



*It was a deep and rather husky voice that Bunter heard*

## CHAPTER I

### SKINNER THE LEG-PULLER

"YOU will go on, Bunter."

"Oh, lor!"

"What? What did you say, Bunter?"

"Oh! Nothing, sir."

"Go on at once!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir! Certainly, sir!" stammered Billy Bunter.

Bunter unluckily, was not prepared to "go on." Never, indeed, had he been more completely unprepared.

The Remove were in form. Latin was the order of the day. Every fellow in Quelch's form was—or should have been—giving attention to the proceedings

of the pious Aeneas. But quite a number of them were thinking of quite other things. It was the day before the big Soccer event of the term—the match with St. Jim's. Harry Wharton and Co. and other fellows, just couldn't keep Soccer quite out of their thoughts, even under Quelch's gimlet-eye in form. Six or seven juniors had already received lines for inattention or faulty construe, and Mr. Quelch's temper was growing sharp. His voice had a snap in it when he called on Bunter to—"go on".

Bunter, certainly, was not thinking of Soccer. Billy Bunter was most likely to be found in an armchair before the fire in the Rag, while other fellows were playing football. But Bunter had his own food for thought. Having given prep a miss the previous evening, his fat mind was a perfect blank on the passage in the Aeneid with which the Greyfriars Remove were dealing that morning. He was in dread of being called upon for "con". His eyes, and his spectacles, were fixed anxiously on Mr. Quelch in terror of the gimlet-eye singling him out.

So far he had escaped the gimlet-eye. Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, Vernon-Smith, Skinner, and several other fellows, had taken their turn. Billy Bunter's fat heart palpitated with mingled hope and dread. And then—!

Then Quelch called on him to "go on".

Willingly Billy Bunter would have "gone on", had he known how. But his little round eyes, and his big round spectacles, fixed dismally and hopelessly on a page of Latin that meant absolutely nothing to him.

"I said go on, Bunter!" came a snap from Quelch.

"Oh! Yes, sir! I—I—I—I've lost the place, sir!" stammered Bunter.

"Go on at Line 305," snapped Mr. Quelch."

"Oh! Yes sir!"

Billy Bunter could, at least, read out the Latin, even if it conveyed no meaning to his fat mind.

"At pius Aeneas, per noctem plurima volvens—," mumbled Bunter.

"Construe!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

Any fellow in the Remove could have told Bunter that that Latin line meant "But the good Aeneas, during the night revolving many matters—." To Billy Bunter it was an insoluble problem.

"I am waiting, Bunter!" Quelch's tone was ominous.

A faint whisper, which did not reach Mr. Quelch at his high desk, reached Billy Bunter's fat ear. It was a whisper from Skinner, who sat beside him.

"Aeneas rolled over during the night," whispered Skinner.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, in great relief.

Harold Skinner was not really the kind of fellow to help another fellow out of a jam. He was the kind of fellow to play malicious tricks. But Billy Bunter,

in his present state of stress, forgot the kind of fellow Skinner was. He had no doubt that Skinner had given him the translation, and he bumbled on quite happily—

"At pius Aeneas, per noctem plurima volvens—Aeneas rolled over during the night—"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry, involuntarily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" Quelch almost roared, "Bunter! How dare you?"

"Is—isn't that right, sir!" stammered Bunter.

"Upon my word! You have no knowledge whatever of this passage in Virgil. How dare you utter such absurdities?"

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Bunter. "You beast, Skinner." It dawned on his fat mind that Skinner had been pulling his fat leg. "I—I—I say, sir, I—I didn't mean that Aeneas rolled over during the night—"



"Is—is—isn't that right, sir!"

"Then what did you mean, Bunter?"

"I—I—I." The unhappy Owl of the Remove stammered helplessly. He knew now that the translation supplied by Harold Skinner was not the genuine article. But that was all he knew. That Latin line was still a mystery to him.

"Well?" Quelch's voice was deep.

"I—I—I—."

"That will do, Bunter. Obviously you have neglected your preparation, and know nothing of the lesson. For that, Bunter, I should give you an imposition of fifty lines. But—," Quelch's voice deepened, "You must learn not to utter such absurdities in the form-room. You will take five hundred lines, Bunter."

"Oh, crikey!"

"You will go on, Todd."

Many commiserating glances were cast in Billy Bunter's direction, as Peter Todd took up the tale, and the lesson proceeded.

