

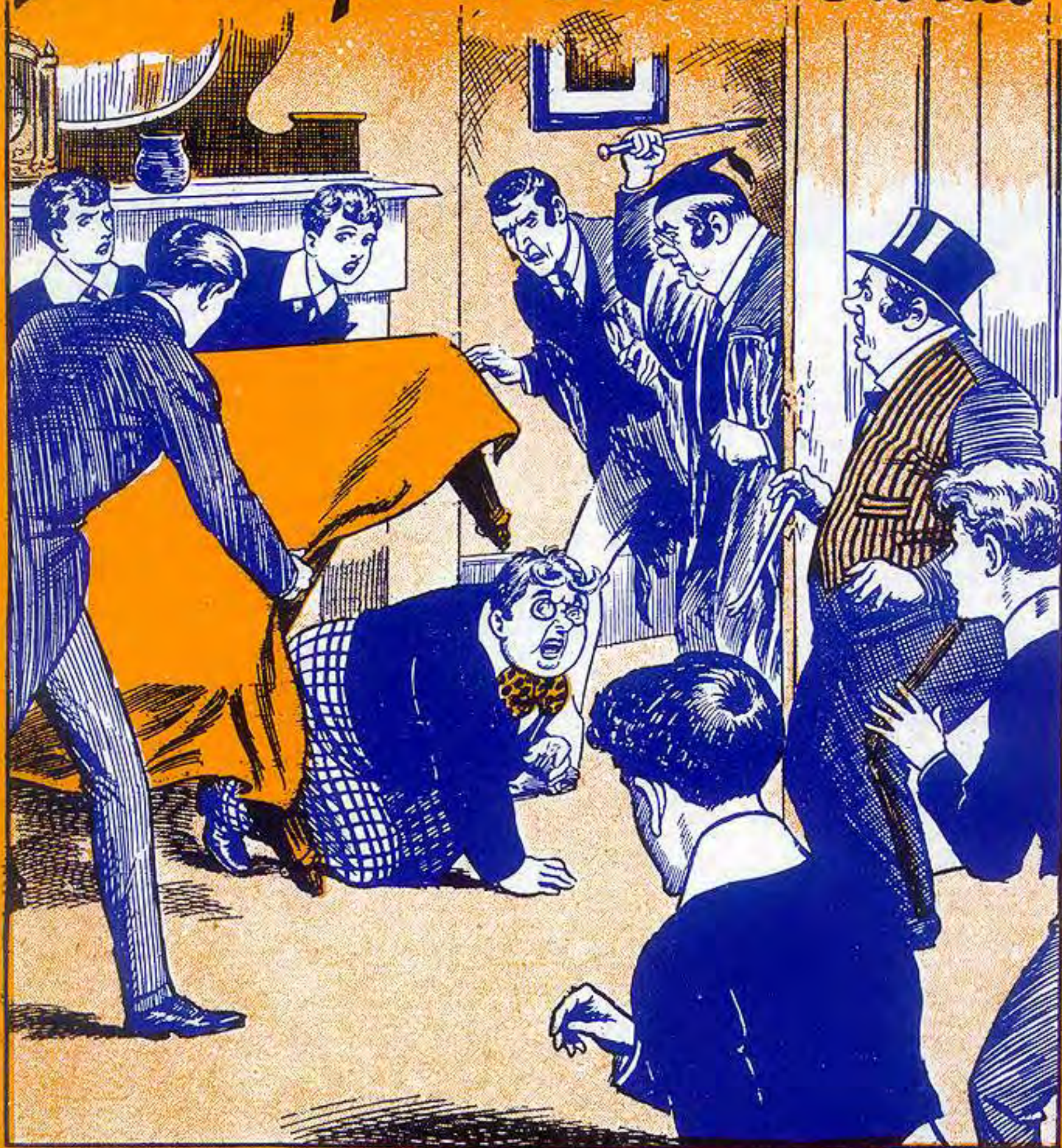
SIGNED FOOTBALL ARTICLE BY FRED. C. KEENOR (WELSH INTERNATIONAL), INSIDE!

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The Magnet 2^d

EVERY MONDAY

Library of Complete School Stories



THE MYSTERY OF THE HEAD'S STUDY REVEALED!

(An astonishing incident in the long complete school story of the Greyfriars chums, inside.)

THE LIMIT! Billy Bunter's fatuous folly has led him into some wild escapades from time to time, but hardly ever has he got himself into such a pickle as in—



A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Ventriloquial!

"BLESS my soul!"

Peter Todd jumped.

It was enough to make any fellow jump.

The words in themselves were not, of course, very startling. Often and often had every fellow at Greyfriars heard Dr. Locke, the headmaster, utter that ejaculation. And the headmaster's voice, though deep, was quite a pleasant one; there was nothing startling in that. Yet Peter Todd jumped, in utter amazement.

For he was coming up the Remove passage, and it was from his own study, No. 7 in the Remove, that the ejaculation proceeded.

The door of Study No. 7 stood slightly ajar. Peter could not see into the study; but he could hear.

And that was what he heard—the deep, familiar voice of the Head uttering that ejaculation—in Peter's own study.

"My only hat!" murmured Peter.

He halted.

What the Head could possibly be doing in his study was a mystery to him. Sometimes Dr. Locke visited the junior quarters of the school, on a tour of inspection. But then he came in state, as it were, with the Remove master—a sort of stately procession. Remove fellows, spotting him from a distance, would have their rooms all ready to meet his august eye—Bob Cherry would take his football boots off the mantelpiece, and Skinner would slip his cigarettes under the hearthrug.

For the Head to dodge, as it were, into a fellow's study in his absence, in a sort of surreptitious way, was absolutely unknown and unheard of; and Toddy would not have believed it possible. The Head might drop informally into a Sixth Form study for a chat—say, Wingate's or Gwynn's study. But he did not, of course, drop in on Lower Fourth fags for purposes of chatting.

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So Peter Todd stood amazed, staring at the door of Study No. 7, wondering whether, in the amazing circumstances, he could venture to enter his own study.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry came up the Remove passage, and greeted Toddy with a smack on the shoulder. The smack rang a good deal like a pistol-shot; Bob had a heavy hand.

"Ow!" gasped Peter. "Keep off, you ass!"

"What's the row?" asked Bob. "What are you standing here for blinking at your study door? Anything up?"

"Hush!"

"Eh! Why hush?"

"The Head!" whispered Peter.

Bob Cherry stared at him, and then stared round him. There was no sign of the Head in the Remove passage, that Bob could see.

"What the thump—" began Bob.

"Hush!" breathed Peter. "I tell you the Head—"

"The jolly old Head isn't here," said Bob blankly.

Peter made him a frantic sign to be silent. Bob's voice, undoubtedly, was audible in Study No. 7. What would Dr. Locke think, hearing himself described as the jolly old Head?

The surprised Bob was about to speak again, when there was a voice from Study No. 7—a familiar voice, but very startling in that quarter.

"Upon my word!"

Bob Cherry jumped, just as Peter Todd had done.

"Oh!" he gasped. "The Head!"

He stared at the door. That door of Study No. 7 seemed to fascinate the gaze of both the juniors.

"He's in my study!" whispered Peter. "Something's up! Goodness knows what's the matter, but I suppose it means a row. The Head wouldn't come up to the Remove passage for nothing."

Four juniors came up the staircase, and glanced along the passage towards Bob and Toddy. They were Harry Wharton, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. They

were about to go into Wharton's study, No. 1; but their gaze was attracted by the two juniors staring blankly at Study No. 7.

"What's on there?" called out Harry Wharton.

"Bunter burst?" asked Johnny Bull.

Peter made a sign of silence, and the mystified juniors came along the passage in wonder.

There was no need then for explanation; for the voice from the study went on again:

"Bless my soul! I must speak of this to Mr. Quelch."

"The Head!" breathed Wharton.

"What on earth—" began Nugent.

"Beats me!" whispered Peter Todd.

"It's not like the Head to sneak into a fellow's study like this. I went down only ten minutes ago, and left Bunter there. Now—"

He broke off as the voice went on.

"I shall certainly speak to Mr. Quelch!" Bunter!"

"Yes, sir!"

That was the well-known squeak of Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove. The juniors exchanged glances. Apparently Billy Bunter was in Study No. 7, along with the headmaster.

"What does this mean, Bunter?"

"What, sir?"

"The untidy state of this study, Bunter! I am surprised, Bunter—I may say I am shocked! Whose are these boots?"

"Toddy's, sir."

"Does Toddy generally keep his football boots in the bookcase?"

Peter Todd, in the passage, made a grimace. It was true that his football boots were in the bookcase in Study No. 7; but he did not generally keep them there; neither would they have been there, had he expected a visit from the Head. But this occurrence was extremely unexpected.

"Well, sir, Toddy's rather slovenly," came Bunter's voice. "I do my best, sir, to keep the study in order. But it's rather hard with a study-mate like Peter Todd."

"Is it, you fat villain?" murmured

Peter, under his breath. Only that afternoon he had been slanging Bunter for untidiness.

