe," said Mr. Hacker, "that a—hem!—a fixture—a regular match—with another school, is at hand—"

"The Rookwood match—yes, sir."

"Is my nephew selected to play in that match?"

Wharton almost laughed.

"No, sir," he answered.

"Why not?" demanded Mr. Hacker.

"I'd rather not talk about Wilmot, if you don't mind, sir!" said Harry.

He was incapable of the Bounder's impudence; but he felt strongly tempted to speak, just then, in Smithy's style.

"I have sent for you to talk about him, Wharton!" answered Mr. Hacker. "I should have placed the matter before your Form-master; but, for various reasons, I prefer not to discuss the matter with Mr. Quelch."

Wharton was able to guess those reasons!

"You, as football captain, are responsible in the matter," continued Mr. Hacker. "Therefore, I am addressing you, Wharton! I desire—in fact, I require—to know why my nephew, certainly as good a footballer as any boy in the Lower Fourth Form, is excluded from the matches."

"But, sir—"

"I will not allow injustice to be done to my nephew!" said Mr. Hacker. "I desire you to understand that very clearly, Wharton!"

"Nobody wants to do him injustice, that I know of, sir!" answered Harry, wondering what Wilmot would have felt like, could he have overheard that extraordinary conversation.

"I am glad to hear that, Wharton! Then, answer my question! For what reason is Eric—I mean, my nephew—excluded from the Form games?"

"Have you ever seen him play footer, sir?" asked Harry.

"Certainly I have! I am not speaking without knowledge!" snapped Mr. Hacker. "On several occasions I visited his last school, and saw him play in matches there. It was agreed by all that he was the best junior footballer at—at—the school."

"I can't imagine what sort of footer they played there, then, sir! I'd as soon put Bunter in my team, as Wilmot."

"What? What do you mean, Wharton?"

"Only what I say, sir! I don't want to talk about Wilmot—but as you force me to speak, I must tell you that he can't play Soccer for toffee, and doesn't seem to want to, either."

"He cannot play Soccer!" repeated Mr. Hacker.

"If he can, he's shown no sign of it here," said Harry.

"Nonsense!"

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Wharton made no answer to that.

"If you are so ignorant of the game, Wharton, that you do not know a first-class footballer when you see one, it is amazing that you should be captain of football in your Form."

"It would be rather amazing, sir, I admit! But I'm supposed, in the Remove, to know a little bit about the game."

"It is either ignorance or prejudice, I repeat. Eric—Wilmot—was the acknowledged best player of the game at his last school."

"May I ask what school it was, sir?" asked Harry. He was really interested to know at what school a fozzling dud like Wilmot was considered the best junior footballer.

"That—that is immaterial," said Mr. Hacker hastily. "You are not here to ask questions, Wharton, but to answer them."

Wharton was trying hard to avoid following the Bounder's example. It was bad form to "cheek" a master; and he had a keener sense of the fitness of things than Smithy ever had. But he was getting near the limit of his patience now.

"May I point out, sir, that you have no right to question me, especially about football matters," he said, as respectfully as the nature of the remark allowed. "I am responsible to Wingate, the captain of the school, and after him to Mr. Lascelles, the games-master. Neither of them would let me carry on if I failed to spot a first-class man for the game. Both of them keep an eye on Remove football."

Mr. Hacker appeared a little struck by that remark. He was silent for several moments. But he came back to the point after those few moments, just as if the captain of the Remove had not spoken at all.

"Why is my nephew excluded from the team that is to meet Rookwood, Wharton?"

"Do you really want me to tell you, sir?"

"Certainly I do!"

"Very well. It's because he's a dud at the game, and a slacker, too, and no good! I'll play him as soon as we fix up matches at hopscotch, or marbles; but so long as it's Soccer, he's out, and stays out!"

The master of the Shell blinked at Wharton. He was getting plain English now—very plain indeed, with no trimmings. He did not seem to like it, now he had got it.

His acid face was suffused with red.

"Wharton," he gasped, "you are disrespectful!"

"You've forced me to speak plainly, sir. If it's disrespectful, I can't help it. I don't want to talk about Wilmot at all. But you've asked me, and I've told you."

"You are speaking falsely, Wharton!" barked Mr. Hacker.

Wharton gave him one look, and walked to the door. The master of the Shell stared after him.

"Stop!" he barked. "I have not told you to go, Wharton! Remain here till I have finished! I order you—"

Without answering, and without turning his head, Wharton walked out of the study, and shut the door after him. He had had enough of Hacker. Quite unintentionally, and against his will, he had, after all, followed the Bounder's example in dealing with that gentleman—only rather more so!

He went down the passage with flushed face. Mr. Hacker was left staring at the shut door.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Wilmot To Play!

WINGATE coughed. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent smiled.

They were in Study No. 1 in the Remove, when the captain of Greyfriars dropped in. A visit from so great a man as the captain of the school was, of course, a distinguished occasion, and as Wingate did not bring his ash-plant with him, there was no cause for alarm.

Apparently, the Greyfriars captain had dropped in to say something. But it appeared, also, that he had some difficulty in saying it. Having made a few desultory remarks on the subject of football, Wingate coughed—and coughed again. Whereat the juniors smiled. It was rather unusual to see old Wingate hesitating, especially in dealing with Lower boys. Generally he came very directly to the point.

"That new kid's not here?" remarked Wingate at last.

"Wilmot? No—he doesn't trouble the study much," said Harry.

"You don't pull with him?"

"Not a lot!"

"Well, look here!" said Wingate. "I was going to speak to you about him, Wharton, as captain of your Form."

Nugent took the hint and left the study.

Wingate waited till the door closed on him. Wharton waited, too—with a rather grim expression coming over his face.

He had a feeling of being fed-up with Wilmot—fed-up to the back teeth. He had heard enough about him from Hacker. If more was coming, from Wingate, it was getting beyond tolerating.

Wingate gave another cough. He leaned his broad shoulders on the mantelpiece, and looked at Wharton's set face.

"What's the kid's footer like?" he asked.

"Rotten!" answered Harry briefly.

"Keen?"

"About as keen as Bunter."

Wingate laughed.

"Hacker seems to think differently," he said.

"I suppose I mustn't tell a prefect that a Form-master is an ass!" said Wharton. "But may I say that Hacker doesn't know what he is talking about?"

"Well, the old bean isn't a whale on games," admitted the Greyfriars captain. "But he must know a bit. I've noticed that kid—he seems a sulky little beast. But he's got the build of a good forward."

"Oh, he's fit enough, if he cared for the game!"

"And he doesn't?"

"He seems to loathe it."

"That's dashed queer!" said Wingate thoughtfully. "Hacker may be mistaken about his form, but he can't be mistaken about the kid having played for his last school. That's a matter of fact, not of opinion."

"Some school!" said Wharton, with a curl of the lip. "Nugent minor wouldn't play him for the Second Form here."

"Still, he must have been fairly keen at his last school, and must have been able to play a game of sorts. Hacker thinks he was a tremendous games man!"

"Hacker's a—what I mustn't call him to a prefect."

"Well, look here!" said Wingate. "Hacker has been talking to me—"

"I guessed that one!"



"Why is my nephew excluded from the team that is to meet Rookwood?" asked Mr. Hacker acidly. "Do you really want me to tell you, sir?" asked Wharton. "Certainly I do!" "Very well; it's because he's a dud at the game. I'll play him, as soon as we fix up matches at hop-scotch or marbles. So long as it's Soccer, Wilmot's out, and stays out!" The master of the Shell fairly blinked at the junior captain.