Bunter's "howlers" often caused merriment in the Remove form-room—to the juniors, if not to Mr. Quelch. Quelch was often patient with the laziest and most obtuse member of his form. But this latest specimen was evidently too much for his patience. Aeneas rolling over in the night was the limit. Quelch had come down hard and heavy: and the hapless Owl sat in a state of collapse. Five hundred lines was an awful impot—really awful. It was likely to keep William George Bunter busy during all his leisure hours for days to come. Certainly it was also likely to impress upon his fat mind that it was worth while to give some attention to prep. But that was no consolation to Bunter.

"Oh, lor'!" mumbled Bunter, dismally.

The gimlet-eye glinted round at him.

"Did you speak, Bunter?"

"Oh! No, sir!" gasped Bunter, in alarm. "I never opened my lips, sir. I only said, 'Oh, lor', sir. I—I mean I—I never said anything, sir.'"

"If you speak again, I shall cane you, Bunter."

"Oh, lor'! I—I—I mean, yes, sir," gasped Bunter.

The fat Owl was silent during the remainder of that lesson. But his looks were expressive—alternately at Skinner and at Quelch. Skinner had pulled his leg, and Quelch had given him five hundred lines—and Bunter could not help feeling that what they both deserved was something lingering, with boiling oil in it! It was a dismal Owl that rolled out of the form-room when the Remove were, at last, dismissed.

## CHAPTER II

## CALLED TO ACCOUNT

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Jolly old Aeneas still rolling over?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha."

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" hooted Billy Bunter, indignantly, "I've got five hundred lines—."

"Didn't you ask for them?" grunted Johnny Bull. "If you tell a beak that Aeneas rolled over—."

"I didn't!" howled Bunter, "It was Skinner."

"Eh! what?"

The Famous Five stared at the fat Owl. They had not heard Skinner's whisper in class, and knew nothing, so far, of Skinner's participation in that "howler" which had evoked Quelch's wrath.

They were talking Soccer when Bunter rolled up in the quad. The St. Jim's match on the morrow was the topic. Tom Merry and Co. of St. Jim's were coming over the next day to play football, and it was a great occasion. Certainly they commiserated a fat Owl landed with five hundred lines: but they were much more interested in Soccer than in Bunter. However, they gave him their attention now.

"What the dickens had Skinner to do with it?" asked Frank Nugent.

"We all heard you hand out that howler," said Harry Wharton. "Where does Skinner come in?"

"He gave me the translation," explained Bunter, "He whispered it to me, and of course I thought it was fair and square, and passed it on to Quelch."

"Oh!" ejaculated all the five, together.

"Rotten trick!" said Bob.

"Rotten!" agreed Nugent.

"The rottenfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a shake of his dusky head.

Snort, from Johnny Bull.

"You might have known that Skinner was pulling your silly leg," he said, "Catch Skinner doing any fellow a good turn."

Harry Wharton glanced round at a group of three Remove fellows at a little distance—Skinner, Snoop, and Stott. All three were grinning and





*"I'll jolly well punch his head for it," said Bunter*

chuckling, evidently discussing something very amusing. The captain of the Remove could guess now what it was—Skinner's malicious trick on the obtuse fat Owl. He frowned. Skinner was as full of tricks as a monkey: and they were seldom good-natured. Evidently the fact that he had landed Bunter with a heavy imposition did not weigh on his conscience.

"I'd jolly well punch his head for it," said Bunter. "Only—only he would punch mine, you see—! But I say you fellows—I expect you to see fair play. Look here, Wharton, you're captain of the form, and it's up to you."

"I'll see fair play, if you're going to punch Skinner," said Harry. "But—you couldn't handle him, old fat man."

"I don't mean that. But look here, Skinner's landed me with five hundred with his rotten trick. Well, it's only fair for him to do the lines."

"Oh!"

Billy Bunter's fat brain had evidently been at work since the Remove had come out of form!

"He wouldn't!" said Nugent.

"Not likely!" said Bob Cherry.

"Catch Skinner!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"You fellows make him!" said Bunter.

"Oh!"

"Fair play's a jewel!" said Bunter, "Skinner got me the lines, didn't he? Perhaps he'll think twice about pulling a fellow's leg in form, if he has to do them himself."

"By gum, it's only fair," said Bob, "Bunter can't help being a silly, fat-headed, blithering ass—."

"Oh, really, Cherry—."

"And it's a dirty trick to land him in a row with Quelch, when he hasn't sense enough to go in when it rains—."

"Beast!"

"Right!" said Harry Wharton, "Let's go over and talk to Skinner. We can't make him do Bunter's lines, if he won't, but we can jolly well bump him for landing the fat chump in a row. We'll give him his choice."

"Hear, hear!"

