

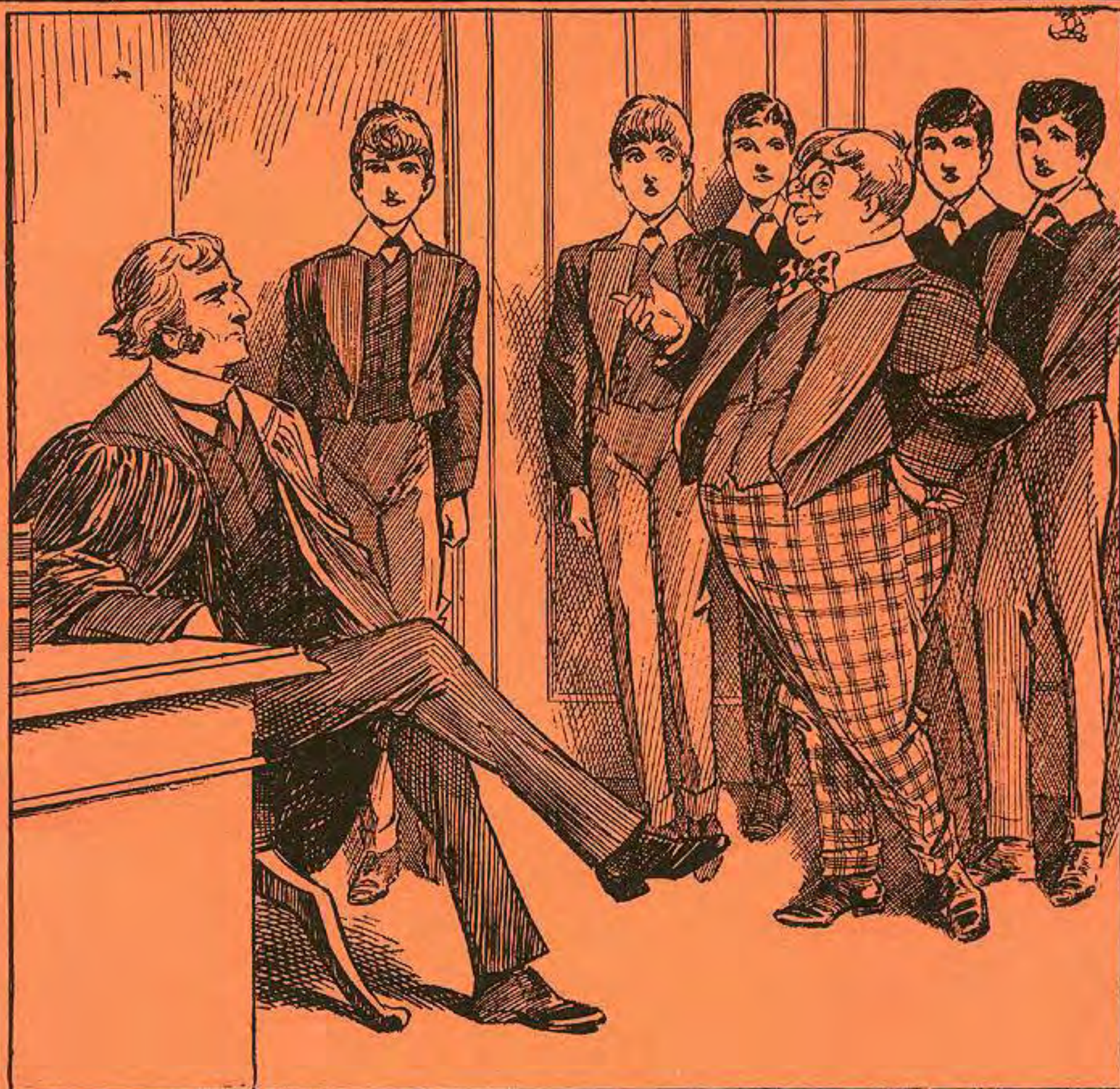
"ALONZO THE GREAT!"

The Magnet Library

No. 129 |

Grand, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

| Vol. 4.



BILLY BUNTER'S MODESTY.

"I said all along that Mr. Quelch was in the right, sir," said Billy Bunter, who could not possibly take a virtuous role without becoming priggish. "I think it's the duty of a junior to back up constituted authority, we're sent here to learn, sir, not to rebel against our kind teachers. I am ashamed of Bulstrode, and I hope he will get into a better state of mind, and try to become more like me and my friends!"

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

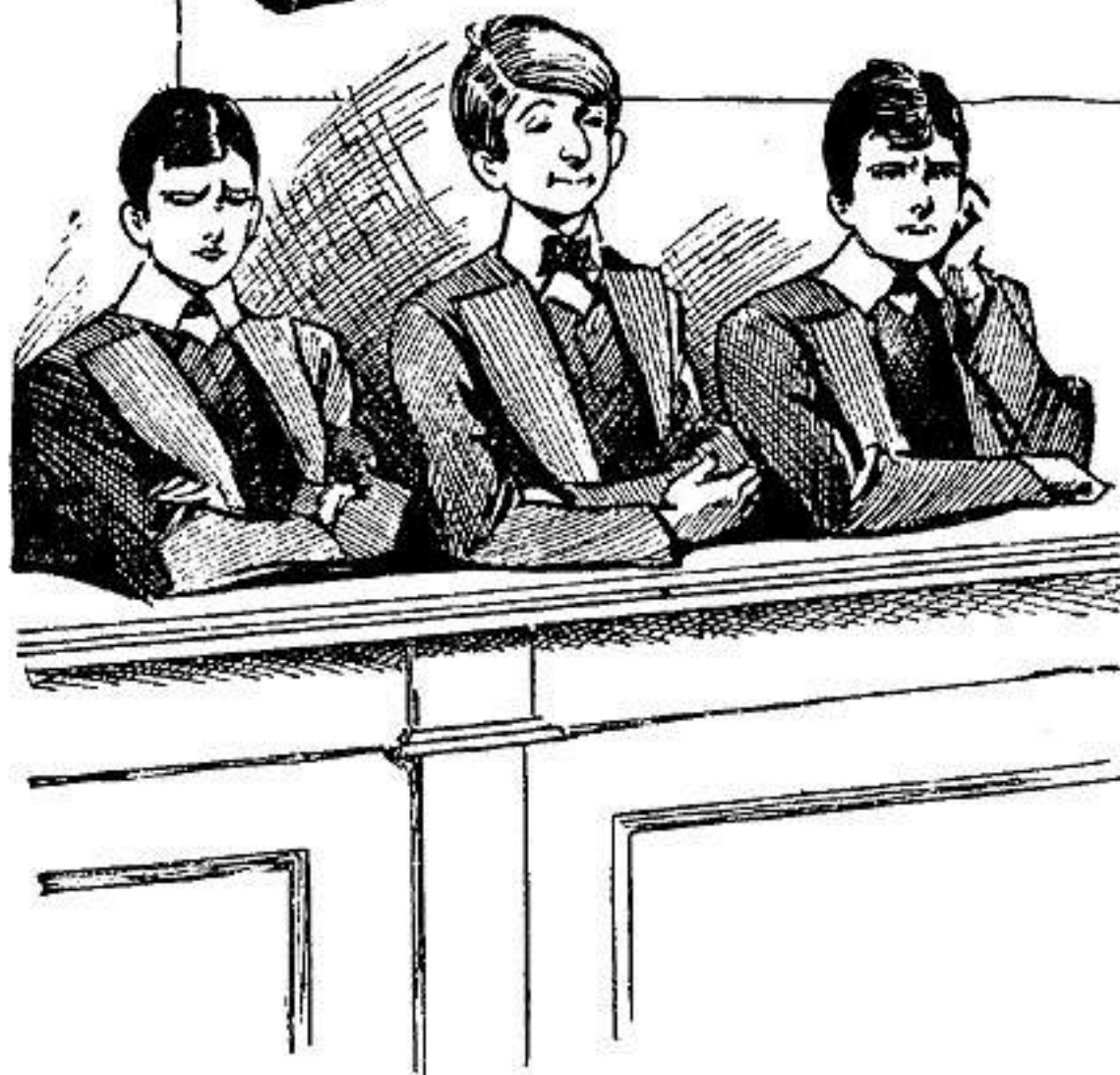
A Long, Complete, School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co.



A Complete School-Story Book, attractive to All Readers.

The Editor will be obliged if you will hand this book, when finished with, to a friend.

Alonzo the Great



A Splendid, Long, Complete
School Tale of
HARRY WHARTON & CO.
at Greyfriars.

— BY —

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Many Thanks!

MR. QUELCH, the master of the Remove at Greyfriars, was showing signs of restiveness.

And his Form looked restive, too.

It was not surprising. It was a hot afternoon, and although the door and windows of the Form-room were wide open, there was hardly a breath of air, and the place seemed insufferably stuffy. Outside, in the Close, the ground baked under a blazing sun. In the Remove-room, the boys baked at their desks, and longed for the hour of dismissal.

It was a time when master and boys grew equally fatigued with each other. Lessons on an afternoon like that seemed out of place. All Nature seemed to be calling to the boys to come out of doors, and gladly enough would they have obeyed the call. But there was an hour yet to dismissal; and already the afternoon seemed to have lasted six or seven hours.

The class was restless.

Partly from that cause, and partly from the hot weather, the master was less patient than usual; and impatience on one side reacted on the other, so that by this time both master and pupils were in a dissatisfied and irritable mood.

Mr. Quelch showed it by an unusual snappishness in speaking, and the juniors showed it by short, sullen answers, and a veiled impertinence of manner.

When a class gets into that mood, it is exceedingly difficult to handle. Even the best pupils, the most thoughtful boys, are quick to catch the prevailing tone. Unless the master is very tactful, trouble is likely to ensue. Most of the Remove thought there would be trouble before lessons ended, and most of them would have welcomed it as a break in the monotony.

Billy Bunter, the fattest junior in the Lower Fourth, sat perspiring, and almost groaning aloud. Bulstrode was grunting at intervals with discontent. Even Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, looked gloomy; and Nugent, the best-tempered fellow in the Lower School, was glum. The big hand on the clock above the bookcase seemed an unconscionable long time in crawling round the dial, and the juniors looked at it at frequent intervals, and marvelled at its slow progress. Only one face was calm and somewhat cheerful; it was that of Alonzo Todd, the Duffer of Greyfriars, who was never put out by anything.

To add to Mr. Quelch's irritation, Dutton, the deaf junior, was deaf as ever that afternoon, and his replies were more wildly at random than Mr. Quelch had ever known them before.

"My only hat!" Bob Cherry murmured to Harry Wharton. "It's a crime to be indoors on an afternoon like this, you know. Think of a boat slipping along under the trees down by the Pool."

Wharton grunted.

"Don't talk of a boat and the river, Bob, or I shall get up and do a bolt," he said.

"That's what I feel like."

"Cave!" murmured Mark Linley, in warning.

But the warning came too late.

Mr. Quelch swung round, with a red and angry face.

"Cherry!" he rapped out.

"Ye-e-es, sir!" said Bob Cherry, in dismay. He knew that his whisper had been heard in the stillness of the classroom, and Mr. Quelch was not in a humour to pass over the slightest fault just then.

"You were talking."

"Oh, sir!"

"Were you talking, Cherry?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"Take a hundred lines."

"Thank you, sir!" said Bob impertinently.

Mr. Quelch breathed hard through his nose. The Remove stirred a little, as if preparing for fun. They were only waiting for someone to start, as it were, to give as much trouble as they could to the Form-master.

"Cherry!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Take a hundred and fifty lines!"

"Thank you very much, sir!"

And the Remove giggled.

Mr. Quelch looked fixedly at Bob Cherry, but he made no rejoinder, and turned to Harry Wharton, the vials of his wrath still unexhausted.

"Wharton!" he snapped.

Harry Wharton looked up.

"Yes, sir!"

"You were talking to Cherry."

"Certainly, sir."

"I am surprised at you, Wharton. You are the head boy in this class, and the captain of the Remove," said Mr. Quelch angrily. "I might have expected you to set the others a better example in class."

"Yes, sir!"

"Take a hundred lines, Wharton!"

"Thank you, sir!"

"Take two hundred lines!"

"Thank you very much, sir!"

It was really very wrong of Harry, but he could not resist the impulse to carry on the joke started by Bob Cherry. The heat and stuffiness of the class-room were responsible for it, as well as Mr. Quelch's unusual sharpness.

"Wharton," said Mr. Quelch, "your reply is impertinent."

"Oh, sir!"

"You will take five hundred lines."

"Thank you so much, sir!"

Mr. Quelch turned away.

"Bulstrode," he rapped out, "how dare you sit in class with your hands in your pockets! Take them out at once, sir!"

Bulstrode took his hands out of his pockets.

"And take fifty lines for slovenliness," said Mr. Quelch.

"Thank you, sir!" said Bulstrode.

The Remove-master turned very red. He saw that it was a "rag," but he did not see very well how to deal with

it. He decided to return to the lesson, which happened to be Roman history; a subject very few of the Remove cared anything about.

The Golden House of Nero did not interest them so much as the boathouse of Greyfriars, on a blazing summer's afternoon.

"Bunter!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

Billy Bunter started.

"Yes, sir!"

"Name the successor of Nero."

"Certainly, sir!"

"Well?"

Bunter scratched his head, and looked down at his desk, and up at the ceiling, and round at the windows. For the life of him he could not remember, though he had been told only five minutes before. Bunter had been day-dreaming of iced lemonade and strawberry ices, and not paying any attention to the lesson.

"Well, Bunter?" said Mr. Quelch, bringing his pointer down upon a desk with a crash that made the whole class jump.

"It was—was—" stammered Bunter.

"Well?"

"It was Tiberius, sir!" gasped out Billy.

And the Remove grinned.

"Bunter! How dare you make such a stupid answer!"

"I—I'm sincerely sorry, sir. I—I didn't mean to say that," said Bunter, in a great hurry. "I—I meant to say Julius Cæsar, sir!"

"You—you meant to say Julius Cæsar!" roared Mr. Quelch.

"N-no," said Bunter, seeing that he was wrong again.

"It was—was Constantine, sir!"

"Bunter, you will stay in an hour after lessons, and write out a hundred times that Galba succeeded Nero in the Roman Empire."

"Oh, sir!"

"Dutton!"

The deaf junior did not reply. He was fanning himself with a leaf torn from his exercise-book, and he did not hear Mr. Quelch.

"Dutton!"

No reply.

The Removes exchanged looks; when Mr. Quelch started upon Willy Dutton, there was fun to be expected. Mr. Quelch rapped a desk sharply with his pointer, and even Dutton heard that, and looked up. Mr. Quelch signed to him.

"Dutton!" he shouted.

"Yes, sir!" said Dutton, standing up.

"Now look out for squalls," murmured Bob Cherry.

"Willy will make Quelch as wild as a Red Indian."

"Cherry, take two hundred lines in addition for talking."

"My hat! I—I mean, thanks awfully, sir!"

Mr. Quelch almost choked. He turned to Dutton again with a very red face.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Dutton is a Little Deaf.

"DUTTON!"

"Yes, sir!"

The deaf junior put his hand to his ear to listen more carefully. He saw that Mr. Quelch was not in a patient temper. Dutton was rather a favourite with the Remove, being one of the most good-natured of fellows, though his affliction was a little trying at times. Some of the juniors felt concerned for him, looking for an outburst upon Mr. Quelch's part before long.

"Dutton! You heard my question to Bunter!"

"Eh, sir? Oh! No, sir!"

"Very well. Name the successor of Nero in the Roman Empire."

"Twice, sir."

"What?"

"Twice."

"What do you mean, Dutton?"

"Yes, sir. Twice."

The Remove gave a joyous chuckle. The fun was beginning. Mr. Quelch cast a glance round that stopped the chuckle at once.

"Dutton!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir."

"What do you mean by replying 'Twice'?"

"Yes, sir, it was very nice."

"Nice! Boy! What are you alluding to?" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

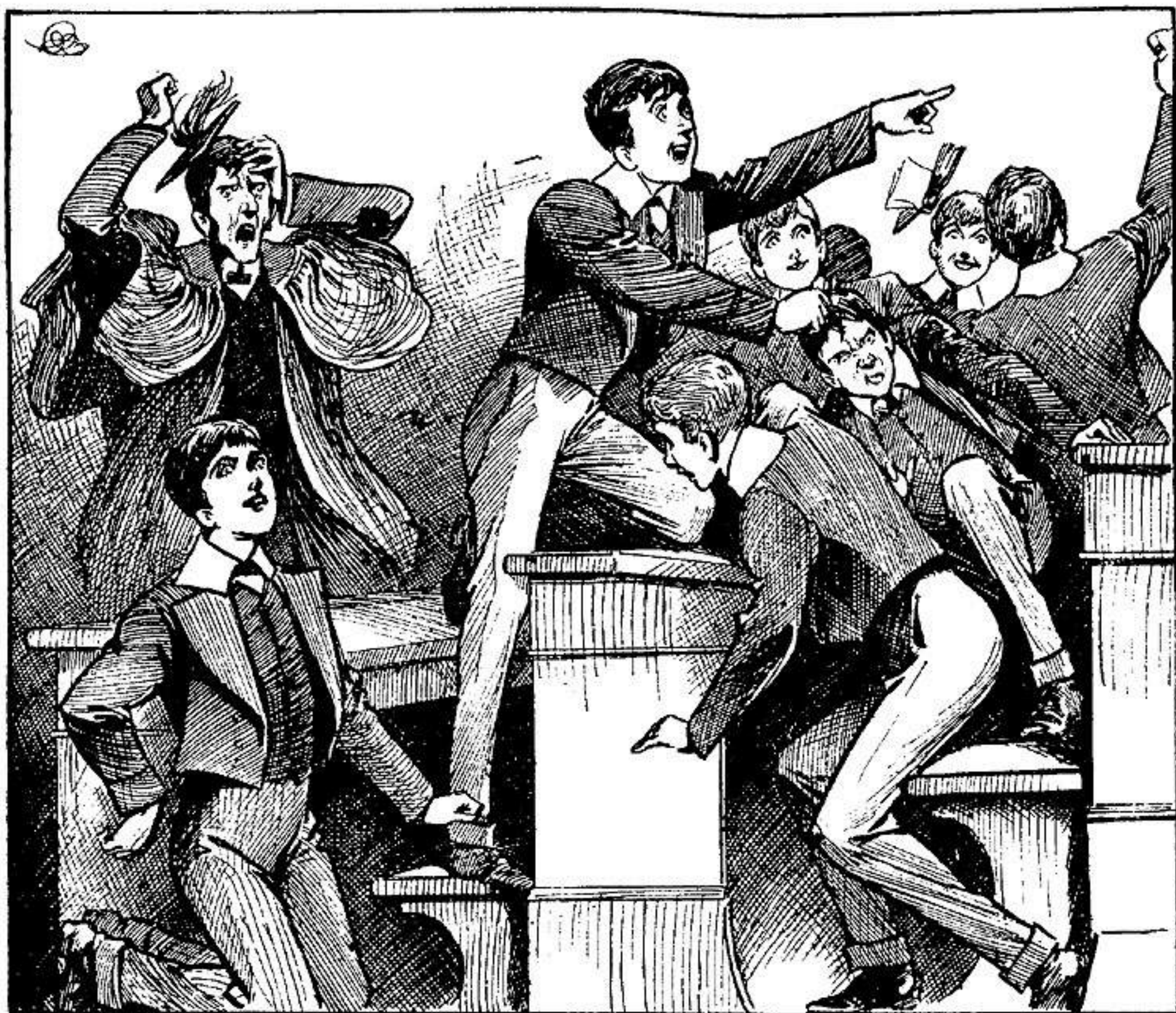
Dutton heard him then.

"You asked me if I had been to the Empire, sir, didn't you?" he said.

"What?"

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The whole Remove had joined in the hunt for Billy Bunter's ventriloquial "buzz." Mr. Quelch had to shout in order to make his voice heard above the din. "Go back to your places at once! How dare you? Go—"

"I've boon twice, sir. My pater took me once, and my uncle once. It was nice."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

He ceased to laugh as Mr. Quelch's eye gleamed upon him.

"Cherry!" almost shouted the Form-master.

"Oh!"

"I see it is useless to give you lines, Cherry—"

"Thank you, sir."

"Stand out here, Cherry!"

Bob Cherry left his place.

"You will stand in the corner," said Mr. Quelch, pointing.

"If you cannot sit in class without behaving like an infant, you must be punished as one, Cherry. Stand in the corner till I tell you to resume your place."

Bob Cherry turned very red.

He had expected to be caned; but he would rather have had a dozen canings than one punishment like this.

"If you please, sir—" he began.

"Another word, Cherry, and you shall wear a fool's cap in addition."

Bob went to the corner without another word. He stood there, facing the class, looking as if all the blood in his body had been pumped into his face.

Mr. Quelch, with a snort, turned to Dutton again.

"Dutton, I asked you a question relating to Roman history."

"Certainly not, sir."

"What?"

"There was no mystery about it."

"He, he, he!" cackled Billy Bunter.

Mr. Quelch turned upon him like lightning.

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NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

"Bunter."

"Yo-o-o-es, sir."

"Stand in the corner with Cherry, Bunter, and be silent."

"But—"

"Go!"

Billy Bunter rolled across the Form-room to the corner. He was very red, more with exertion than self-consciousness, however. Bunter was the fattest and laziest junior in Greyfriars, and he did not like standing up, especially upon a baking summer's afternoon.

"I say, Cherry," he murmured, "this is rotten!"

"I'm not enjoying it," Bob growled. "Yow! Don't lean on me!"

"I'm tired!"

"So am I."

"Oh, really—"

"Get off, you porpoise!"

Billy Bunter grunted, and leaned against the wall. Mr. Quelch, meanwhile, was returning to the charge. He was a conscientious master, and he did not mean to neglect Dutton just because the junior happened to be deaf.

"Now, Dutton," he said, almost shouting to make his voice audible to Dutton. "Listen to me carefully, and try to understand what I say."

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Dutton!"

"I haven't, sir."

"You haven't what?"

"I haven't been careless with my work to-day. That was what you said, wasn't it, sir?"

"Bless my soul!" muttered Mr. Quelch. "It is really

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too bad. I shall have to speak to the boy in the deaf and dumb alphabet, really. This is becoming too great a trial to my nerves. Dutton, we are dealing with Nero."

"What hero, sir?"

"Nero!" roared Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!" said Dutton. "I didn't know Nero was a hero, sir. I thought he was a very bad man."

"He was a bad man!" bawled Mr. Quelch.

"Then how could he be a hero, sir?"

"I did not say he was a hero."

"You are not saying anything about Nero?" repeated Dutton, in astonishment. "Why, sir, I heard you, sir."

"You—you—"

"Oh, yes, I know it's true, sir. All the fellows heard you as well as me!"

The Remove simply roared.