"I am sure of that, Bunter," resumed the Head's voice. "I have the highest opinion of you, Bunter, and I am assured that you do everything in your power to restrain the slovenly habits of your study-mate."

Harry Wharton & Co. blinked at one another. This was the first they had heard of the Head's high opinion of William George Bunter. Upon what he founded it was a mystery to them.

"Thank you, sir!" squeaked Bunter. "I shall certainly speak to Mr. Quelch. I shall request him to administer some correction to Todd."

Peter made another grimace. "Where is Todd now, Bunter?"

"I think he's hanging about outside the study, sir," squeaked the Owl of the Remove. "I fancy he can hear everything you're saying, sir."

Peter's expression was quite indescribable as he heard that.

"Bless my soul! Todd! Todd, I say! If you are there, come into the study at once!"

"Oh dear!" murmured Peter. And he pushed open the door of Study No. 7, and entered.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Only Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER grinned cheerfully at the newcomer.

The fat junior's face was, in fact, irradiated by its most expansive grin. Bunter seemed to be immensely entertained about something.

But Peter was not looking at him. He was looking for the Head.

A bewildered look came over Peter's face. He had entered the study in response to the Head's command. But amazing to relate, the Head was not visible within the walls of Study No. 7. Billy Bunter was there, fat and grinning. But Dr. Locke was not to be seen.

Peter Todd blinked about the study, bewildered, almost unnerved. Unless the Head had vanished suddenly up the chimney, Peter could not guess what had become of him.

"What—wha—a-a-at—" stammered Toddy.

"He, he, he!"

"What—where's the Head?"

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. Peter stared round the study again, and then his eyes fixed on Billy Bunter with a deadly look.

"You—you—you fat villain! This is one of your ventriloquist tricks, is it?"

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "I fancy I pulled your leg, old bean. He, he, he!"

"You—you—" gasped Peter.

Bunter chortled spasmodically. There was no doubt that the Greyfriars ventriloquist had pulled Peter's leg—most effectually and completely. Not for a moment had Toddy doubted that the Head was in Study No. 7; he had never even dreamed that the dialogue he had heard from outside was carried on entirely by Bunter, speaking alternately in his own voice and in the Head's.

Bunter grinned at him cheerily.

"You see, I heard you coming!" he explained. "I thought I'd make you jump, you know. He, he, he!"

Peter breathed hard and deep.

"Well, you did make me jump," he admitted.

"He, he, he!"

"And as one good turn deserves another, I'm going to make you jump."

"I say, Peter—Yaroooooooh!" roared Bunter, as Peter Todd grabbed him by the collar and proceeded to tap his head against the study table.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"What—"

Harry Wharton & Co. stared in. There was no sign of the Head in the study, but Bunter's head was rapping on the table in a series of postman's knocks, and the yells of William George Bunter rang the length of the Remove passage.

"I say, you fellows, draggimoff!" yelled Bunter. "Yarooooh! Only a joke—only a j-j-j-joke! Whoop! Stop it! I'll jolly well lick you, Peter Todd! Oh crumbs! Draggimoff!"

Crack, crack, crack!

"You fat villain!" gasped Peter.

"I've warned you what would happen if you played your beastly ventriloquist tricks in this study any more! Take that—and that—and that—"

"Yaroooooh! Rescue!" yelled Bunter, struggling frantically.

Harry Wharton & Co. rushed to the rescue. The excited Peter was collared and dragged off his victim.

"Hold on!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Enough's as good as a feast, you know, Toddy."

"Mustn't slaughter Bunter!" said Johnny Bull.

"Leggo! I—I—I'll jolly well burst him!" exclaimed Peter Todd. "He made me believe that the Head was here—going to report me to Quelch for slovenliness! He—"

"Only a jest, old man," said Harry Wharton soothingly. "You really might have guessed that it was Bunter, knowing his tricks."

"You didn't guess!" snapped Peter.

"Well, no," admitted the captain of the Remove. "Bunter had the Head's toot wonderfully. Blessed if I know how he does it."

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Keep that idiot off! It's a gift, of course—a wonderful gift—"

"Must be a gift," said Bob. "If it needed brains, you couldn't do it."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Will you leggo?" roared Peter Todd.

"I tell you I'm going to squash him! Ventriloquism is barred in this study."

"Todd!" It was a sharp, stern voice outside the door, the voice of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove.

"Todd! What does this violence mean?"

Peter Todd jumped, and the Co. released him at once. Apparently the terrific yelling in Study No. 7 had brought the Remove master on the scene. Certainly Bunter's frantic howls must have been heard all over Greyfriars.

"Oh, sir!" gasped Peter. "I—I—I—"

"How dare you, Todd?"

"I—I—I—"

Peter broke off. The door was wide open, and there was nothing to be seen of Mr. Quelch there. Peter understood all of a sudden; really it was impossible that Mr. Quelch should be keeping out of sight round the corner while he was speaking to Todd. It was the Greyfriars ventriloquist again!

Bunter's faculty for imitating voices was really marvellous. But his weird gift earned him more kicks than halfpence, so to speak, in the Greyfriars Remove.

"Quelch's not there," said Bob Cherry. "It's Bunter again! How the dickens does he do it?"

"He, he, he!"

"I—I—I'll make an example of him!" roared Peter. "Why, a fellow's life isn't worth living with a potty ventriloquist in the study! I'll burst him!"

"Whoop!" roared Bunter.

Peter's grasp was on him again, and he was yanked out of the arm-chair. He bumped on the carpet with a heavy bump.

"There!" gasped Peter.

"Yow-ow-ow! Help!"

"Todd! How dare you?"

It was Mr. Quelch's voice again, but this time it was the genuine article; the din in the Remove passage had, in fact, drawn the Form master to the scene.

Mr. Quelch came whisking along to Study No. 7 with a frowning brow and a cane in his hand.

He stared into the study wrathfully. Peter Todd, with his back to the door, was bumping Bunter's hapless head on the carpet.

"Todd! Cease this at once! You ruffianly boy, how dare you?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, cheese it, you spoofing rotter!" howled Peter Todd. "How the dickens you do it while I'm bumping your head is a mystery to me, but I'll jolly well stop you!"

As Peter had his back to the door, and did not see Mr. Quelch, it was natural that he should suppose that it was some more of Bunter's ventriloquism.

Bump, bump!

"Yaroooooh! Help!"

"Todd!" gasped Wharton.

"Todd!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Are you out of your senses?"

"Shut up, I tell you!"

"What?"

"I'll jolly well make you chuck it somehow, you silly idiot!"

Mr. Quelch stood transfixed.

Really, it was incredible that a junior in his own Form should talk to him like this. But he had to believe his own ears.

"Todd!" yelled Bob. "You frightful ass, it's really Mr. Quelch this time!"

"What?"

Peter Todd released Bunter as if he had suddenly become red-hot, and spun round.

His jaw dropped at the sight of his Form master in the doorway.

"Oh, my hat! Oh crikey! Mr. Quelch! Oh!"

"Todd!" stuttered the Remove master. "You—you—you unruly, disrespectful young rascal! You—you—How dare you? I shall take you to the Head for a flogging! I—I—"

"Oh, sir! Sorry!" gasped Peter, in dismay. "I—I thought—I didn't know it was you, sir; I never knew—I swear—"

His utter dismay was convincing. Mr. Quelch calmed down a little.

"If you were too excited to recognise my voice, Todd, that is very little excuse for you. I shall cane you severely for creating this disturbance, and for not paying immediate attention to your Form master."

"I—I—I—" babbled Peter.

"Bend over that arm-chair, Todd!"

"Oh dear!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack, whack, whack!

Peter Todd squirmed and wriggled and gasped as he received "six"—the severest "six" he ever had received.

"Now, let there be no more of this," said Mr. Quelch, tucking his cane under his arm. "Any repetition of this disorderly conduct, Todd, will be followed by a flogging from your headmaster. Take care!"

And Mr. Quelch, with a grim warning frown, marched out of the study, leaving Peter Todd wriggling in anguish.

Bunter rolled out after him. Just then Billy Bunter did not regard Study No. 7 as a safe place to linger in; and

undoubtedly he was right. Peter Todd leaned on the table and gasped.

"Oh dear! Oh crumbs! I—I'll burst that fat villain! Ow, ow, ow! What are you grinning at, you silly owls? Ow! Is there anything to grin at, you chuckling chumps? Get out! Ow, ow, ow!"

And Harry Wharton & Co. got out, still grinning, leaving Peter to gasp and groan till, at long last, gasping and groaning brought him relief.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Asks For It!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

Bob Cherry looked astonished. "How did Bunter know we had a cake for tea?" he asked.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I didn't know you had a cake! Still, I don't mind taking a whack, as you ask me."

"Nobody asked you, sir, she said," sang Frank Nugent. And the chums of the Remove chuckled.

Billy Bunter rolled into Study No. 1. There was a large cake on the table, and the Famous Five were beginning tea with bread-and-butter, intending to finish with the cake. Billy Bunter decided to start on the cake. He picked up a knife, sliced off about a quarter of it, and started.