"I say, you fellows, come on!" chirruped Bunter.

The Famous Five came on! They walked across to the grinning group under the elms. The practical joker was to be called to account!

"Fancy even that fat ass falling for it!" Skinner was saying, as they came up, "Aeneas rolled over in the night! Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha!" echoed Snoop and Stott.

"No wonder Quelch went off at the deep end," chuckled Skinner. "But fancy that fat chump taking it in!" He grinned round at Harry Wharton and Co. "You fellows haven't heard the joke—."

"Yes, we've just heard it—from Bunter," said Harry. "Very funny, if it hadn't landed Bunter in a row. But five hundred lines isn't a joke. What about that?"

Skinner shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, you've had your little joke," said Bob Cherry. "But the chap who calls the tune has to pay the piper. Are you going to help Bunter out with his lines?"

"What?"

"That's only fair!" said Nugent.

Skinner laughed.

"I say, you fellows—!" squeaked Bunter.

"Leave it to us, old fat man," said Harry. "Look here, Skinner, you can pull that fat chump's leg as much as you like: but you can't land him with a



*"Leave it to us, old fat man!"*

whacking impot for a joke. You got him that impot from Quelch, and it's only fair to do it for him."

"I'll watch it," said Skinner.

"You won't?"

"Not so's you'd notice it!" yawned Skinner.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter! Look here, Skinner, you're going to do those lines, or you're going to be bumped—hard! Yes or no," snapped the captain of the Remove.

Skinner made a move to back away. Five juniors surrounded him at once. There was no retreat for Skinner.

Snoop and Stott exchanged a glance, and strolled away. Skinner was left alone, scowling at five faces that encircled him.

"Can't you fellows mind your own business?" he snarled.



"We're minding Bunter's, for a change," said Bob. "You wouldn't have played that trick on a fellow who could wallop you for it, Skinner. You're going to do those lines."

"Quelch would smell a rat, if I did," muttered Skinner. "My fist isn't like that fat scrawler's."

"You can make it near enough. Make it look as if a spider had swum in the ink-pot and then crawled over the paper. That would pass for Bunter's fist any day."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Well, I won't do a single line for the fat chump!" snapped Skinner, "And you can't make me."

"You'll get a bumping if you don't,"

"The bumpfulness will be terrific."

Skinner made a sudden rush. But it booted not. Three or four pairs of hands grasped him at once.

Bump!

There was a frantic yell from Skinner, as he was swept off his feet, and landed on the hard, unsympathetic earth.

"Doing those lines?" asked Bob.

"No!" howled Skinner.

"Give him another!"

Bump!

"Ow! Oh! Leggo! Ow!" yelled Skinner. "I won't do a line! Wow!"

"One more for luck, then," said Bob.

Bump!

"Yooo-hooooop!"

"Now boot him!"

A breathless, enraged, dusty Skinner fled from lunging feet—evidently no longer enjoying that joke on Billy Bunter.

The fat Owl blinked after him as he fled, and then blinked at the Famous Five.

"I say, you fellows—!" he squeaked. "I say, if Skinner won't do those lines, what about you fellows doing them?"

"What?"

"I'll do some," said Bunter, hastily. "Look here, I'll do twenty-five. Then you chaps can whack out the rest. It will be only seventy each, for the five of you, to make up the five hundred."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. I say, you fellows, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you!" howled Bunter.

But the Famous Five did walk away, laughing. They had done all they could: and did not seem disposed to do Bunter's lines in addition. The topic of the St. Jim's match was resumed, and Billy Bunter was left to waste his sweetness on the desert air.



*"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at"*

### CHAPTER III

### BUNTER ON THE WAR-PATH!

**H**ARRY WHARTON and Co. were looking merry and bright, when the Remove came out in the break the following morning. There was only one more lesson to come: after that, a half-holiday: and it was a fine, clear winter's

day, and St. Jim's were coming over to play football. So it was no wonder that the chums of the Remove looked as bright as the winter sunshine.

Their cheery looks contrasted with Billy Bunter's. The fattest face in the Remove was also the most lugubrious that morning. Five hundred lines impended over Billy Bunter's fat head, like the sword of Damocles.

Some fellows, with so extensive an impot on hand, would have got going without delay. Not so Bunter. Bunter had not even started on his lengthy task. Not a single line, or a single blot, had so far dropped from his pen. The lines had to be done; and if Skinner remained obstinate on the subject, in spite of bumpings, Bunter had to do them. There would be no lazy frowst in an arm-chair for Bunter, that afternoon, while Harry Wharton and Co. were playing St. Jim's at Soccer. Only lines, and lines, and lines! It was an awful prospect for a lazy fat Owl.