"He's frightfully in earnest about it—he seems to think that the kid isn't getting a fair show!"

"He's doing the kid no good by barging in."

"Taken as read," said Wingate. "But, look here! Hacker's very keen about it, and he talked to me for a solid half-hour. I don't want that over again, if I can help it. He's asked me to step in, as head of the games."

"As head of the games, you can tell him that his nephew is in good form to play a girls' school at croquet; but is no good for Soccer."

"Thanks! I don't want to see Hacker blow up like a bomb! Look here! What about giving him a chance in a match?"

Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"I'll resign the Form captaincy, if you like," he said. "So long as I'm skipper, he plays in no Remove matches."

"Don't get your back up, kid!" said Wingate soothingly. "I'm not speaking of the Rookwood game, or St. Jim's, or St. Jude's. You're playing a Form match on Saturday—Temple's lot in the Fourth."

"Oh!" Wharton laughed scoffingly. "Anybody can play those fozzlers. I've played Bunter against the Fourth! I wouldn't mind Wilmot."

"Well, then, a Form match is a match," said Wingate. "If you have to carry a passenger, it will be all the harder practice for you, see? It's only the same as playing a man short."

"Just the same, so long as Wilmot doesn't get in the way. If he does, he will get barged out of it fast enough."

"Well, look here! I'd like to satisfy Hacker, if possible, that his blessed Eric isn't being boycotted," said Wingate.

"And the fact is, Wharton, I've had an eye on that sulky young tick, and I believe he could play if he liked. It looks to me as if he never wanted to come here, and has his back up with things generally. Football may help to pull him round. Mind, I'm not giving you any orders—I'm asking you to oblige me by giving him a chance in a Form match."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Invitations from royalty amount to commands, don't they?" he said. "I'll do it if you like, Wingate. Can't see any sense in it. But it's a go!"

"Done, then!" said Wingate, and, with a friendly nod to the junior, he went out of the study.

It was not pleasant for Wharton. It was not Wingate's authority, but the fact that he admired and respected the captain of Greyfriars, that caused him to concede the point. It was true that a "dud" in the team that played Temple & Co. of the Fourth did not spell danger. But Wharton wanted to have nothing to do with the sulky new fellow, and he had a feeling of having been overruled in his own province.

However, he made up his mind to it with the best grace possible.

Nugent came back to the study and found his chum pencilling a footer list. He glanced at it and whistled.

"Wilmot!" he ejaculated.

"He won't do any harm, playing the Fourth," said Harry.

"But will he play?"

Wharton started.

"Will he play?" he repeated.

That had not occurred to him. A fellow picked out to play had to play—generally jumped at it. Wharton felt a gust of anger surge over him.

He had had a "jaw" from Hacker.

and another "jaw" from Wingate, and, against his own will, had put Wilmot down to play. Yet it was quite on the cards that the sullen, obstinate fellow, instead of jumping at the chance, and regarding it as a boon and a blessing, might reject it—coolly and contemptuously. He was no party. Wharton felt sure, to Hacker's meddling; probably did not know that Hacker had barged in at all. If he refused—

"He doesn't seem to care for footer," said Nugent, "and he seems as obstinate as a mule. I rather think he may decline."

Wharton set his lips.

"Let him!" he said. "I've had enough worry over that sulky tick! I'd as soon play Bunter, so far as Soccer goes. I've told Wingate that he's going to play on Saturday—and he's going to play! If he refuses—"

"Well, he might—"

"He might!" agreed the captain of the Remove, with gleaming eyes. "Let him, and we'll see whether I shall have better luck than Smithy in giving him the hiding he's been asking for ever since he came here!"

"But, old fellow—"

"Don't let's talk about him any more, or I shall punch his head when he comes up to prep!"

Nugent changed the subject at once. When Wilmot came up to his study to prep, there was the usual silence there to greet him.

In any other circumstances, Wharton would have mentioned the matter at once—knowing that the news would be welcome to any fellow. But he said no word to Wilmot. He would know, when he saw his name in the list put

up for the Form match—and that was good enough. He could like it, or lump it, and make the best of it—or the worst!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bitter Blood!

"HAT tick!"

"That sulky ass!"

"What rot!"

"That dud!"

"Wilmot!" said Vernon-Smith, with a scoffing laugh. "Well, that's the limit—the jolly old limit!"

It was Friday evening, after prep, and the list was up in the Rag. It was not a matter of deep interest in the Remove, for the match with Temple & Co. of the Fourth was little more than a walk-over for the strenuous footballers of the Remove. Still, fellows looked to see if their names were in. Smithy's name was there—which he took as no compliment. But the name that drew general attention was that of E. Wilmot.

"So Wharton's resigned the captaincy!" said Smithy, with a jeering grin.

"Has he?" exclaimed Hazel.

"Looks like it! Can't be two captains in one team—and Hacker has become skipper, judging from this."

At which there was a loud laugh.

"Think Hacker worked this?" asked Skinner.

"I don't think—I know! Wharton wouldn't touch the fellow with a punt-pole if he could help it! He's not put in because he can play footer, I suppose—as he can't! He doesn't even want to! Remove footer is being run from the Shell beak's study now."

And there was a growl from some of the fellows. Wharton had said nothing; but the thing was clear enough.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter was blinking at the list through his big spectacles. He was not hoping to see his name there. He was dreading to see it there! Luckily, his dread proved unfounded. Wharton had sometimes put the fat Owl into a game where he could do no damage; but this time, at least, he had not repeated what W. G. Bunter regarded as a scurvy trick!

Still, Bunter was interested in the list. He knew, if nobody else did, that Eric Wilmot, late of Topham, was a first-class footballer—if he chose! Few, if any, in the Remove, were his equals in that line, judging by what the Owl had seen at St. Jude's.

"I say, has Wharton found out what a topper he is?" asked Bunter. "I say, he will walk all over the Fourth!"

"Shut up, you silly ass!" hooted the Bounder.

Bunter's opinions on Soccer were not wanted. Generally they were not very valuable.

"Well, you see," said Bunter, "that chap can play your head off, if he likes, Smithy! He's as good at footer as at boxing!"

Smithy did not answer in words. He let out a foot, and the fat Owl departed with a yell.

"Here come his Nibs!" murmured Hazel.

Wilmot came into the Rag.

Every eye was turned on him—not with a friendly look. He could see that something unusual was on, though he did not yet know what it was.

"Gratters, Wilmot!" called out the Bounder sardonically.

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Wilmot gave him an icy glance.

"Your name's up!" called out Skinner.

To his surprise, he could see that the new fellow was unaware of it. Most of the fellows were taking it for granted that that name, in the football list, was the outcome of "greasing" to a beak!

"My name?" repeated Wilmot, in astonishment. "What do you mean?"

"Didn't you know?" sneered the Bounder.

Without replying, Wilmot came over to the group, and glanced at the paper. His brow darkened.

He said nothing, but walked out of the Rag. The juniors stared after him and exchanged curious glances. Even the Bounder was puzzled.

"He doesn't seem fearfully bucked!" remarked Hazel.

"He must have wangled it, with his uncle!" snapped the Bounder. "Wharton never wanted to put him in."

"That's a cert!" agreed Peter Todd. "But—well, if he's pleased, he doesn't look it! After all, he doesn't care for Soccer."