They could not help it.

Mr. Quelch clenched his hand. His temper had gradually been getting worse and worse, and he was very near losing control of it now.

"Silence!" he shouted.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I will cane the next boy who laughs!"

The laughter died away.

"This class is most unruly!" said Mr. Quelch, greatly incensed. "The whole Form will be detained half-an-hour after lessons!"

The Remove groaned aloud.

The big hand on the clock now pointed to four, and they had been expecting only one more half-hour of it. To be detained till five was terrible. There was something very like mutiny in the looks of the Remove.

Bunter gasped in his corner.

"I—I say, sir!" he exclaimed. "I—I—I'm not to stand here till five, am I, sir?"

"Silence, Bunter!"

"I—I'm tired, sir!"

"Silence!"

"But am I to stand—"

"Yes, sir, you are to stand!" said Mr. Quelch angrily. "And if you say another word on the subject I will cane you!"

Bunter relapsed into silence. But his fat face was glowing with indignation. He was standing alternately upon one leg and then upon the other, and both were aching by this time. They had a great deal of weight to support.

Mr. Quelch turned to Dutton again. He opened his mouth to speak, but closed it again, and took his chalk instead, and chalked on the blackboard.

"Who was the successor of Nero?"

"Galba, sir!" said Dutton.

"Very well, you may sit down," said Mr. Quelch, feeling that he had done his duty by Dutton. But Dutton did not sit down.

"I am sure, sir!" he said.

"You may sit down."

"But it wasn't, sir!"

"Eh? What wasn't—what?"

"It wasn't Trajan, sir. Trajan—"

"I was not speaking about Trajan. I said you might sit down."

"Yes, sir. I've learned that it was Galba; but if you say it was Trajan—"

"I did not!" roared Mr. Quelch.

"It's in the book, sir!"

"What is in the book?" shrieked the unfortunate Form-master.

"About Galba, sir. I assure you—"

Mr. Quelch took the chalk again in a sort of frenzy, and scrawled on the board: "Sit down!"

"Oh, sir, certainly!" said Dutton.

And he sat down.

Mr. Quelch went to his desk and drank a glass of water. Dutton was almost too much for him on a hot day. Dutton himself was in a state of astonishment, and inclined to think that the hot weather had affected Mr. Quelch's brain.

"He must be off his rocker," Dutton confided to Alonzo Todd, who was sitting next to him on the form. "Fancy his telling me that Nero was a hero. Why, Nero was an awful chap—had his mother killed, and all that. Not my idea of a hero."

"He didn't say hero," said Todd.

"Didn't say Nero? Oh, yes he did."

Mr. Quelch turned quickly round from his desk.

"You are talking, Todd!"

"Yes, sir. I was explaining to Dutton—"

"Take fifty lines!"

"With pleasure, sir," said Alonzo, who was always polite.

"But—"

"Enough!"

"I was explaining to Dutton—"

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NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

"Will you hold your tongue, sir?" thundered the Remove master.

"Hold my tongue?" said Alonzo, who had a curious habit of repeating what was said to him when he was startled or nervous.

"Yes, sir. If you are not silent I shall cane you!"

"Cane me, sir?"

"Come here, Todd!"

"C-c-come here, sir?"

"Stand out here!"

Micky Desmond good-naturedly gave the Duffer of Greyfriars a shove, or he would probably have gone on arguing till he was jerked out by his collar. Todd went out very slowly and reluctantly before the class.

"Hold out your hand, Todd," said Mr. Quelch, taking a businesslike grip upon the pointer.

"M-m-my hand, sir?"

"Immediately!"

"Immed—"

"Will you do as I tell you?"

Todd gasped and put out his hand. Mr. Quelch made a smart cut at it—but the Duffer of Greyfriars involuntarily drew it back.

Crack!

The room rang with the crack as the pointer landed upon Mr. Quelch's own knee.

The Form-master gave a wild howl. The next moment he was clasping his knee, and standing on one leg like a stork.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites yelled.

"Oh, sir, I'm so sorry!" said Todd.

Mr. Quelch tried to calm himself.

"G-g-go back to your place!" he gasped. "I—I will deal with you presently, Todd. Go back to your place at once!"

And Mr. Quelch went to his desk and sat down upon the stool, and rubbed his knee—and for the next five minutes the Remove, like Othello, found their occupation gone.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Succeeds.

BILLY BUNTER groaned as the big hand of the clock pointed to six. It was half-past four, the usual time for the dismissal of the Remove. Bunter was tired of standing, and tired of the class-room. He had pictured to himself making a desperate bolt from the Form-room to the tuckshop as the clock went half-past, and within four seconds guzzling gingerbeer. Now there was half an hour more to wait.

"I simply can't stand it!" he murmured to Bob Cherry.

Bob snorted. He found it hard to stand, too, but he did not grumble.

"Sit on the floor, then," he growled.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Dry up!"

"I—I shall have to get away somehow," moaned Bunter. "I'm thirsty. Do you think it would be any good working off some ventriloquism on old Quelch?"

Bob Cherry grinned.

"I don't think I should care to, in his present temper," he remarked.

"I suppose it would be dangerous."

"What-ho!"

Bunter sniffed. He was a very clever ventriloquist, and he had often got out of corners by the use of his ventriloquial powers. But whenever he had tried them upon Mr. Quelch, the result had been disastrous.

And, as Bob Cherry remarked, Mr. Quelch was in the worst possible humour for an experiment now. But Bunter was desperate.

"Suppose I made the Head's voice call him," he said.

"Don't be an ass!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I must get out of this somehow; I'm tired!"

"Tell Quelch so," said Bob sarcastically.

Billy Bunter took the advice seriously. He blinked through his big spectacles at Mr. Quelch as he turned to the blackboard a few minutes later.

"If you please, sir—"

"Silence!"

"I'm awfully tired, sir—"

"Do you hear me, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir. I've got a delicate constitution, sir, and I'm afraid it may injure me to stand up, in—in the hot weather, sir?"

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

"Dry up, you ass!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Bunter grunted angrily. The whole Form were looking mutinous. Lessons had been bad enough in the usual lesson time. But to be detained like this was too bad.

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If they had been dealing with a weak master, the Remove might have had an outbreak then. But Mr. Quelch was not the kind of master to break out against.

But there was gloomy discontent in every face.

"I'm going to try a dodge, Cherry," murmured Billy Bunter.

"I advise you not."

"But I can't stand this."

"Oh, grin and bear it!"

"I won't!"

Bob Cherry shrugged his shoulders. The lesson dragged on. Mr. Quelch was as sick of it as his pupils were, but he could not retract what he had ordained. He was bound to keep the Remove there till five o'clock, and to stay with them.

Suddenly, above the drone of the Form-master's voice, came a slight sound of buzzing.

The Remove all looked up.

"A wasp!" murmured Tom Brown.

Mr. Quelch looked round uneasily.

He did not like wasps, and the buzz was very near his head.

He waved his book in the air.

"Shoo—shoo!" he exclaimed.

Buz-z-z-z!

The "shoo" did not seem to frighten the wasp. Bob Cherry looked quickly at Billy Bunter. He saw the fat junior's lips moving, and he knew that the Greystriars ventriloquist was at work.

But no one else in the Form-room suspected it as yet.

Z-z-z-z-z!

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, starting back as the z-z-z-z came close by his ears. "This is—is most annoying!"

Z-z-z-z!

"There is either a wasp or a bee here. Can you see it, any of you?"

"It seems to be close to you, sir," said Wharton.

"It has stopped now," said Mr. Quelch, listening. "Perhaps it has gone the way it came, through the open window. We will resume!"

Z-z-z-z-z!

It was the buzzing that resumed, not Mr. Quelch. The Form-master jumped, and waved his book to keep the unseen wasp off.

The buzzing ceased.

"Dear me! I—I think it must have settled upon my gown!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Bulstrode, see if you can see the wasp—please drive it off!"

"Certainly, sir!"

Bulstrode stepped from the form, book in hand. He looked over Mr. Quelch's gown behind, in search of the wasp.

Bulstrode could not see any wasp. But Bulstrode remembered his lines. And Bulstrode was ripe for mischief.

"There it is, sir!" he exclaimed excitedly.

"Where—knock it off, please!"

"I'll kill it, sir!"

And Bulstrode made a terrific swipe with his book, as if he were hitting for a boundary.

Mr. Quelch gave a yell as the heavy book crashed down upon his back with all the force of Bulstrode's powerful arm. He staggered forward, gasping.

"What—what—how dare you, Bulstrode?" he exclaimed.

"How dare you?"

"I was hitting at the wasp, sir!"

"You—you utterly stupid boy! You have struck me a fearful blow!"

"I didn't think of that, sir. I think I've squashed the wasp, sir!"

"Go back to your place, Bulstrode!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

Bulstrode went back, looking very serious and concerned; but winking at the Remove unseen by the Form-master. The juniors were trying not to laugh. They knew how much "stupidity" there had been in Bulstrode's action.

Mr. Quelch squirmed a little in his gown; the blow had made his shoulder ache. But the buzz had ceased; doubtless the wasp had been finished with.

But just as the Form-master rubbed his shoulder the buzz recommenced.

Z-z-z-z-z!

It was close behind Mr. Quelch, and he swung round in alarm.

"You did not succeed in killing the wasp, Bulstrode!" he exclaimed angrily.

"Shall I have another try, sir?"

"Certainly not!"

Z-z-z-z-z!

Mr. Quelch swung his book through the air several times. The wasp seemed to be keeping close to his head, for the z-z-z-z remained in his ears all the time. The Remove-master was red and excited.

"I really cannot continue the lesson while this annoying insect is here!" he exclaimed. "Wharton—Nugent—kindly look for the wasp and drive it out!"

Any interruption of the monotony was welcome. Wharton

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NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

EVERY
TUESDAY.

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ONE
PENNY.

and Nugent jumped up with alacrity, and hunted for the wasp.

Z-z-z-z-z!

"It's on the wall——"

"On the desk——"

"Faith, I can hear it over there!" exclaimed Micky Desmond.

"No—it's here——"

"Look towards the fireplace——"

"It's in the corner."

The whole Remove joined in the hunt without asking permission. In a moment the room was a scene of confusion, with the juniors rushing and shouting to and fro.

Mr. Quelch shouted to make his voice heard above the din.

"Go back to your places at once! How dare you——
Go——"

Z-z-z-z-z!

The Form-master jumped, and broke off, as the z-z-z-z started close to his ears again. He gasped for breath.

"Upon the whole, I shall not prolong the detention!" he exclaimed. "The class is dismissed!"

Mr. Quelch had had enough of the wasp, and the stuffy class-room, too. The boys grinned with delight, and made a break for the door, and went pouring out into the broad, flagged passage with a whoop.

Bob Cherry gave the Owl of the Remove a slap on the shoulder that made him stagger.

"Bravo, Bunter!" he exclaimed.

"Ow! Yow! You ass!"

"Bravo, you giddy ventriloquist!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Was it Bunter all the time?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here, come on, Bunter!" exclaimed Frank Nugent, seizing the fat junior by the arm. "You deserve something for that——"

"Ow! Leggo!"

"Come on, I say!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—ow—help——"

"You ass!" exclaimed Frank. "I'm taking you to the tuckshop! Don't you want any gingerpop?"

"Oh!"

Billy Bunter's expression changed at once. Gingerpop was what he wanted, and plenty of it.

"I—I didn't understand," he mumbled. "I'll come to the tuckshop with pleasure, Nugent. I'd do more than that for a fellow I like."

"Ha, ha! Come on!"

And Nugent rushed the fat junior across the Close at top speed—an exertion at which Bunter did not grumble for once as there was a treat at the end of it. A crowd of other juniors went with them.

They filled Mrs. Mimble's little tuckshop to overflowing. But Billy Bunter had a front place at the counter, sitting on a high stool, and his fat face was beaming.

"Gingerbeer!" he exclaimed. "Large size, please. And some jam-tarts—I think you said tarts, Nugent!"

Frank laughed.

"No, I didn't!" he exclaimed. "But you can have some, all the same. Give the porpoise six tarts, Mrs. Mimble!"

Bunter blinked at him.

"Twopenny ones, I suppose?" he remarked.

"Yes, porpoise!"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

But the gingerbeer and the tarts were forthcoming just then, and Bunter ceased. He turned to them, and his fat face beamed.

"This is something like!" he remarked.

And then he started operations, and was too busy for some time to make any further remarks.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bulstrode's Idea.

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Another gingerbeer for Bunter, Mrs. Mimble."

"Thanks! I say——"

"Jam-tarts for Bunter."

"Certainly, Master Nugent."

"Thanks awfully, Nugent. But I say——"

"Buns for Bunter."

"Good! But I say——"

"Here, you dry up!" exclaimed Frank Nugent indignantly. "If gingerpop, and buns, and tarts aren't enough, you can go and eat coke!"

Bunter blinked at him.

"They're enough, Nugent. I wasn't going to speak about grub."

"Not going to speak about grub!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in astonishment. "Are you ill, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Dry up!" said Nugent, tapping the fat junior on the head with his tumbler. "If you're to be fed, you can't expect to be allowed to talk, too. It's asking too much."

The too-muchfulness is terrific," said Hurree Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, with a solemn shake of the head.

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"The cheesefulness would be the good caper."

"Look here, I've got something to say," said Bunter, emptying his glass. "You can have that filled again if you like, Nugent. I wouldn't ask you, only I happen to be rather short of money at the present moment, owing to a disappointment about a postal-order. Look here, what's going to be done about the lines?"

"What lines?"

"My lines."

"Oh!" said Wharton. "I thought that perhaps you were thinking of my five hundred?"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I think I've enough to worry about with my own imposition. Quelch has told me to stay in the Form-room for an hour and write out a hundred times that Nero succeeded Galba—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean that Galba succeeded Rome—"

"Ha, ha! Go it!"

"Well, it was something or other—I forget what," said Bunter. "Now, confinement in the Form-room tells on my health in this weather. I've got a delicate constitution, as you know. I only keep myself going at all by taking plenty of nourishment. What I need in my state is long spells of rest—lying in the grass under the trees, you know. That would set me up."

"Go hon! I've heard of others feeling like that in the hot weather," said Bob Cherry. "But of course, you need rest more than anybody else."

"Of course," agreed Bunter. "The question is, what's going to be done about those blessed lines?"

The juniors laughed. Bunter's coolness struck them as comical. Many of the other fellows had impots, that were simply enormous, and would account for a great deal of their leisure time for the next day or two. But Bunter did not consider that a matter of any moment at all. His lines were the important thing, and he calmly expected the other fellows to put their heads together and think of some way out of the difficulty for him. And the curious thing was, that Bunter's cool check often had the required result, and he succeeded in shifting his troubles off upon other shoulders.

Bunter took an enormous bite at a jam-tart—the last on his plate—and resumed the subject, blinking at Harry Wharton & Co. through his big spectacles.

"Got any ideas about it, Wharton?"

"Not one."

"What do you think, Nugent?"

"I think I'll have another marmalade-tart."

"I mean, what do you think about my lines?"

"Nothing at all."

"Oh, really! I say, Cherry, what do you think had better be done?"

"The lines," said Bob Cherry.

Bunter grunted discontentedly.

"I really wish you wouldn't try to be funny at a serious time," he said. "Quelch was so bothered about the wasp that he forgot to detain me; but he'll remember the lines, and ask me for them. He's awfully bad-tempered to-day. Now, I rescued you all from detention by buzzing like a wasp—"

"So you did! Have another gingerpop?"

"Thanks, I will—I'll have two if you like; I'm pretty dry. Now, I was thinking that if Wharton, as Form-captain, goes to Quelch and explains that I'm not in a fit state of health to be detained in the Form-room, Quelch will let me do my lines in the study."

"What good will that do?"

"Why, then you fellows can do them for me, you know."

"There's a treat for you!" said Tom Brown, laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I suppose you don't want me to expire of over-exertion in this hot weather," said Billy Bunter pathetically.

"I've got a weak heart, you know."

"A weak head, you mean."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"We've nearly all got lines," said Bulstrode sulkily. "Don't make such a jaw about your impot, Bunter. You make me tired. If you fellows will all back me up, we'll defy Quelch."

Wharton's brows contracted a little.

There was no doubt that Mr. Quelch had been irritable and harsh that afternoon, and he had visited light offences with a heavy hand.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 129.

NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

But he was upon the whole a just and kind master, and Harry rightly considered that the fellows were called upon to put up with a little harshness patiently, when they were very well treated upon the whole.

But that was not Bulstrode's view.

He was angry and irritated, and most of the others were feeling very sore from Mr. Quelch's treatment of them that afternoon.

They had been detained in the hot, stuffy class-room, they had been snapped and snubbed, and half the Form had lines to do, and some of the impots were enormous.

To "get level" with Mr. Quelch was therefore a burning desire in many bosoms.

There was an immediate and eager demand to know how Bulstrode proposed to defy the Remove-master. Mr. Quelch was not exactly the sort of man to be defied with impunity.

"What's the wheeze, Bulstrode?" demanded Hazeldene.

"Get it off your chest, old man!"

"What can we do?"

Bulstrode grinned triumphantly at Harry Wharton. He thought he saw here an opportunity of taking the Form with him, and putting the captain of the Remove in the shade.

"Well, Quelch was in a temper this afternoon, and when he's cool he won't be able to pretend that he was just," said Bulstrode. "He's given Wharton five hundred lines, and that's simply absurd. He's given Nugent a hundred and fifty, and Brown a hundred, and nearly all of us have fifties and hundreds, or more. What do you think the Head would say if he knew that all those big impots had been imposed in a single afternoon?"

Hazeldene grinned.

"He'd say that Quelch had lost his temper owing to the hot weather, and chucked out lines on all sides in consequence," he said.

Bulstrode nodded.

"Exactly."

"But I don't see how that helps us," remarked Ogilby.

"Faith, and I don't, nayther!"

"That's because you're thick-headed duffers!" said Bulstrode. "I suppose you know that we've a right to appeal to the Head against the Form-master? If we're in the right, the Form-master gets it in the neck!"

"By Jove!"

"We're in the right this time."

"But—"

"This is my idea. We'll all refuse to do our lines. When Quelch asks for them, we'll say that we haven't done 'em."

"Oh!"

"When he's going to cane us, we'll say we appeal to the Head."

"But—"

"Let me finish. The matter goes before the Head. He discovers that Quelch gave us about three thousand lines between us, on a blessed hot afternoon. He'll make us do the lines, perhaps, to keep up appearances—but I'll bet a great deal we shall not be asked to show them up."

"But—"

"But even if we have to do them, it's cheap at the price! We shall get even with Quelch! The Head is certain to haul him over the coals for flagrant injustice. He'll have ten minutes with the Head that will make his hair curl!"

"Good egg!"

"In fact, he'll be quite likely to resign after such a talking-to as the Head will give him," said Bulstrode. "We may get rid of him entirely. That will be a triumph for the Remove, if you like!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Bulstrode!"

"Do you all agree?" exclaimed Bulstrode, looking round upon the excited crowd of juniors.

There was a shout of assent.

The scheme recommended itself at once to the thoughtless fellows. They were smarting under the treatment they had received, and the thought of scoring off so powerful a personage as a Form-master was irresistibly attractive.

"Hear, hear!"

"Hurrah!"

"We'll back you up, Bulstrode!"

"Faith, and we're with ye intirely!"

"Hold on!" said Hazeldene. "Wharton hasn't spoken yet. What does Wharton say?"

Bulstrode knitted his brows.

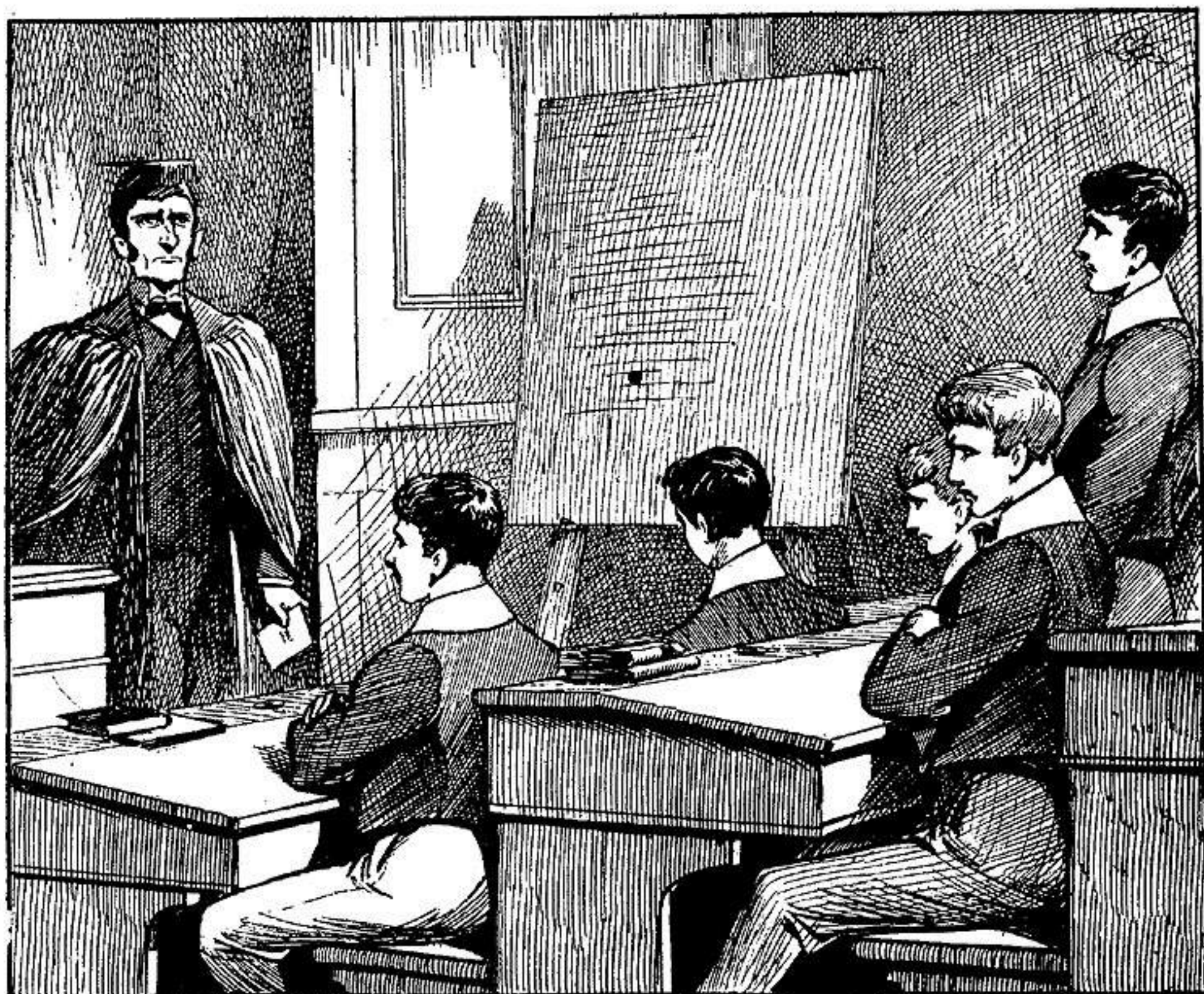
"I suppose Wharton won't back out if we're all agreed on the scheme," he said. "He will have to back up the Form."