Five cheery juniors, sauntering in the quad, came on a woeful Owl, who greeted them with a dismal blink through his big spectacles.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Enjoying life, old fat man?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, lor'!" mumbled Bunter.

"Anything the matter?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton—" Bunter gave the captain of the Remove a deeply reproachful blink. Actually, the Famous Five had forgotten about Bunter and his woes: just as if a football match was more important than Bunter! "My lines—!"

"Oh! Your lines! Haven't you done them yet?"

"There's five hundred—."

"Well, how many have you done, so far?"

"I—I haven't started on them yet—."

"Better get going," said Nugent. "Quelch will want those lines, fathead."

"Lazybones!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Tain't fair!" hooted Bunter. "Skinner landed me with those lines, and it's up to him. Quelch will ask me for them to-morrow."

"Better get them done to-day," said Bob Cherry. "Quelch isn't exactly pleased with you already, old fat man. Might be whops!"

"That cad Skinner—."

"Skinner's a cad, but he won't do those lines for you," said Bob. "Make up you mind to it, you lazy old porpoise. After all, you did ask for them—you couldn't expect to please Quelch by telling him that jolly old Aeneas rolled over in the night—."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle!" said Bunter, bitterly. "Quelch is a beast—coming down on a fellow like that for nothing—well, next to nothing. But perhaps he'll be sorry for it," added Bunter, darkly.

"Eh! How come?" asked Bob, staring.

"Perhaps I know how to make him sit up for it," said Bunter. "Perhaps he will like sitting down in a lot of ink next time he sits down in his armchair. Perhaps he won't! He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter's lugubrious fat face cleared, and he chuckled. The idea of Henry Samuel Quelch sitting down in a lot of ink seemed to cheer him up.



*"You fat ass!" said Johnny Bull*

The Famous Five gazed at him.

"You fat ass!" said Johnny Bull. "Are you thinking of playing tricks in Quelch's study?"

"Hasn't he given me five hundred lines?" hooted Bunter.

"He will give you something tougher than that, if he catches you playing tricks with ink in his study."

"He jolly well won't catch me," grinned Bunter. "You see, I heard him tell Prout that he's going out for a walk in break. He may come out any minute

now. As soon as he's gone out, what's to stop a fellow nipping into his study, and pouring the inkpot into his armchair?"

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Forget it!"

"Wash it out!"

"Yah!" was Bunter's reply to those remonstrances. Evidently, the fat Owl was on the trail of vengeance: and his fat mind was made up.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here comes Quelchy!" murmured Bob Cherry, as an angular figure, in coat and hat, emerged from the House. Mr. Quelch walked briskly down to the gates, walked out, and disappeared.

"Now, look here, Bunter, you ass—" said Harry Wharton.

"Yah!"

"Keep clear of Quelch's study—."

"Yah!"

"Ten to one you'd be spotted," urged Bob Cherry.

"The ten-to-oneness is terrific, my esteemed idiotic Bunter," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter's replies were monosyllabic, but emphatic. The Owl of the Remove was on the war-path. Words of wisdom were wasted on him.

"Look here, Bunter," said Harry. "We'll go and look for Skinner, and hump him again if he won't help with the lines. But leave Quelch alone. Quelch isn't safe to rag."

"Yah!"

"Look here, you fat as—"

"Yah!"

With that final monosyllable, Billy Bunter turned a fat back, and rolled away. Bunter was not losing this opportunity, while Quelch was out of gates! He rolled off to the House.

"Whops for Bunter, if Quelch catches him!" said Bob.

"The whopfulness will be terrific."

Harry Wharton knitted his brows.

"It's all that cad Skinner's fault," he said. "Let's go and look for him, and bump him again if he won't help Bunter out with the lines."

"Good egg!"

And the Famous Five went to look for Harold Skinner.

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter rolled into the House. Very cautiously he approached Masters' Studies. Bunter was not very bright: but he was bright enough to know that he had better not be seen going to his form-master's study,



when his object was to tip his form-master's inkpot into his form-master's armchair, for his form-master to sit in.

To his extreme annoyance, the vicinity of Quelch's study was not uninhabited, as he had hoped to find it. Portly Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was standing at an open door, talking to Monsieur Charpentier, the French master, in the passage. Neither of them glanced at Bunter: but obviously the fat Owl could not roll undetected into Quelch's study while they were there.

"Beasts!" breathed Bunter.