"I haven't really come to tea," he remarked. "I'll leave you chaps all the bread-and-butter."

"Go hon!" said Bob sarcastically. "You might leave us a little of the cake, too, if it isn't asking too much, Bunter," remarked Johnny Bull, still more sarcastically.

But Bunter had no attention to waste on sarcasm. His attention was concentrated on the cake.

"You're not tea-ing in your own study?" asked Harry Wharton, with a laugh.

After the exciting events of the afternoon Wharton could guess that Bunter was not keen to revisit No. 7 until he had to.

Bunter shook his head with his mouth full.

"No; I'm fed-up with Toddy. Dutton told me he's got a fives bat on the table waiting for me to come in to tea."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Pretty hard cheese for a fellow to be kept out of his own study in this style, I think," said Bunter warmly.

"I've a jolly good mind to go straight to No. 7 and give Toddy a hiding with his own fives bat. But—but I won't."

"No; I think I wouldn't," grinned Bob Cherry. "It would be a jolly painful thing—not for Toddy."

"The fact is Quelchy's licked him, and I'm letting him off," said Bunter magnanimously. "I say, you fellows, this is a rather decent cake. Not like the cakes I get from home, of course, but quite good. I'll have some more."

And he did.

"Don't mind us!" said Frank Nugent, also in a deep, sarcastic vein.

"Right, old fellow, I won't! I like cake better than bread-and-butter, myself; but every chap to his taste," said Bunter. "I'll do some ventriloquial stunts after tea, if you like. I don't mind!"

"We do," said Harry Wharton.

"Jolly queer thing, isn't it, how fellows are jealous of my gifts?" said Bunter. "Jealousy and detraction all round, that's what I'm accustomed to."

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I suppose it's a sort of penalty for being clever."

"Oh, my hat!"

"The cleverfulness is not really terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"If you fellows could do what I do—" went on Bunter.

"We'd like to, but you've got all the cake," remarked Johnny Bull.

"I wasn't alluding to the cake, fat-head."

"I was," said Johnny Bull.

"I hope you're not going to be mean about a cake. I'll let you have the next one they send me from Bunter Court, if you like."

"We shall be past cakes then," said Bob Cherry. "People don't eat cakes in extreme old age."

"Yah!"

Bunter sliced the cake again. Harry Wharton reached across the table and rescued what was left. It made a moderate slice each for the owners of the cake.

"I say, you fellows, I really came in to tell you the news," said Bunter, munching busily. "The Head's son is coming home."

"Is he?" said Bob. "Did the Head tell you so?"

"Yes; confided it to me," said Bunter. "I don't think anybody else at Greyfriars has been told. You know young Locke is in the Army. He's been out in Mesopotamia, or somewhere, a jolly long time. Well, he's coming back to England, and may land at Southampton any day—the ship's been delayed by foul weather, or something."

Harry Wharton & Co. were mildly interested. They were acquainted with the Head's son, Mr. Percy Locke; he had been at Greyfriars, some time ago. He was quite a nice young man, they remembered, and they had no doubt that the Head was attached to him, and glad he was coming home again.

"The Head's going to Southampton to meet him when the steamer gets in," said Bunter. "He's rather bothered by the delay, you know, as he can't get away from Greyfriars for long; but he wants to be sure not to miss Percy when he lands."

"He told you all that?" grinned Bob.

"Yes; we had quite a chat. I understand that Quelchy will be left in charge while the Head's gone. Quelchy's the Head's right-hand man, you know, though he's only Lower Fourth master. From what old Locke was saying I think the steamer may get in to-morrow; if so, the Head will buzz off in his car at once, leaving Quelchy in control. Any more cake?"

"Nix."

"Not much of a spread to ask a fellow to," said Bunter, with a sniff. "I rather wish I had gone to Smithy's study now."

"And so say all of us!" said Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But about young Locke," went on Bunter. "The Head said he was thinking of giving Greyfriars a holiday when the chap comes home."

"Good egg!"

"Good old Head!"

"Bravo!"

This was much more interesting news. "The goodnessful is terrific, if true," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But how does the esteemed and fat-headed Bunter know?"

"The Head told me," said Bunter calmly. "He was quite chatty, in fact. I don't know whether it's to be a whole holiday or a half; the Head was just

going to say when Quelchy looked round and I had to clear—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean the Head didn't mention that in his chat with me. I don't see anything to cackle at. I say, you fellows, it will be ripping to get an extra holiday, especially if it's on a day when we have maths. I thought I'd tell you fellows, as you're pals of mine. If you're done with the table you might clear the things off, will you? I'm going to do my lines here."

The Famous Five looked at Bunter. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, to whom Study No. 1 belonged, did not seem in the least enthusiastic about Bunter doing his lines there. Neither did they seem keen to clear the tea-table for the purpose.

"You see, Toddy'll be cutting up rusty if I go to my own study," explained Bunter, "and I've got to get through the lines. There's two hundred now—they've been doubled twice because I haven't done them. Quelchy's told me it will be a licking if they're not handed in by five to-day."

"It's five now!" said Nugent.

"Yes; all the more reason for hurrying. If I don't take them to Quelchy he will come up here inquiring after them, you know, and that means bending over."

"Then it means bending over," said Harry Wharton. "You can't possibly get two hundred lines done in time."

"I expect my old pals to stand by me, especially when I've come here to tell you the latest news," said Bunter. "Two hundred lines won't take long with all of us working at them."

"Oh!"

"I'll do a line at the top of each sheet, see, and you fellows can copy my fist," said Bunter. "It only needs a little sense."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You've got a Virgil here," said Bunter. "I don't want to go to my study for mine. Now, there's no time to lose. Clear the table sharp."

The Famous Five did not stir.

They were not looking for lines to do, as a matter of fact. To Billy Bunter it was extremely important that those lines should be done in a hurry, and he considered that it was a case of all hands to the mill. The importance was not so obvious to the Famous Five.

They considered that if Bunter did not want a licking for leaving his impots unwritten, he should have written them while there was yet time. That consideration did not seem to occur to the Owl of the Remove.

"Deaf?" asked Bunter, looking round irritably at five grinning faces. "I keep on telling you that there's no time to lose. If Quelchy remembers my impot, he may come up here any minute after me."

"And catch us all copying your fist!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Not quite good enough, Bunter."

"The not-quitenessful is terrific."

"I say, you fellows, I'm relying on you, you know," urged Bunter. "I've had the rotten impot doubled twice, and Quelchy always makes it a licking after that."

"Why haven't you done your lines, lazybones?" demanded Johnny Bull. "Do you think we're going to do two hundred because you're too jolly lazy to do fifty?"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Call in some other study," said Nugent.

"I say, you fellows, I expect my old pals to stand by me at a time like this," said Bunter reproachfully. "I really think they ought."

"They ought," agreed Bob Cherry. "Go and tell them so, whoever they are."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cut the cackle!" exclaimed Bunter. "I tell you old Quelch will be after me if I don't bung those lines on him soon. Look here, are you going to pile into those lines, or are you not?"

"Not!" said five voices in unison; and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh added emphatically that the notfulness was terrific.

"Well, this is rather thick," said Bunter in a deeply aggrieved tone. "You won't write my lines in an emergency like this, when I've come here specially to tell you what old Locke told me, about having a holiday when young Locke comes home—What are you making faces at, Wharton?"

Wharton was making an extraordinary face, intended to convey a warning to Bunter to ring off. The door of Study No. 1 was wide open, and a figure in cap and gown was passing—the figure of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove. Obviously the Remove master was on his way to Study No. 7, in search of Bunter and the—as yet—unwritten lines.

Bunter's voice floated out of Study No. 1, and Mr. Quelch came to a sudden halt and turned to the door.

Then the Owl of the Remove learned the cause of the extraordinary expression on Wharton's face.

"Bunter!"

"Oh, lor'!"

Bunter spun round like a teetotum. His fat knees knocked together as he blinked at Mr. Quelch, his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles with terror.

"Bunter," thundered the Remove master, "is it possible that you were alluding to your headmaster as 'old Locke'?"

"Oh crumbs! No, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Certainly not, sir! I—I wouldn't dream of such a thing, sir!"

"I distinctly heard you use the words 'old Locke,' Bunter."

"Did-did you, sir?"

"I did, Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, with a terrifying glare at the hapless Owl. "How dare you deny using words which I distinctly heard you use? Such an expression applied to the headmaster of this school—"

"I—I wasn't speaking of the Head, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"What, boy?"

"I—I was speaking of—of—of—"

stuttered Bunter.

"Oh whom?" said Mr. Quelch in a grinding voice.

"Nobody at all, sir," gasped the terrified Owl. "I—I was speaking of—the lock on a door, sir."

"Wha-a-t?"

"The—the lock on my study door, sir," babbled Bunter. "I—I was saying it was an old lock, sir, and—and we want a new one, sir. That—that's all, sir. I—I hope you believe me, sir."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry, almost overcome.