It was quite a puzzle to the Removites. Heedless of what they said or thought, Wilmot went up to the Remove passage. He found Harry Wharton & Co on the landing, chatting there before they came down to the Rag after prep. He went up directly to the captain of the Remove.

Wharton looked at him, and his face set.

"I've just seen a football notice downstairs!" said Wilmot.

"Well?"

"My name's in it."

"Well?"

The Co. stood silent. Trouble, it was clear, was at hand.

"I'm new here," said Wilmot, in quiet, icy tones. "I quite understand that games practice is compulsory, and that I made a fool of myself last week when I refused to turn up. I've turned up since on compulsory dates. I'm asking for information now."

"Well?"

"Is to-morrow a compulsory date?"

"No."

"A fellow is not bound, by any rule, to play in a match if he doesn't care to?"

Wharton paused a moment before replying.

"A fellow is generally glad to play in a match!" he said at last.

"I haven't asked you that!" Wilmot pointed out. "I asked you whether there is a rule, enforced by the school authorities, to make a fellow play in a match on a date when games practice isn't compulsory?"

"No!" said Wharton, with a deep breath.

"You frowsy slacker—" began Johnny Bull, in a deep voice.

But Johnny stopped at that. It was a matter for the captain of the Form to deal with. Moreover, Johnny realised, even as he spoke, that whatever was the matter with Eric Wilmot, he was not a frowsy slacker! He did not, at all events, look the part!

"Then I'm not bound to play?" asked Wilmot, in the same icy tones, and taking no more notice of Johnny Bull than of the old oak banisters.

Wharton paused again before replying.

"I only want to know!" added Wilmot, with a faint touch of sarcasm.

"I'll tell you!" said Harry quietly.

"If a man's picked out to play, he plays. Generally he's glad to. If he's sick, he can say so. If he isn't, he plays. If he's too slack to want to

play, he's generally ashamed to own up to it. If he's a footer funk, it's hard luck—but he can get over that better by doing his best, than by slouching about with his hands in his pockets."

"All that's frightfully interesting," said Wilmot. "But you're not answering my question." He seemed quite unmoved by the contempt in the look and tone of his Form captain. "I gather that I'm not bound to play if I don't choose!"

"No!" said Harry at last.

"Thanks! Will you take my name out of the list, then?"

"No!" said Wharton again.

Wilmot knitted his eyebrows.

"What's the good of leaving it in when I shan't be playing?" he asked.

"You will be playing."

"Haven't you just said that I have a right to stand out?"

"Quite! But it's never been heard of before in the Remove for a man to refuse to play when called on. Even Bunter—"

"I'm not asking for lessons in the manners and customs of the Lower Fourth Form at this school! Thanks all the same!"

"You'd better hear me!" said Wharton, keeping his temper with great difficulty. "It's never been heard of before, as I've said, and you're not here to make history. It's not going to be heard of now! You're going to turn up to-morrow with the Form team to play the Fourth!"

"I'm going to do nothing of the sort!"

There was a pause. Wilmot made a movement to go.

"Hold on!" said Harry quietly. "We'd better have this clear! You're not wanted in the team—you know that! You're not wanted at Greyfriars, if you come to that! You've made every man in the Form dislike you, with your rotten sulky temper! You're a dud at footer, a slacker, and a sullen toad! Nobody wants you! But I've practically had orders from the head of the games to play you, and you're going to play!"

"I don't see why Wingate should butt in."

"None so blind as those who won't see!" said Harry scornfully.

Wilmot looked at him, evidently puzzled; then, as he comprehended, a crimson flush came over his face.

"Do you mean that my uncle—"

"Didn't you know?"

"I did not!"

"Well, you know now! And I'm not going to be called over the coals by Wingate and jawed again by your precious uncle because you're too sulky and slack to do what any decent fellow would be glad to do. You're going to play football to-morrow!"

Wilmot stood silent for a moment. The crimson faded out of his handsome face, leaving him pale.

"I'm sorry!" he said at length. "I never knew—" he paused. "Mr. Hacker means well, of course—" He paused again. "But if I wanted to play, I'd refuse a place in the team on those terms. If you mean that you've been ragged into playing me, I wouldn't be found dead in your eleven!"

"Very right and proper, I've no doubt," said the captain of the Remove. "But that doesn't let me out! You're playing to-morrow! That's settled!"

"Never!" said Wilmot forcibly.

"Never's a long word," said Harry. "I can't take you by the neck, and make you play in a match, as we were doing to make you turn up at games practice the day your uncle barged in. But if you don't turn up—"

"I shall not turn up!"
 "You've licked Smithy," said Wharton. "I fancy he might have had better luck if he'd kept cool. I shall keep cool, I hope. At any rate, I'm going to do my best to give you the thrashing you're asking for! If you're not on Little Side for the game tomorrow, I will look into the study for you afterwards, and shall expect to find you there!"

Wilmot shrugged his shoulders.
 "You'll find me if you want me," he said. "I'll make a point of it!"

He turned and walked away.
 He left deep silence behind him. Harry Wharton's face was almost pale with intense anger. The Co. exchanged uncomfortable looks.

"After all, the chap's right in a way," said Bob slowly at last. "No decent fellow would want to be bunged into a team by favouritism."

"That's so, Harry," said Nugent hesitatingly.

Harry Wharton nodded.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Under The Shadow!

ERIC WILMOT'S name remained in the Remove football list.

The next morning Wingate of the Sixth saw it there, and gave a satisfied nod. Fussy Mr. Hacker, seldom known to take any interest in games, took the trouble to give that list a glance, no doubt having heard from Wingate what he might expect to see there. He, too, gave a satisfied nod.

Wingate was satisfied, and Hacker was satisfied, but there was little satisfaction elsewhere.

Wharton said nothing, and Wilmot said nothing, and most of the Remove remained in the belief that Wilmot was playing, and in the belief that his uncle, the Shell beak, had wangled it. If Wilmot had been unpopular before, he was doubly and trebly unpopular now. Wharton, too, came in for some severe criticism for having allowed himself to be dictated to in such a matter.

Meanwhile, with all the Remove irritated because Wilmot was going to play, the captain of that Form was still more deeply and intensely irritated because he wasn't—which was a very unusual and peculiar state of affairs.

When the footballers went to the changing-room in the afternoon, Eric Wilmot did not go with them. Wharton noticed his absence, with a bitter compression of the lips.

Bob Cherry, always anxious to pour oil on the troubled waters, scuttled out to look for the fellow. It was incomprehensible to Bob's honest mind that a fellow who had a chance of playing football should prefer to loaf about in the sulks.

"Seen Wilmot, Bunter?" he called out.

"He's gone to Quelch's study," answered the fat Owl.

"Oh blow!"

Bob went along to Masters' Passage, to wait for Wilmot when he came away from Quelch. He waited at the corner impatiently, hoping that the fellow would not be long with the Remove beak.

As a matter of fact, he was not long. But Bob little guessed why he had been called in by the Remove beak.

Mr. Quelch, in his study, was handing him a letter.

"This letter has come for you, Wilmot," said the Remove master coldly. "It was not placed in the rack as usual, because—" He paused. "I understand from Mr. Hacker that, for—

h'm—certain reasons, the name of your former school has not been mentioned here!"

"That is so, sir!" answered Wilmot, in a low voice, his eyes on the floor.