"What do you say, Wharton?"

Wharton's eyes glistened.

"I say that it's a rotten scheme, and that I won't have anything to do with it!" he exclaimed.

A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.



"Take a hundred lines, Wharton!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Thank you, sir!" said Harry. "Take two hundred lines!" "Thank you very much, sir." "You will take five hundred lines." "Thank you so much, sir!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Wharton Objects.

THERE was a buzz among the crowd of juniors as Harry Wharton spoke. It was a buzz of surprise, and anger too.

Harry Wharton was Form captain, and was generally acknowledged to make an excellent one—far ahead of what Bulstrode had been when he held the post.

But some of the fellows regarded Harry as a little high-handed; and certainly he sometimes had a direct way of putting things which was not so tactful as it might have been.

When his temper was up, he would hit out straight from the shoulder, and on such occasions he seldom measured the force of his words.

Bulstrode scowled angrily. He had half-expected Wharton's refusal, and he did not understand Harry's motives, attributing Harry's attitude to pique, because the plan had emanated from another than himself.

"Of course, Wharton won't back us up against the masters!" said Bulstrode, with a sneer. "Wharton loves his kind teachers, like good little Georgie in the story-book. But we can do without him, I think."

"Yes, rather!" said Skinner emphatically.

"What-ho!" said Snoop and Stott, and several others.

"Hold on a minute!" exclaimed Ogilvy. "Let's see what Wharton's objections to the plan are. Why don't you like the idea?"

"Because it's a rotten one," said Harry.

"That's no answer," said Skinner. "You must admit that we have a jolly good chance of scoring over Quelch."

"I know that."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 129.

NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

"And a fair chance of getting out of doing the lines, too." "Yes, that's true." "And there isn't very much risk about it, either." "I wasn't thinking of the risk." "Then what's your objection?" "Yes, what's your objection, Wharton?" asked a dozen voices.

"I think it's a rotten caddish scheme, that's all," said Harry. "What do you want to score over Mr. Quelch for, in the first place?"

"Why, hasn't he been ragging us all the afternoon?"

"And hasn't he detained us?"

"Faith, and loaded us up with lines?"

Wharton nodded.

"I know all that," he said. "He was in a bad temper—but so were we! Quelch is pretty good-tempered on the whole. Suppose you even made him leave Greyfriars—do you think we should get a better Form-master in his place?"

"Oh, rats to that!" said Bulstrode. "We can take our chance of that."

"Yes, that is looking a jolly long way ahead," said Russell.

"Well, never mind that, then," said Harry. "I object to taking a rise out of Mr. Quelch in this way. He's ragged us to-day, but he's generally treated us well, and he's been really kind to some of us who needed it. I won't have a hand in taking him down. If the Head spoke to him as you expect, it would cut him awfully deep!"

"That's what we want," said Snoop.

"You may want it," said Harry contemptuously, "but I don't—and I don't believe any decent fellow here does."

"Oh, rats!" broke out Bulstrode, afraid that Harry would make an impression on the Form. "No blessed Sunday."

A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

school rot for me! If you don't want to back us up, you can say so, and keep out of the game!"

"Well, I do say so, and I shall certainly keep out of the game," said Harry. "And I hope every friend of mine will do the same."

"Hear, hear!" exclaimed Nugent, and Bob Cherry and Mark Linley together, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh added that the hear-hearfulness was terrific.

Bulstrode's face wore a very ugly look.

"You can have your way," he said. "I stick to my idea, if the fellows have the pluck to back me up. What do you chaps say?"

"We'll back you up, Bulstrode."

"Good for you."

"Good! Every chap on my side can call for what he likes," said Bulstrode, going up to the counter.

That finished it.

The crowd of juniors gave their orders right and left, and Harry Wharton and his own chums left the tuckshop.

Wharton looked round as he went out.

Many of the juniors avoided his glance; some did not notice it. Only Bob Cherry, Nugent, Linley, and Tom Brown, and the Nabob of Bhanipur followed him out. Even Hazeldene stayed with Bulstrode's party.

Wharton's lip curled a little as he emerged into the Close.

"That's what it's worth to be a Form captain," he remarked, with a shrug of the shoulders. "As soon as I stand against them, they all turn against me."

"They'll come round," said Bob Cherry.

"I don't care whether they do or not, as far as I'm concerned, but I'm thinking about Quelch," said Harry, knitting his brows angrily. "It's a dirty, low-down trick to play on him, and Bulstrode knows it. The other fellows don't think much, and he's leading them by the nose. I wouldn't have Mr. Quelch's feelings hurt for anything—certainly not because he was a bit crusty for once in a way."

Nugent nodded thoughtfully.

"I'm with you there," he remarked; "but the fellows don't seem to see it in that light. They're waxy, and they want to take a rise out of Quelch."

"Well, I'm against it."

"So are we," said Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather."

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"Still, it's no good arguing with those chaps," said Tom Brown, who had a horror of doing anything that looked like the conduct of a good little boy in a prize book. "Let's mind our own business, and let them alone."

"I suppose we can't stop them," said Harry, with a nod; "but I'm against it, all the time."

"That's understood. Shall we get down to the cricket now?"

Wharton shook his head.

"Not yet; no time."

"What's on, then?"

"Lines."

"But—"

"We've got the lines to do," said Harry Wharton decisively. "If we're not going to help Bulstrode's scheme, we'd better get them written at once, and handed in to Mr. Quelch. Let's go and start."

The chums looked dismayed.

The sun was still shining brightly, and the cricket-field and the river seemed to call to them. To shut themselves up in study or common-room and write out lines, required a very great effort of will.

"Hang it," said Nugent dolefully, "Bulstrode's idea isn't so bad, after all, you know. No; don't demolish me with a frown, Harry. I'm not proposing backing him up. Let's get in."

"Come on, then."

They entered the School House.

Bob Cherry and Mark Linley went to their study, No. 13, and Harry Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Singh went to No. 1. Even Linley, the most careful boy in the Lower Fourth in his conduct, had lines to do, Mr. Quelch having given him a hundred from Virgil for an imaginary offence.

But the Lancashire lad was quite of Harry Wharton's opinion in the matter. Without being in the least priggish, he realised quite clearly that the juniors could afford to forgive an outbreak of bad temper on the part of a man whose temper was often sorely tried, and who was, upon the whole, a kind and just man.

There were shouts and calls of merry juniors in the Close as the chums settled down to their task.

Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh sat down round the table in No. 1 Study, and started.

All three had lines to do; and Wharton's imposition—500 lines—was likely to keep him busy for a very long time.

But they grinned and bore it—at least, they bore it, even if they did not grin.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 129.

NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

The three chums were still very busy when there was a heavy footstep in the passage, and Billy Bunter rolled into the study, and sank with a gasp into the armchair.

He mopped his perspiring brow with a handkerchief, and blinked at the chums of the Remove through his spectacles, as he puffed and puffed.

"Oh, cheese it, grampus!" said Nugent, looking up from his work.

Bunter blinked indignantly.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Shut up!"

"I'm fagged out. I can't stand those stairs. I think they ought to have a lift put in for us," grunted Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go to the Head and suggest it," grinned Nugent. "I'm sure he would be grateful for the suggestion, and he would give you some substantial mark of his appreciation."

"The markfulness would be terrific," murmured the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Well, I find those stairs more trying every day. It's rotten."

"Try eating a little less between meals," suggested Wharton.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Better do your lines, Bunter," said Nugent. "They've got to be shown up to-night. You can do them here, as Mr. Quelch hasn't sent you into the class-room."

Bunter shook his head.

"I can't do them, Nugent."

"Can't do them! What do you mean?"

"I object to doing them."

"Eh! So do we, but we've got to do them, all the same."

"Yes, but it's a matter of principle with me," said Billy Bunter.

And at this announcement the three chums stopped their busy pens, and all three raised their heads to stare at Billy Bunter. He had succeeded in surprising them at last.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Does His Lines.

BUNTER blinked at the staring juniors, apparently surprised by their steady gaze.

"Would you mind repeating your last remark?" asked Nugent, in very polite tones.

"Yes, if you like. It's a matter of principle with me."

"Principle!"

"Yes," said Billy Bunter emphatically. "Principle! You chaps haven't very much principle, I'm afraid, but—"

"My only hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"The great-Scottfulness is terrific."

"Oh, really—"

"I must say that Bunter has struck something original at last," Harry Wharton observed. "Had you ever noticed that he had any principles, Nugent?"

Nugent shook his head.

"Never."

"Had you, Inky?"

"The neverfulness is terrific."

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"You're making a mistake, Bunt," said Wharton. "We've never heard of your principles before. You mustn't spring that on us, you know. Try something a little less steep."

"Look here, Quelch was unjust, and it's against my principles to submit to injustice," said Bunter. "It undermines the independence of the character."

"Independence," echoed Nugent faintly.

"Yes, that's the word."

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"But what have you got to do with independence?"

"I hope I'm an independent chap," said Billy Bunter. "I know I'm not understood in this study. I don't expect to be understood. Shakespeare wasn't understood in his own time, and Plato wasn't, either. Great men never are. I'm getting used to being under-rated. But I'm not going to give up my independence to please anybody."

"You started that dodge once before, and it worked out badly," said Nugent. "Look here, don't be a lazy slacker. Get the pen and do your lines."

"I'm on Bulstrode's side."

"Oh, don't be a cad—if you can help it!"

Bunter waved a fat hand.

"Let's drop the subject," he said. "We sha'n't agree. Besides, I can't do the lines. I feel too run down from want of nourishment. I suppose you fellows know it's tea-time?"

"I dare say it is."

"Well, aren't you going to have tea?"

"Can't you see we're busy?"

"Those rotten lines! Leave them till after tea, if you will do them. You'll do them ever so much quicker with a good meal inside you," said Billy Bunter persuasively.

"Rats!"

"I say, you fellows, we'd better have tea. I'm hungry."

"There's nothing in the study," said Harry Wharton, without looking up from the foolscap over which his pen was travelling at express speed.

"Oh, that's all right. I'll go down to the tuckshop."

"Will you, really?"

"Certainly. I'll get anything you like there."

"Good. Buzz off, then."

"What shall I get?"

"Oh, get cakes, and ham sandwiches, and butter and eggs and bacon, and cream puffs and dough nuts. Don't forget to pay for them."

"Eh?"

"Still, I don't suppose Mrs. Mumble will let you bring them away without the money, so that is all right."

"Look here——"

"Don't talk, old chap. I'm busy."

"But I'm short of money, Wharton. You see, a postal-order I was expecting didn't come by the last post in. I expect it will be here by to-night's delivery, but that's no good for tea."

"Would you mind shutting up a bit?" asked Nugent politely.

"What are we going to have for tea?"

"I've told you what we're going to have," said Wharton.

"Well, what am I going to have, then?"

"Whatever you like. We shouldn't presume to dictate to an independent chap like you."

"Oh, really——"

"You can have your independence, you know," said Nugent. "If that isn't satisfying enough, you can go and eat coke."

"I'm hungry."

"Look here," said Harry Wharton decisively. "You can feed with us, if you like; but we're not going to have tea till the lines are done. And then you won't have any, unless you've done your lines too."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"I mean that. If you're going to back up Bulstrode, go and back him up, and don't bother us."

"Well, I looked in at Bulstrode's study, and he was rude. He said it wasn't a sty, so it was no place for me," said Bunter, snorting with indignation.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. It was simply piggish. I was going to back him up from the most disinterested motives."

"Because you were too lazy to do the lines, you mean."

"Oh, really——"

"Well, you can take your choice—no grub until you've done your lines," said Harry Wharton inexorably.

Bunter grunted.

"I—I don't mind doing the lines to oblige a fellow I like," he remarked. "But suppose we do them after tea?"

"Rats!"

"You see, I shall feel ever so much stronger then, and I can knock them off like anything after tea," said Bunter persuasively.

"More rats!"

"Oh, really, you know, I don't feel strong enough to do lines now," said Bunter pathetically. "You know, I've got a delicate constitution, and I can only keep it going at all by taking plenty of nourishment."

"Do ring off, Bunter!"

"Are we going to have tea first?"

"No!"

"Yah! I suppose I'd better do the lines. I think you're a beast!"

"Thanks!"

Bunter snorted with indignation, and drew a chair up to the table. He made a great fuss of getting paper and ink.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 129.

NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

and gave a moan at nearly every movement, hoping to touch the hearts of the chums of the Remove. But either their hearts were very hard or they knew that Bunter was humbugging—at all events, they turned a deaf ear to the pathetic sounds he made.

Bunter's pen crawled over the paper when he was at work at last.

Wharton glanced at him in the interval of a minute's rest.

"Better buck up, Billy, or you'll be late for tea."

And then Bunter's pen fairly flew.

The lines were finished at last—a long and tiring task. Both Nugent and Hurree Singh had done some for Wharton, their own shorter impots being finished first. Bunter was done, too, and the mass of lines looked quite imposing.

Harry Wharton rose and stretched himself, with a long yawn.

"My hat!" he ejaculated. "That's done at last! I'm blessed if I've ever stuck at a table like that before! And all for the sake of the man who gave us the lines! If that's not out-Georgying good little Georgie in the story-book I don't know what is!"

"My dear chap, it beats Eric and the World of School hollow," grinned Nugent. "Let's bung them in on Quelch, and then go and get a feed. I'm famished."

And the juniors took up the lines and made their way to Mr. Quelch's study. The Remove-master was not there, so they looked for him in the masters' room, where they found him in conversation with Mr. Capper, the master of the Upper Fourth.

Mr. Quelch seemed to be quite restored to good-humour in the cool of the evening. He gave the juniors a pleasant nod, and looked in surprise at the impositions they carried.

"What is all this?" he asked.

"Our lines, sir."

"Your lines?"

"Yes, sir—the lines you gave us to-day."

"Oh!"

Mr. Quelch coloured a little as he took the lines. Mr. Capper looked at the great quantity of them in surprise, and with a slight smile. He could not help thinking that the Remove-master must have come down heavy on his class that afternoon.

"Ah, very good, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch. "I did not expect them quite so soon. You may place them in my study."

"Yes, sir."

The juniors went away. The lines were duly placed in Mr. Quelch's study, and then the chums made a direct line for the tuckshop.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Duffer Comes Round.

ALONZO TODD, the junior who had the distinction of being known as the Duffer of Gréyfriars, was sitting in the junior common-room with a thoughtful expression upon his face. He had left afternoon school that day the richer by a hundred lines, but he had not written them yet. He was buried in thought, and did not look up as a little crowd of juniors poured into the room. They were Harry Wharton & Co., fresh and refreshed from a feed in Mrs. Mumble's shop, the extent of which had satisfied even Billy Bunter.

Bob Cherry sat down in an armchair and stretched out his legs, kicking Alonzo as he did so. Bob's legs were long, and his feet were not small. Alonzo started out of his brown study with a little gasp.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob. "In the way again!"

Alonzo rubbed his calf.

"I'm so sorry!" he remarked.

"Oh, never mind!" said Bob Cherry magnanimously. "You're always in the way, but I suppose you can't help it."

Bob could afford to be magnanimous, as it was Alonzo who was kicked. Alonzo rubbed and rubbed, and blinked at the sturdy junior.

"Have you done your lines, Todd?" asked Harry.

Todd looked round at him.

"Done my lines?" he repeated.

"Yes—the lines you got this afternoon."

"No, I haven't done them yet, Wharton."

"You're going to do them?"

Todd rubbed his nose for a change.

"I don't know, Wharton. Bulstrode has pointed out that it is my duty to help the Form to stand up for their rights."

"It is your duty to obey orders, Todd."

"Yes, that is certainly quite correct," assented Todd

"My Uncle Benjamin always told me to obey orders and respect constituted authority."

"Good for Uncle Ben!" said Nugent. "Get your lines done, then."

"But Bulstrode said——"

"Never mind Bulstrode! Do your lines," said Harry Wharton. "It's the decent thing to do. It's rotten bad form to rag our own Form-master."

"Yes, there is something in that. But Bulstrode——"

"Hallo, who's taking my name in vain?" demanded a loud voice, and the burly Remove came into the room. "What's up?"

Todd blinked at him.

"I was just explaining to Wharton my reason for not doing the lines, Bulstrode. I think your reasons were very good."

"Of course they were!" said Bulstrode. "You're bound to back up the Form."

"Yes, yes, of course!"

"Stuff!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You're bound to back up your Form captain."

"Indeed, that is very true also."

"Rot!" said Bulstrode. "Stand by the Form, and we'll put Mr. Quelch in his place between us. Besides, you'll get out of doing the lines that way."

"Quite so."

"But you don't want to be a slacker," said Wharton. "What's a hundred lines? I've done five hundred."

"True; I don't want to be a slacker."

Nugent chuckled.

"Blessed if Todd isn't the latest edition of Mr. Facing-both-Ways," he remarked. "I'm interested to see how it works out."

"Do your lines, there's a good chap," said Harry Wharton. "You can take my word for it that it's the best thing to do."

"Well, I would always take your word, Wharton. My Uncle Benjamin told me always to take the word of a chap I know to be honourable."

"I tell you you'd better not do 'em," exclaimed Bulstrode. "You can take my word, too, I suppose?"

The Duffer of Greyfriars shook his head.

"No, Bulstrode, I am sorry to say I cannot take your word. My Uncle Benjamin——"

"What?" roared Bulstrode.

"My Uncle Benjamin warned me never to rely upon the word of a fellow I knew to have told a lie."

"Why, you—you——"

"My Uncle Benjamin said that a fellow who told one lie would tell another, and that it was never safe to trust him."

Bulstrode pushed back his cuffs.

"Your Uncle Benjamin seems to have given you a lot of good advice," he remarked. "Did he, among other things, caution you not to cheek a fellow who was able to wipe up the floor with you?"

Todd shook his head slowly.

"No," he replied. "I don't remember Uncle Benjamin to have given me any advice to that effect, Bulstrode."

The Remove bully smiled grimly.

"That's unfortunate," he remarked, "because it would have been very useful to you. Where will you have it?"

"Have what?"

"My knuckles," said Bulstrode.

"Your knuckles?"

"Yes."

"But I don't want——"

"It's not a question of what you want, but of what you're going to get," said Bulstrode. "You've called me a liar——"

"But you are a liar, you know," said Alonzo, looking distressed. "You remember telling Mr. Quelch a lie about the time Wun Lung's pigtail was cut off, you know. I am sure some of the other fellows remember."

"What-ho!" grinned Nugent.

"So you see, Bulstrode—— Oh!"

Alonzo was cut short as Bulstrode's knuckles tapped him on the nose.

"Oh, dear!" he gasped. "Pray do not assault me in that brutal manner, Bulstrode. You have considerably hurt my nose."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"I'm going to considerably hurt some more of you," grinned Bulstrode.

"Really, Bulstrode——"

Harry Wharton strode forward and stepped in front of Alonzo Todd. Bulstrode paused, and glared at the captain of the Remove.

"Stand aside!" he said.

Wharton did not stir.

"What are you interfering here for?" demanded Bulstrode between his teeth. "Why can't you mind your own business?"

"This is my business. You are not going to bully Todd because he's decided to do his lines. You can lead the rest

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 129.

NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

of the Form by the nose if you like, and if they choose to be led; but if a fellow chooses to have his own way he's not going to be bullied out of it. Todd can't stand up to you, I can; and if you're looking for trouble come right on."

"Hear, hear!" said Tom Brown.

Bulstrode gritted his teeth.

He did not want trouble with Harry Wharton, knowing from of old how useless it was for him to stand up to the sturdy Remove captain. But he could not retreat now without risking his new ascendancy in the Form, and he put up his fists.

"All right!" he exclaimed. "I——"

"Bed-time!" said a voice at the door.

It was Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars. The big Sixth-Former glanced at the juniors, and all signs of battle vanished in a second. Wharton nodded to him, and Bulstrode dropped his hands and turned away.

Wingate smiled slightly.

"Off to bed!" he exclaimed. "By the way, don't let me hear any row in the dormitory to-night, either. There will be trouble if I have to come to you."

And the Remove went to bed. Alonzo Todd caught Wharton's sleeve as they went upstairs.

"Thank you so much!" he said. "I really could not stand up to a big chap like Bulstrode, you know; though, of course, I should have done my best. My Uncle Benjamin always told me never to shirk a row, even if I were certain of being licked."

"Uncle Ben's a sportsman," grinned Wharton.

"I am really much obliged to you," pursued Todd. "I shall certainly write out the lines if you think it is better to do so, Wharton."

"I wish you would, Toddy."

"Then I certainly shall do so. I will write them out as early as possible to-morrow, and take them in to Mr. Quelch before afternoon lessons."

"Good for you!"

And they went into the dormitory. It was one more recruit for Harry Wharton's side; but the major part of the Form was with Bulstrode.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Dutton Is Pleased.

DUTTON sat down on his bed to take his boots off, and he was so occupied when Harry Wharton tapped him on the arm. Wharton often talked to the deaf junior out of sheer good nature; for the fellows, as a rule, did not yearn for the delights of conversation with Willy Dutton. Dutton was a decent fellow, and very pleasant-tempered; but his affliction was an affliction to others as well as himself.

He looked up with a nod to Wharton.

"You have some lines to-day?" asked Harry, sitting down beside Dutton, and beginning to remove his boots.

"Eh?"

"You had lines to-day?"

"Yes, it was very fine to-day," agreed Dutton. "I thought at one time that it might rain; but it didn't, after all."

"Lines!" shouted Wharton.

"Eh?"

"You have lines to do."

"Yes, and I hope it will be the same to-morrow."

There was a chuckle from the rest of the juniors, and Bulstrode joined in it. He did not envy Wharton the task of recruiting Dutton.

Harry put his head close to Dutton's and bawled.

"Did you have lines to-day?"

"Certainly; fifty."

"Have you done them?"

"Sung them? I don't understand."

"Have you written them out?"

"Oh, I see. No."

"You're going to?"

"How can I show them to you when I haven't written them out?" said Dutton. "Don't be funny, you know."

"You're going to write them out?"

"I never drink stout. I'm a teetotaler."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My only hat!" groaned Wharton.

"Eh? Whose cricket bat?"

"Oh, look here! Are you going to write your lines?" shrieked Wharton into the ear of the deaf junior.

"Eh?"

"Are you going to write out your lines?"