The chums of the Remove gazed at Bunter open-mouthed.

Bunter was a fabricator of unusual powers. His first resource in a scrape was to roll out the first "whopper" that came into his obtuse head, and to back it up with more and more "whoppers," bigger and bigger, like Pelion piled on Ossa. But if Bunter hoped that Mr. Quelch believed his extraordinary explanation, it showed a remarkably sanguine disposition on his part. His hope was not destined to be realised.

"Boy," stuttered Mr. Quelch, "how dare you—how dare you, I say, look me in the face and tell me such absurd untruths?"



Bump! Bump! "Yaroooh! Help!" Mr. Quelch stared into the study at Peter Todd, who, with his back to the door, was bumping Bunter's hapless head on the carpet. "Todd! Cease this at once!" he exclaimed angrily. "You ruffianly boy, how dare you?" But Peter heeded not. With his back to the door he did not see the Remove master, and naturally concluded that the voice was another sample of Bunter's ventriloquism. (See Chapter 2.)

"Oh, really, sir—"

"You were alluding to your headmaster in the most disrespectful terms," exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "But worse than that, Bunter, you were speaking of a private matter that has hitherto been known only to the Head and myself, outside Dr. Locke's own family. I demand to know how you became aware that Dr. Locke's son is about to return home from abroad?"

Bunter's teeth chattered.

He had told Harry Wharton & Co. that he had been having a chat with the Head. But even Bunter was not likely to make that statement to Mr. Quelch.

"You have been eavesdropping, Bunter."

"Oh! No, sir! Oh, no!" gasped Bunter.

"The matter has not been mentioned before to-day. You must have listened to Dr. Locke's conversation with me."

"Certainly not, sir! I—I wouldn't."

"Then how do you know anything about the matter, Bunter?"

"I—I—I don't, sir."

"What?"

"I—I don't know anything about it at all, sir! It—it's quite a mistake to—to think I know anything about it."

"Are you out of your senses, Bunter? I heard you making the statement to these juniors—"

"I—I didn't know you were listening, sir!"

"WHAT!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"I—I mean, I didn't know you were passing, sir. Oh dear!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I wasn't really telling these fellows about young Locke coming home, sir. I—I don't know anything about it really, sir. I—I was only speaking in—in a general sort of way, sir."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

"Bunter, go to my study at once!"

"Wha-a-t for, sir?"

"I am going to punish you, Bunter, for outrageous untruthfulness, and for listening to a private conversation."

"Oh, sir! I—"

"GO!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

The hapless Owl quaked and went. Mr. Quelch whisked away after him.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Bunter does take the cake—the whole cake! Ananias was a fool to him; he could give George Washington fifty in a hundred and beat him hollow!"

"Poor old Bunter; he's for it now!" said Harry.

"Well, he asked for it, and no mistake."

There was no doubt that Bunter had asked for it, and no doubt at all that he was getting what he had asked for. A few minutes later loud sounds of anguish were heard proceeding from Mr. Quelch's study—the voice of William

George Bunter raised in woeful lamentation. The vials of wrath were being poured upon the Owl of the Remove, and the celebrated lamentations of Job were a mere jest compared with the lamentations of William George Bunter.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Woeful!

PETER TODD glanced round, and reached for the fives bat that lay handy on the study table. The fives-bat was all ready for Bunter when he came in, and Bunter was coming. There was a well-known footstep and a well-known grunt in the Remove passage outside Study No. 7.

The door opened.

Peter gripped the fives bat with a business-like grip.

But as the Owl of the Remove rolled in Peter unloosed his grip. It needed only one glance at Bunter's anguished face to tell that he had been gathering up punishments somewhere, and that he was not in need of any more.

The Owl of the Remove blinked at Peter, with a lack-lustre eye. He had forgotten the fives bat.

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Todd, staring at him.

Groan!

"Loder been licking you?"

Groan!

"Too much tuck, and a pain amidships?" asked Peter.

Groan!

Bunter limped across the study to the armchair, and sank down. The next moment he leaped to his feet, with a howl. For reasons of his own, the hapless Owl did not want to sit down. As a rule he never stood if he could sit; just now he was keen on standing.

"Licked, I suppose?" asked Peter.

"Ow! Wow! Yes! Wow! Ow!"

"Well, don't make such a row about it, old chap!"

Groan!

"I'll let you off the fives bat," said Peter generously. "There! You were going to get a licking, anyhow! So shut up!"

Groan!

"Chuck it, old man!"

Groan!

Billy Bunter leaned on the table, and groaned as if he were getting his form up for a groaning match.

Peter eyed him. He could see that the fat junior had been through it severely; it was not humbug this time.

"Well, if you've had it bad you can groan a bit, if you like," he said.

"Dash it all, you can howl, if you like! Try howling!"

Groan!

"I'll get out of the study, if you don't mind," said Todd, rising. "Keep it up if it relieves you, old fat man; but it's a bit horrid to listen to!"

Groan!

Peter crossed to the door. But he turned back. Bunter was not a fellow whose ways were likely to make him popular or beloved; but Peter could feel for him in this dreadful state. He fumbled in his pocket.

"I've got a packet of toffee here," he said.

Obviously, Bunter's sufferings were acute. For he showed no interest in the toffee.

Peter took out the packet, and held it out to Bunter. The Owl of the Remove shook his head feebly.

"Mean to say you can't eat toffee now?" asked Peter, in wonder.

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Groan!

"Great Scott! You must have it bad! Well, if you don't want it, I do," said Peter, and he was about to slip the toffee back into his pocket, when Bunter held out a fat hand. "Oh, changed your mind—what? Well, here you are."

Bunter accepted the toffee. But he did not transfer it immediately to his mouth, as he generally did with anything eatable that came into his possession. He slipped it into his pocket. His interest even in food was at a low ebb in this state of suffering; but even in the midst of his woes he had an eye to the future.

Peter Todd grinned.

"Well, you can have the study to yourself, till you've done groaning," he said. "Get through before prep, won't you?"

Groan!

Peter Todd left the study, and Bunter was left to groan, which he did loud and long. Mr. Quelch had not spared the rod; he had felt that this was an occasion for severity; and he had handed out a dozen of the best. No doubt the Remove master was quite right, from his own point of view; but his point of view and Bunter's were wide as the poles asunder.

Bunter leaned on the table in deep tribulation, and the sounds of his woe echoed through Study No. 7.

He was still groaning, quite a considerable time later, when the door was tapped and opened, and Lord Mauleverer's kind face looked in.

Bunter blinked dismally at his lordship.

"I hear you've been through it, fatty," remarked Mauleverer, with a sympathetic look at the Owl of the Remove.

Groan!

"Feelin' awf'ly bad?"

"Oh! Oh, dear! Yes! Frightful!"

"Can't take an interest in anythin' just yet—what?"

"Ow! No."

"No good askin' you to supper in my study, then?"

"Eh?"

Bunter pricked up his fat ears. It dawned upon him that his pains and aches had considerably lessened, and that he was still groaning from, as it were, force of habit.

"Don't feel like supper?" asked the sympathetic Mauly. "We've got fish and chips—"

"Oh!"

"And a pie—"

"Ah!"

"And a cake! But if you don't feel equal to it—"

"I do!" gasped Bunter, in a great hurry. "The—the fact is, I feel a lot better now, Mauly! Lots and lots!"

Lord Mauleverer grinned.

"If you're sure—"

"Quite."

"Come on, then, old fat bean!"

And Billy Bunter rolled after his amiable lordship to Study No. 12. He had a twinge as he sat down at Lord Mauleverer's hospitable board, and gasped; but the feed consoled him. His woeful face brightened over the fish and chips, he was smiling when he came to the pie, and over the cake he grinned with expansive enjoyment.

Bunter was himself again!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Sticking To It!

MR. QUELCH frowned as he glanced at Bunter, in the Remove Form the following morning.

Really, there was no occasion for frowning, for the moment. Bunter, so far, had given no offence that day.

In fact, Bunter, having got over the licking of the day before, had almost forgotten the incident. His mind was chiefly occupied now by the circumstance that he had not had enough for breakfast. Having had only enough for two or three fellows, he was troubled with a sinking feeling. That, at present, was the only thing that mattered in the universe, from Bunter's point of view.

But Mr. Quelch had not forgotten.

That a junior should dare to listen surreptitiously to his conversation with the Head, and should repeat what he had heard, up and down the Remove passage, was an extremely serious and deep offence in Mr. Quelch's eyes.

Bunter had been caned for it, as he deserved; he had had a dozen well laid on. The matter was closed. But Mr. Quelch remembered it, and Bunter was in his black books on account of it. Hence the frown with which he glanced at the fat junior in the Form-room.

Bunter's punishment had been more than adequate, in Bunter's opinion. But Mr. Quelch rather regretted that he had not sent him up to the Head for a flogging.

However, it was too late to think of that; and Bunter was safe till his next offence.