He stopped at a window, and stood blinking out into the quad, hoping that they would go. Break did not last long, and Quelch would be back in time for third school. Minutes were precious. It seemed to the irritated fat Owl that Prout's drone, and Mossoo's squeak, would never end, as the precious minutes passed.

But they did end: Monsieur Charpentier, at last, came down the passage, and Prout disappeared into his study and shut the door. Billy Bunter waited



*Grinning, he rolled, inkpot in hand towards Quelch's armchair in the corner*

only till Mossoo was gone. Then he fairly shot along the passage to Quelch's door. That door was opened, and shut again, in a twinkling: and a breathless fat Owl panted for breath inside the study.

All was clear now.

Billy Bunter rolled across to the table, and reached to the inkstand. He jerked out the ink-well, grinning. Five hundred lines impended over Bunter: but it would be a consolation, while he was grinding through those endless lines, to think of Quelch sitting down in a swamp of ink!

Grinning, he rolled, inkpot in hand, towards Quelch's armchair, in the corner of the study—a dusky corner, where Quelch was not likely to discern ink on dark leather before he sat in it. He reached the armchair. In another moment, the inkpot would have been up-ended over the seat. But in that moment, he heard the door-handle turn!

Seldom was William George Bunter quick on the uptake. Seldom, very seldom, were his motions rapid. But the terror of being caught there by Quelch quickened his fat wits, and accelerated his movements. He had just time to whip round the armchair, and duck out of sight behind the high back, before the door opened. The next second it was open, and footsteps came into the study: and an invisible fat Owl, palpitating with dread, strove to suppress his breathing, as those footsteps approached the armchair behind which he huddled.

#### CHAPTER IV

#### SKINNER'S SCHEME

“**R**YLCOMBE one-O-one!”

Billy Bunter hardly refrained from jumping.

If Quelch had come in, no doubt he would sit down to rest after his walk, in the few minutes that remained before third School. Only the back of the armchair would be between him and Bunter. That was what the terrified Owl expected—and he could only hope to remain out of sight till the bell rang, and Quelch left the study to go to the form-room.

But, to his great relief, the newcomer did not sit down in the armchair. He stopped quite close to it, but apparently had no intention of sitting down.

A whirring sound reached Bunter's fat ears: and he understood. It came from the telephone, which stood on a little table close by the armchair. Quelch—if it was Quelch—had come in to telephone.

There was nothing surprising in that. But there was something very surprising in what followed. It was not Quelch's voice that Bunter heard: and that

voice was asking for a trunk<sup>c</sup>call! And the number given was one well-known to Remove fellows—St. Jim's, the school in Sussex from which Tom Merry and Co. were coming to play Soccer that afternoon. Somebody was ringing up St. Jim's on Quelch's phone.

It was not Quelch's voice,—even if the Remove master could have been supposed to have anything to say to anybody at St. Jim's. Had it been Harry Wharton's, it might only have meant that the Remove captain wanted a word, for some reason, with the St. Jim's skipper, before the team came over, and had borrowed Quelch's phone, for the purpose, in his absence. But it was not Wharton's voice—it was not a boy's voice at all, or at all events did not sound like one. It was a deep and rather husky voice that Bunter heard asking for the call to St. Jim's.

Strangest of all, it was a voice unknown to Bunter. Bunter knew the voices of all the Staff at Greyfriars: from Prout's boom and Hacker's snap, to Wiggins' mumble and Mossoo's squeak. It was none of them.

"Is that St. James's School?"

"Yes, the School House. Mr. Railton speaking."

The telephone was so near the armchair behind which the fat Owl huddled, that the reply from St. Jim's reached his fat ears. Railton, house-master of the School-House at St. Jim's had taken the call at the other end.

"Good-morning, Mr. Railton. Mr. Quelch speaking from Greyfriars School."

Again Billy Bunter barely refrained from jumping.

It was not Quelch's voice. Bunter knew that, though naturally a master at a distant school did not. Yet whoever was using Quelch's telephone was using his name also.

"Good-morning, Mr. Quelch," came back from Mr. Railton: in polite but slightly surprised tones. Obviously the house-master at St. Jim's was not expecting a telephone call from the Remove master at Greyfriars, of whom he knew little more than his name.

"I am sorry to trouble you, Mr. Railton—."

"Not at all, sir."

"But the matter is urgent—very urgent. I understand that a junior football team is to come here this afternoon from your school—."

"Yes, that is so."

"I am sorry to say that the fixture must be cancelled."

"Indeed! May I ask why?"

"Owing to a case of polio here—."

"Polio!"

"It was not known for certain till this morning, when the school doctor

confirmed it. In the circumstances, every precaution is, of course, being taken, and I felt it my duty to apprise you—.”