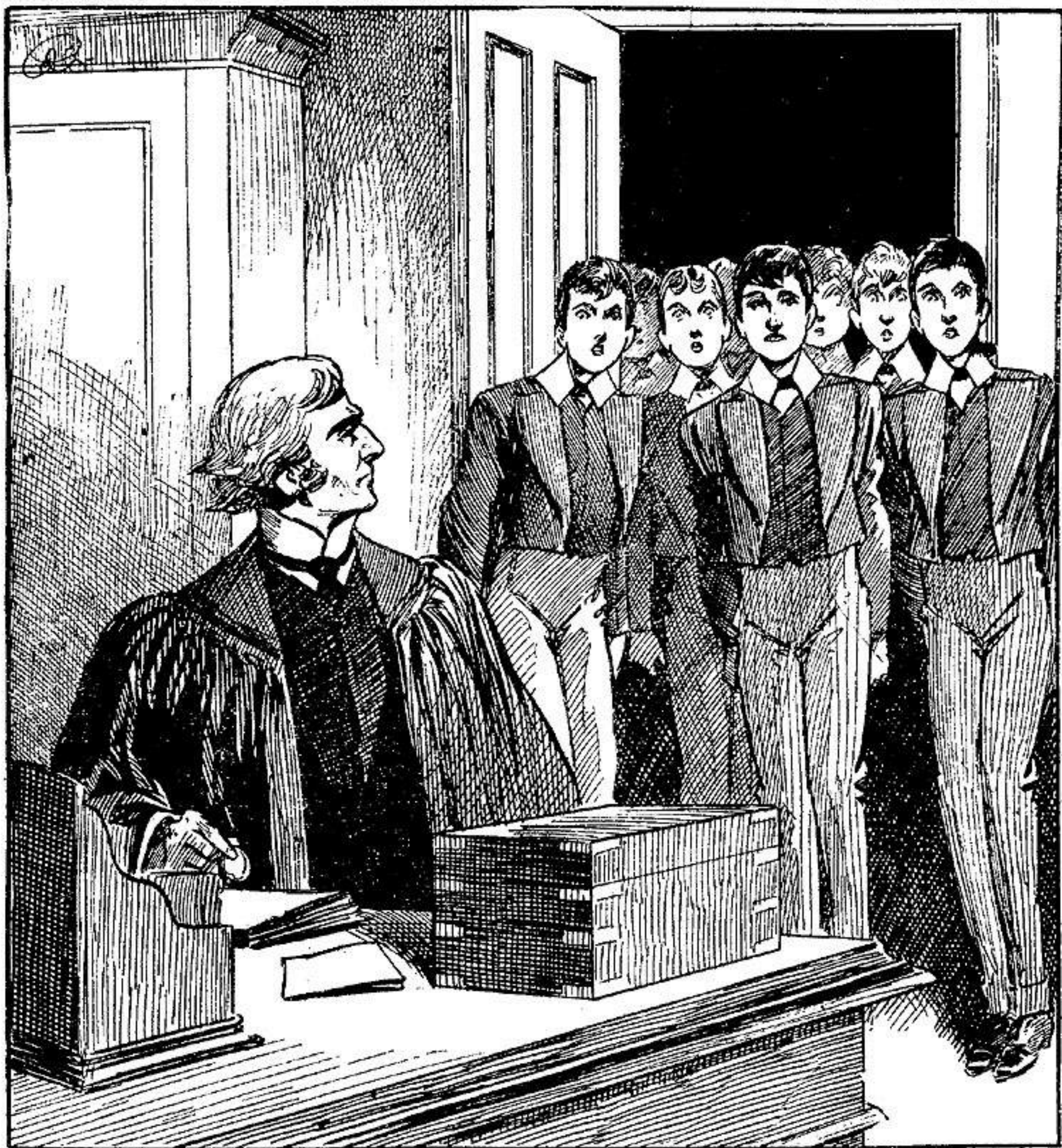
"Eh? Don't shout, you know, but speak clearly. I can hear you without your raising your voice, if you speak clearly."

"Are you going to write your lines?" yelled Wharton.

"Oh, my lines. No."

"Why not?"

A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS



"Dear me!" gasped the Head, as he turned his head towards the door. "Whatever do all you boys want?"
"P—please we've come," stammered Bulstrode.

"Bulstrode says——"
"Hang Bulstrode! Look here——"
"No, I haven't a book here. I never read in bed."
"Oh, chuck it, Harry," said Nugent. "Leave it till to-morrow, and write it out for him, you know."
Wharton shook his head.
"I'll make him understand, so long as my lungs last," he replied. "Look here, Dutton——"
"Eh?"
"Bulstrode is trying to make a set against Mr. Quelch, and it's a caddish thing to do," roared Wharton.
"Oh, come!" said Dutton. "You don't mean to say you put radishes in stew? Besides, what stew are you talking about?"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I want you to write out your lines."
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 129.

"Thanks, awfully, Wharton. That's very decent of you."
"What?"
"I hate doing lines," said Dutton. "But if you want to write out my lines, you may, of course, and I'll take them in."
"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Nugent.
"I didn't say I wanted to write out your lines," shrieked Wharton. "I never said anything of the sort."
"You're not afraid of being caught? Oh, no, I don't suppose there's any risk of that. Mr. Quelch has piled on so many lines lately, and he can't possibly look over them all."
"I didn't say that, you ass!"
"Oh, yes, they'll pass all right."
Wharton rose to his feet looking very weak.
"I think I'll give it up," he murmured.

NEXT
WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll bring you the paper to your study to-morrow," said Dutton. "I take this as really kind of you, Wharton."

"Oh dear!"

"Yes, I do, really. Thanks, awfully."

Wharton plunged into bed.

He did not feel equal to the attempt to explain matters to Dutton.

The juniors laughed themselves almost husky. Dutton was evidently persuaded that Wharton wanted to do his lines for him, and it would not be easy to get the idea out of his head.

Wingate came in and put lights out, and the Remove went to sleep. Harry Wharton had forgotten his talk with Dutton when he rose the following morning; but the deaf junior had not forgotten it.

He smiled cheerily at Wharton as they tumbled out of bed at the sound of the rising-bell.

"I'll bring the paper to your study after breakfast, Wharton," he said.

"You'll do what?"

"Oh, no; it won't want a lot for fifty lines. Still, I'll bring enough," said Dutton.

"You ass!"

"Oh, no, you won't have time to write them out before going into class; better leave it till after morning lessons. That will be in time."

"Oh, suffocate him, somebody!"

"Eh?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Sorry you spoke? Oh, rats! You've undertaken to do the lines now, and you can't get out of it. I call all the fellows to witness," said Dutton warmly.

"Hear, hear!" shouted the Removites.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You hear that, Wharton?"

"Look here, you awful chump——"

"Eh?"

"I never said anything about writing your silly lines."

"Eh?"

"I tell you I didn't say I'd write anything out for you."

"Oh, you were only joking? All right; I don't mind a joke, so long as you write the lines," said Dutton good-humouredly. "That's the important thing."

Wharton gasped and gave it up.

The Remove went down. After breakfast Dutton, as good as his word, brought some sheets of blank foolscap and a copy of the *Æneid* to study No. 1, and left them on the table. Harry Wharton found them there when he looked into the study. He glanced at the *Virgil*, and saw W. Dutton written on the title-page.

"My only hat!" he ejaculated.

Mr. Quelch was very good-tempered that morning in the Form-room. Perhaps he realised that he had been very harsh with the Remove the previous day, and he wanted to make up for it. His kindness of manner made Harry Wharton more than glad that he had refused to be drawn into any scheme for the discomfiture of the Form-master.

It had a very different effect on Bulstrode.

"Quelch is weakening," he muttered to Skinner.

Skinner nodded.

"Looks like it," he agreed.

"See, he can see us talking, and he's pretending to look another way," grinned Bulstrode.

"He's in a good temper now," said Ogilvy.

"Rats! He knows he's given us a chance, and that we can make him sit up if we like," said Bulstrode scoffingly.

"Well, perhaps that's it."

"Of course that's it."

Bulstrode was as careless and impertinent that morning as he dared to be, but Mr. Quelch was very patient. His patience, however, had only the effect of convincing Bulstrode that he felt unsure of himself, and that it would be safe to carry out the scheme that had been planned in the tuckshop the previous day.

After lessons, as Harry Wharton went out into the passage, Dutton tapped him on the shoulder with a friendly smile.

"I put the paper and the book in your study," he said.

"Oh, you ass!"

"You have to do the first fifty lines, that's all."

"You frabjous duffer!"

"Eh?"

"You blithering ass!"

"Yes, they'll pass all right. I'm awfully obliged to you, Wharton."

And Dutton walked away whistling. Harry Wharton stared after him.

"What on earth shall I do?" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha! You'd better write out the lines," said Russell. "That's easier than arguing it out with Dutton."

"What-ho!" grinned Nugent.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 129.

NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

And Harry Wharton thought so himself on reflection. He wrote out the lines accordingly, and handed them to Dutton, who took them in to Mr. Quelch. And if the Form-master noticed anything amiss with the handwriting, he did not make any remark about it.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Rebellion!

"BULSTRODE!"

Mr Quelch's voice stopped the bully of the Remove, as the Form filed out after the last lesson that day.

It was another hot afternoon, and the juniors were anxious to get out of doors. Bulstrode scowled a little as he stopped.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"I think I gave you an imposition yesterday, Bulstrode?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is it ready?"

"No, sir."

"It should have been handed to me before this," said Mr. Quelch. "There were also a number of other impositions. All of them should be handed to me by tea-time this evening. You hear me?"

"Yes, sir," said a dozen voices in chorus.

"If you please, sir——" began Bulstrode.

"That will do, Bulstrode. You can go."

The juniors left the Form-room.

Some of the conspirators were looking a little dubious now. It was all very well to conspire among themselves, borrowing courage of one another, but it was different when it came to facing the cold, clear eyes of Mr. Quelch.

A good many of the juniors began to doubt whether they would have nerve enough to carry the scheme through.

But Bulstrode had no doubts.

If only for the purpose of scoring off Harry Wharton, he was determined to make a success of his scheme.

"Looks like trouble for some of us," Trevor remarked.

"Not if we all stand together," said Bulstrode.

"Wharton's against us," said Russell.

Bulstrode shrugged his shoulders.

"Let him be! Wharton isn't the big panjandrum he would like to make out. We can get along very well without Wharton."

"It's risky," said Lacy.

"Who's afraid?"

"Oh, I'm not afraid!"

"I'm game," said Ogilvy, "only——"

"Look here, everybody knows we're backing up against Quelch," said Bulstrode. "We can't back down now. We can't get the lines done in time now unless we hurry them through, and let all the fellows see us eating our words. Are you going to play the giddy goat in that way?"

"Well, no."

"Faith, and ye're right, Bulstrode."

"Let's stick it out," said Skinner.

"Hear, hear!"

And the conspirators determined to "stick it out." After all, Bulstrode was the ringleader, and in case of trouble he would get the worst of the punishment. And if he did not falter, the rest were bound to go on.

Alonzo Todd had written out his lines and handed them in; but, with the exception of Harry Wharton and his chums, Todd was the only one to do so—excepting, of course, Dutton whose lines had been written for him.

There were fifteen juniors, at least, in the scheme, and they were numerous enough to keep one another in countenance, and to make an impressive show against Mr. Quelch if the matter came before the Head—as Bulstrode was determined that it should.

At tea-time some of the fellows were looking uneasy, but Bulstrode kept up a very bold front.

Not a line had been written.

Mr. Quelch was in his study, where he sometimes had his tea. Trotter, the page, brought in his tray and set it on the table.

Mr. Quelch looked at his watch.

It was time some of the Removites had come in with their lines. Mr. Quelch might regret that he had been so liberal with those lines; but having imposed them, he intended to have them written.

He was not the kind of master to forget an imposition—that was only a way to make the boys regard such punishments with indifference, and to make it necessary to have recourse to the cane.

Mr. Quelch finished his tea, and rang for Trotter.

It was now half-past six, and most of the Removites must have had their tea by that time.

It was clear that the lines had been forgotten, or neglected.

Trotter made his appearance, and gathered up the tea-things on the tray.

"Kindly send Master Bulstrode to me, Trotter," said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir."

The page retired.

In a few minutes there was a sound of footsteps in the passage. Mr. Quelch looked up from his book and listened. Bulstrode was, evidently, not coming alone.

There was a knock at the door—not a timid rap, but a loud knock. Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"Come in," he said.

The door opened.

Bulstrode came into the study, and a crowd of juniors were at his heels. Some of them hung back in the passage, and some hesitated in the doorway. But five or six followed the burly Removite boldly into the study.

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows.

"I sent for you, Bulstrode," he said.

"Yes, sir. I suppose it is about the lines, sir?"

"Quite right."

"As the others are in the same boat—I mean, as they all had lines to do, they all came with me, sir," said Bulstrode.

"Very well. You have done the lines, I suppose?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Quelch's brow contracted.

"You have not done them?"

"No, sir."

"And you have come in a body to tell me so?"

"Yes, sir."

"I do not understand this, Bulstrode. Did I not distinctly order you to have the lines ready to present to me by tea-time?"

"You did, sir."

"And yet you have not done them?"

"We have not done them, sir."

"All of you?"

"All of us, sir."

Mr. Quelch's eyes glinted.

"May I ask you to explain why, Bulstrode?"

Bulstrode's heart beat faster for a moment. But he took his courage in both hands, as it were, and replied:

"Certainly, sir. We have talked the matter over, and we think that you were very hard on us, sir."

"What?"

"We appeal to the Head, sir."

Mr. Quelch started from his chair.

The look upon his face made the juniors wish themselves well out of the study. But it was too late to retreat now.

"You appeal to the Head, Bulstrode?"

"Yes, sir," said Bulstrode, as firmly as he could.

"Against me?"

"It is our right, sir. Vernon-Smith was allowed to appeal to the Head—it's an old custom of the school, sir."

"I am quite aware of that. Are all the others here of the same mind?"

"All, sir."

"Let them reply for themselves." Mr. Quelch's gimlet-eyes swept over the assembled juniors. "Do you all wish to appeal to the Head?"

"Yes, sir," said the crowd with one voice.

"Very well. It is your right. You know your way to the Head's study," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "He is there now. Go there, and kindly explain to him."

"But—"

"Not a word more, Bulstrode. Go to the Head, and explain to him that you have not done the lines imposed by me, and give him your reasons. You have elected to appeal to the Head. You shall do so. Close the door, please."

And Mr. Quelch waved his hand imperatively to the door.

The juniors crowded out.

Bulstrode closed the door.

The crowd stopped in the passage. And it is safe to say that a more dismayed and uneasy crowd never filled a passage at Greyfriars before.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Appeal to the Head.

BULSTRODE was silent. He did not exactly know what to do, or what to say. He had led the rebellious Removites into this pass; but how to lead them out again he did not quite know. He stood with a puzzled frown on his face. The weaker spirits among the rebels were already expressing regret and alarm.

"This is a ripping position, I don't think!" Lacy remarked. "What's the next move in the game, Bulstrode?"

"Looks to me like a licking all round," said Snoop.

"Most likely."

"Better have taken Wharton's advice."

"Cherry, and Nugent, and Brown have kept out of it, too!" growled Morgan. "We'd have shown more sense to do the same, look you."

"Yes, rather!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 129.

NEXT WEEK: **"BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."**

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ONE
PENNY.

Bulstrode looked round with a bitter smile.

"Getting frightened already?" he sneered.

"You're frightened yourself," said Stott.

"It's a lie!"

"Well, you look it."

"We're all right," said Bulstrode, recovering his courage, somewhat, as he saw the signs of falling away on all sides of him. "You remember that fellow, Vernon-Smith, appealed to the Head against Quelch, and he scored."

"One swallow doesn't make a summer," retorted Ogilvy. "Besides, there was secret influence at work in Vernon-Smith's case."

"Rats! We're in the right, ain't we?"

"Well, you say we are."

"Don't you think so yourself, ass?"

"Blessed if I know. I know I don't want to do the lines, if that's what you mean, and I suppose that's really what's the matter with all of us."

"Nothing's happened that I don't expect," said Bulstrode. "I—"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"Come off!"

"Cheese that!"

"I tell you I expected Quelch to cut up rough. Perhaps I thought he'd take us into the Head's study and accuse us, and give us a chance of squashing him."

"He's too jolly cute for that," said Ogilvy. "He's left it to us to break it to the Head. We've got to march in and complain of our Form-master. That's very different from answering up to him if he took us in there."

"Yes, rather!" said Hazeldene. "It's a bit rotten to complain of one's Form-master, anyway."

"What-ho!"

"He's only trying to put us in the wrong," said Bulstrode, desperately. "It will work out all right if you stick together."

"Well, we'll do that," said Hazeldene. "We're in too deep to wriggle out now, and either Quelch has got to get it in the neck, or we've got to."

"That's so."

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"Well, then, stop whining, and let's buck up," said Bulstrode scornfully. "We've got to open the ball, that's all. We've got no choice now, anyway, so let's get on."

"Oh, all right!"

And Bulstrode marched off towards the Head's study, and the juniors followed him, feeling a great deal like so many lambs going to the slaughter.

Bulstrode's promise that they should score over the Form-master seemed extremely doubtful of fulfilment now; but, as Hazeldene said, they were in too deep for retreat. The foolish game had to be played out to the end.

Bulstrode tried to keep up an appearance of perfect nonchalance, but he could not quite hide his uneasiness as he knocked at the door of the Head's study.

"Come in!" called out the deep voice of the Head.

The juniors went in.

Dr. Locke looked considerably surprised at finding his study invaded by fourteen or fifteen members of the Lower Fourth Form.

He gazed inquiringly at the juniors.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "Whatever do you boys want?"

Some of the juniors nudged Bulstrode. He was the spokesman, and no one had any intention of relieving him of his task.

Bulstrode cleared his throat.

"We've come, sir—" he began.

There he stopped.

Dr. Locke nodded.

"Yes," he said good-humouredly, "I can see that you have come, Bulstrode. That is really self-evident. What I wish to know is, what you have come for."

Bulstrode turned very red. The unhappy rebels all looked at the floor, and wished that it would open and swallow them up.

"If—if you please, sir—" stammered Bulstrode.

"Well?"

"We—we've come—"

"Yes."

"M—Mr. Quelch s-s-sent us, sir."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Dr. Locke, in astonishment. "Whatever have you been doing, to make Mr. Quelch send so many of you to me to be caned?"

"I—I—I—"

The Head rose, and took a cane from his desk.

"Very well," he said. "You first, Bulstrode."

Bulstrode nearly choked.

"I—I—I didn't—"

The Head's mistake was natural. Mr. Quelch never sent boys in to him except to be caned, and though he was surprised at the number of the delinquents, he had no doubts on the subject. He signed to Bulstrode to stand forward.

"Come, come, Bulstrode. It is useless for you to say that you did not do whatever it is Mr. Quelch desires me to punish you for. I cannot listen to you."

"But I—I—"

"Hold out your hand, Bulstrode."

"But, sir—"

"Come, come, you are wasting my time," said the Head, frowning.

"But, sir, Mr. Quelch didn't send us here to be caned!" exclaimed Bulstrode, jerking out the words in a breathless hurry.

"What!"

"We—we came—"

"I fail to understand you, Bulstrode."

"We—we came of our own accord, sir—"

"You stated just now that Mr. Quelch had sent you—"

"So he did, sir."

The Head looked decidedly impatient.

"Bulstrode, try to be lucid. You say in one breath that you came of your own accord, and in the next that Mr. Quelch sent you. Both statements cannot be correct."

"Yes, sir."

"Will you explain to me at once?"

"You—you see, sir—" stammered Bulstrode.

"I do not see in the least."

"We—we came to appeal to you, sir—"

"To appeal to me?"

"Yes, sir. To appeal—"

"Do you mean to say you want leave, or an extra excat?" said Dr. Locke. "You should apply to your Form-master in the first place."

Bulstrode's face was crimson, and the other fellows stood shifting and fidgeting uneasily. It seemed as if the Head would never understand.

"No, sir, it's not that. We—we're appealing to you against Mr. Quelch," Bulstrode burst out desperately. "An appeal to the Head, sir. It's our right."

Dr. Locke's face hardened.

"You are appealing to me against your Form-master?"

"Yes, sir. Vernon-Smith did when he was here."

"You are within your rights, Bulstrode, in doing so; and I trust your action will be justified," said the Head grimly. "Kindly acquaint me with the facts of the case, and as briefly as possible."

"Very well, sir. It was yesterday afternoon. Mr. Quelch lost his temper owing to the hot weather, and—"

"You must not make such a statement as that, Bulstrode. If you are impertinent I shall cane you, and dismiss the matter."

"Well, sir, he gave us three thousand lines."

"He gave you what?"

"Three thousand lines among us in one afternoon, sir."

The Head pursed his lips.

"H'm! That may only mean that you were unruly, and that Mr. Quelch was obliged to deal out extraordinary punishments, Bulstrode. In fact, I have very little doubt that such was the case."

Bulstrode was decidedly discouraged. This was not what he had hoped for.

But he stuck to his guns. As a matter of fact, there was no help for it now. The rebels realised that they had either to make their tale good, or face the consequences. And the expression on the doctor's face seemed to hint that the consequences would not be pleasant.

"All the fellows will back me up in saying that we—we played up—I mean, we behaved ourselves well, sir," said Bulstrode. "We're not the only fellows who were punished

for nothing. There were a lot of others—nearly all the Form, sir, in fact."

"But the others, apparently, have not chosen to complain."

"They were afraid to, sir," said Bulstrode boldly.

"Oh!"

"They were afraid Mr. Quelch would be down on them, sir, if they claimed the right of an appeal to the Head."

Dr. Locke pursed his lips.

"You have chosen to appeal to me," he said at last. "I have no choice but to look into the matter; but if this is an idle complaint, Bulstrode, you will be sorry for having made it."

"I know you will do us justice, sir."

"Perhaps that will not be agreeable to you, however," said the Head caustically. "But to resume. Give me the names of all the boys who were punished by Mr. Quelch the same afternoon."

Bulstrode started.

"But, sir—"

"You heard me, Bulstrode—"

"But, sir, the—the others have not complained, and—"

"And I wish to know why."

"It was because they were afraid to, sir."

"I am afraid I cannot accept your opinion on that as final, Bulstrode. Kindly give me the names."

"I—I don't think I can remember them all, sir."

"Very well. Give me what you remember."

Bulstrode bit his lip.

"There—there was Brown, sir, and—and Mark Linley—"

The Head looked a little surprised. He knew that Linley, at all events, very seldom had an imposition to do.

"Then there was Dutton—and Todd—and Bunter—"

"Well?"

"And Cherry and Nugent and Inky—I mean Hurrea Singh—"

"Any more?"

"And Wharton, sir," said Bulstrode.

The Head made a note of the names on a slip of paper. He rang the bell, gave the paper to Trotter, and told him to bring the juniors at once to the study.