Any fellow but Bunter would have been wary; he would have noted his Form master's frown, and taken warning thereby; he would have remembered that he had lately given dire offence, and would have been extremely circumspect. Not so Bunter.

He was thinking almost entirely of his inner Bunter; and so far from observing the danger-signals, he was not thinking of Mr. Quelch at all.

Far more important considerations occupied his fat mind.

Harry Wharton was called upon to construe, and Vernon-Smith followed, and Ogilvy followed Smithy. Bunter was not giving much attention; he hoped that he would not be called upon, but if it happened, he was prepared to render his usual excruciating construe, which certainly would have made P. Virgilius Maro tear his hair, could that ancient classic gentleman have been present to hear it.

While the other fellows were giving Virgil beans, so to speak, Bunter was groping in his pockets.

He was hungry, and getting hungrier. He groped in his pockets in the faint hope of finding some article of a comestible nature overlooked there. A chocolate, however dusty, a fragment of liquorice, howsoever sticky, even a single aniseed ball, would have been very welcome.

Bunter's fat face lighted up as his groping fingers came in contact with a toffee-packet.

It was the toffee Peter Todd had given him in the study the evening before. In the enjoyment of Lord Mauleverer's munificent feed, Bunter had forgotten all about that toffee.

He smiled.

That toffee came now like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years. It was the right thing in the right place!

Surreptitiously, under his desk, Bunter extracted the toffee from the

packet, and then, stooping down for a dropped pencil, he transferred a chunk of it to his mouth.

He sat up again happily.

Mr. Quelch's attention was fixed upon Redwing, who had been called upon to follow Ogilvy. For the moment, at least, he had no eyes for Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove chewed away at the toffee, in a happy and satisfied state.

"That will do, Redwing. You will go on, Bunter."

Bunter jumped.

Mr. Quelch's gimlet-eye was upon him now.

Bunter thought wildly of bolting the chunk of toffee. But it was too bulky to be bolted in a lump, without imminent danger of choking. And he could not construe Virgil with a large chunk of toffee in his mouth. It was a desperate moment.

The Owl of the Remove brought his teeth together on the chunk of toffee, to bite it in halves.

Thus divided, it could have been bolted rapidly in two gulps—at least, that was Bunter's idea. Perhaps it was fortunate for him that he was prevented from disposing of the toffee in that heroic manner. Prevented he certainly was. His teeth almost met in the sticky chunk as he bit at it desperately, but they would not come out again. To his utter horror, he found his teeth fast in the toffee, stuck as if they were glued.

"I called to you, Bunter!" snapped Mr. Quelch, quite unaware so far of the agony of mind that oppressed his hapless pupil.

Bunter was quite willing to respond to the call, and render a construe as bad as usual. But he couldn't.

The effort he made to draw his teeth from the toffee almost uprooted the teeth from his gums.

And they would not come out.

In fact, they seemed as likely to come out of his gums as to come out of the toffee into which they were deeply driven.

Bunter gasped and spluttered, his face growing as red as a turkey-cock's. His eyes goggled horribly.

"Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

Peter Todd reached out a friendly foot to kick Bunter, as a warning to attend to his Form master.

But a kick was no use to Bunter. He wanted a dentist at least to help him out of this fearful predicament.

Mr. Quelch frowned portentously. He was already displeased with Bunter—extremely displeased with him. It seemed to him now that the fat junior was adding deliberate insolence to his other many offences. Called upon to construe, he did not rise to the occasion, but sat with his mouth tight shut, his eyes goggling at his Form-master. Really, it was beyond all patience.

"Bunter! Will you heed me, or will you not?" thundered the Remove master. "Are you deaf, Bunter? What does this mean? Answer me!"

"Mmmmmmm!"

That was the best Bunter could hand out in the way of an answer. A fellow whose teeth were stuck together by toffee was not in a state for conversation. Bunter, as a rule, was an incessant talker. In season and out of season his fat voice was heard. Often and often—in fact, unnumbered times—Remove fellows had implored him to shut up. Now he had shut up with a vengeance!

"Bunter!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Gooooooh!"

"Boy!"



"Ooooooooooooooh!" mumbled Bunter helplessly. Strive as he might he could not drag his teeth from the toffee. Shake, shake, shake! "Mmmmmmmmmmm! Mmmmmmmmmmm!" "You greedy, disobedient, disgusting boy!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. He marched Bunter out of the class and hooked him over to the waste-paper basket. "Now eject whatever is in your mouth!" (See Chapter 5.)

"Moooooooooooooh!" mumbled Bunter helplessly.

The Removites stared round at Bunter. Nobody knew what was the matter with him—unless he had suddenly taken leave of his senses. Why a fellow, if sane, should sit there making a mooing noise like a cow was a mystery to all the Remove.

Mr. Quelch strode towards him. He came among the forms with thunder in his brow, and his eyes fairly gleamed at Bunter.

"Stand up, Bunter!"

Bunter stood up. He could obey that order.

"Now answer me!"

Bunter gurgled. That was an order he couldn't obey.

"Do you hear me, Bunter?"

"Mmmmmmmmmmm!"

"Have you something in your mouth?" exclaimed the Remove master, beginning to comprehend what was wrong.

"Moooooooooh!"

"You are eating in class, you greedy, disgusting boy!"

"Moooooooooh!"

"What are you eating?"

"Ug-gug-gug-goo!"

"How dare you utter such ridiculous sounds, Bunter?" roared the Form master. "This is deliberate insolence!"

"Mmmmmmmmm!"

Mr. Quelch had been sorely tried by Bunter, and now he was tried again, and his temper was found wanting. He

grasped the fat junior by the collar and shook him vigorously.

"Ooooooooooooooh!" mumbled Bunter helplessly.

Strive as he might, he could not drag his teeth from the toffee. And as he was trying to answer Mr. Quelch, he really could not help uttering what the Form master described as ridiculous sounds. Articulation was out of the question.

Shake! Shake! Shake!

"Mmmmmmmmmmm! Mmmmmmm!"

"You greedy, disobedient, disgusting boy!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, and he marched Bunter out of the class and hooked him over to the waste-paper basket. "Now eject whatever is in your mouth!"

"Mmmmmmmmmoooooh!"

Bunter would have been only too glad to obey. But he couldn't! The toffee had the last word in that matter.

"For the last time, Bunter, will you obey me?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Ooooooooooh!"

Bunter pointed desperately to his mouth. He tried to make Mr. Quelch understand that he could not speak. That fact dawned on the Form-master at last, but it did not lessen his anger.

"Is that an adhesive substance in your mouth, Bunter?"

"Mmmmmmmmm!"

"Toffee, or butterscotch, I presume?" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"Moooooooooh!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar from the Remove. They could hold it in no longer.

They knew that Mr. Quelch was in a dangerous mood, and they were well aware that it was not safe to laugh. But they could not help it. There was a limit to human fortitude, and the Remove broke out quite suddenly into a roar.

Mr. Quelch glared round at his class. "Silence!" he roared.

The laughter died away. The look on Mr. Quelch's face would have induced gravity in an ancient jester or a modern judge. The Lower Fourth were suddenly solemn.

"Every boy present will take a hundred lines!" hooted the Remove master, greatly incensed.

The gravity of the Remove, if possible, increased in intensity. It was really impossible to foresee what another chuckle might have cost.

"There is no occasion for merriment in this disgusting, this revolting exhibition of a greedy boy!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

The Remove did not agree with him, but they tried to look as if they did. Form masters, especially in Mr. Quelch's present mood, had to be given their head.

"Bunter!"

Mr. Quelch turned to his victim again.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Ow! Groooogh!"

Desperate efforts had brought success at last. His teeth emerged at long last from the clinging toffee.

His face was crimson, his eyes watered. He blinked in the direst apprehension at Mr. Quelch.

He had cause for apprehension.

"Oh! You can speak now, Bunter?"

"Ow! Yes, sir! Oh dear! Oh, quite, sir!" stuttered Bunter.

"I shall not cane you for this disgusting exhibition, this reckless interruption of classes, Bunter."

"Oh! Thank you, sir!"

"I shall send you to the Head!"

"Ow!"

"I shall request Dr. Locke to administer a severe flogging."

"Wow!"

"Stand there while I write you a note to take to the Head."

"Oh dear!"

Mr. Quelch scribbled a note at his desk. The Remove watched him in breathless silence, Bunter in quaking terror. Mr. Quelch sealed the note, handed it to Bunter, and glanced at the Form-room clock. It was not yet time for Dr. Locke to have taken the Sixth.

"Go to Dr. Locke's study, Bunter, at once! Hand this note to him."

"Oh dear! I—I say, sir——"

"Silence!"

"But——"

Mr. Quelch grasped Bunter by the shoulder, and walked him across to the door of the Form-room.

"Go!"

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter went; and the Form-room door closed after him. While Mr. Quelch's back was turned, smiles had crept round the Remove. But as soon as he turned back, an almost preternatural gravity reigned. Mr. Quelch gave his class a suspicious look.

"We will now resume!" he said, in a grinding voice.