“Bless my soul! I am sorry to hear such bad news, Mr. Quelch: but very grateful to you for warning me in time. The football match must, of course, be cancelled: I will speak to Merry, the junior captain here, at once. Thank you very much, Mr. Quelch.”

“Not at all, Mr. Railton. Good-bye.”

“Good-bye, sir.”

Billy Bunter, behind the armchair, listened like a fellow in a dream. In fact he could hardly believe his fat ears.

It was not Quelch speaking, though the speaker had used Quelch's name. There was not a word of truth in the statement made over the wires. Nobody at Greyfriars had even the most distant acquaintance with that dread disease, polio. Mr. Railton, at St. Jim's, had taken that statement at face value, naturally enough. Billy Bunter knew that it was an invention. But the Soccer match, to which Harry Wharton and Co. were looking forward so keenly that afternoon, was going to be washed out. The expected visitors would not arrive: and the Remove footballers would be left wondering why. Somebody—evidently somebody with a bitter grudge against the Co.—had coolly and unscrupulously washed out the St. Jim's match for them.

Who was it?

Bunter could not begin to guess. What man at Greyfriars could want to play at treacherous and unscrupulous a trick on the footballers?

Then suddenly he was enlightened.

He heard the receiver jammed back on the hooks. That sound was followed by a low chuckle, and a muttering voice that Bunter knew.

“That's tit for tat, the rotters! They're going to keep on ragging me unless I help that fat idiot Bunter out with his lines, are they? Well, if they rag me, I'll give them something back as good, or better. If they make me stick in a study writing lines on a half-holiday, they can mooch about, wondering why St. Jim's don't come over to play football, while I'm writing them. Ha, ha!”

It was Skinner's voice.

Then it dawned on Billy Bunter that the voice he had heard was not a man's voice at all, but an assumed one: the young rascal had assumed that deep husky voice to delude the St. Jim's house-master at the other end.

“Beast!” breathed Bunter.

But he was careful to make no audible sound. He could guess what Skinner would feel like,—and what he would do—if he discovered that his cunning scheme had been overheard. At the mere thought of it, he could almost feel Skinner's fists hammering a fat face. Not a sound came from Bunter, and not a





*It was Skinner's voice*

movement, till he heard the door open. Then he ventured to raise a fat head above the level of the chair-back, as he knew that Skinner's back would be turned, and had a view of that unscrupulous youth as he left the study. The door closed on Skinner, and Bunter, at last, emerged from his hideout, the inkpot still in his fat hand.

"Oh, crikey!" breathed Bunter, at the sound of a voice from the passage. It was Prout's boom.

"What do you want here, Skinner?" Evidently, Prout had come out of his study, as Skinner emerged from Quelch's.

But Skinner's reply was prompt and plausible.

"I came to speak to my form-master, sir, but I found that he had gone out."

"Oh! Very well."

Skinner departed, and Bunter heard Prout's ponderous footsteps pass the



door. Both of them were gone: and the fat Owl lost no more time. The inkpot was upended, and its contents flooded out into the seat of the armchair.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter.

A cautious blink from the doorway revealed that the coast was clear. Billy Bunter rolled out of the study: and rolled into the quad, with startling news for Harry Wharton and Co. And a few minutes later Mr. Qulech, coming in from his walk, sat in the armchair in his study to rest for a few minutes before going to his form-room—and his feelings, when he discovered what he had sat in, were deep—very deep indeed.



*Mr. Quelch, coming in from his walk, sat in the armchair*

## CHAPTER V

"THIS way!" said Bob Cherry.

He linked an arm in Skinner's, when the Remove came out after third school. Johnny Bull linked on, on the other side of Skinner.

"Keep him till I come back!" said Harry Wharton.

"We'll keep him all right!" said Bob.

"The keepfulness will be terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton hurried away: leaving Skinner with the Co. Skinner wriggled in the grip on his arms, as the Co. walked him down the corridor.

"Will you let me go?" he breathed.

"Not so's you'd notice it."

"I tell you I won't do Bunter's lines for him, and if you start ragging again, I'll go to Quelch," hissed Skinner.

"We're not bothering about Bunter's lines at present," said Nugent. "Quite another matter."

"What do you mean?" snarled Skinner.

"You can go to Quelch as soon as you like," said Bob. "We'll walk you there, if you like. Quelch would be interested to know what you had to say on his telephone while he was out in break this morning."

"Wha-a-t!" gasped Skinner.

"You rat!" grunted Johnny Bull. "I only half-believed—but there's no doubt about it now. Look at his face."