Then he turned to his desk again; and the juniors waited. The Head's look was very grave. Bulstrode had given him a list of the top boys in the Remove; if Harry Wharton & Co. had been punished, as well as Bulstrode and his set, it certainly showed that Mr. Quelch had been on the war-path that afternoon, at all events.

There was silence in the study till a tap was heard at the door, and Harry Wharton & Co. came in.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Fiasco.

HARRY WHARTON glanced at Bulstrode and his followers, as they stood crowded together before the Head's desk. A sorrier-looking band of rebels had certainly never been seen under the sun. All the juniors except Bulstrode wished themselves well out of it; and even the Remove bully was extremely doubtful now. If Harry Wharton backed him up, things would probably take a favourable turn. But Wharton had already declared his intention of standing by his Form-master. Harry had left no doubts upon that point; his warning had been plain enough, and Bulstrode & Co. knew what to expect.

The Head raised his eyes and looked over the juniors as they came in.

"You sent for us, sir," said Wharton.

"Yes, Wharton. Bulstrode has appealed to me, against a certain punishment inflicted by his Form-master yesterday afternoon. I understand that you and the rest shared

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Bulstrode made a terrific blow at the Imaginary wasp with his book. It fell on Mr. Quelch's back with a force that made him stagger. "What—what—how dare you?" gasped the Form-master.

this punishment, which Bulstrode declares was undeserved."

"Yes, sir."

"Do you declare that it was undeserved, Wharton?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"Did you have a large imposition?"

"The largest of all, sir—five hundred lines."

Dr. Locke started.

"That was very heavy, Wharton."

"Yes, sir."

"For what fault did Mr. Quelch impose this imposition?"

"Impertinence, sir."

The Head looked very hard at Harry Wharton. The captain of the Remove made the reply with perfect calmness.

"That is certainly very frank of you, Wharton," said Dr. Locke, after a pause. "So you were impertinent to Mr. Quelch?"

"Yes, sir. I did not really mean to be disrespectful, but I am afraid we were all feeling out of sorts, and we had a little rag."

"Ah! A rag, I believe, is a joke worked in concert by a number of persons, for the sake of—of what you would call taking a rise out of someone."

"Exactly, sir."

"Of what nature was this rag?"

"We pretended to thank Mr. Quelch very gratefully when he gave us lines, sir."

The Head could not help smiling.

"And you found that very amusing, did you?"

"Well, sir, I'm afraid we meant to make Mr. Quelch

waxy—ahem!—I mean, in a bad temper, sir. I don't excuse it, sir. I suppose we got what we deserved."

"I am glad you are able to see it in that light, Wharton. You think, then, that you deserved the punishment Mr. Quelch imposed?"

"I think, sir, that I should be willing to leave that to Mr. Quelch to decide. He has always been just."

"Very good, Wharton. And you, Cherry, are you satisfied with the justice of your punishment?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you, Nugent?"

"I suppose Mr. Quelch knows best, sir."

"Quite so. And you, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter blinked reprovingly at Bulstrode & Co. through his big glasses. He saw that the tide was going against Bulstrode, and he was very pleased to be on the winning side.

By this time the fat junior had persuaded himself that he had been backing Mr. Quelch up all the time, and he was feeling very virtuously scornful towards Bulstrode.

"Certainly, sir," he said. "I said all along that Mr. Quelch was in the right, sir, and I used all my influence in the Form to stop this, sir."

"Ahem—"

"I think it's the duty of a junior to back up constituted authority," said Bunter, who could not possibly take a virtuous role without becoming priggish. "We're sent here to learn, sir, not to rebel against our kind teachers. I am ashamed of Bulstrode, and I hope he will get into a better frame of mind, and try to become more like me and my friends."

Bulstrode glared, and the Head coughed.

"That will do, Bunter. Brown, are you satisfied?"

"Quite, sir."

"And you, Linley?"

"I have no complaint to make, sir."

"What do you say, Hurrec Singh?"

"The punishfulness was for the talkfulness in the honourable class, sir," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The talkfulness was the accomplished fact, and the punishfulness followed. There is no complainfulness."

"Very good! And you, Todd?"

"Well, sir, I did not like doing the lines," said Alonzo Todd. "But Wharton explained to me that I ought to do them, to back Mr. Quelch up, sir."

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Wharton fiercely.

The Duffer of Greyfriars looked at him in wonder.

"But you said, Wharton—"

The Head interrupted.

"So Wharton told you you ought to back up your Form-master, Todd?"

"Yes, sir. I am afraid it is too late now, Wharton. You did not tell me that it was a secret, or I would not have told Dr. Locke. My uncle Benjamin always impressed upon me to keep a secret faithfully, but in this case, you did not tell me it was one."

"You ass!"

"You frabjous chump!" murmured Nugent.

"Really—"

"Come, come, silence!" said the Head. "You took this excellent advice, Todd, and decided to support your Form-master."

"Yes, sir," said Alonzo. "Bulstrode thought the punishment was unjust, and Wharton thought I had better do it, and, as he protected me from Bulstrode's violence, I thought I would take his advice."

The doctor's eye gleamed upon Bulstrode for a moment.

"So Bulstrode threatened you with violence, did he?"

"If you please, sir—" began Bulstrode.

"Silence, Bulstrode. I think I am beginning to see how this matter really lies," said the Head. "Go on, Todd!"

"I really have no more to say, sir. I am sorry to fail to back up Bulstrode, but it is impossible to take two sides at once. I hope Bulstrode will see that, and will not bear malice. Besides, I think that it is very probable that if Mr. Quelch were induced to resign his position here, we might get a worse Form-master, so upon the whole—"

"Who has been talking about Mr. Quelch resigning his position here?" asked Dr. Locke, very quietly.

"You see, sir, we discussed it, and— Oh!"

"What?"

"Ow!"

"What are you making those ridiculous noises for, Todd?"

"Ow! Somebody kicked me, sir—quite by accident, I am sure, but it hurt me considerably."

"Did you kick Todd, Bulstrode?"

"N-no, sir."

"Are you sure?"

"I—I might have pushed against him, sir!" stammered Bulstrode.

"Stand further back, Bulstrode."

"Yes, sir!"

"Now go on, Todd. So it was suggested that Mr. Quelch might resign his position here in consequence of this?"

"I hope I am not letting any secrets out," said Todd, looking round nervously. "You did not wish me to keep this secret did you, Bulstrode?"

The Remove bully gritted his teeth.

There was no stopping the innocent babbling of the Duffer of Greyfriars, and the whole scheme was sure to come to light now.

"Go on, Todd!"

"Yes, sir. We discussed it, sir, and Wharton was against it. I only wanted to do what was right, and I am sure Bulstrode understands that. My uncle Benjamin always told me to do what was right and risk misunderstanding, sir—"

"Kindly keep to the point. Am I to understand that this whole affair is a scheme for causing trouble to Mr. Quelch—a set made against a Form-master by certain members of his Form?"

Todd rubbed his nose.

"Bulstrode can reply to that question better than I can, sir," he said. "I am sure Bulstrode knows better, as he was the originator of the whole scheme."

The Head looked at Bulstrode.

"Please answer, Bulstrode," he said.

The Remove bully looked sullen.

"I only wanted fair play," he said.

"You shall have that," said the Head quietly. "I have questioned all these boys, who were also punished, and—stay, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 129.

NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

I think I did not question you, Dutton. You were punished with the rest yesterday afternoon?"

"I had no time for a rest, sir," said Dutton. "You see, we were detained in the Form-room until five o'clock."

"You were punished by Mr. Quelch?"

"No, sir."

"Bulstrode gave me your name as one who was punished. Are you sure that you were not given an imposition by Mr. Quelch?"

"No, sir. I consider them unhealthy."

"What?"

"And I do not like shellfish, anyway."

"Shellfish!" said the Head faintly. "What is the matter with the boy?"

"Quite so, sir; I never touch them."

"You—you never touch what?"

"Whelks, sir."

"Whelks!" gasped the Head.

"Yes, sir. I don't like them."

"Boy, I did not speak to you about whelks. Ah, I forgot! You are deaf!" The Head raised his voice. "Did Mr. Quelch punish you yesterday afternoon?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Have you any complaint to make?"

"I have never tried it, sir."

"What?"

"But I like currant cake, and Genoa cake—"

"Cake—cake! I did not say anything about cake. Upon the whole, I think it is unnecessary to question Dutton," said the Head. "Now, Bulstrode, your complaint has not been supported by the rest. The boys who were least likely to deserve the punishment have acknowledged that the punishment was just. Todd has fortunately admitted that the whole complaint and appeal to me is a scheme for revenge upon Mr. Quelch—for that is what it amounts to."

"If you please, sir—"

"You have said quite enough, Bulstrode. I can see the whole matter very clearly now. You have been trying to take an unfair advantage of your Form-master. These other boys who have supported you I will excuse, because I feel convinced that they were led into this by you. You, however, I cannot excuse. The punishments imposed by Mr. Quelch are confirmed by me—you hear? All of you may go but Bulstrode. I have a few words to speak to Bulstrode."

The juniors left the study.

Bulstrode stayed behind.

The "few words" the Head had to speak to him were apparently emphatic ones, for when Bulstrode came out of the study he was wriggling in a most expressive way, and rubbing his hands hard together, and he replied only with surly grunts to the comforting remarks his friends tried to make.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bulstrode Means Mischief.

THAT evening there was a rush to get the lines done. In half the studies in the Remove passage, and in the common-room, juniors were busy with their lines.

The plot had fallen through, and the impots had to be written out after all. They had to be handed in that evening, and the work was pressing. Doleful juniors went up and down borrowing foolscap, and sat at tables scribbling away for dear life. As for Bulstrode, he had fallen from his high estate as leader of the rebels. The rebels—rebels no longer—scoffed at him. Harry Wharton came in for some black looks, but he was much more popular than Bulstrode. The latter had a rather trying time that evening.

When he came into the junior common-room with a packet of foolscap under his arm, there was a howl of derision.

"Here he is!"

"Here's the conquering hero!"

"Here's the giddy rebel!"

"Licked, Bulstrode?"

"Serve him jolly well right!"

"Might have all been licked!"

Bulstrode scowled round upon his derisive followers.

"Oh, shut up!" he exclaimed. "It would have been all right if Wharton had backed us up, instead of turning against us."

"He didn't turn against us," said Ogilvy. "He told you all along that he wouldn't have a hand in the business!"

"Of course he did."

"Faith, and we all heard him intirely!"

"He ought to have stood by us, and then it would have been all right," said Bulstrode, between his teeth.

"Well, you know what he told you, and if his support was necessary, you should have cried off in time, when you knew you couldn't get it," growled Lacy.

"Yes, rather!"

"You chump, Bulstrode."

A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

"You ass!"
"You fathead!"
"Go and eat coke!"
"Pah—pah!"

Bulstrode clenched his fists, as if half-inclined to run amock among the Removites. But he restrained himself, and sat down at a corner of the big table, and began to do his lines. The sight of Bulstrode doing the lines he had loudly declared he would not do excited further derisive remarks, which he pretended not to hear.

When Harry Wharton came in, Bulstrode gave him a fierce scowl. The captain of the Remove grinned at the sight of the juniors scribbling away.

"Go it!" he said. "You might have taken your time over it if you had started earlier."

"We depended on that fathead Bulstrode," said Ogilvy.

"More ass you!"

"The ass-fulness is terrific!"

"You ought to have backed us up, Wharton!"

"In ragging the best master in the school?" said Wharton.

"Not much! You were a set of asses to think of such a thing, and you deserved worse than you've got."

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, "Bulstrode has got you into a hole, you know, and it would be only fair to make him stand a feed, in compensation. I would help with the shopping, and the cooking, too, if you like."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You hear that, Bulstrode— Oh!"

A book flew through the air, well aimed by Bulstrode, and it caught the Owl of the Remove on his fat chin. He gave a yell.

"Ow! Who threw that book?"

"I did!" said Bulstrode.

"Did you chuck it at me on purpose?" roared Bunter.

"Yes, I did."

"Oh, all right," said Bunter, in a more subdued tone.

"I—I only wanted to know, you know."

Bulstrode grunted, and returned to his work. Alonzo Todd came in, and looked round, then ambled over to Bulstrode, and tapped him on the shoulder. The burly Removite looked up from his work with a growl.

"What do you want, confound you?"

"I'm so sorry, Bulstrode."

The Remove bully looked at him grimly. He knew how much he owed to the Duffer's indiscreet revelations in the Head's study.

"Oh, you're sorry, are you?" he said.

"Yes, very sorry," said Todd. "Upon reflection, it has occurred to me that perhaps I was a little too confidential to the Head. He may have picked up from me that you were the ringleader in the set against Mr. Quelch."

"Oh, he may, may he?"

"Yes. I think it is possible."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "It's barely possible, Toddy."

Todd looked distressed.

"I'm so sorry," he said. "I really had no intention of causing trouble for you, Bulstrode. I hear you have been caned. It is very unfortunate."

"It will be unfortunate for somebody," said Bulstrode.

"I trust you do not harbour feelings of revenge," said Todd. "My Uncle Benjamin always told me that it was wrong to harbour feelings of revenge."

"Oh, get out."

"But I assure you—"

"Buzz off."

"That I am sorry—"

"Leave me alone."

"So sorry—"

Bulstrode clutched up the inkpot, and Alonzo beat a hasty retreat.

The Remove bully went on with his work. The word had gone forth that the impositions were all to be handed in before bed-time, or there would be trouble. One by one, as they completed their lines, the delinquent juniors took them in to Mr. Quelch in his study.

Bulstrode was the last.

The Remove bed-time was half-past nine, and at twenty-five minutes past nine Bulstrode had not taken in his impot. Mr. Quelch was waiting for it.

The Form-master glanced at his watch, when it indicated twenty-nine minutes past. He rose and took down a cane. There was a tap at his door.

"Come in," rapped out the Remove master.

Bulstrode entered, and laid his task on the table. He had held out as long as he dared. Mr. Quelch laid down the cane, and looked hard at Bulstrode.

"My imposition, sir," said Bulstrode, dropping his eyes.

"Very well, Bulstrode."

The Remove bully left the study. Skinner was waiting for him in the passage. The school clock was striking half-past, and the Remove were going up to bed.

"Just saved your bacon," said Skinner.

Bulstrode scowled.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 129.

NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

"Yes, that's all right."

"Blessed fiasco, the whole business," said Skinner consolingly. "I had my doubts from the first, you remember."

"I don't remember anything of the sort," said Bulstrode savagely, "and you don't, either. You were hand in glove with me from the start."

"Well, it's ended rottenly enough, and the worst of it was that ass Todd giving you away as he did. That was what got you the licking."

Bulstrode ground his teeth.

"I know it was. I owe all this to Todd, and Wharton—and Quelch! I'll make them sorry for it, too, all of them."

"I don't see how you'll manage it. You could lick Todd, and perhaps Wharton; but I suppose you're not thinking of asking Mr. Quelch to have it out in the gym?" And Skinner chuckled.

"Don't be an ass!" growled Bulstrode. "There are more ways than one of killing a cat. I'm not going to take this lying down, anyway."

And he tramped up the stairs.

In the dormitory there were some gloomy faces. Alonzo Todd looked most concerned of all. When the Duffer of Greyfriars put his foot in it very badly, he generally realised the fact when it was too late to amend it, and then nobody could be sorrier for the damage done.

Unfortunately, belated regrets could not undo the caning Bulstrode had had. But, quite contrary to his usual custom, Bulstrode appeared now to have forgotten an injury. He cleared his face as he entered the dormitory, and gave Todd a cheerful nod.

Alonzo looked greatly relieved.

"I'm so sorry, Bulstrode," he said, once more. "I trust you have come to regard my share in the transaction as quite involuntary, as indeed it was."

"Good old dictionary," murmured Nugent.

Bulstrode nodded.

"It's all right, Todd," he said. "Don't worry. It's all in the day's work. The scheme was a rotten failure, and there's an end."

"I am truly delighted to see you take that view of it, my dear Bulstrode," said Alonzo. "It really shows great nobility of character on your part."

Bulstrode grunted and went to bed.

"What's the matter with Bulstrode?" murmured Nugent. "He's feeling as waxy as a bear with a sore head, and he hasn't forgiven Toddy, not by long chalks."

"He means mischief," said Harry Wharton quietly.

And Wharton was right. Bulstrode did mean mischief!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A New Dodge.

BILLY BUNTER sat up in bed and yawned.

The rising-bell had clanged, and clanged, and stopped, and most of the Remove were busy with their dressing; but the fat junior was not yet out of bed.

Bob Cherry kindly scattered a few drops from a sponge upon him.

"Get out, you fat slacker!" he exclaimed.

"Yow!"

"You'll be late down."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Lend me a hand to help him out, Nugent," said Bob.

"Certainly."

Bunter whipped out of the bed on the other side so quickly that he caught his foot in the bedclothes, and rolled on the floor.

There was a loud bump!

"Yahooh!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groo! I'm hurt!"

"Bet you can't do that again, Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter picked himself up, grunting and growling. He rubbed his legs, and blinked at Bob Cherry and Nugent.

"Beasts!" he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rotters!"

"Go it!"

"Cads!"

"Keep it up!"

And Bunter sulkily took to his clothes. Having performed his usual ablutions, which did not delay him long, he dressed himself.

"I say, you fellows," he remarked, as the juniors left the dormitory. "I've got a tired feeling this morning. I think I ought to be excused classes."

"Better tell Quelch so."

"He's so jolly unreasonable. I feel ill."

"Well, he would send you into sanatorium."

"I don't want to go into sanatorium and feed on slops," said Bunter sulkily. "What I want is plenty of nourishment and a good rest. There's that chap Dutton doesn't get half so bothered in class as we do, because he's deaf."

"Well, you'd better go deaf, or blind, or silly, and you'll be let off too," said Hazeldene. "Or, rather, you're blind and silly already."

"Oh, really, Hazel—"

"You really feel soedy, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry sympathetically.

Bunter groaned. At the least sign of sympathy, his symptoms always redoubled.

"Yes, awfully," he murmured.

"Where have you got the pain?"

"It isn't exactly a pain."

"Well, the ache, then?"

"It—it isn't exactly an ache."

"What the dickens is it, then?"

"A sort of tired feeling—a feeling as if I don't want to work, but ought to have rest and plenty to eat," explained Bunter.

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"That's the worst possible remedy," he exclaimed. "What you want is a good shaking up. Slapping on the back is a good cure."

"Oh, no, that's no good."

"My dear chap, it's splendid. If I were to give you a good slapping on the back, you'd get an astonishing activity all at once, and—"

"I don't think anything of the sort," said Bunter peevishly.

"Well, I give you my word for it, and I'm not the chap to let a fellow suffer to save myself a little exertion," said Bob Cherry.

"Look here, Cherry—"

"So here goes!"

"Hands off—keep off—yow—yarooh!"

"I'm going to cure you."

Smack! smack! smack!

Bob's open palms descended upon Bunter's back with powerful smacks.

His prediction was verified.

Billy Bunter developed a sudden and astonishing activity.

He simply flew along the passage, with Bob Cherry after him, smacking away like a machine, every smack drawing a fresh yell from Billy Bunter.

Bunter's pace increased, and he reached the stairs, and went down them as if for a wager.

Bob stopped at the top, roaring with laughter.

But Bunter fled on, reached the lower passage, and dashed headlong out into the Close, still yelling.

"There!" exclaimed Bob breathlessly, as his chums came up. "Did you ever see a quicker cure than that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's really not a laughing matter—it's a miraculous cure; and I think we ought to work it on Bunter again."

And the chums yelled with laughter.

They did not see anything of Bunter again till breakfast-time, when he came in blinking indignantly, and kept at a safe distance from Bob Cherry.

"Feeling better, Bunter?" Bob called out to him.

"No!" grunted Bunter.

"Shall I give you some more medicine?"

"Beast!"

And Bob chuckled.

There was a thoughtful frown on Billy Bunter's face during breakfast, and he did not appear to hear some remarks that were addressed to him. Hazeldene's careless words had made an impression on his mind; and a glorious prospect of shirked work rose before the eyes of the fat junior.

Bulstrode asked him to pass the bread, and he did not answer.

"Bread, you ass!" said Bulstrode again.

Bunter put his hand to his ear.

"Eh?"

"Pass the bread."

"Mind my head. My head's all right."

Bulstrode stared at him blankly.

"What new rot is this?" he demanded.

"Oh, really, Bulstrode. I—I mean, I can't hear you."

"Getting deaf?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Well, that's all you needed," said Bulstrode.

"Oh, really—"

"Oh, you heard that, did you?" grinned Skinner.

Bunter coloured.

"I—I— No. You see—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"What are you humbugging about, you fat fraud?"

Bunter did not see fit to hear that question. He returned THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 129.

NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

to his breakfast, and made no reply to any further remark addressed to him.

Those who noticed his new departure were distinctly puzzled by it. Bunter might as well be deaf as short-sighted and stupid, but it was clear to the least observant that the fat junior was "spoofing." Bunter prided himself a great deal upon being an awfully deep fellow; but, as a matter of fact, nothing ever was more transparent than his attempts at deception.

After breakfast, when the fellows went out, Bunter was keeping up his new role. Harry Wharton spoke to him in the passage, and Bunter put his hand to his ear.

"Eh?" he said.

"What's the matter, Billy?"

"Who's mad as a hatter?"

"What?"

"Don't say rot to me, you know."

Harry Wharton stared at him.

"Off your rocker?" he asked.

"Oh, really, Wharton—I—I mean, I can't quite hear. Would you mind repeating what you said a little louder?"

"Are you off your silly rocker?" roared Wharton.

"Eh? Who's got a job as a docker?"

Wharton laughed.

"I see—you're understudying Dutton. But what's the game?"

"Eh?"

Harry Wharton gave it up. He was as surprised as the rest by this new departure of Billy Bunter's, and he wondered what it portended.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter is Deaf.

THE Remove went into their class-room after prayers, as usual, but the morning's lessons were not destined to proceed as usual. Bunter had a new idea in his head—a dodge to avoid work—and a dodge like that was one that appealed to every fibre in William George Bunter.

As it happened, it was some time before Mr. Quelch addressed Billy Bunter. When he did, the "dodge" became apparent to the Remove, and they knew what Bunter was at.

"You will construe, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch.

The fat junior did not stir.

"Bunter!"

No reply.

"Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, more loudly.

Still no answer.

Mr. Quelch's brows contracted. There was a general craning of necks to look at Billy Bunter. Why he did not answer was a mystery.

Bob Cherry reached over and poked him. Even that failed to draw the fat junior. He sat like a stone image.

"Bunter!" shouted Mr. Quelch.

The fat junior looked up at last.

"Did you call me, sir?" he said.

"Yes, I did, Bunter."

"Eh, sir?"