"It would therefore have been judicious," said Mr. Quelch, "to hold no correspondence with your former friends at Topham, Wilmot!"

"I have had none, sir! Nobody there knows that I came to Greyfriars."

Mr. Quelch tapped the letter.
 "This does not look like it," he said curtly. "The postmark on that envelope is Topham!"

Wilmot started violently.
 He looked at the letter. Evidently he recognised the handwriting of the address—a thin, spidery hand.

"Crawley!" he muttered.
 "It would have been wiser to tell no one, Wilmot."

"I told no one, sir! But that fellow Crawley knew I had an uncle a master here, so I suppose he guessed—"

"It is very unfortunate," said Mr. Quelch. "The postmark would probably have been noticed had the letter been placed in the rack as usual. However, there is no harm done. You may take the letter, Wilmot."

Wilmot left the study with the letter in his hand, and an overwhelmed expression on his face. He did not see Bob Cherry waiting at the corner till Bob caught him by the arm.

"Time, old man!" said Bob amiably. "Come along, and—"

Wilmot wrenched his arm away.
 "What do you mean? Let me alone!"

"Time to change for footer, old bean," said Bob soothingly. "Hadn't you better—"

"Leave me alone, you fool!"

Wilmot tramped past him and went up to his study in the Remove, the letter still in his hand. Bob stared after him. He refrained from following him and banging his head on the banisters, as he was strongly tempted to do. There was something more than sulks in the fellow's look—he looked like a fellow knocked out by an unexpected blow.

Bob went quietly back to the changing-room.

"Isn't our dear Eric turnin' up, after all?" called out the Bounder. "Has the dear boy changed his mind?"

"Are we going to wait for him?" sneered Hazel.

"No!" said Wharton, with a deep breath.

"You'll want another man," said Bolsover major. He was keen enough.

"Yes; you get changed, Bolsover."
 "Like a bird!"

The Remove team went down to the field without Eric Wilmot. There was a good deal of curiosity on the subject; the Bounder was quite perplexed. So far as Smithy could see, the fellow had "wangled" this by greasing to a beak, and then, at the last moment, turned it down. Anyhow, Wilmot was not there; and the Form match was played without him.

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Fourth, went through their usual grilling at the hands of the Remove. Vernon-Smith played a hard game, in the hope of convincing the captain of the Remove that he really was the man for the Rookwood match when it came along. But he was sadly off his form, and did not succeed in convincing even himself.

But Temple & Co. were handsomely beaten by three to nil, all the same. After the match, in the changing-room, there was a good deal of talk about

Wilmot, and his peculiar and unexpected proceedings. Wharton did not join in it.

Having changed very quickly, he left before the other fellows. Frank Nugent, with his head poking out of a shirt half-on, stopped him at the door.

"Harry, old chap—" he muttered.

Wharton looked at him grimly.
 "Well?" he said.

"It's not worth while—" said Nugent uneasily.

"I don't agree!"

Harry Wharton walked away with that. He was in almost a white heat with intense anger. He had told Wilmot what to expect if he did not turn up for the match; and the fellow had not turned up. Now he was going to take the consequences.

Quietly, but with a grim set face, he went up to the Remove passage. He had no doubt that he would find Wilmot in the study. Whatever the fellow was, he was not a funk. He had said that he would be there, and Wharton had no doubt of finding him there.

The door of Study No. 1 in the Remove was half-open. There was no sound from the study.

Wharton glanced in.

His lips came hard together. If the fellow was not there— The next moment he saw that Wilmot was there; though so silent and still that anyone might have supposed that the study was unoccupied.

If he had heard Wharton's footsteps, he did not stir. But it was clear that he had not heard them.

He was sitting in the window-seat, with the glimmer of the winter sun on his head. But his face could not be seen—it was buried in his hands, his elbows resting on his knees.

Wharton stared at him.

This was not the sulky, defiant, insolent fellow he had expected to see. It was a fellow limp, overwhelmed, crushed. Clearly, he did not know that Wharton was there. He was unconscious of everything but the black trouble that weighed him down.

Wharton did not speak. He could only stare. Insensibly, his anger faded away. What was the matter with the fellow to crush him like this? A letter lay on the floor at his feet. It looked as if it had been savagely crumpled before it was dropped.

Wilmot sat there, with hidden face, like a figure of stone. Then Wharton saw him stir, and he stepped back quickly out of the study. He disliked the fellow intensely, but he wanted to spare him the humiliation of having been seen thus.

He heard Wilmot's voice in a low broken tone as he stepped back.

"What am I going to do? Oh, what—what am I going to do now?"

Harry Wharton went quietly down the passage to the stairs. His anger was gone—utterly gone—at the sight of that vision of misery and despair. Quietly, the captain of the Remove went down the stairs.

Harry Wharton's chums were surprised and relieved to find that the expected "row" had not come off. But he did not tell them why.

THE END.

(The next story in this grand series featuring Eric Wilmot is entitled: "THE FORM-MASTER'S FAVOURITE!" Look out for it in next Saturday's bumper issue of the MAGNET, chums!)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,458.

DAN of the DOGGER BANK!

By DAVID GOODWIN.

Some Sea Trip!

KENNETH GRAHAM, son of a millionaire shipowner, is rescued off the Dogger Bank by the crew of the fishing trawler, Grey Seal.

His past life a blank, he is given the name of "Dogger Dan," and signed on as fifth hand under Skipper Atheling, Finn Macoul, Wat Griffiths, and Buck Atheling.

Aware of his nephew's fate, and knowing that he will be heir to the shipowner's money when his brother dies, Dudley Graham engages Jake Rebow and his cut-throats of the Black Squadron to get Kenneth out of the way for ever.

Following a fruitless attempt on their lives by Rebow's confederates, Dan and Buck Atheling are wrecked on Baltrum Island, the only occupant of which is a wealthy old Dutchman named Jan Osterling, who is later brutally attacked by two of the Squadron's men and left to die.

Before breathing his last, Jan asks the boys to hand over his savings to his nephew Max, in return for which he hands them a chart, disclosing the whereabouts of a hidden treasure worth £5,000, to be divided between them.

Dan and Buck eventually rejoin the Grey Seal, but fail to interest Skipper Atheling in the matter of the treasure.

Later, while out fishing in the ship's boat, the two chums try to bag a whale. Misfortune befalls them, however, for the whale gets away, towing the boat and its occupants along in its wake like a torpedo-boat on steaming trial.

They rushed along without a pause, tearing over the sea in a white lather of foam, the wind whistling in their ears.

Dan cast a glance over his shoulder. "The Seal's nearly out of sight!" he said. "What's to be done?"

"Can't do anything," gasped Buck, "except wait till the whale exhausts himself an' dies! He's wounded deep. If you got into the bows to cut the line the boat'd go down head-first."

"Wish he'd tow us to Baltrum!" said Dan, giddy with the sense of speed. Then suddenly his voice changed. "He's stopping! He's done for!"

"Ay, he's in his flurry!" cried Dick. "Now look out for squalls!"

The whale slowed down, stopped, and began to lash the water in its death-agony. The harpoon had taken strong effect. The impetus of the boat had drove her right alongside.

A practised whaling-crew, in a proper boat, would have known how to deal with the situation. But with the two chums it was different. Before they could run out the oars, they were in the centre of danger.

Flap—whack! went the huge tail, with a force that would have knocked down a cottage. It struck the boat with a splintering crash, breaking it nearly in half, and flinging the boys into the water. Dan and Buck were fortunate not to be killed outright by the blow, which just missed them.