Skinner's face was quite sickly. Not for a moment had he dreamed that anything was known of that treacherous telephone call to St. Jim's.

"I—I—I—," he stammered, "I—I don't know what you mean. I—I haven't been to Quelch's study—I—I—."

"You didn't sneak there in break, and ring up St. Jim's?"

"N-h-no!"

"You didn't spin a yarn that there was an outbreak of polio here, to keep Tom Merry's team away this afternoon?"

"I—I—I—No!" gasped Skinner. "Did—did—did anybody?"

"That's what Wharton's gone to make sure of. He's going to ask Quelch to let him use the phone for a call to St. Jim's. Plenty of time to set the matter right, if you played that rotten trick."

"Oh!" gasped Skinner.

The Co. marched him out into the quad. They stopped at the fountain, to wait for Wharton to rejoin them. Skinner waited with them, having no choice in the matter, in a state of uneasy trepidation. The Co. had, perhaps, had some lingering doubt of the accuracy of Bunter's startling news: but Skinner's obvious uneasiness confirmed it. How they knew was a mystery to Skinner: but he knew that his cunning scheme had fallen to pieces like a house of cards, and that the consequences were likely to be extremely uncomfortable.

Harry Wharton came out of the House at last. His face was set and grim as he joined the group at the fountain.

"You cur, Skinner!" he breathed, as he came up. I got on to Mr. Railton, at St. Jim's. He was phoned this morning in Quelch's name, with a yarn about polio here. I've explained to him that it was a practical joke, and nothing in it: and Tom Merry's crowd will be coming over as arranged. It's all right now, Skinner, you rat."

"Good egg!" said Bob.

"The goodness of the egg is terrific."

"Okay now," said Johnny Bull. "Wasn't that St. Jim's beak shirty about having his leg pulled like that?"

"He was!" said Harry. "He said that such a practical joke should be severely punished. I think you fellows will agree."

"Hear, hear!"



*There was a gurgling howl from Skinner*

"Duck him!"

Splash!

There was a gurgling howl from Skinner, as his head went over the rim of the fountain into the water. It came out dripping.

"Oooooogh! Groooogh! Leggo! Gurrnggh!" gurgled Skinner.

"Give him another!"

Splash!

"Wurrrrgghh! Urrgggh!"

"Now, you rotter—!"

"Wurrrrrrgghh!"

"You're going to do Bunter's lines this afternoon—the whole five hundred of them!" said Harry Wharton. "If they're not done by the time we're through with the football, look out for squalls. Now boot him."

How many kicks he collected, before he escaped, Skinner could hardly have counted: it seemed to him like hundreds. It was a wet, draggled, aching and painful Skinner who got away at last, sadly and sorrowfully realizing that the way of the transgressor was hard.

"I say, you fellows." Billy Bunter rolled up to the Famous Five in the quad. "I say, about my lines—I say, one good turn deserves another, you know. I put you wise about Skinner's dirty trick on Quelch's phone, didn't I?"

"You did!" agreed Harry Wharton.

"Fancy Bunter coming in useful for once!" said Bob.

"Well, he couldn't be ornamental!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! But I say, about my lines—one good turn deserves another, doesn't it?"

"It does!" assented Harry.

"Well, then, suppose you fellows do my lines for me this afternoon—"

"While we're playing football?" asked Bob.

"You can cut out the football," suggested Bunter. "Lots of the fellows would be glad to take your places to play Soccer, but they wouldn't do my lines. What about it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. I haven't said anything funny, have I?" yapped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