"Bunter—"

The fat junior put his hand to his ear.

"Eh?"

Mr. Quelch looked at him fixedly. He was only astonished as yet.

"What is the matter with you, Bunter?"

"Eh, sir?"

"What is the matter?"

"No, sir."

"What?"

"I have not changed my hatter, sir."

"What? What, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir."

"How dare you make these ridiculous replies to me?"

"I haven't brought any pies, sir."

"Pies?"

"Yes, sir."

"Bunter, are you ill?"

"I haven't for weeks, sir."

"You haven't what?"

"Taken a pill, sir."

Mr. Quelch gasped.

The Remove gasped, too. They stared at Bunter in blank amazement. Inconceivable as it seemed, the fat junior was "japing" the Form-master.

Bunter did not exactly intend it as a jape, however. But the Removites put it down to that, and they wondered at his astounding nerve.

"Bunter!" rapped out Mr. Quelch at last. "I cannot understand this. Are you deaf?"

"Eh, sir?"

A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS

"A little out of breath, sir. I think I over-exerted myself in getting up this morning," said Bunter.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Did you ever hear of such a nerve? Quelch will fry him!"

"The fryfulness will be terrific!"

Mr. Quelch came nearer to the class, and his eyes looked more like gimlets than ever as he fixed a penetrating look upon Bunter.

"You seem to be deaf this morning, Bunter," he observed.

"Eh, sir?"

"You cannot hear what I say."

"Yes, sir, it looks like being a fine day."

"I did not say anything about the day, Bunter. I said that you do not seem to be able to hear what I say."

"I beg your pardon, sir."

"You did not hear me?"

"Oh, we don't fear you, sir—we all admire and respect you very much."

The Remove listened in silent amazement. Billy Bunter's nerve in keeping the game up like this simply took the breath out of them.

Mr. Quelch drew a deep, hard breath.

"This is very peculiar," he said. "Bunter seems to be deaf. Have you noticed any deafness in him before, Wharton? He shares your study."

"Not before to-day, sir," said Harry.

"Have you, Nugent?"

"N-no, sir."

"The attack seems to be quite sudden," said Mr. Quelch, pursing his lips. "If it is at all serious a medical man must be consulted at once. But it is really very strange. Is there any deafness in your family, Bunter?"

But Bunter was not to be so easily caught.

He put his hand up to his ear, and bent his head a little.

"Eh, sir?"

"You did not hear what I said?"

"None at all, sir."

"What?"

"I have no pains in the head, sir."

"Can you hear me speak?"

"Eh?"

"Can you hear me now?" said Mr. Quelch, raising his voice.

"I beg your pardon."

"Can you hear me?"

Mr. Quelch almost shouted.

"Yes, sir," said Bunter.

The Form-master was growing red with his unusual vocal exertions. He was growing angry, too, but that he kept under at present.

"It is very unfortunate, for it will interfere with your lessons, Bunter."

"Eh?"

"You do not seem in a fit state to attend to your lessons."

"Yes, sir, I hope it will lessen in time."

"Listen to me, Bunter—"

"Eh, sir?"

"If you are as deaf as appears I shall excuse you lessons this morning, and you can retire from the class-room."

"Eh, sir?"

Mr. Quelch repeated his words in a louder tone.

"Thank you, sir!" said Bunter.

"Leave the class-room, Bunter."

"Certainly, sir."

"Perhaps you will find a complete rest beneficial."

"Very likely, sir."

And Billy Bunter crossed to the door of the class-room, Mr. Quelch's eyes following him, more gimlet-like than ever.

The Remove could only stare.

To see the usually keen-sighted Remove-master taken in by this transparent dodge of Billy Bunter's astounded them.

Bunter had almost reached the door, his fat face glowing with glee. In the prospect before him he saw uncounted hours of leisure and basking in the sun instead of working in the stuffy class-room.

"By the way, perhaps you had better have something to eat, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, in an ordinary tone of voice, as the fat junior reached the door.

"Thank you, sir!" said Bunter.

The next moment he could have bitten his tongue in his chagrin.

But he had betrayed himself.

Mr. Quelch rapped out words like pistol-shots now.

"Come back, Bunter!"

"Eh, sir?"

"What!" exclaimed the Remove-master angrily. "Do you dare to keep up that deception when you have just given me proof that it is all pretence?"

"I—I—"

"Come here at once—"

"I—I can hear sometimes and not others," said Bunter nervously, as he approached the Form-master. "You—you see, sir—"

"You had better make it a point to hear in the class—"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 129.

NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

EVERY
TUESDAY.

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

room, at all events," said Mr. Quelch grimly, picking up his pointer. "Hold out your hand, Bunter."

"Eh, sir?"

"Hold out your hand."

"Where am I to stand, sir?"

Mr. Quelch gave him one look, and then grasped him by the shoulder, and the pointer sang about the plump limbs of Billy Bunter. The fat junior roared and squirmed.

"Ow! Yow-yow! I— Oh! Gerrooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Remove.

Mr. Quelch released Bunter at last.

"Now go back to your place!" he exclaimed.

Bunter heard that. His deafness had vanished as suddenly as it had come on. He lost no time in getting back to his place; but, arrived there, he showed a curious disinclination to sitting down on the form.

It was Billy Bunter's first and last attack of deafness.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Mischief!

BULSTRODE tapped Billy Bunter on the shoulder when the Remove came out after lessons.

The fat junior blinked up at him.

"That was a ripping good dodge of yours, Bunter," said Bulstrode.

"Oh, really—"

"I'm quite serious. It was awfully clever!"

"Well, I thought it was rather clever, you know," said Bunter, who always purred when he was stroked. "Of course, I never expected Quelch to play such a mean trick to bowl me out. One expects a Form-master to play the game."

Bulstrode grinned.

"Exactly," he agreed. "I suppose you're feeling pretty sore?"

"Yow! Yes!"

"And hungry?"

Bunter's face became eager at once.

"I'm pretty nearly famished!" he said. "It's some time to dinner, yet, you know, and I don't know how I shall hold out. I've got a delicate constitution, and—"

"Come to Mrs. Mumble's."

"Oh really, Bulstrode—"

"Come on—I mean it!"

Bunter did not need bidding, after he had once seen that the Remove bully was in earnest. He trotted off towards the school shop, his little fat legs going like clockwork to keep pace with Bulstrode's long stride.

Bunter was a little puzzled. He knew that Bulstrode had something to get out of him—hence the offer of a treat; but he could not guess what it was.

Bulstrode soon enlightened him.

Billy Bunter was seated upon a stool in the tuckshop, with a glass of gingerbeer and a plate of tarts, and then Bulstrode approached the subject.

"You remember that jolly clever dodge of yours to clear the class-room the other day, Billy?" he remarked.

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter. "If I hadn't worked that wasp dodge, you would all have had some more of it."

"Just so! The fellows all agree that it was awfully clever."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I'm a jolly good ventriloquist," said Bunter. "I'm a good hypnotist, too; but I think I'm best as a ventriloquist."

"Of course," said Bulstrode, who had seen some of Billy Bunter's hypnotism, and grinned at it, "you ought to go on the halls, Billy."

"Perhaps I shall when I grow up, if I get offered a good contract. I don't think I could accept less than a hundred pounds a week."

"Two hundred would be more like," said Bulstrode. "Stick out for what you're worth while you're about it. When we've all left Greyfriars, and we're all pegging away in odd corners, we shall read in the papers about the great William G. Bunter, the idol of the public, and the cynosure of all eyes."

"Yes, I shouldn't wonder!" agreed Bunter.

"But, to come to business, I've thought of another clever ventriloquial dodge you could work," said Bulstrode. "It's up against Quelch, too, and would give him a little back for licking you this morning."

Billy Bunter looked alarmed.

"If—if you don't mind, I won't work any more dodges on Quelch," he said hurriedly. "He's such a jolly sharp beast, you know."

"But this one is quite safe. It can be worked through Todd, and if anything comes out, the Duffer will get the benefit of it."

"Oh, that's better!"

"Well, listen, then, and see what you think of it," said Bulstrode. "If it works out well, you can come in here afterwards and order what you like at my expense."

Billy Bunter beamed.

"Go ahead!" he said tersely.

And Bulstrode went ahead, explaining his scheme in a low tone. Billy Bunter divided his attention between the tarts and Bulstrode's explanation.

"Well, what do you think?" said Bulstrode, when he had concluded.

"I think I'll have another tart, Bulstrode."

Bulstrode looked impatient, and signed to Mrs. Mimble to add another of the jammy delicacies to Bunter's plate.

"But what do you think of the idea?" he said.

"Oh, it's good enough."

"I am sure a clever chap like you will manage it all right," said Bulstrode. "You imitate people's voices a treat."

"Yes, I know I do. But—"

"Oh, there are no 'buts' in the case. It's simply bound to succeed, if you just exert your genius a little," said Bulstrode, laying it on thick.

Billy Bunter liked his flattery in large chunks.

"Well, perhaps you're right," agreed Bunter.

And they were still discussing the scheme when they left the tuckshop.

Alonzo Todd met them in the Close.

He gave them a friendly smile.

"I was looking for you, Bulstrode," he said. "I wanted to tell you how pleased I am that you have forgiven my inadvertent offence yesterday. It was certainly against my own wish, you know, that I—"

"Yes, we've had all that," said Bulstrode. "I—I mean, it's all right. You didn't mean any harm, and—and I think you're a jolly decent chap. I never saw a chap I'd rather chum with, except—except Bunter."

"That's very nice of you," beamed Alonzo. "My uncle Benjamin always said—"

"I'm in a hurry—excuse me."

"Oh, certainly; but I've had a remittance this morning, and I should have liked to stand something—a sort of feed of peacemaking," beamed Alonzo.

"I—I've just fed," said Bulstrode hurriedly. "Thanks, all the same."

And he walked quickly away. Bulstrode had not fallen low enough to feed in a friendly way with a fellow he was scheming to injure. But Billy Bunter was not troubled with any such scruples.

He twitched the Duffer's sleeve.

"Come on," he said.

"Eh?"

"Come on."

"Where?"

"To the tuckshop."

"Why?"

"Didn't you just say that you'd had a remittance?" said Bunter. "I'm ready to come with you. I'm not in a hurry."

"I was speaking to Bulstrode."

"Never mind. I'll come instead."

"Really, Bunter—"

"Look here," said Bunter. "I was expecting a postal order myself this morning. I suppose you haven't got hold of mine by mistake?"

"Oh, no!"

"How much was yours for?" asked Bunter suspiciously.

"Five shillings."

"I was expecting a postal order for exactly five shillings. You'd better let me look at it, in case there's a mistake."

"There it is."

The Duffer produced a crumpled postal order from his pocket. The name of Alonzo Todd was written upon it as plainly as possible.

Bunter shook his head.

"That looks like my name," he said, blinking at it.

"That's more like a B than a T, to my mind."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Todd.

"Well, look here, suppose you let me have this, as you don't want it—"

"But I do want it!"

"H'm! Well, suppose you let me have it, and you take my postal order when it comes?" suggested Bunter. "That will be all right, I suppose?"

"But—"

"Mine will be here this afternoon, or this evening at the latest."

"But some of the fellows say—"

"Never mind the fellows. Can I have it?"

"They say that you never do get these postal orders that you're always talking about, Bunter, and that you—"

"Oh, very well, if you doubt my word, this discussion had THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 129.

NEXT WEEK. "BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

better cease," said Billy Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Todd, looking greatly distressed. "It isn't that, I assure you; but the fellows do say—"

"I suppose you can take my I O U," said Bunter, with an air as if his I O U were worth millions. "I'll write it out, and you can give it me back when my postal order comes, and I hand it over."

"But—"

"Oh, very well, if you can't trust me—"

"I'm so sorry, Bunter, but—"

"Oh, all right! I—"

"I'm so sorry you should think I wouldn't trust you," said Todd, pressing the postal order into Bunter's hand. "I can do without it till this evening."

"Thanks!" said Bunter. And having taken one glance at the order to see that it was filled in, he scuttled off to the tuckshop.

Alonzo Todd said that he would wait till the evening for Bunter's postal order. The probability was that he would wait a great deal longer—probably for the term of his natural life.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Todd is Obliging.

"TODD!"

Alonzo Todd looked up.

He was alone in his study, his brows bent over his work, when his name was called through the half-open door of the passage.

It was Harry Wharton's voice—at all events, it sounded like it, and Todd had no suspicion that it was not the real article.

"Yes?" said Todd, in his obliging way. "Come in!"

"All right—I'm in a hurry! Have you a bit of time to spare, Toddy?"

"Certainly!"

"Will you do Mr. Quelch a favour?"

"With pleasure. My uncle Benjamin always told me to do any little favour I could, and I have tried to benefit by his instructions."

"Good! I suppose you know Quelch's chimney wants sweeping?"

"I did not know it, Wharton."

"Well, it does. He doesn't want to send for a sweep, and he thinks that one of the fellows might do it. His idea is to fasten a broom on the end of a long stick, and to sweep the chimney from the study that way."

"Dear me!"

"He'd rather one of the fellows did it, you know. He doesn't want to be bothered with sending for a sweep."

"But—"

"If you care to take the trouble—"

"Certainly, Wharton!"

"Then you'd better begin at once, and get it finished by the time Mr. Quelch comes in. He's gone down to Friar-dale."

"Oh, very well."

"Buck up, then!"

"Certainly, Wharton; but come in a minute," said Todd, rising from the table.

"Sorry—I'm in a hurry."

And there was a sound of retreating footsteps in the passage.

Todd stepped to the door, and looked out in a somewhat puzzled frame of mind, but there was no sign of Wharton in the passage. Bulstrode was standing at his study door, chatting with Billy Bunter. There was no one else in sight.

"Did you see Wharton?" asked Todd, looking at them.

"He's gone downstairs," said Bulstrode.

"Oh, you heard what he said."

"Eh?"

"I'm to sweep Mr. Quelch's study chimney," said Todd.

"My hat!"

"Didn't you hear Wharton tell me?"

"No."

"Well, he did, anyway. It's very remarkable, isn't it? Mr. Quelch wants me to sweep his study chimney, because he doesn't want to send for a sweep."

"You'd better buck up, then," said Bulstrode, going into his study.

Alonzo Todd stood and reflected for a few moments.

Enormous as his gullibility was, he would have doubted the truth of what had been said to him, had it not been said in Harry Wharton's voice.

But he could not doubt Wharton.

If it had been a jape Wharton was not the fellow to play such a jape upon the innocent Duffer of Greyfriars, and Todd knew that.

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So he had no doubts. As for Bunter's ventriloquism, if he had heard about it, he had forgotten it.

After a few minutes' reflection, the Duffer of Greyfriars took Bulstrode's advice, and "bucked up."

He went in quest of the necessary implements for sweeping the Form-master's chimney.

"Have you seen Wharton?" he asked, as he met Bob Cherry in the passage.

"Gone out, I think," said Bob.

"Oh, dear! Can you lend me a broom?"

"A what?" demanded Bob, with wide open eyes.

"A broom!"

"What sort of broom?"

"A broom with a long handle, if possible."

Bob Cherry stared at him, and then began deliberately to turn out his pockets. The Duffer of Greyfriars watched him in wonder.

Bob turned out a bunch of keys, a fragment of sealing-wax stuck to another fragment of toffee, a bit of string, and a penknife, and several copper coins. Then he shook his head solemnly.

"Sorry," he said.

"Why, what—?"

"I haven't one."

"You haven't one what?"

"Broom with a long handle," said Bob, with perfect seriousness. "Wait a tick, though. I'll go through my waistcoat pockets."

"Really, Cherry—"

Bob Cherry went through his waistcoat pockets, and gave another serious shake of the head as a result.

"Sorry I can't find one," he said.

"I think you must be joking," said Todd. "I sometimes think you fellows are making fun of me, you know."

"Oh, my dear chap!" said Bob, looking shocked. "Whatever put such an idea as that into your head?"

"I should be truly sorry to do you an injustice," said Todd. "But really that has sometimes occurred to me, you know. But really, Cherry, you know, I was far from expecting you to have a broom in your pockets. It was my idea that you might have one in your study."

"Oh, I see. I'm sorry I don't stock the article," said Bob. "Ask the housekeeper."

"Yes, that's a good idea."

And Todd ambled away to the housekeeper's room.

Mrs. Kebble heard his request in some surprise. Juniors, as a rule, did not want brooms; they were content to leave the sweeping to the maids, and if enough wasn't done, they put up with it very cheerfully. But tidy instincts ought to be encouraged, Mrs. Kebble thought, and she willingly lent the Duffer of Greyfriars a broom.

Todd carried it off under his arm.

The sight of the junior carrying a broom naturally excited a great deal of attention. Two or three fellows asked him what he was going to do with it.

Todd explained. His explanation was received with a yell of laughter.

"You're going to sweep a chimney?" gasped Ogilvy.

"Certainly!"

"Whose?"

"Mr. Quelch's."

"My only hat!"

"You giddy japer!" exclaimed Russell. "You'd better not let Mr. Quelch catch you doing it, that's all."

"You are under a misapprehension," explained Todd. "It is by Mr. Quelch's own request that I am about to sweep his chimney."

"What?"

"Quelch asked you?"

"Rats!"

"I assure you—"

"Did Quelch ask you himself?"

"No, it was through Wharton."

"He's pulling your leg," said Ogilvy.

"Really, Ogilvy—"

"Wharton wouldn't do that, I think," said Tom Brown.

"But there must be some mistake. Did Wharton actually ask you himself, Todd?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, I don't understand it."

"I am quite willing to oblige Mr. Quelch," said Todd. "In fact, my Uncle Benjamin always told me to be obliging, and to make myself useful. Do you fellows think this broom is long enough to sweep the chimney?"

"Not at all," said Skinner, entering into the joke at once. He was sure there was a jape on, and he was ready to help it forward. "Better get something to fasten it to, or you won't bring down any soot."

"Yes, I thought so; but—"

"Some umbrellas and cricket stumps, tied to one another, would do," said Skinner. "You could shove the top end on the chimney, and add the sticks to one another from below, like a sweep fitting his brush."

"That is a really valuable suggestion, Skinner."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 129.

NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

EVERY
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

"No extra charge," grinned Skinner. "Better make a collection of the masters' umbrellas, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't be an ass," said Tom Brown. "You'll be scalped if you do, Toddy."

"Oh, let Toddy alone," said Bulstrode, coming up. "Let Todd be obliging. He was born to make himself useful."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Toddy!"

"I think I will take some cricket stumps," said Todd. "As I am doing this for Mr. Quelch, he will not object to my using his umbrella, if necessary, and his walking-stick. You fellows might get me some stumps, and some string to tie them together."

"What-ho!"

"Yes, rather!"

Half-a-dozen of the Removites entered into the spirit of the thing at once. They were only too glad to supply the Duffer of Greyfriars with what he required. The spectacle of Alonzo Todd sweeping Mr. Quelch's chimney was too good to be missed. Skinner said it would be worth a week's pocket-money.

Alonzo was soon in possession of the articles he required. He bore them off to Mr. Quelch's study, and a crowd of grinning juniors followed to watch.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Todd Excels Himself.

ALONZO TODD entered Mr. Quelch's study, and laid down his implements on the hearthrug. He took off his jacket, and rolled up his sleeves. He folded his jacket very neatly, and laid it upon a chair. Alonzo was very neat and tidy in all his ways, doubtless owing to the kindly injunctions of Uncle Benjamin.

The juniors crowded at the open doorway, watching.

"This will be better than a circus," murmured Skinner.

And the others grinned and assented.

Todd knelt before the grate. There was, of course, no fire. The fire was laid, in case Mr. Quelch should need it. Todd screwed his head under the chimney, and looked up.

A fragment of soot came down, and Todd drew his head quickly back, and clapped his hand to his eye.

"Ow, ow!" he ejaculated.

"What's the matter?" asked Stott.

"Ow! A fragment of soot has lodged in my eye, and is causing me considerable pain," said Alonzo.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, you know, it is not a laughing matter," said Todd reproachfully. "I am being caused considerable pain."

"Good old dictionary!"

Todd rubbed his eye.

He rubbed the soot out, leaving it in a black mark round his eye, for all the world as if he had been engaged in fisticuffs, and had received a black eye. The juniors chuckled as they watched him.

"Better buck up," said Ogilvy. "Mr. Quelch may be back soon."

Todd blinked at him.

"Why should that matter?" he said. "I suppose Mr. Quelch will be pleased to see me obliging him in this way."

"H'm! Yes! But—but he might want to use the study, you know, so it would be better for you to be finished."

"Dear me! That is very true."

"Buck up!" said the juniors in chorus.

Todd turned to the grate again. He did not look up the chimney any more. He took the broom, inserted it in the chimney, and pushed it up as far as the length of the handle allowed.

A little shower of soot came down. The chimney certainly was in need of a sweep. Todd coughed a little.

"My word!" murmured Russell. "He hasn't even thought of covering up the papers or the furniture, or anything."

"Oh, let him alone," said Skinner. "Let him make a complete job of it. Quelch will be pleased."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bulstrode didn't manage to score off Quelch, but Todd will get there all right, I think," grinned Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Todd blinked round at the juniors.

"You might hand me a stump, will you?" he said. "If I let go this broom it will come down again."

"Right you are!" said Skinner obligingly.

He handed Todd a cricket stump. The Duffer carefully laid it to the end of the broom handle, and tied the two together firmly with cord.

Then he pushed the elongated broom up the chimney.

"Another, please," he said.

A fresh shower of soot fell. Blacks settled all over the study. Mr. Quelch had left his table covered with papers, some of them being papers he was drawing up for an examination. He had left paper-weights upon them to prevent them being blown away; but he had not anticipated any visit of a chimney-sweep during his absence. The papers were now covered with a fine black sprinkling, which was growing thicker every moment.

Chairs and carpet and curtains were rapidly getting in the same state. But Todd was oblivious to that; besides, it could not have been helped. He was there to sweep the chimney, and any little trifles besides that he had no time for.

He added a second stump, and then a third. Then Skinner handed him Mr. Quelch's umbrella, and that was added to the handle of the lengthened broom.

The soot was falling in showers now.

Todd's face and hands were growing blacker and blacker, and there was a layer of soot on the hearthrug round him.

The juniors at the door were coughing and sneezing.

Todd began to turn the broom in his hands, and now the soot fell in earnest. It came down in lumps and chunks and showers. It filled the grate and the hearth and the fender, and smothered the floor and the furniture and the curtains and the walls.

Soot was everywhere!

The juniors at the door retreated to the opposite side of the passage, sneezing violently. They were sneezing now as much as they were laughing.

Skinner scuttled out of the study at last.

"Pray give me another stump," said Todd, blinking round in the darkening showers of soot.

"Can't stand the atmosphere," grinned Skinner.

"Really, you know—"

"That's all right, if you put your beef into it," said Stott.