As Dan's eyes met those of the yacht-owner, the big man started violently. "Uncle Dudley!" gasped Dan, catching his breath.

Desperately they struck out away from the furious turmoil. The water was red with blood and tainted as though with musk. Presently the struggles ceased, and the whale, dying, sank to the seabottom.

"If we'd only known!" groaned Buck an hour later.

The sun was going down, and the air grew chill, and the water chillier still. The boys were clinging to the wrecked boat—as much of it as floated—and there was no sign of help. The Grey Seal was nowhere to be seen.

"If we'd known, we could ha' avoided this. I've heard some o' these brutes sink when they're killed."

"It looks as if he's done his best to kill us," said Dan, trying to still his chattering teeth. "Not a vessel in sight, and no food or drink. Can't hold out till morning like this. The water's deathly cold. I'm numb to the bone already."

"Same here," said Buck. "Better ha' let the beast alone."

Hour after hour the boys drifted on, not knowing which moment would be their last. Their numbed arms only clung to the boat mechanically. Soon they knew the end must come.

Towards morning, when he had given up hope and could hold on no longer, Dan raised despairing eyes, and saw the triangle of lights of a steamer coming towards them, bow on.

"Wake up, old boy!" he said hoarsely in Buck's ear. "Here's a vessel coming along!"

Buck was already nearly in the grip of the fatal lethargy of cold and exhaustion, when the new hope roused him.

"A steamer comin' right at us! Save your breath, an' get ready to shout as soon as she's near enough!"

The vessel came on, the throb of her engines beating steadily in the silence of the night. It seemed as though she would run the boys down.

Then, as she approached, a hoarse, angry cry rang out—a wild laugh, as of a man crazed by drink or madness.

She steamed along steadily, and showed herself as a low, black vessel of shapely lines.

"A queer ship, that!" muttered Buck. "Why, she's a yacht! Let's shout, Dan—both together!"

"Ahoy! Ahoy! Ahoy!" The yacht glided past, taking no heed.

Despairingly the boys shouted. A man looked over the side, listened, and spoke. Still the yacht went on.

"If she passes," groaned Dan, "we haven't another half-hour to live!"

There was a noise of quarrelling upon the vessel's bridge, and again the wild, drunken laugh sounded from somewhere in the heart of her. Then followed the sound of a blow and a sharp, double ring in the engine-room. The vessel slowed down.

The moonbeams played upon her stern, showing in raised golden letters the name—Ercildoune. Over the waters sounded the screech of davit-blocks, as a boat was lowered away.

A prayer of thankfulness rose to the lips of the boys. Then Buck, staring at the strange craft, uttered a startled exclamation.

"Dan—Dan!" he cried. "It's the black steam yacht—the one that ran us down on the Dogger!"

A Shock For Two!

"**H**AUL 'em aboard, you fox-eyed dago, or I'll lay you out! Ah, you drop 'em back, an' see what happens!"

Buck and Dan, dripping, sore, and exhausted, were helped out of the quarter-boat on to the deck of the steam-yacht.

A dark-brown, Southern-looking sailor was their helper, and he looked as though he did not like his job. But the savage voice of the English mate by the rail warned him, as above, and the man obeyed.

Buck thought it a rather rum order to give. Why should the Portuguese want to drop them back again?

But he was too exhausted to think it out.

"Welcome aboard, my lads!" said the mate, a strong-faced, tough-looking man, in smart yacht uniform. "Glad to ha' pulled you out of it, though it's a pity you ain't chanced on a better vessel."

"Get to your stations, you yellow scum, there! Steward, take these lads below. Give 'em hot cocoa an' grub, an' rig 'em out in dry clothes. Come up to the bridge when it's done, young 'uns. It's my watch. Jack Ward's my name, an' mate's my rating."

The steward was a foreigner like the crew; the boys could get nothing out of him.

"This is a rum go!" said Buck. "Crew are all dagoes; but I'll bet my last bob that this is the craft that ran us down off the Little Bank, when you fell overboard through the old Seal's broken rail!"

"Sure you didn't make a mistake?" put in Dan dubiously.

They went up the bridge ladder, and the mate greeted them cheerily.

"Feel better, young 'uns?" he asked kindly. "Now let's hear how you come adrift on half a boat."

"Hadn't we better pay our respects to the owner, Mr. Mate?" asked Buck.

"If you'll take my tip, you'll do nothing o' the kind, my lad," answered the mate. "However, he's below in the saloon or his smokin'-room, an' you can go if you like."

"One of us ought to thank him," said Dan. "You're the eldest, Buck. If he hadn't owned a yacht, we should be food for fish by this time."

Buck went off rather reluctantly, and Dan, standing by the mate, and looking out over the starlit sea, told the tale of his late disaster with the whale.

"If I were a landsman," said the mate, "I should call you a blessed liar; but I've known queerer things happen at sea."

"You're right," said Dan. "I've got one in my mind at the present moment, and it's worrying me."

"What may that be?" said the mate.

"Well, don't be offended, but did you ever—er—that is to say, did this vessel ever—"

"Spill it out, my lad!" said the mate inelegantly, as Dan paused.

"Did this craft happen to run down a fishing-smack about three weeks ago on the Little Bank?"

The mate turned and bent a searching look upon Dan.

"What d'you mean?" he asked.

"I was on the smack," said Dan,

The instant he had spoken a doubt assailed him.

There was a moment's silence.

"Sure she did!" said the mate.

"Ah!" returned Dan. "An' p'raps you'll tell me why she didn't stand by afterwards?"

"If you want to know, I reckon it was because she didn't want to."

"Well," said Dan, "I know it isn't much good talking of these little blunders after they've happened. I s'pose you know the smack's name?"

"I know nothin' about her," said the mate. "It was my watch below. But as for tellin' you about it, my lad," he continued fiercely, "I don't care who knows. It's likely, as far as I can see, that you'll be the only soul outside this

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shortly—

You'll vote 'em absolutely spiffing!

ship's company I'll get the chance to tell!"

He raised his voice, and his tones were sharp with anger.

"I'll tell you another thing, my lad—you're better off on this ship than if you'd been left in the water, but not much! She's a dud ship; I wish I was off her!"

"If I hadn't hazed those dagoes so they daren't call their souls their own, you wouldn't ha' been picked up at all. They only did it because they knew I'd ha' rammed the boat an' sent 'em to Davy if they'd refused! An' if it had been the captain's watch, neither he nor they would have seen or heard you, though you might ha' yelled loud enough to split a steam-whistle."

"This craft don't care to have outsiders aboard. But there's one outsider on her, an' he's outside the whole bunch. D'you know who that is?"

"Apparently it's you!" said Dan.

"Right! And I wish I was farther outside yet. D'ye hear that?"

From the interior of the vessel rang the wild, uncanny yell that had startled Dan when he was in the water.

"That's the skipper," said the mate scornfully, "nursin' the jimjams an' a bottle o' brandy. D'ye see?"

"But does the owner allow that?"

"He's got to allow it, my son. An' that'll show you what sort of a man he is. The owner is, by nature, the last man alive to take sauce from any livin' soul; but the skipper knows too much. So do the crew."

"They're all staunch by the owner, for they're a dirty lot, an' they'll stick by any blackguard who pays. This here yacht's been at sea a month. What her game is I'm just findin' out. She's thick with the worst nest o' toughs on the Northern Sea."