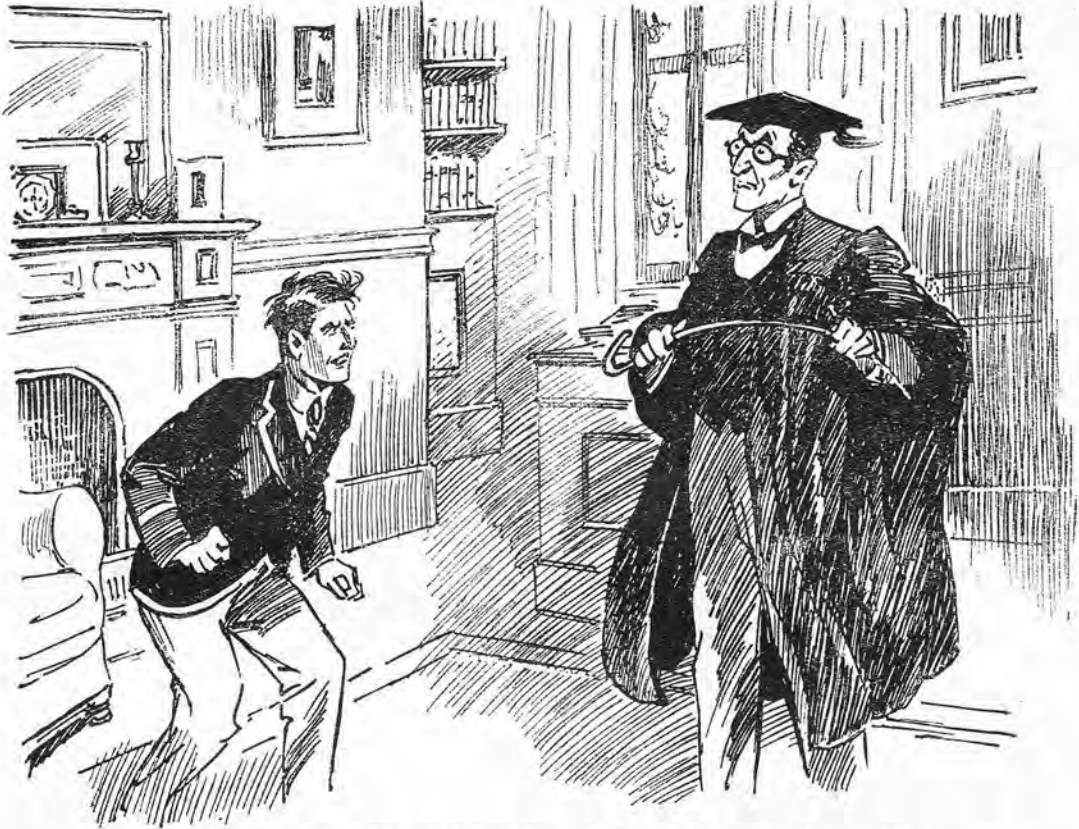
"Look here, you fellows—"

"It's all right about the lines, old fat man," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You can leave them to Skinner."

"But he said he won't—"

"If he doesn't, we're going to boil him in oil. It's all right."





*"Did you enter this study, without leave, during my absence?"*

"Well, if it's all right, all right!" said Bunter. "So long as I don't have to do them, I don't mind who does. I say, you fellows, I wonder what we're going to have for dinner!"

## CHAPTER VI

### SIX FOR SKINNER

THERE were many cheery faces at Greyfriars that afternoon. Tom Merry and Co. duly arrived from St. Jim's to play Soccer, and Harry Wharton and Co. went into the field with them, merry and bright. Billy Bunter, equally cheery though in a different way, settled down happily in an armchair before the fire in the Rag, with a bag of toffees he had found in Bob Cherry's study. Everyone in fact, seemed to be enjoying life, with the exception of Harold Skinner, whose

cunning scheming had come home so painfully to roost. Skinner had Bunter's lines to write, lest worse should befall him: and even that was not all. He received a summons to his form-master's study: and he obeyed it in fear and trembling, in dread that Quelch had heard something about that telephone-call to St. Jim's, so unexpectedly known to so many fellows.

He found Mr. Quelch looking his grimmest.

"Skinner!" rapped Quelch.

"Yes, sir!"

"During my absence in break this morning, some Remove boy entered this study, and poured ink into the seat of my armchair. I sat in it before I perceived it. I have made inquiries, Skinner, and I have learned that you were seen to leave my study during break. You were seen by Mr. Prout." Quelch picked up a cane. "Bend over that chair, Skinner."

"But I—I—I didn't—I—I—I never—!" stammered Skinner.

"Did you enter this study, or not, without leave during my absence?"



*Billy Bunter lolled at his fat ease in the Rag and consumed Bob Cherry's toffees*

"Oh! Yes! No! But—"

"That is sufficient. Bend over that chair. This is not the first time you have played disrespectful tricks in this study, Skinner. I trust it will be the last. Bend over that chair!"

Quelch had no doubts! He had sat in the ink, swamped in his armchair by a surreptitious hand. Skinner, whom he knew to be as full of mischievous tricks as a monkey, had been in the study at the material time. That was enough for Quelch. Six swipes from the cane were more than enough for Harold Skinner. From the bottom of his heart he wished that he had steered clear of Quelch's study that morning.

Skinner sat very uncomfortably while he scrawled five hundred lines that afternoon, what time Billy Bunter lolled at his fat ease in the Rag and consumed Bob Cherry's toffees, and Harry Wharton and Co. urged the flying ball on the football field.

THE END