"Oh, very well."

Todd put his beef into it.

He worked the broom up and down the chimney, and round and round, while the soot fell in clouds.

The broom was certainly not so effective as a real sweep's brush would have been. But it was effective enough. The chimney was badly in want of a sweeping, and Todd's sweeping was energetic enough to dislodge heaps and heaps of soot. The hearth and the grate were piled with it.

Todd could hardly breathe.

The juniors in the passage could hardly laugh.

"Dear me!" gasped Todd at last. "I really think that will do. Don't you fellows think so?"

"I fancy Mr. Quelch will," yelled Skinner. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it was by his own wish—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Todd released the broom.

"I think I had better get the soot away now," he remarked. "I am afraid there will be some stains of it left on the carpet."

"My hat! I think there will."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really—"

"Cave!" came a hurried warning from the passage.

"Who is it?" exclaimed Skinner.

"Quelch!"

"My only Aunt Matilda!"

There was a rush of flying footsteps at once.

Mr. Quelch, coming down the passage, heard it, and glanced along, in time to see flying feet vanish round the corner.

He looked surprised.

"Dear me!" murmured the Remove-master. "I wonder what that means—and what a smell of soot, too! Really, the smell is very strong. It is as if a chimney had been lately swept here. I—"

He broke off as he reached the door of his study.

He looked in, and stood petrified.

Alonzo Todd had risen from his knees before the hearth, black as the ace of spades. The study was very nearly as black as Todd.

Mr. Quelch gazed at his blackened study, and gazed at the black, strange, unrecognizable figure facing him. It was a full minute before the Remove-master found his voice.

Then he simply shouted:

"Who are you? What does this mean?"

Alonzo Todd gave a gasp of dismay. He could see the Form-master was angry, though he did not know why.

"Do you hear me?" roared Mr. Quelch. "Who are you? What have you done?"

"If you p-p-please, sir," stammered Alonzo. "If you pip-pip-please, I'm Todd, sir, and I've s-s-swept your chimney!"

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Todd in Trouble.

"MR. QUELCH gazed at Todd.

Then he gazed round the study.

He gazed at the papers on the table, which had cost him hours of work, now blackened beyond all hope—at the chairs, covered with soot—at the curtains, heavy with it. Then at Todd again, black as a nigger minstrel.

"Todd! You are Todd!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir."

"You have swept my chimney?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you mad, Todd?"

"Mad, sir?"

"You heard my question?" shouted the Form-master.

"Question, sir?"

"Are you mimicking me, Todd?"

"M-m-mimicking you, sir?" stammered Todd, thoroughly frightened, and repeating what was said to him, as he always did when he was scared, "Oh, sir!"

"Boy! Why have you done this?"

"Done this, sir?"

"You have ruined everything in my study——"

"Ruined everything, sir?"

"You—you wretched boy! I have never heard of such astounding impudence. I think you must be insane!"

"I-i-insane, sir?"

"How dare you play such a prank in my study!" roared Mr. Quelch.

"P-p-prank, sir?"

"Wretched boy! I—I——"

Words failed Mr. Quelch.

He rushed at Todd, and caught him by the collar, picking up a cane with the other hand. The cane sang in the air.

Thwack! Thwack! Thwack!

Todd yelled and danced.

Thwack! Thwack! Thwack!

The soot rose from his clothes in clouds, and Mr. Quelch coughed and sneezed. The soot saved Alonzo from a more severe licking.

Mr. Quelch could not get his breath.

"Ow!" roared Alonzo. "Leggo, sir! You asked me to sweep your chimney, sir! I think you must be out of your mind, sir. Oh!"

Thwack! Thwack!

"Gr——" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Groo! Oooh!"

"Yow! Leggo! Help!"

Mr. Quelch released the junior, and rushed to the window to throw it open. Alonzo did not lose the opportunity. He dashed to the door.

"Come back!" shouted Mr. Quelch.

But Alonzo was not "taking any" just then. He turned a deaf ear to the master, and sped down the passage.

Soot flew from him as he ran. He left a trail of it on the floor, and a cloud of it in the air wherever he passed. The sound of footsteps in the rear warned him that he was pursued, and he put on a desperate spurt, frightened into extraordinary exertions.

"Stop!" shouted Mr. Quelch.

But Todd did not even hear him now. He dodged into the hall, and made a break for the stairs. Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars was there. Mr. Quelch shouted to the Sixth-Former from the distance.

"Wingate! Stop him!"

Wingate stared in surprise at the blackened junior, whom he could not recognize under the covering of soot. But he obeyed Mr. Quelch's call, and stepped to intercept Todd. Alonzo ran right into him, and a thick cloud of soot rose from the impact.

"Atchoo—atchoo!" sneezed Wingate.

"Hold the boy!"

"Atchoo—atchoo—atchoo!"

Wingate was fairly doubled up with sneezing. Todd tore himself away, leaving a considerable quantity of his soot upon Wingate, and pelted up the stairs.

Wingate gasped for breath. Mr. Quelch halted angrily at the foot of the staircase. He could not compromise his dignity by a further chase of the fugitive.

"Wingate! I asked you to stop him!" he exclaimed.

"Atchoo—atchoo!"

"Wingate——"

"Atchoo—choo—atchoo—oo—ooooo!"

"Dear me!"

"I tried to—atchoo—but—choo—he atchoo—got away—atchoo—choo!"

ANSWERS

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 129.

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A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

Todd did not know that Mr. Quelch had stopped. He dashed on at top speed, and in the bend of the staircase he encountered Monsieur Charpentier, who was coming down. They met on the corner landing.

Monsieur Charpentier started back in affright at the sight of the wild and blackened figure charging upon him.

"Ciel!" he exclaimed. "Ciel! Vat is zat! It—ah! Oh!"

Biff!

Right into the little Frenchman Todd charged blindly.

"Ah! Mon Dieu!"

Monsieur Charpentier clutched wildly at Todd to save himself, as he rolled over. He clawed the Duffer down with him, and they rolled on the landing together.

"Oh!"

"Ah!"

"Yow!"

"Help! A moi!"

"Leggo!"

"Ciel!"

Todd tried to tear himself away. But Mr. Quelch's voice was ringing up the staircase now.

"Stop that junior!"

"Ah!" gasped the French-master. "I have zat shunior. I have him!"

"Hold him!"

"Leggo!"

"Ciel! I have ze garcon!"

Mr. Quelch ascended the stairs.

Monsieur Charpentier staggered to his feet, dragging up Todd. Alonzo strove to tear himself away.

"Todd!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch sternly. "Be quiet!"

"Quiet, sir."

"How dare you struggle!"

"S-s-struggle, sir?"

"I think the boy must be wrong in his head!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"W-r-r-rong in m-my head, sir?"

"Ciel! I zink zat you are right, monsieur!" gasped Monsieur Charpentier. "Look at ze state he is in! Look at ze state he have made me in! I am all black viz myself. My vaistcoat is vat you call done in!"

"I'm so sorry, sir!" gasped Todd.

"Ciel! But—"

"I'm so sorry, Monsieur Charpentier. I regret it very much. I ran into you quite by accident, sir. I thought Mr. Quelch was out of his mind."

"Vat you say?"

"What do you mean, Todd?" demanded Mr. Quelch sternly.

"Well, sir, you—you went for me, you know—"

"Did you think such an outrageous prank would pass unpunished?" demanded the Remove-master. "You cannot be so stupid, Todd."

"W-w-what prank, sir?"

"Filling my study with soot from the chimney!" exclaimed the Remove-master angrily.

"B-b-but, sir, I w-w-was sweeping the chimney, sir!"

"How dared you?"

"B-b-but, sir, you asked me."

"What?"

"You asked me to sweep the chimney, sir."

"I!" repeated Mr. Quelch dazedly. "Unless you are insane, Todd, explain yourself. You say I asked you to sweep the chimney?"

"Yes, sir. Wharton told me—"

"Wharton?"

"Yes, sir. He told me you wanted me to do it. Don't you remember, sir?"

Mr. Quelch's brows contracted.

"I believe you are the stupidest boy in the school, Todd," he exclaimed.

"Oh, sir!"

"It is clear that your extraordinary simplicity has been practised on again."

"Oh, sir, I'm sure Wharton wouldn't—"

"I did not tell Wharton I wanted my chimney swept."

"Oh!"

"You are sure it was Wharton told you I said so."

"Oh, quite sure, sir!"

"I cannot understand Wharton playing such a culpable trick," said Mr. Quelch angrily. "The damage done to my study will cost pounds to set right, to say nothing of my papers being ruined."

"I'm so sorry, sir—"

"Hold your tongue!"

"I only wanted to be useful, sir—"

"You had better restrain your desire to be useful in future, Todd. In order to impress upon your mind the necessity of doing so, you will stay in the next half-holiday, and write lines. As for Wharton, I shall investigate very carefully his part in this matter, and if he is really responsible—"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 129.

NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

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ONE
PENNY.

Mr. Quelch did not finish the sentence.

But his look, as he strode away in search of Harry Wharton, boded ill to the captain of the Remove.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Wharton Proves an Alibi.

"TROTTER!"

"Yes, sir," said the page, very softly, for there were thunder-clouds upon Mr. Quelch's brow.

"Find Master Wharton, and send him to my study at once—or—or, rather, send him to the masters'-room."

"Yes, sir."

And Trotter went on his errand. Mr. Quelch went to the housekeeper's-room to explain what had befallen his study, and to give instructions for the room to be cleaned up as quickly as possible. Mrs. Kebble wrung her hands when she saw the state of the study. She understood now what Alonzo had wanted the broom for.

Mr. Quelch proceeded to the masters'-room, where he found Trotter.

"Well?" he said.

"Master Wharton's gone out, sir."

"H'm! Send him to me as soon as he comes in, then."

"Yes, sir."

It was half an hour later when Harry Wharton came in. He had been down to the village to arrange for the purchase of some things for the junior cricket club, and it had taken him some time. He came in at last without a suspicion that all was not as it should be.

Trotter met him at the doorway, with a long face. Trotter liked the Remove captain, and he felt concerned for him.

"Mr. Quelch wants you, Master Harry," he said.

"Yes. In his study?"

Trotter grinned.

"No. His study chimney's been sweep', Master Harry, and there's a row about it. He wants to see you in the masters'-room. He's simply biling."

"He's what?" asked Harry, in surprise.

"Biling," said Trotter impressively—"simply biling."

"Do you mean that he's in a bad temper?"

"Hawful."

"What's the matter?"

"His study chimney's been sweep'."

"Well, what difference does that make?" asked Wharton, puzzled. "Why should that put Mr. Quelch into a bad temper?"

"You should see his study."

"Something gone wrong with the sweeping?"

"I should say so," said Trotter. "Master Todd sweep' it."

"Todd?"

"Yes."

"Great Scott! Was it a jape?"

"I s'pose so, Master Harry."

"Blessed if I see what it has to do with me, though," said Wharton. "I suppose I'd better go and see Quelch."

And he made his way to the masters'-room, wondering what was wanted of him. True, he was captain of the Remove; but he was not responsible for pranks played by the Removites; and he could not be supposed to have his eye on the Duffer of Greyfriars when he was down in the village, and the Duffer was in the school.

Mr. Quelch was in the masters'-room, talking to Monsieur Charpentier. The French-master had cleaned off the soot Todd had imparted to him, and was looking newly swept and garnished, but his usually-smiling face was clouded now. He was not pleased; and one glance at Mr. Quelch's countenance revealed the fact that he had not yet recovered from the shock he had received when he saw his study.

"Ah! You are here, Wharton!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir," said Harry. "I've just come in. Trotter told me that you wished to see me, sir."

"I do wish to see you," said Mr. Quelch grimly.

"Ciel! I should zay zo."

"Yes, sir."

"A most outrageous prank has been played during my absence," said Mr. Quelch. "Todd has swept my chimney, and smothered my study in soot."

"Yes, sir; Trotter has just told me."

"You did not know anything about it before?"

"I have been out for a couple of hours, sir."

"Then you did not tell Todd to sweep my chimney, and tell him that I wished him to do so!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Zat is ze question," said Monsieur Charpentier, rubbing his hands.

"I, sir?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in astonishment.

"Certainly not, sir. Why should I tell him such a thing?"

"You are sure, Wharton?"

"Of course I am sure, Mr. Quelch. Surely you don't think I would play such a rotten trick as that on a duffer like Todd."

"Todd is certainly a very foolish boy, and I am sure he has been victimised, as usual, in this instance," said Mr. Quelch. "Even so stupid a boy is not likely to have thought of sweeping my chimney himself."

"I am sure not, sir. He must have been put up to it by somebody."

"By you, he says."

"That is not correct, sir."

"You deny it?"

"Certainly!"

"Then Todd has told an untruth."

Harry Wharton looked troubled.

"I can't quite understand it, sir," he said. "Todd isn't the chap to tell a lie, though he is the biggest fool in Greyfriars."

"He declares that you told him I had requested him to sweep my chimney."

"If I could ask Todd myself, sir—"

"I will send for him, Trotter!"

Trotter was hanging about outside the door. He came in with a rather pink countenance as Mr. Quelch rapped out his name.

"Yes, sir. Did you ring, sir?"

"No, I did not ring," said Mr. Quelch severely. "You know perfectly well that I did not ring, Trotter. You were inquisitive. Go and send Master Todd to me, and then take yourself off!"

"Suttingly, sir."

Trotter vanished. In a few minutes Alonzo Todd made his appearance. He had been newly bathed, and had changed his clothes, but there were still ample traces of the soot clinging to his fingers, his hair, and his ears. It was not all to be got rid of so easily.

"Todd," said Mr. Quelch, "repeat before Wharton what you told me."

"What I told you, sir?"

"Don't repeat my words, boy!"

"R-repeat your words, sir?"

"Will you do as I tell you?"

"Ye-es, sir. I told Mr. Quelch I had swept his chimney, Wharton."

"What else?"

"That you had requested me to do so, in Mr. Quelch's name, Wharton, Mr. Quelch having asked you to see about it. I am truly sorry if it turns out to be a mistake, and I hope it will not get you into any trouble. I had no idea that it was a jape when I told Mr. Quelch," said Todd, looking distressed. "I suppose now, as it turns out, that it was a jape. The fellows are all laughing over it in the common-room."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr. Quelch, frowning.

"Yes, sir. Skinner says it is simply great, and the others all agree with him. I am afraid they mean it in a spirit of mockery. Bulstrode has proposed calling me Alonzo the Great, and they were putting it to the vote when Trotter called me, sir. I couldn't help suspecting that they were making fun of me."

Mr. Quelch passed his hand over his mouth to hide a smile, and Monsieur Charpentier turned to the window and grinned out into the dusk. Alonzo was really irresistible.

"Well, Wharton, what do you say?" asked the Remove-master.

"That Todd is mistaken, sir," said Harry. "I certainly did not tell him anything of the sort."

Todd stared.

"Really, Wharton—"

"You've made a mistake, you duffer."

"Oh, come! I am sorry if this will cause you trouble, Wharton, but I trust you will not be guilty of untruthfulness. My Uncle Benjamin says—"

"Never mind your Uncle Benjamin now," said Mr. Quelch. "We must investigate this matter. You deny the truth of Todd's statement, Wharton?"

"I deny the correctness of it, sir," said Harry. "I do not think Todd would tell a lie. When was it you supposed me to tell you this, Todd?"

"About an hour ago, in the Remove passage. You surely cannot have forgotten, Wharton."

Harry drew a breath of relief.

"An hour ago!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, about that."

"You are sure it was not more?"

"It might have been an hour and a half," said Todd thoughtfully. "It could not have been more than that, for I went to my study at half-past five, and it is only seven now."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 129.

NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

"And I spoke to you after you went to your study at half-past five?"

"Yes."

"Then it's clear enough, sir," said Harry, turning to Mr. Quelch. "I asked Wingate for a pass out of the gates at five o'clock, and went out as he gave it me. Bob Cherry came down to the gates with me, and saw me go."

"You have been out ever since?"

"Yes, until five minutes ago."

Mr. Quelch turned a very severe glance upon Todd.

"You hear that, Todd?"

"Yes, sir. Wharton must have made some mistake. He certainly spoke to me in the Remove passage soon after half-past five."

"I can easily prove that I was in the village, sir," said Harry. "You say that you actually saw me in the passage, Todd?"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Alonzo. "I didn't say I saw you. I said you spoke to me."

"But how could I speak to you without your seeing me?"

"You called into my study."

"You are sure it was my voice?"

"Of course; I know your voice."

"But you didn't see me?"

"No. I called to you to come in, but you said you were in a hurry."

Wharton smiled.

"I suppose someone imitated my voice, well enough to take you in," he said. "I certainly was in the village, and was in Mr. Tucker's shop when half-past five struck. Mr. Tucker would tell you so, sir—"

Mr. Quelch interrupted him.

"It is not necessary; I quite believe you, Wharton. Todd!" he rapped out.

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

"Did it not occur to you that someone might be imitating Wharton's voice?"

"N-n-no, sir. Surely it would be very difficult. I certainly never thought of it."

"Did you not think it odd that Wharton should speak from the passage, and not enter your study?"

"Yes, sir. I looked out for him, but he was gone—I mean he was not there."

"Ah! Was there anyone else in the passage?"

"Only two Remove fellows."

"Their names?"

"They hadn't—"

"Their names?"

"Bulstrode and Bunter, sir."

"Ah, Bulstrode!" said Mr. Quelch, with a gleam of intelligence in his eye. "Is Bulstrode capable of imitating a voice, Wharton?"

"I don't think so, sir."

"Then Bunter—aha!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, a light breaking in upon him. "Is not Bunter a ventriloquist?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"And has he not a power of imitating voices—I think I remember a trick of his of that sort," said the Remove-master.

Harry Wharton was silent. He guessed the truth easily enough now, but he did not care to say a word against Bunter. The fat junior had served him and Todd a very rotten trick, which might easily have ended in a severe punishment for each of them. But Wharton knew very well that Bulstrode was at the bottom of it all. Bunter could never have thought of it for himself.

Mr. Quelch looked sharply at Wharton, and then at Todd. But he did not repeat his question. He rang—and Trotter appeared with remarkable quickness. Perhaps he had not been very far from the doorway all the time.

"Send Masters Bulstrode and Bunter to me at once," said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir."

And Mr. Quelch, with a grim expression upon his face, waited for the arrival of the delinquents.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Hardly a Triumph.

BULSTRODE & CO. were rejoicing.

All the juniors chuckled over the absurd adventure of Alonzo as a chimney-sweep; but Bulstrode had special reason to be satisfied, for he had not the slightest doubt that the affair would end in a severe punishment for both Wharton and Todd, against both of whom he bore a bitter grudge.

The Remove bully had covered up his tracks so well in the matter that discovery seemed impossible, and the thought of having served Mr. Quelch a trick that would make him "sit up," and of having succeeded in making the punishment fall

upon the two juniors who had offended him, made Bulstrode feel very satisfied with himself and his powers as a schemer. Billy Bunter was already claiming his reward in the tuckshop.

"I say, Bulstrode, I'm awfully peckish," he said, nudging the bully of the Remove in the ribs. "Would you care to come to Mrs. Mimble's now?"

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here, you promised——"

"Oh, I'm coming, porpoise!" said Bulstrode, getting off the table where he was sitting. "Get a move on you!"

"Right-ho! I——"

Bunter was interrupted. It was at this moment that Trotter came breathlessly into the room.

"Mr. Quelch wants Master Bulstrode and Master Bunter in the masters'-room!" he exclaimed, as he put his head in at the door.

Bulstrode gave a jump.

"Wants me!" he exclaimed.

"And me?" echoed Bunter.

"Yes," grinned Trotter. "You're to go at once."

"Anybody with him now?" asked Bulstrode, with assumed carelessness.

"Masters Wharton and Todd. They're talking about the chimney-sweepin' business," said Trotter. "You're to go at once."

And he vanished before Bulstrode could ask any more questions. The other juniors were looking very curiously at the Remove bully.

"Did you have anything to do with it, then?" asked Ogilvy.

"Well, we all looked on," said Bulstrode.

"Yes; but somebody must have put the Duffer up to it. Was that you?"

Bulstrode did not reply. He left the common-room, followed at a trembling pace by Billy Bunter. Bunter had forgotten all about the promised feed in his alarm.

"I—I say, Bulstrode, do you think Mr. Quelch knows about the dodge?" he asked.

"He can't," said Bulstrode uneasily.

"But—but he's sent for us."

"He can't know anything. Keep a stiff upper lip, and it will be all right," said Bulstrode desperately. "Deny everything; that's your cue."

And Bulstrode kept a "stiff upper lip" himself as he entered the masters'-room; but Bunter's attempt at the same was not much of a success. Mr. Quelch met them with a glance that certainly justified the assertion of the Removes that his eyes bore a strong resemblance to ginlets.

"Bunter!" he rapped out, in a voice that made the fat junior jump.

"Yes, sir. It wasn't me, sir!"

"Indeed! Do you know anything about this matter, Bunter?"

"W-w-what matter, sir?"

"Someone has imitated Wharton's voice, in order to induce Todd to sweep my chimney," said Mr. Quelch.

"P-p-perhaps it was Wharton, sir."

"Wharton was absent from the school at the time. I believe you are very clever at imitating voices, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir; I'm rather a dab at it—— I—I mean, no, sir, I—I can't imitate voices. I've never done such a thing in my life!"

"Can you imitate Wharton's voice?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Did anyone suggest to you that you should do so, for the sake of playing this trick upon Todd, or did you think of it yourself?"

"Oh, I didn't, sir; the idea never came into my head till Bulstrode said——" Here Bunter caught Bulstrode's eye, and broke off in confusion. "I—I mean that it never came into my head at all, sir."

"I am afraid it is too late for you to make that statement, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "You have admitted too much already. What was it Bulstrode said?"

"He said it would be a good dodge to—— I—I mean, he never said anything, sir. I don't remember having spoken to Bulstrode to-day at all, and he certainly wasn't in the tuckshop with me."

"You are sure, Bunter?"

"Quite sure, sir," said Billy cheerfully.

"You do not object to my calling Mrs. Mimble as a witness, I presume?" said Mr. Quelch, in a biting tone.

Bunter almost collapsed.

"I—I—no—yes, sir! You—you see, sir, Mrs. Mimble is getting pretty old, and she might—might imagine that she saw me there with Bulstrode, sir. You know, you can't depend on a woman to be strictly truthful, sir."

"Bunter! You were in Mrs. Mimble's with Bulstrode to-day, and he proposed to you that this trick should be played!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, in a voice of thunder.

Bunter cast a hopeless look at the sullen, furious face of the Remove bully.

"He knows all about it, Bulstrode," gasped the fat junior.

"I suppose he was standing outside the door all the time, or else Mrs. Mimble heard what we were saying, and told him. I've a good mind not to deal with Mrs. Mimble any more. I'll pay up the fourteen and threepence ha'penny I owe her, and transfer my custom to the village shop."