"You mean Rebow's lot?" said Dan.

"That's it, my lad. They're hand in glove with 'em, but only on one job. I'll tell you what—there's someone wants puttin' out o' the way. It's my belief he was on that smack o' yours, whoever he be, an' next time this craft meets his craft, he'll go to the bottom with her!"

"Ah!" said Dan.

"I asks for my discharge before I was aboard here a week. They tells me she ain't bound for a port yet; I've got to stay."

"Says I: 'Put me on the first craft we meet, an' I'm content. I ain't going to deal with a craft that has any truck with the Black Fleet.' They tries to rope me in with themselves, an' offers ten quid a week an' one hundred pounds bonus."

"The skipper puts it to me, an' if you'll look at him you'll see four of his front teeth are unshipped. That's all the answer he got. Seein' I wouldn't come round, they've tried to out me and stop my mouth. But, mark you, when it's my watch, I make this mob o' dagoes skip like goats if I as much as wink an eyelid!"

Dan's brain was in a whirl. Why this costly, luxurious steamer should concern herself with the sinking of the Grey Seal; why the owner, plainly a man of some wealth, should deal with the Black Fleet Squadron, puzzled him.

Meanwhile, Buck, who was seeking the owner below, was at first unsuccessful. As he was passing a smoking-lounge a tall, hook-nosed, bronze-skinned man stepped out and stared at him angrily.

"You the owner, sir?" asked Buck.

"Who the blazes are you?" said the tall man.

"Your craft has just picked me an' my mate up, an' we want to thank you. Buck Atheling's my name, o' the Grey Seal."

The big man suppressed a start, and his tone changed. A queer light shone in his eyes. He looked at Buck and smiled.

"Did she, by Jove!" he exclaimed. "I'm glad we had the chance of saving you. Come in and tell me all about it!"

The tall man led the way into the luxurious smoking-lounge, where he motioned the boy to a seat, and took one himself. His dark eyes roved over Buck restlessly.

"We were upset in the long-boat, sir," began Buck, preferring to say nothing of the escapade with the whale, "an' we'd been in the water a couple of hours when you picked us up. We've seen your craft before, I think."

"Seen me before? Where?"

"Not you, sir—the craft," said Buck. He did not want to open the subject now that he owed a debt of gratitude to the yacht; but he saw the owner meant to hear more. "The fact is, we—we thought this was the same vessel that ran into our trawler three weeks back on the Dogger."

"Impossible, my lad!" said the big man. "The yacht and I were at Weymouth at that time. We only came up-Channel two days ago."

"I must be mistaken, then," said Buck; and his face cleared.

The man's tones carried conviction,

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and it did not occur to Buck to doubt him.

"Sorry, sir!" he said apologetically. He looked round at the tasteful and comfortable appointments of the lounge-cabin.

"You're fond of the sea, I suppose?" he continued simply. "Must be fine for anybody who can afford to just cruise about and enjoy it."

"You are right, my lad," said his host, with a pleasant smile. "I love the sea, and I live on my craft. I make it my business to know as much about the wide and narrow waters as an amateur can. But I often envy you fishers, who know the real job, and who fall in with all kinds of adventures. I am always searching for adventures—a derelict, treasure-spot. I believe even a shipwreck would delight me. But they never come my way."

"You mightn't like them if they did, sir," said Buck, grinning.

An inspiration shot through him. Here they were on a smart vessel, whose owner did not mind where he went, who loved an adventure, and who was plainly a rich man, and could, therefore, be trusted not to play false in a matter of money. Jan Osterling's treasure still lay buried on Baltrum Island, and the memory of it, and Atheling's unbelief in it, lived in Buck's brain night and day and tormented him. Here was too good a chance to miss.

"You are looking for an adventure, sir," said Buck. "I might put one in your way, and one with money in it, too. Will you help me and my mate? We'll go shares, if you like?"

"That sounds exciting," exclaimed the yacht-owner, with a laugh. "Tell me all about it."

Leaving out the details, but omitting nothing that was essential, Buck told the story of Jan Osterling's gold.

The yacht-owner was inclined to laugh at first; but Buck's earnest tones convinced him. And part of the tale he already knew.

"That's an interesting story," he said slowly. "Have you the chart you spoke of, showing the bearings of the treasure?"

"My mate has it, sir," said Buck. "I'll have a word with him."

A few moments later Dan, standing on the bridge, felt Buck's hand on his shoulder.

The younger boy's head was whirling with the thoughts that the mate's story had awakened in him. New ideas formed themselves, old ones returned, and as his brain cleared Dan felt a kind of click in his brain-pan, as though a

spring had suddenly uncoiled there. His emotions made him feel almost physically sick.

The memory of Dogger Dan was returning.

"Let me have Jan Osterling's plan, old boy," said Buck. "The owner of this hooker is going to help us find the treasure."

Buck's voice sounded faint and far away to Dan's ear. He was deep in other thoughts.

Mechanically, not knowing what he was doing, he drew the little parchment chart from his breast-pocket and handed it to Buck, who started at once for the cabin.

Before he had vanished down the companion Dan turned and walked slowly after him.

"Here's the chart, sir," said Buck, entering the lounge cabin and showing the plan to his host.

The yacht-owner took it and examined it closely. His face gave no sign of emotion.

"Looks all right, unless it's a fake," he said at last, returning it as Buck held out his hand. "We'll go to Baltrum and investigate. By the way, who is the companion you spoke of? Bring him in here, I'd like to see him."

"He's here now, sir," said Buck, as a footstep sounded outside.

The door opened, and Dan entered. As his eyes met those of the yacht-owner the big man started violently, and in his eyes dawned a gleam of fierce satisfaction, which was suppressed an instant later.

Dan stopped suddenly, and caught his breath.

"Uncle Dudley!" he gasped. Dead silence followed Dan's exclamation. Buck stood staring from one to the other, amazed.

"Pardon me," said Dudley Graham, with perfect composure, "but I fail to understand you!"

"Do you mean to say," said Dan slowly, "that you are not my Uncle Dudley? Either I'm mad or you are!"

Dudley turned to Buck with a pitying air.

"Is your companion right in the head?" he asked.

"Well, I—I—we—" Buck stammered, hardly knowing what to say.

He had a strong suspicion that the bee in Dan's bonnet was beginning to buzz again.

"Quite so! Quite so!" said the yacht-owner sympathetically. "A sad case! And whom do you imagine yourself to be, my poor lad?" he continued, turning to Dan again.

"I'm Kenneth Graham, son of Donald

Graham, the ship-builder, of Greenock." Buck looked at his chum in amazement.

"What's your opinion?" said Dudley, addressing Buck. "Do you know him by that name?"

"We call him Dogger Dan on the old Seal," said Buck, bewildered. "But it may be true, for all I know," he continued, shooting a keen glance at the yacht-owner. "We picked him up at sea. He had a crack on the head, and didn't know his name. But if Dan says so I believe him. Son o' Donald Graham! Gosh!"

"You will perhaps allow me to know my own brother's son," said Dudley calmly. "This lad is certainly not he. He has been injured in the head, you say, and lost his memory. The delusion has taken shape!"

Dan said nothing, but kept his eyes fixed on the bronzed man who denied his relationship in such a quiet, polished voice.

"However," said Dudley, with a smile, "let us say no more about that. What you both need most is a good meal, I imagine. Come to the saloon in a quarter of an hour's time, and we will do what we can for you."