And they resumed; and for once in their career the Greyfriars Remove were an absolutely faultless Form. In Mr. Quelch's present mood, they had to be circumspect; and they were very, very circumspect indeed.

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THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Luck!

TAP!

Buzzzzz!

Billy Bunter tapped on the door of Dr. Locke's study, and at the same moment, the telephone-bell rang in the room—just as if Bunter's tap had started the instrument.

Bunter opened the door, having tapped.

"Bless my soul!"

Bunter heard the Head utter that well-known ejaculation, as he blinked into the study.

But the Head was not looking at Bunter; he was standing at the telephone, with the receiver in his hand. Bunter had only a view of the back of his gown.

Bunter blinked at the Head's back.

He had a note to deliver to Dr. Locke, and he more than suspected that the note was to elicit a Head's flogging. In the circumstances, it was really too bad to be kept on tenterhooks like this. Bunter felt rather bitterly that the Head might have done his telephoning at a more convenient time.

With a flogging impending over his head, Bunter was still Bunter! Whatsoever the Head had to say on the telephone was no concern of his; so naturally he listened with both his fat ears. That was Bunter's way.

"My dear, dear boy! Immediately!" the Head was saying into the transmitter.

Although Bunter could see only the Head's back, he could discern that the old gentleman was a little agitated.

"Certainly, my dear Percy!" went on the Head. "I shall order the car immediately—I shall be with you at lunch, I hope. Yes, yes, and you will return with me in the car. My dear boy!"

Obviously, Dr. Locke was speaking to his son, who must have landed from the steamer which had brought him home from Mesopotamia.

"I shall lose not a moment!" said the Head, in a voice of happy agitation. "And you are well, my boy—quite well? I am thankful for that! My dear boy, I shall use the greatest haste."

Dr. Locke hung up the receiver.

He turned from the telephone, and there was a brighter smile than Bunter had ever seen before, on his kind old face. Evidently his son's return from the arid sands of Mesopotamia had delighted the old gentleman. Dr. Locke took a turn up and down the study, not even noticing the fat junior in the doorway, for the moment.

Bunter coughed.

He was wondering inwardly, whether, in this happy mood, the Head would be likely to lend ear to a plea for mercy. Certainly, Dr. Locke did not look as if he would have cared to flog anyone that morning.

Bunter had slipped Mr. Quelch's note into his pocket. He decided to try the effect of his eloquence on the headmaster, before he handed over that epistle.

Dr. Locke started a little as Bunter coughed, and looked round at him.

"What? What? Bunter! What are you doing here, Bunter?"

"Mr. Quelch sent me, sir——" began Bunter.

The Head interrupted him.

"But it is fortunate, as it happens," he said, without heeding Bunter, or perhaps even hearing him. "I have not a moment to spare. You will take a message to Mr. Quelch."

"If you please, sir——"

Dr. Locke made him a sign to be silent. He turned to the telephone again, and rang up the garage.

"The car immediately for Southampton. Lose no time. No! I will walk down to the garage. I have not a moment to lose. Very good!"

The receiver jammed on the hook again.

The Head turned to Bunter. That youth was feeling very impatient. All this was all very well; but what about Bunter's flogging? He did not want anything like that hanging over his head, like the sword of Damocles, all the time that the Head was gone to Southampton. Besides, this was the most favourable moment imaginable for testing the effect of his eloquence on the Head. Surely the old scout wouldn't flog a chap, when he was just starting to meet his only son, home from foreign parts. And he couldn't be unfeeling enough to leave a chap under sentence all day while he was gone! If only Bunter could get a hearing——

But he couldn't!

The Head did not seem to think that Bunter mattered at all. He was too preoccupied to think or care why Bunter had come to the study. He was, in fact, absolutely regardless of Bunter, except from the point of view of his usefulness as a messenger—the Head requiring a messenger at that moment of pressing haste.

"If you please, sir——"

Dr. Locke waved away Bunter's intended remarks, with a wave of the hand.

He had no time to listen to Bunter. He was totally ignorant and regardless of the importance of hearing him.

"Bunter, you will go to Mr. Quelch——"

"But, sir——"

"Tell him I am called away, to meet Mr. Percy, at Southampton. He will understand."

"Yes; but—— Yes, sir. But——"

"Request him to take the Sixth Form, and make what other arrangements are necessary."

"Yes, sir! I——"

"That is all, Bunter."

"But, sir——"

But the Head was gone.

Billy Bunter blinked after him, as he hurried down the corridor, with a haste very unusual in the grave and dignified old gentleman.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Bunter, in utter disgust.

"Really, it was too thick!"

The Head seemed to think that his own trivial family matters transcended in importance the weighty affairs of William George Bunter, of the Remove.

It was another sample of the selfishness to which Bunter was accustomed!

It was Bunter's duty to repair immediately to the Remove Form room and deliver the Head's message to Mr. Quelch.

But Bunter was in no hurry.

He had himself to think of, though the Head, apparently, did not consider him of any consequence.

Taking the Head's message to Mr. Quelch was all very well, but what was to happen then? The flogging, doubtless, would be off. The probability was that Mr. Quelch would take Bunter's punishment into his own hands, after all. On reflection, Bunter considered that most likely. He would have a caning from Mr. Quelch instead of the threatened Head's flogging.

But Bunter did not want a caning, any more than he wanted a flogging.

The matter, therefore, required thinking about, even if the Head's trivial affairs had to be a little neglected.

Bunter rolled into the Head's study to think it out.

There was no hurry.

The Head was in a hurry, but Bunter wasn't! Mr. Quelch, supposing that he was getting a flogging, would not expect him back in the Remove room yet. Bunter had time to think the matter out. The Head was gone. He was already in his own house, dressing hurriedly for the motor-car journey, no doubt. Certainly, he had not expected Bunter to remain in his study, but it was quite safe for Bunter to remain there. He closed the door, so that no chance passer should see him. Then he reflected.

Suppose he returned to the Remove room, leaving Mr. Quelch to suppose that he had had his flogging! Bunter dallied with the idea, but he was forced to give it up. Quelch was a suspicious beast, and as sharp as a razor—and he might ask the Head later, too!

Supposing he had given Mr. Quelch's note to the Head—who had shoved it into his pocket unread in the hurry of the moment! That might really have happened, and Bunter felt that it was more plausible.

The fat junior extracted Mr. Quelch's note from his pocket and dropped it into the Head's grate.

It was consumed in a moment.

That, at least, was done with.

Bunter figured it out in his mind. In considering this important matter he quite forgot that he had an urgent message to deliver to Mr. Quelch.

The Sixth Form would be going to their room in a few minutes, and would not find the Head there; neither would he come! The high and mighty Sixth would be left at a loose end.

Still, that did not matter. Bunter did not give that the fag-end of a thought.

The great question was, how was Bunter, having escaped a licking from the Head, to escape a licking from Mr. Quelch in turn?

Faintly, from a distance, Bunter heard the echoing sound of a departing car.

The Head was gone! Already he was on the road, with his back to Greyfriars, speeding away from the school, his face towards the distant seaport, and his thoughts already there! Bunter was done with the Head for the day.

If only he could have been done with Mr. Quelch also! Mr. Quelch, unfortunately, remained to be dealt with.

The problem was a difficult one. It beat anything in Euclid. From whatever aspect Bunter considered it the certainty seemed that, since his punishment had not been administered by the Head, it would be administered by Mr. Quelch. The Head had been in a melting mood; Mr. Quelch was not likely to be in anything of the kind. If the flogging was off the caning was on—that seemed certain. It was an improvement, but it was not good enough!

With that prospect before him on his return to the Remove-room, Bunter was naturally in no hurry to return. The Head's message to Mr. Quelch, of course, could wait.

But the minutes were passing.

The Sixth had gone to their Form-room, and Mr. Quelch would soon be wondering why Bunter did not return.

Bunter was not much accustomed to thinking. But his fat wits were hard at work now. If Mr. Quelch could be made to believe that Bunter had had his licking, or if a fictitious message could be invented from the Head, causing Mr.

Quelch to remit the punishment, either would do. But—

Deep in that problem, Bunter heard a sound of footsteps in the corridor outside, approaching the study door.

He started.

Back into his fat mind came the recollection of the Head's reference to the Sixth Form, which Mr. Quelch was to "take" in Dr. Locke's absence.

There was no one to "take" the Sixth, and they had obviously been waiting, and now some beast was coming along about it: Bunter even thought he recognised Wingate's footsteps. Of course, with nobody in charge of the Sixth Form room, the head prefect would naturally come to the Head for instructions.

Bunter quaked.

What would Wingate think, finding Bunter in the Head's study—a room in which no junior had a right to be? What would he think—and what would he do, which was more serious. At the very least he would march Bunter back to his Form-room and hand him over to Mr. Quelch's tender mercies—with his problem still unsolved.

Bunter hardly stopped to think.

He crossed rapidly to the door, and, silently, softly, turned the key in the lock.

He was only in time.

Tap!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

His Master's Voice!

BILLY BUNTER breathed hard.