"Mrs. Mimble has told me nothing, you stupid boy," said Mr. Quelch. "I know nothing but what you have just revealed yourself."

"But—but I haven't said anything, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"You have said quite enough. Bulstrode, will you venture to deny that you suggested this trick to Bunter?"

Bulstrode scowled.

"I don't deny it, sir," he said. It would have been useless to deny anything, after Billy Bunter's unintentional revelations, and Bulstrode knew it. "It was only a jape, sir."

Mr. Quelch looked at him sternly.

"It was only a jape, as you call it, Bulstrode?"

"Yes, sir, that's all."

"If the truth had not come out, Wharton would have been punished very severely. Todd is punished already. Had you any intention of owning up, Bulstrode, as soon as you knew that the punishment was falling upon an innocent person?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Quelch looked directly at him. The Remove bully's gaze fell.

"I do not believe you, Bulstrode," said Mr. Quelch, very quietly. "I believe you planned this more for the purpose of getting Wharton into trouble than for any other reason. In any case, the punishment will fall now upon the right shoulders. You may go; Bulstrode will remain."

Mr. Quelch took up a cane.

Wharton and Todd and Bunter left the masters'-room. As they went down the passage they could hear the swish of the cane. Bulstrode was finding out once more that the way of the transgressor is hard.

"I'm so sorry, Wharton," murmured Alonzo Todd. "I am afraid that I very nearly got you into serious trouble by that natural mistake."

"Oh, you can't help being a duffer," said Harry.

"Really——"

"It's this fat rotter who's to blame, and Bulstrode," said Harry, grasping the Owl of the Remove by the collar, and shaking him.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Yaroooh! D-d-don't shake me like that, Wharton; it unsettles my digestion!"

Bunter wrenched himself away and ran. Wharton walked away, followed by Todd, still expressing his regrets, till Harry gently pushed him over, and left him sitting on the floor in a state of great astonishment.

Billy Bunter waited for Bulstrode to come out. Bunter was thinking of the promised feed in the tuckshop, and he saw no reason why it should not come off all the same, in spite of the untoward turn of events. Bunter could think of only one thing at a time, and that thing was generally provender. He hung about the passage waiting for Bulstrode, though a little more wisdom would have warned him that the Remove bully was not likely to be in a chummy temper when he escaped from the hands of Mr. Quelch.

The door of the masters'-room opened at last, and Bulstrode came out.

He was looking very pale, with a red spot glowing in either cheek, and his brows were darkly bent. He had his hands tucked under his arms, and was squeezing them to allay the pain as he came down the passage.

Bunter rolled forward, blinking at him.

"I say, Bulstrode——"

Bulstrode gave a growl a great deal like a bear.

"Leave me alone, you fat fool!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode, I suppose you haven't forgotten the feed, you know. I'm feeling awfully hungry, and—— Oh! Oh! Yah! Yaroooh!"

Bulstrode had grasped the fat junior and swung him round. Bulstrode was in a humour to wreak his rage upon somebody, and Bunter really came along in the nick of time. The Remove bully kicked the fat junior along the passage, and Bunter staggered and roared.

"Ow! Oh! Yaroooh! Help!"

And he ran for his life.

Bulstrode ran, too, after Bunter, kicking at nearly every step, and he dribbled the fat junior along the passage all the way to the door, where Bunter whipped out into the Close and escaped.

And that was all the reward Billy Bunter ever received for his share of the jape upon Alonzo the Great.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday, entitled: "Billy Bunter, Limited," by Frank Richards. Please order your copy of "The Magnet" Library in advance. Price 1d.)



STANLEY DARE

The Boy Detective

INTRODUCTION.

An undergraduate named Douglas Clayton, of St. Martin's College, Cambridge, is accused of the murder of a fellow-undergraduate, and Stanley Dare, assisted by Professor MacAndrew, takes up his case. After much perilous work, the young detective causes the arrest of a man who had posed as Latimer at the college, and who was the leader of a notorious gang of criminals, named Jim Bargrave. Dare has scarcely achieved this success, however, before he receives notice from the gang that they have captured Professor MacAndrew, and demand, as the price of his safety, that the young detective shall give up the case. Dare examines the paper on which the notice is written through a powerful lens, and to his joy discovers a clue.

(Now go on with the Story).

The Cellar of the Royal George Inn—Professor MacAndrew's Peril—A Search-Warrant.

The writer had evidently been short of notepaper, for some pencil-marks had been carefully rubbed out with ink-eraser, as could be seen by the rough and crumpled state of one end of the letter.

The words that had been rubbed out appeared to refer to an account due to the landlord of the Royal George Inn. On making enquiries, Dare found that the Royal George was an inn on the Doncaster road, about a mile outside Cambridge, and that it did not bear a very good reputation.

He made up his mind in an instant how to act. Enlisting the aid of Blount, Paget and Graham, and disguising himself as a rather disreputable-looking tramp, he set off as soon as it was dark with his three companions, to reconnoitre this shady hostelry.

Dare had taken the precaution to have the mark of the gang cleverly painted on the middle finger of his right hand, to look as though it had been tattooed into the flesh.

On arriving in sight of the inn, which was an ordinary-looking country public-house, the three undergraduates concealed themselves amid a clump of trees, while Dare went forward, and entered the inn. The landlord, a bloated and surly individual, asked him what he wanted.

"Half a pint of ale," said Dare, flinging down three half-pence, and taking care that the mark on his finger should be seen as he did so.

On catching sight of the cross within the diamond the landlord became civil at once, and exhibited a similar mark on his own finger.

"Got any news?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Dare. "Where are the others?"

"Down in the cellar along with the old cove they brought here. Are you dodging the cops?"

"I mean to clear out of the neighbourhood," Dare said.

"Wiseest plan," answered the landlord. "I wish they'd take that professor chap away from here. It ain't safe now the cops are on the alert."

"That's my idea," said Dare, "and I've come here to tell them so."

"Well, you know the way down. You'll find 'em all there."

The young detective did not know the way down, but he had found out what he wanted, and he was glad that an influx of ordinary customers now engaged the landlord's attention. In any case, the way down to the cellar would not be difficult to discover. Meanwhile, he had to bring his three comrades on the scene as quietly and unobtrusively as possible. Five minutes later they were in the inn yard, a dirty and dilapidated place, which appeared to be seldom used. Dare explained the situation.

"We have to rescue the professor," he said, "at all costs, for his life is in danger. We can't do any police work—I mean we can't bother to arrest these miscreants; but if they show fight we must go for them hammer and tongs. You understand?"

"I think we understand that part of the business," replied Blount with a grim smile.

"Come along then. Move as noiselessly as possible."

The landlord was still at the bar, and there did not appear to be anybody at the back of the house.

The stairs leading to the cellar were soon found, and the quartette descended. At the end of a short passage at the foot of the stairs a door faced them. It was fastened on

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 129.

NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER, LIMITED."

the inside, and from beyond it came the low growl of men's voices. Dare knocked sharply on the panels.

"Who's there?" demanded a man with a hoarse voice.

"Open the door, quick!" whispered Dare. "No time to be lost! I've got a message from Jim Bargrave!"

"What is the sign?"

"A cross within a diamond," replied Dare, at a venture.

"Nothing of the sort, you thundering spy!" snapped the voice. "If you're not out of this in—"

The report of Dare's revolver drowned the rest of the sentence. He had blown in the lock, and the door swung slowly open. Rushing into the cellar, followed by the undergraduates, he saw the professor at the opposite end of the room, handcuffed to a staple in the wall. There were four of the gang there. From above, the voice of the landlord could be heard demanding to know what was the matter. But no one heeded him. One of the gang yelled out:

"Spies! Down 'em! College chaps! Let 'em have it hot!"

In two minutes a terrific fight was in progress, but Dare and his companions were not to be denied. They fought with an energy that carried all before them; two of the gang were quickly hors-de-combat, and the other two, concluding that discretion was the better part of valour, made good their escape, fearing, no doubt, that the police were not far off.

"Mon, tae think that I should have been trapped like this!" exclaimed MacAndrew. "It's galling, an' I feel richt doon ashamed. Ay, but they're cunning loons!"

"Never mind, professor," said Dare. "It's the fortune of war. These fellows have over-reached themselves this time. Hold your wrists steady. That's right."

The handcuffs, attached to a chain, swung against the wall with a clatter, and MacAndrew was free.

"The sooner we are out of this the better," continued Dare. "There may be some more of the gang not far off, and I don't know exactly how strong they may be in point of numbers."

Blount led the way, Dare and the professor came next, and Paget and Graham brought up the rear. The two thieves who had fallen were left in the cellar, the young detective meaning to send the police down to the inn as soon as possible.

A few yokels, who had been drinking at the bar, stared open-mouthed at Stanley Dare and his comrades as they passed out of the house. The landlord had disappeared, but Dare did not trouble about him. The police would have no difficulty in tracking him down.

"How did these fellows trap you?" asked Dare of the professor, as they returned towards the town.

"Wi' a forged note, pretending tae come frae you," replied MacAndrew. "Laddie, your handwriting was imitated exactly. It ran: 'What made you leave college without seeing me? Want to see you urgently. Meet me at the Royal George Inn. Fresh developments!' The man who delivered it looked like one of the college porters. He got a cab for me, and I jumped in. Half-way to the inn the driver dropped his whip, and jumped down for it. It was all part of the trick. He put his head in at the window of the cab to apologise for stopping, and before I knew where I was he had clapped a chloroform pad over my mouth. I lost my senses. When I recovered I was handcuffed to the wall in that cellar."

"An old dodge worked very smartly," said Dare. "They

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are up to every move on the board, and must have been watching you pretty closely. Well, here we are at the college gates. I think that a thorough night's rest will do us all good. To-morrow—"

"Yes, to-morrow?"

"To-morrow I shall strike," said Dare, "for I have caught the murderer in the toils, and he cannot escape now. And the fool does not even dream that I suspect him."

"You have all the necessary proofs?"

"Yes, my case is complete."

To-morrow!

Well, it was to be a day big with surprises for many within the college, Dare being probably the only one who was fully prepared for all that was going to happen.

The first surprise came just after morning chapel. A sergeant and two police officers presented themselves, armed with a search-warrant. Information had been lodged that the escaped prisoner, Douglas Clayton, awaiting trial on a charge of murder, was in hiding in the college.

Dr. Golightly at once sent for Dare, asking him if the warrant was regular.

"Perfectly regular," said Dare.

Then he turned to the sergeant.

"Who lodged the information?" he demanded.

"I am not at liberty to give you the man's name," replied the officer.

"It is of no consequence," said Dare. "I know it. Where do you propose to search first?"

"In the rooms formerly occupied by the prisoner," the sergeant answered. "We know that you are acting for him, Mr. Dare; but I must warn you that if you attempt to interfere, or encourage others to interfere with us in the execution of our duty, the consequences will be very serious."

"I have no intention of interfering with you in the execution of your duty," said Dare. "In fact, I intend to aid you."

"In what way?"

"That will be made clear when you have finished your search. Here comes the man who lodged the information. He means to aid you, too, I suppose. Let me advise you, sergeant, not to allow him out of your sight; his information, you know, may, after all, be incorrect."

The sergeant glanced at Dare doubtfully, then at the man who was crossing the court towards them. This man was Sennitt, the gyp!

A Startling Denouement—The Shadow of Guilt is Lifted.

The door of Clayton's rooms was unlocked in the presence of the sergeant of police. He and the constables entered. The rooms were empty so far as a human being was concerned. The police even searched the cupboards, which, having many shelves, would have been inconvenient quarters for a full-grown cat; but not only was Douglas Clayton invisible, there were no signs of the rooms having been occupied since his arrest.

The sergeant turned for an explanation to Sennitt, who was not only bewildered, but showed traces on his sallow face of absolute fear. What was it that he feared?

"He was here last night," said the fellow hoarsely. "I'll swear to that! That precious young detective was the one who hid him here, aiding and abetting a prisoner to escape, and the chances are that he is the one who smuggled him away again."

"Well, Mr. Informer," observed Paget, regarding the gyp with contempt and disgust, "the young detective that you refer to is waiting down in the quadrangle for you and the police-officers when you have done your search, and I have no doubt, will be very happy to explain his conduct."

"I'll search the rooms on this staircase first," said the sergeant, "and then go and have a word or two with Mr. Dare."

He drew blank in the other rooms, for the very simple reason that the man he was searching for—Douglas Clayton—was at that moment leisurely walking up and down by the college green, leaning on Wilfred Blount's arm, and chatting as carelessly with him, apparently, as though the police could have no possible concern with him.

It is, perhaps, needless to say that, as far as his outward appearance was concerned, he did not now bear the slightest resemblance to Douglas Clayton, of St. Martin's.

At an early hour that morning, Stanley Dare had smuggled him down into Blount's rooms, and there disguised him so cleverly that the keenest-eyed police-officer in the world could not have recognised him. He now had the appearance of a man well past middle age, with grey hair, beard, and moustache, and a deeply-bronzed face, as though he had lived much abroad. He was supposed to be a relative of Wilfred Blount, who had come up to Cambridge to see him.

"Look here, Mr. Dare," said the sergeant, when he re-appeared in the quadrangle after his unsuccessful search, "I don't quite understand this business. This man, Sennitt,

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states that it was you who brought the prisoner into the college—"

"One moment, sergeant," interposed Dare. "This excellent servant—my gyp, by the way, so long as I am on the college books—may be able to suggest some other hiding place where Clayton may be concealed."

"Yes, I can!" snarled Sennitt. "There is a small cell in that underground monastery which was discovered the other day—"

He stopped suddenly, realising that he was saying too much. But Dare quickly caught him up.

"When, and in what manner, did you learn about the cells of the underground monastery?" he demanded.

"I went down out of curiosity," stammered the fellow, "and when—"

"That is a lie!"

Sennitt's face became bloodless. The young detective had taken a pace forward, and stood in front of him with flashing eyes. A small crowd of undergraduates had already gathered, and were gazing from the detective to the gyp with wonder and expectancy. That they were on the eve of hearing some startling and dramatic revelation, they felt sure; nor were they to be disappointed.

"Come, Mr. Dare," interposed the sergeant, "we shall gain nothing by abuse. This man has made a statement—"

"Which, I repeat, is a lie!" reiterated Dare. "There is no question of abuse. The men who know the most about the underground monastery are the members of the gang of thieves who made it their headquarters."

"I hope you don't mean to assert, sir," exclaimed Sennitt, "that I know anything about this gang of thieves which you refer to, or have had any connection with them in any way?"

He had thrown out his hands in an attitude of appeal, assuming the role of an injured man. The professor was standing close behind him, and at a glance from Stanley Dare he seized the fellow's right wrist in a vice-like grip, while, with a single deft movement, he snatched off the leather finger-stall from Sennitt's middle finger.

"Sergeant," cried the young detective, "you know the secret mark of the gang of thieves and murderers, of which Jim Bargrave was the head?"

"I know it," replied the sergeant.

"Look here, on that fellow's middle finger!" pursued Stanley Dare. "The cross enclosed by the diamond! I say that this scoundrel, who obtained a position as a college servant with forged references, is a member of that notorious gang—or, perhaps, I ought to say, was a member, for the gang, as a criminal brotherhood, no longer exists."

"An unusual place for a tattoo mark," observed the sergeant, himself visibly impressed by the skilful manner in which the young detective was turning the tables on the informer, and clearing the tangled net of crime which had, alike, caught innocent and guilty in its meshes.

"Aye, there is nae doot about that," said Professor MacAndrew. "I have guid cause to know that mark, and to remember it!"

It was plainly visible, tattooed between the first and second joint of the middle finger.

Sennitt closed his hand, as though to hide it; but he laughed scornfully, meaning to brazen the matter out to the last.

"A tattoo mark that, somewhat foolishly, I had done one evening," he said. "It goes for nothing."

"An unusual place for a tattoo mark," observed the sergeant drily. "In view of the fact that Bargrave and three other members of the gang, who were captured last night, have a similar mark in the same position, it is at least suspicious. But, Mr. Dare—he turned to the young detective—"this does not help us in the matter of Douglas Clayton."

"It will help us to prove his innocence," replied Dare.

"On the first night that I slept in this college I heard somebody moving about the rooms which had been occupied by Clarence Latimer. I crept up the stairs. A man dashed out of the room, seized me by the throat, and flung me back. I knew the man, although I did not see his face in the darkness. I felt the leather finger-stall that he wore on his middle finger pressed against my throat. The man was Sennitt."

"You are trying hard to build up a case!" sneered Sennitt.

"I discovered that a floorboard in Latimer's bed-room had been lifted," pursued Dare, disregarding the interruption, "and in the space beneath there were the marks where a cashbox had been concealed—Latimer's cashbox, containing the fifty pounds in gold which Clayton was falsely accused of having stolen. Sennitt had hidden the box there, and had gone to fetch it when I overheard him in the room. The money was afterwards shared among the gang. The

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By FRANK RICHARDS.

diamond ring, which also had been stolen, Sennitt kept for himself."

"You continue to make these assertions!" cried Sennitt. "Where are your proofs?"

"You shall have them," said Dare.

The man was standing with his arms hanging loosely by his sides and his hands clenched. Dare made a sudden leap forward, and before Sennitt could prevent him, had snatched a leather wallet from the inner breast-pocket of his jacket.

"See what this wallet contains, sergeant!" exclaimed Dare, handing it to the officer.

The sergeant opened it quickly, and the first thing that he extracted was a diamond ring. A cry of anger and amazement broke from the students.

"Latimer's ring!" they cried. "The one that was stolen from him!"

"That is my proof that this man, and not Douglas Clayton is guilty of the theft!" cried Dare triumphantly.

A cheer went up from the undergraduates at this announcement; but it was quickly hushed as Sennitt, with bloodless face and ashen lips, gasped out:

"Have you finished?"

"No!" said Dare, and his voice rang out like a clarion. "I charge you with murder! I charge you with having poisoned Clarence Latimer by administering a drug known as curarine in the cup of coffee which he drank before retiring to rest on the night of his death!"

Sennitt reeled like a drunken man, and no one there could doubt his guilt when they saw the look in his eyes. He knew the game was up at last. Suddenly his hand, which he had slipped into his coat pocket, moved swiftly up to his mouth.

"Hold his wrist—quick!" cried Dare.

The professor had gripped it even before Dare spoke, and he wrested a small, cut-glass phial from the wretched man's hand.

"It is the remainder of the curarine!" he said.

At a word from the sergeant, the constables caught hold of Sennitt. There was the sharp click of handcuffs.

"He meant to poison himself!" gasped Dr. Golightly.

Dare nodded.

The sergeant touched Sennitt on the shoulder.

"You are my prisoner!" he said.

On the evening of that eventful day Stanley Dare, Paget, Graham, Clayton—still disguised, although he meant to surrender to the police next day, as his innocence would soon be legally proved—and Wilfred Blount, had assembled in the latter's room for supper, at the conclusion of which joyous meal Dare gave an account of the manner in which he had solved the mystery of Clarence Latimer's murder, and so lifted the shadow of guilt for ever from Clayton's shoulders.

The greater part of this the reader already knows; but a few words of explanation may still be necessary.

"From the first I regarded Latimer's gyp with suspicion," said Dare, "especially when I discovered, from unmistakable evidence, that he had been wearing a pair of your old shoes, Clayton, to obtain which he must have entered your room. The fact that Sennitt always kept the middle finger of his right hand covered, appeared to me to be suspicious—especially when I found that his statement to me that he had cut his finger badly was a lie. Of course, when I discovered the secret mark of the gang, I understood the reason of it.

"Sennitt was a member of that clever gang of thieves, and, having obtained the position of gyp in the college, there were plenty of opportunities of making big hauls of money, jewellery, or college plate, by working in conjunction with his confederates. The fact that Bargrave was so exactly like Latimer—not only in appearance, but in voice also—paved the way for some big coups. It is not possible, now, to prove it, but there can be no doubt that he was in and about the college very often during the evenings, when anyone, on seeing him, would have mistaken him for Latimer.

"The real Latimer made the discovery that it was his gyp, Sennitt, who had robbed him; but he meant that the suspicion should rest on you Clayton, as, for reasons with which I am unacquainted, Clarence Latimer bore you the most intense hatred.

"But Sennitt thought that the accusation against you was only a ruse on Latimer's part, and that he meant to hand him over to the police on the following day. To save himself, and transfer the suspicion of murder, as well as theft, to Clayton, he obtained the curarine and poured enough poison to kill two men into his master's coffee. The coolness and diabolical cunning of the act served to avert suspicion from him at first."

"What an utter villain!" exclaimed Blount.

"You may say that," replied Dare. "Well, he will pay the price of his crimes."

He did. In due course he was tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. Bargrave received a long term of penal servitude, and the other members of the gang varying terms according to the evidence that was brought against them.

Douglas Clayton is still one of the most popular men at St. Martin's; but Stanley Dare is the hero of the undergraduates, and whenever he goes to Cambridge he is sure of a hearty and joyous welcome.

However, he could spare no time to holiday with them just then, for, no sooner had he returned to his rooms, than a visitor called upon him on urgent business.

A Strange Story.

"I have heard of you, Mr. Dare, as being the youngest and smartest detective in London, official and private. I believe in young men. They strike out new methods of their own, and, as a rule, they are more daring than men who are past their prime. It is for these reasons that I have come to consult you in a case of mysterious murder and robbery."

Stanley Dare stood with his back to the window, and his face in deep shadow—a favourite position of his when interviewing a new client. It possessed this advantage, that he could note the varying expressions on his client's features, while his own could only be observed with difficulty.

In the present instance he noted that his visitor was blind of one eye—the left—but that his sound eye was a piercing one, with a somewhat sinister gleam in it. He was roughly clad, and had the outward appearance of a merchant seaman. His voice was soft and polished, and his general style of speaking showed him to be a man of education. His card, which Dare still held between a finger and thumb, bore the name "Martin Gilbert."

"I am certainly the youngest detective in London," replied Dare, with a slight smile. "Now, will you please state your case? Was the murdered person a friend or relative of yours?"

"Neither," answered Martin Gilbert—"not even an acquaintance. But I was interested in the man from a purely personal reason.

"The man's name was John Fleming," went on Gilbert; "he was a common seaman, and he had in his possession, at the time when he was murdered, a leather pocket-book which belonged to me."

"Indeed! How did it get into his possession?"

"I am coming to that. The pocket-book, which contained papers of some value to me, had been entrusted to his care by a friend of mine, who is a shipping agent at Lagos, on the West Coast of Africa. Fleming had been in my friend's employ, and was a trustworthy fellow, I believe. As he was coming home to England, my friend decided to send the papers which I have referred to by him. The pocket-book in which they were placed is of no value of itself, but if the book can be traced we shall no doubt be on the track of the murderer."

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