The boys left the lounge. The moment he was outside Dan darted up to the bridge. The mate was still in charge.

"Ward," said Dan anxiously, "will you do something for me?"

"Ay," said the mate—"and welcome! You and that other kid are the only white folk on the ship! What d'ye want?"

"Can you send a radio message for me?" asked Dan.

"Sorry, I can't!" The mate shook his head. "We've got a receiver, of course; we can receive messages. But we ain't got any transmitting plant; I dunno why. This is a silent ship; she can listen, but she don't talk."

"Well, can you signal the first passing ship that's got radio and tell her to broadcast a wireless message?"

"Ay, I can do that, of course. It won't be easy, with this crew o' monkeys puttin' their oar into everything—but I'll do it! What's the message?"

"To Donald Graham, Yacht Vallhalla—or wherever he may be. Tell him that his son, Kenneth Graham, is alive and is on Dudley's yacht. Ercildoune! And give our position and reckoning—as near as you can."

(Boys, whatever you do, don't fail to read next week's gripping chapters of this popular sea-adventure story—you'll vote 'em great!)

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ST. SAM'S in the STRATTERSPHERE

First Spasm of a Staggering New Serial by **DICKY NUGENT**

Mr. I. Jollifwell Lickham, master of the Fourth Form at St. Sam's, burst into the Head's study, waving a newspaper in his hand.

"Sir!" he gasped. "Here's the very chance you've been looking for! You know you were telling me this morning you'd do almost anything for munny?"

Doctor Birchmall nodded. "I reckon it, Lickham."

"Well, sir," said Mr. Lickham eggstidely, "have a look at this newspaper offer. It's the chance of a lifetime for you, sir. Breefy, what it amounts to is this: The 'Daily Shreek' is offering a thousand pounds to anyone who is willing to be shot—"

"WHAT?" yelled the Head.

"A thousand pounds, sir, to anyone who is willing to be shot—"

"SHOT?" hooted the Head.

"Yes, sir!" larked Mr. Lickham. "But not shot in the way you're thinking of. The munny is to go to the person who is willing to be SHOT TO THE MOON!"

"Oh! Well, that's different!" growled the Head. "Why didn't you say so at first, fathead?"

"Here's the paper, sir," rattled on Mr. Lickham, eagerly. "Seeing's believing—and you can read it for yourself, if you like!"

Doctor Birchmall took the paper from his subordinit and glanced through the paragraph Mr. Lickham had been reading. This is what he read:

"£1,000 Reward!

"Professor Potty's marvellous steel cylinder, specially built to travel through the strattersphere, is unable to start on its proposed journey to the moon because volunteers are lacking. In order to overcome this difficulty, the 'Daily Shreek' has pleasure in offering the Sum of One Thousand Pounds spot cash to each person who is willing to make the trip. The cylinder will be shot into space as soon as seven volunteers have been found. The rewards will be paid immediately the journey to the moon and back has been completed. APPLY EARLY AND AVOID THE RUSH!"

The Head's eyes were gleaming, as he handed Mr. Lickham back his paper.

"My hat! It's a grate offer, and no mistake!" he mermerged. "Of course, there's a certain amount of risk. It's quite possibul they'll fire the thing in the

wrong direction and miss the moon altogether—which mite make it awkward for getting back!"

"Oh, I wouldn't worry about that, if I were you, sir," said Mr. Lickham, who, on the quiet, was rather looking forward to a rest from Doctor Birchmall. "They're bound to supply you with plenty of tuck—and even if you don't hit the moon, you're sure to hit something, sooner or later!"

"Trew enuff! Lickham!" said the Head, thumping his desk as he rose to his feet. "You have decided me! We'll go!"

Mr. Lickham jumped. "WE?" he gasped.

"Why, of course!" grinned Doctor Birchmall. "You didn't think I'd be such a cadd as to leave you behind, Lickham, did you? You'll come with me. Better still, why shouldn't we make it a hundred-percent St. Sam's party?"

"But I can't come, sir!" howled Mr. Lickham. "Only yesterday the doctor warned me against travelling long distances. If he knows I'm going up to the moon, he'll go up in the air about it!"

"Nonsense, Lickham!" larked the Head. "You'll find it just as easy as travelling in the bus to Muggleton. You're coming, and that's that! Now for the other five! I'll summon a General Assembly and ask for volunteers, I think."

Ignoring Mr. Lickham's plaintive pleas to be left out, Doctor Birchmall rang the bell for Binding, the page. And five minnits later the assembled skool heard with surprize that the Head and Mr. Lickham were contemplating a trip to the moon and wished for five volunteers to go with them.

By the time the Head had finished eggspaining matters, most of the fellows had made up their minds not to have anything to do with the skeem. It wasn't a very inviting prospect to have to stick inside a steel rocket with nothing but space to jump into when you got tired of Doctor Birchmall. That was the way most of them looked at it.



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STAGGERING SECRET of MAULY'S MARATHON

By **SIR JIMMY VIVIAN**

Chaps who thought last Wednesday's Junior Paper Chase was going to be easy because Mauly was the hare, had the shock of their life. Instead of being caught in the first half-mile, as everybody thought, Mauly showed the "hounds" a clean pair of heels and wasn't seen again till they got back to Greyfriars.

Now this is about the most surprising thing anyone could possibly have expected from the Languid Lord. The most energetic thing I'd seen him do up till Wednesday this term was when the study clock stopped and he walked down to Big Hall to see if it was time for bed! Apart from that, he has scarcely moved, except when compelled!

But there was no getting away from his paper-chase performance. The moment Wingate gave him the signal to start, he bounded away like a giddy greyhound, and he was out of sight round the bend of Friardale Lane before we could say "Jack Robinson!"

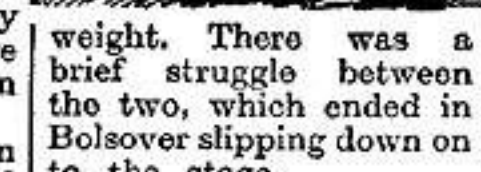
Of course, everybody said he couldn't keep it up. But when it came to catching him, there wasn't a man who could get near him—and all the cracks, including Cherry, Russell, and Vernon-Smith, were putting their best feet forward, too!

So the crowd that waited at the gates in the expectation of seeing Mauly being carried back in a state of collapse had the amazing experience of seeing him return five minutes before anyone else, looking as fresh as a daisy! They haven't got over the shock of it yet in Lower School circles!

And that's why everyone has been asking if Alonzo Todd is a superman!

As a matter of fact, the answer is that he isn't. If you trot along to Bolsover's study and examine those weights of his, you'll soon know why. I've had a good look at them myself and I know!

They aren't made of iron at all, you see. They're fake weights, just made of cardboard—and Bolsoy and his pals were just having us all on a bit of string!



IS ALONZO TODD A SUPER-MAN? Asks BOB CHERRY

Is Alonzo Todd a superman? Everybody in the Remove is asking the question, and you'd be asking it, too, dear reader, if you'd seen what happened in the Rag the other evening!

We were having a variety concert, and one of the turns was Bolsover major, who, with typical modesty, called himself on the programme "The World's Strongest School-boy." It was Bolsoy's turn that caused it to happen.

Bolsoy's speciality was weight-lifting, and I must say he gave a nifty display and won himself plenty of applause. Everybody admired also the kit he had with him on the stage—particularly a number of those whacking great dumbbells weighing a ton or so each that you see in "strong man" acts on the music halls.