Wingate, or some other Sixth Form beast, was tapping at the door of the Head's study—most likely Wingate.

Bunter made no sound.

If Wingate supposed that the Head was not there, and did not look in, all was well. Bunter would have gained a respite, at least, and would still have time to solve his problem.

Tap!

The newcomer knocked again.

Then the handle turned.

"By Jove!"

Bunter heard George Wingate's voice murmur that ejaculation. Doubtless the captain of Greyfriars was surprised to find the Head's door locked, and to receive no answer to his knock.

Bunter stood silent, his fat knees knocking together, wondering what the prefect would do.

Knock!

It was a louder knock than before. Bunter's eyes gleamed through his big spectacles. Why couldn't the beast go? He must know that the Head didn't want to be disturbed if he had locked the door and didn't answer a knock. But Wingate did not go. He was surprised, and perhaps startled.

Knock!

"Are you there, sir?" called out Wingate of the Sixth. "The door seems to be locked, sir!"

Bunter breathed hard.

"Dr. Locke!" called out Wingate, and there was a note of uneasiness in his voice now. "Dr. Locke! Are you ill, sir?"

"Oh, dear!" breathed Bunter.

The silly ass actually supposed that the Head was ill, because he did not answer! Knowing nothing of Dr. Locke's sudden departure from Greyfriars, and finding the Head's door locked, Wingate could really hardly suppose anything else. But it was extremely irritating to Bunter. It meant that the beast wouldn't go!

"Dr. Locke!" Wingate called out again.

And then, like a flash, came Bunter's brain-wave. There was a way of satisfying Wingate—quite an easy way, though Bunter had not thought of it before. The episode of the previous day in Study No. 7—it was only necessary to repeat it. The ventriloquial voice that had deceived Peter Todd and Harry Wharton & Co. was good enough for Wingate of the Sixth.

Bunter gave a little fat cough, his usual preliminary to ventriloquial stunts.

"Bless my soul!"

"Oh, you are there, sir!" exclaimed Wingate as he heard that well-known ejaculation in the study through the oak door.

"Yes, certainly. Is that you, Wingate?"

It was the Head's voice to the last tone!

"Yes, sir. I knocked, and you did not answer, and I thought perhaps you might be ill, sir."

"Bless my soul! Not at all, Wingate. I have—hem!—locked my door so that I shall not be disturbed. I have a very important matter of business to deal with."

"Yes, sir," said Wingate, in wonder.

"As I shall not be at liberty this morning, Wingate, I desire Mr. Quelch to take the Sixth. Will you tell him so, and will you take charge of the Remove, Wingate?"

"Very well, sir."

"You will inform Mr. Quelch that I have dealt with the boy Bunter, Wingate. Bunter was sent to me for punishment, and I have dealt with him."

"Yes, sir."

"Kindly inform Mr. Quelch, also, that I have given Bunter leave from class this morning," went on Bunter, almost surprised at his own facility of invention, and still in the Head's voice. "After administering—hem!—a severe punishment, I considered it judicious to excuse him from class. You will tell Mr. Quelch so."

"Very good, sir!"

And Wingate, greatly to Bunter's relief, walked away down the passage.

Bunter grinned.

The captain of Greyfriars, obviously, had not the slightest suspicion, though doubtless he was a little perplexed.

Bunter was safe!

Safe from the Head—safe from Mr. Quelch—safe from classes! He had a morning off, instead of a flogging or a caning! Really, it had been well worth while to cultivate his weird gift of ventriloquism.

He sat down in the Head's comfortable armchair, and put his feet on the Head's mantelpiece.

He was in no hurry to leave the study.

It was judicious to wait till Mr. Quelch was settled in the Sixth Form-room with the seniors, and all the school at work. Then he would be able to slip out of the study without the slightest danger of detection.

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A REAL THRILLER!

"BAT BARSTOW'S

SPORTING TOUR!"

— in —

This Week's "GEM."

True, he had not yet delivered the Head's message to Mr. Quelch. He had, in fact, forgotten that, in the stress of circumstances. But that could come later. For the moment, obviously, Mr. Quelch could not be allowed to know that the Head was gone, since he was to believe that the Head had just been giving Wingate directions.

Bunter sat in the Head's armchair, and groped in his pocket. He still had a chunk or two of Peter Todd's toffee left, and he proceeded to dispose of it with satisfaction.

Footsteps again!

Bunter started up.

If that beast Wingate was coming back, or Mr. Quelch— Fortunately, the door was locked. Bunter listened with painful intentness. Then he recognised the heavy, ponderous tread of Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth. Portly Mr. Prout had a tread that was unmistakable—indeed, Potter of the Fifth had applied to him a quotation from Macaulay, describing him as the "huge earth-shaking beast."

What the thump did the Fifth Form master want? He ought to have been in his Form-room with his Form, but here he was!

Knock!

The Greyfriars ventriloquist answered at once; he did not want Mr. Prout to become suspicious.

"Who is there?"

"It is I, Dr. Locke," answered Mr. Prout's portly voice, and he turned the handle of the door.

"The door is locked, Mr. Prout. I must not be disturbed this morning. I am engaged upon—hem!—some pressing business."

"Oh, quite so, sir!" said Mr. Prout. "I am sorry to disturb you, sir, in that case, but as you instructed me to come at ten-thirty—"

"Eh?"

"Perhaps you could spare one moment, sir, to hand me the Latin paper for which I have called, and for which you instructed me to call," said Mr. Prout, with a faint note of sarcasm in his voice.

Bunter breathed quickly.

Of all unlucky things it seemed that the Head had been preparing a Latin paper for the Fifth, and told Mr. Prout to ask him for it that morning! Really, it was not an unusual incident, but it was very unfortunate in the circumstances—the peculiar circumstances. Bunter was at a loss for a moment, and did not know what to reply, and Mr. Prout went on:

"I have been to the Sixth Form-room, sir, and was told that you were in your study, sir, so I came here. I am loth to disturb you, sir; but your own instructions—"

"Yes, yes; quite so, Mr. Prout," said Bunter, in the Head's voice—"quite so! But the fact is—the fact is—"

"Yes, sir?"

Mr. Prout evidently wanted to know what the fact was!

"The—the fact is—" Bunter cudgelled his fat brains. "The—the fact of the matter is—is this, Mr. Prout—I have gone to Southampton to meet—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I am going to Southampton to meet my—my son, who is returning from India—"

"From India, sir?"

"I mean from Mesopotamia. I have had a telephone message from my—my son, Mr. Prout, to say that he has landed at Northampton—"

"At Northampton?"

"I mean Southampton. In the circumstances, Mr. Prout, I quite forgot the Latin paper, and I have not—not

prepared it. I shall have no time to attend to the matter to-day."

"Very good, sir."

"I am now expecting a trunk call from Southampton, so I must not be disturbed. Kindly go back to your Form-room at once, Mr. Prout, and remain there!"

"What?"

"Remain there!"

There was a sort of gurgling grunt outside the Head's door. Dr. Locke was extremely popular with his staff, for his urbanity of manner, his old-world courtesy, was unfailing. So this kind of talk from him was very surprising and disconcerting, and Mr. Prout was very much surprised and very much offended.

"Dr. Locke!"

"Yes, yes!"

"You will excuse me, sir," said Mr. Prout, his portly voice trembling with resentment. "You will excuse me, Dr. Locke, if I take exception, sir, to this mode of address, to which, sir, I am unaccustomed—quite unaccustomed. I came to see you, sir, on your own instructions—your instructions, sir, given to me personally. I will return to my Form-room, sir, immediately, and I shall certainly remain there, sir—most certainly; but, although you are my chief, sir, and I respect you highly, sir, I am bound to say that I take exception to such a mode of address, sir—I am bound to say that, Dr. Locke!"

And Mr. Prout, extremely offended, marched away down the corridor with his heavy tread.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bunter.

He had escaped again, at all events; and the offence taken by Mr. Prout did not matter much—to Bunter. He sat down in the Head's armchair to finish the toffee.

The toffee finished, Bunter decided that it was time to get out of his present quarters, before some other troublesome person came along.

He unlocked the door quietly, opened it a few inches, and blinked into the corridor.

Like Moses of old, he looked this way and that way. After what had occurred, it was extremely important that the Greyfriars ventriloquist should not be seen leaving the Head's study.

The next moment Bunter's head popped back into the study, like that of a tortoise into its shell.

A few yards along the corridor was a window. At that window stood Trotter, the House page, polishing the glass.

Bunter's heart thumped.

He closed the door again softly, and as softly turned the key in the lock.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bunter.

He had not been seen, but the escape had been narrow. Evidently he could not leave the Head's study yet.

"Oh dear!"

Up to that moment all had gone well—remarkably well! But the peculiar situation had developed awkwardness! Billy Bunter was a prisoner now in the Head's study, and how long his imprisonment was to last was a troublesome question to which there was, as yet, no answer.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Mysterious!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Not Bunter!" whispered Nugent.