Bolsoy, it seemed, had acquired these at a sale of theatrical junk in London during the Christmas vac.

One of these hefty-looking articles was so heavy that it took four men to carry it on to the stage—Skinner, Snoop, Stott and Desmond. We really thought it would be too much for Bolsover, and it certainly did prove a problem to him. He spent several minutes down on one knee, puffing and panting and snorting and gasping, before he could budge it. He got

it above his head eventually, and everybody cheered.

It was just then that Alonzo Todd took a hand in the game. "My dear Bolsover, I feel it my duty to warn you of the dangers to which you are exposing yourself!" he burred. "Are you not aware that the lifting of such inordinately weighty articles is likely to have a detrimental effect on your physical health?"

"You mind your own business, Todd!" said Bolsover, scowling. "But it is my business to save a schoolfellow from overstrain which may possibly even bring about internal injury!" cried 'Lonzy. "If you insist on proceeding with this performance, my dear Bolsover—"

"Of course I'm going on with it!" roared Bolsover. "Then I shall insist on helping you—thus ensuring that you do not lift too much at a time! Pray do not attempt to dissuade me, my dear fellow. It is a pleasure, I assure you!"

So saying, 'Lonzy climbed on to the stage. Bolsover gave a roar. "Look here, you dummy, if you don't clear off, I'll—"

But Alonzo was already helping him, whether Bolsoy liked it or not! His bony fingers closed round the bar of the

Bright and Fearless! "What! Only four?" cried the Head. "Bless my sole! I eggsppected a hundred offers, at the very least! Anyway, you four boys can consider yourselves signed on. Now we want another one. Barrell!"

"Ye-e-es, sir!" gasped Tubby Barrell, of the Fourth. "You have the reputation of being a good cook, I believe, and we shall need someone to do the cooking. I nominate you as the fifth volunteer!"

"Ow! But look here, sir—"

Doctor Birchmall's hand strayed towards his birch. "You are not, I trust, thinking of raising any objections to being a volunteer, Barrell?" he asked, icily.

"Nunno, sir!" said Tubby, hastily. "I shall be delighted to come, sir!"

"Good! Then that completes our gallant little band!" cried the Head. "All that now remains is for me to ring up the 'Daily Shreek' and tell them that we're ready! The skool is dismissed!"

And the Head took a flying leap over his desk and galloped away to the nearest tellyphone. He was soon talking to the editor of the "Daily Shreek." Forchunity—or unforchunity, from the point of view of Mr. Lickham and Tubby Barrell—his application turned out to be the first they had received, and it wasn't long before all St. Sam's knew that Doctor Birchmall and his volunteers were definitely booked to take a trip to the moon!

Natcherally, there was grate eggstiment about the eggscursion. St. Sam's fellows were not shot into the strattersphere every day

of the week, and Jolly and Merry and Bright and Fearless and Barrell found themselves in the limelight with a vongenaz as the time for leaving drew near!

There was plenty to do before the grate moment arrived. Clean collars and changes of clothing and tuck hampers had to be packed and flying visits paid to their various homes. None of the boys' parents raised the slitest objection to their being shot to the moon, so long as they promised to keep out of mischief, and to this they all reddily agreed.

Everything was ready at last, and, one cold and frosty evening, Doctor Birchmall led his volunteers out of the Skool House and marched them down to the playing-fields, where a huge steel



rocket was waiting for them. Professor Potty, the famous inventor, who was there to see that everything went off all right, called for three cheers for the eggsplores, and they were given with a will. Then, after final handshakes all round, they marched into the rocket and closed the door.

"Stand back, everybody!" cried Professor Potty, through a megaphone, and the crowd stepped back.

A minnit later, the professor struck a match and lit the fuse of a tron enjous cannon-cracker that stood at the rear of the grate rocket.

BOOM! There was a blinding roar, and a defening flash of flame—and when the smoke had cleared away and the spectators had picked themselves up again, Professor Potty's rocket was a meer dot in the sky. Pretty soon after that, it vanished from site altogether.

The St. Sam's eggsplores were in the strattersphere! While the rest of the skool returned to prep in the Skool House, the seven absentees were whizzing through space in the direction of the moon!

What will happen if they duly reach their objective? More important still, what will happen if they don't? Only the future can tell! (Look out for the second instalment of this amazing and amusing serial next week!)

BORN FOR THE JOB! We are told that when Dabney, of the Upper Fourth, leaves Greyfriars, he intends to become an estate agent and spend his days letting houses.

He won't need to advertise. People will know what he is as soon as they see that "vacant" look in his face!

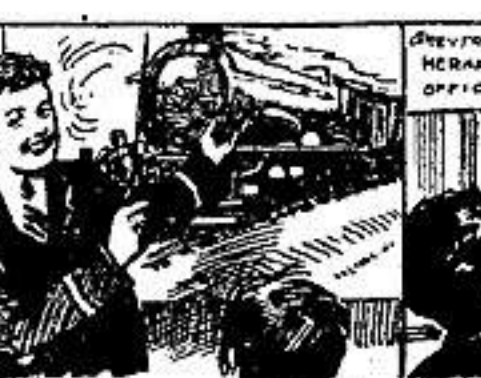
WANTED! Two gallons of dish water, 100 doorsteps, and a small quantity of cartgrease. They've run short of supplies for TEA IN HALL!

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?



Harry Wharton is hoping for an opportunity of demonstrating his remarkable skill as a skater this winter. On the frozen Sark he is a master of dazzling turns and glides. Bunter's attempt to imitate him ended at the first "turn"—which brought down the house—and Bunter!

S. Q. I. Field is very proud of his Australian origin, and gave Removites an interesting lecture on Australian Railways in the Rag.



"Squiff" says we may hold the speed record in England, but Australian locomotives are of "record" size. Squiff proved it with photographs.

One week when the "copy" for the "Greyfriars Herald" was unavoidably late, it was produced at simply breakneck speed—the Editorial staff, led by Harry Wharton, establishing a record!



Bull nearly "broke his neck" rushing to and from the printer's with the "copy."

A bit-of-war in the snow, which fell unexpectedly at Greyfriars, between Remove and Shell Form teams resulted in a win for the Remove by two pulls to one.



Hobson & Co. couldn't stop their feet slipping—as Bob Cherry said, they didn't look "slippy" enough!

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!



A 60 m.p.h. gale upset the football match between Remove and Upper Fourth—the wind "blowing" a goal for Temple & Co. following a clearance by one of their full-backs. When the Remove got the wind behind them, however, they quickly piled on a round dozen.

Johnny Bull is very keen on "hot" trumpeting, and drove his study-mates down to the junior common-room when he insisted on practising in the study.



When Loder came up with a cane, however, Johnny was forced to flee from the study, "trumpeting" in quite a different way!

ENTIRELY DIFFERENT!

Coker felt awfully bucked the other day when he thought he heard Gosling call him a Titan. Perhaps he won't be so happy when we tell him the sad truth. Gosling was referring to the small size of the tip Coker had given him for carrying a trunk up to his study. What he actually called Coker was not a Titan, but a "TIGHT 'UN"!

HIRE A MODEL!

For half-a-crown I supply a life-sized model of yourself to leave in bed when you go out at night. Beats the beaks every time! — FISH E R T. FISH, Study No. 14, Remove.