The door of the Remove Form-room had opened, and all eyes in the Remove turned upon it, in the expectation of seeing Billy Bunter.

All the Remove knew what Mr. Quelch's note to the Head meant. It meant that the Head was requested to give Bunter a flogging.

So the Remove fellows expected to see Bunter return to the Form-room in a crumpled condition, squirming.

But it was not Bunter—it was Wingate of the Sixth who entered the Remove-room.

Mr. Quelch glanced at him in surprised inquiry.

"The Head sent me, sir," said Wingate. "I am to tell you that he is very busy this morning, and desires you to take the Sixth Form in his place, sir."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch.

"I am to take the Remove in your absence, sir."

"Very good, Wingate!"

"The Head desired me to tell you that he has punished Bunter, sir, and has excused him from classes this morning in consequence of his punishment."

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows a little.

"Indeed! Bunter is excused from class?"

"The Head said I was to tell you so, sir."

"Very good!" said Mr. Quelch, compressing his lips a little.

Mr. Quelch saw no reason whatever why Bunter should be excused from classes, simply because he had been flogged. But this was not the first occasion that Dr. Locke had taken a more lenient view than the somewhat severe Remove master. It was slightly irritating, but it was not a matter of surprise.

Mr. Quelch glanced over his class.

"I shall leave you in Wingate's charge this morning," he said. "Wharton, you will acquaint Wingate with the order of work for the lessons. I shall expect order to be kept in this Form-room during my absence."

And Mr. Quelch left the Remove-room, and went away to take the Sixth, nothing doubting.

The Remove brightened up considerably.

Mr. Quelch's temper had been very tart that morning, and the juniors were by no means displeased to change him for Wingate.

First lesson was over, and second lesson went off quite amicably with the captain of Greyfriars in control.

Then came morning break, and the Removites were dismissed for a quarter of an hour, and they streamed out cheerily into the sunny quadrangle.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where's Bunter?" inquired Bob Cherry.

The juniors had expected to find Bunter in the quad, but he was not to be seen.

"Lucky bargee, to get off classes for the morning," said Skinner. "Almost worth a flogging."

"Not quite, I think," said Bob, laughing. "I'd rather have Quelch and Latin irregular verbs than a Head's flogging. I wonder where he is?"

"Gone up to the study to sleep it off, perhaps," suggested Johnny Bull.

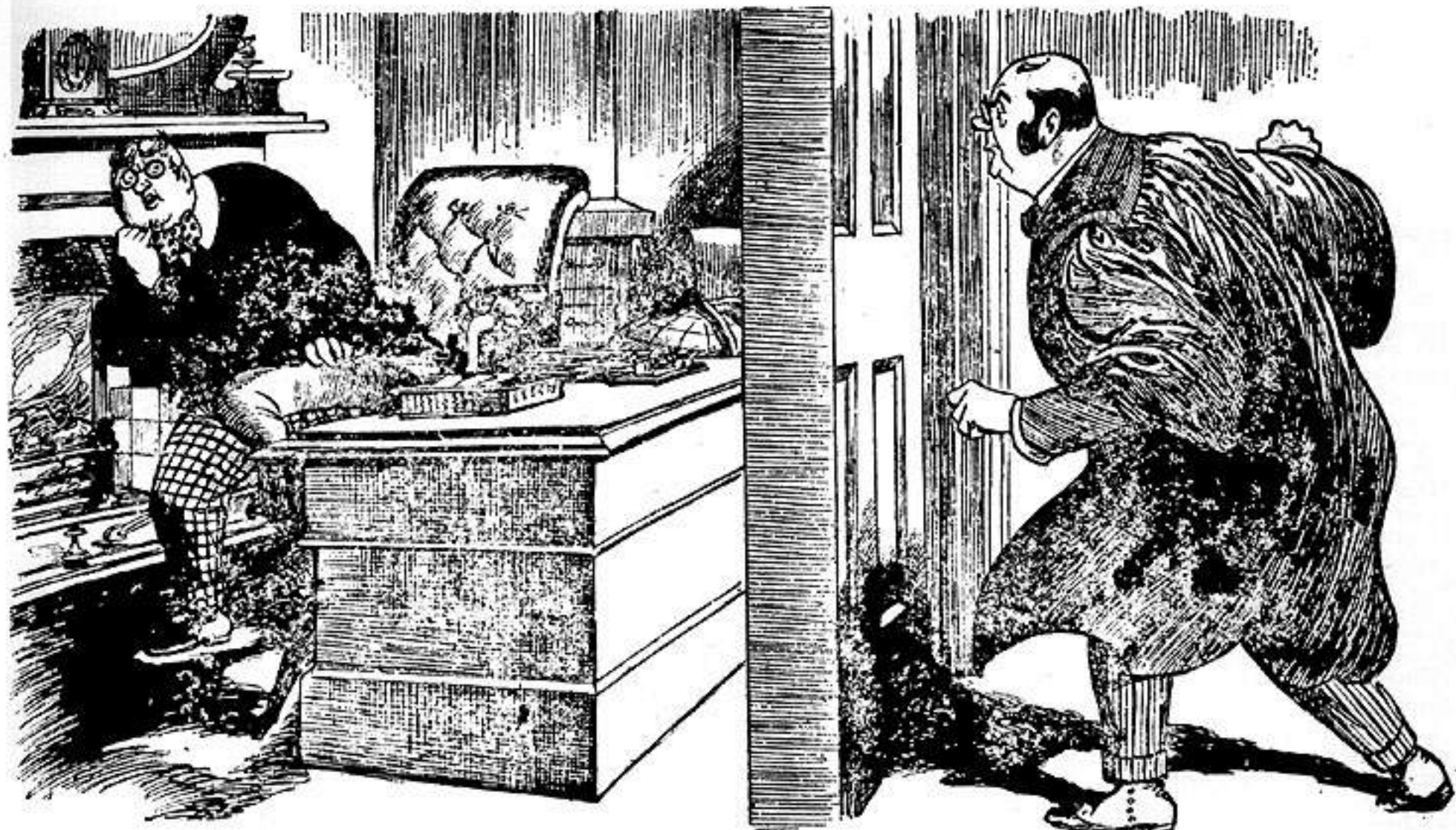
"Poor old Bunter!"

"The sufferfulness of the esteemed Bunter is probably terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Let us seekfully look for him, and administer the harmless and necessary sympathy."

"Good!" said Bob. "I've got a packet of chocs. They'll help to comfort Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. proceeded to the Remove passage to look for Bunter, with sympathetic intentions. No doubt



Mr. Prout turned the handle of the door. "The door is locked, Mr. Prout!" The Greyfriars ventriloquist answered up at once, imitating the well-known voice of Dr. Locke. "I must not be disturbed this morning. I am engaged upon—hem—some pressing business!" There was a gurgling grunt outside the Head's door. (See Chapter 7.)

Bunter had asked for trouble that morning; still, a fellow who was up against trouble enlisted the sympathy of the heroes of the Remove.

Bunter was not to be found in Study No. 7.

The juniors looked in the other studies. Knowing Bunter's little ways, they would not have been surprised to find him raiding some fellow's study cupboard.

But the whole Remove passage was drawn blank. Bunter was not there.

"Oh where and oh where can he be?" sang Bob Cherry.

"Might have gone up to the dorm for a snooze!" said Harry. "I think he likes sleeping next to eating."

"Let's look!" They looked. But the Remove dormitory was drawn blank. Billy Bunter was not there.

The juniors came downstairs again, and looked in the Rag. The Rag was vacant.

It was rather a puzzle where Bunter could be. He did not seem to be indoors, and he could not be seen out of doors.

"Can't be gone out of gates," said Johnny Bull. "There's no leave out of gates till after third lesson. I say, Toddy, where's your prize pig?"

Peter Todd came up to the Famous Five in the quad. He was looking puzzled.

"I've been looking for him, and I can't find him anywhere."

"Same here!" grinned Bob.

"Of course, he doesn't matter," said Peter; "but as the fat duffer seems to have had a flogging, I thought I'd look for him. If the Head's given him leave, he may have given him leave out of gates, though."

"Let's ask Gosling."

The Removites walked down to the school-porter's lodge. The ancient and grumbled William Gosling was summing himself in his doorway.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Seen a porpoise rolling by this morning, Gossy?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Has Bunter gone out, Gosling?" Gosling shook his head.

"Agin' orders," he answered, "and wot I says is this 'ere, you young gentlemen ain't going out, neither!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We're not after that, Gossy; we're looking for Bunter. He's got leave from class this morning, and he seems to have vanished. The Head let him off class after giving him a flogging."

Gosling eyed the captain of the Remove.

"Gammon!" he answered.

"Eh?"

"You can't pull my leg, Master Wharton. I don't know why you're spinning me this yarn, sir, but wot I says is this 'ere, & I can't pull my leg!"

Wharton stared at him.

"But I'm not pulling your leg, old bean," he answered. "Bunter was up for a flogging in first lesson, and the Head let him off class afterwards."

"Chuck it!" said Gosling derisively. "Think I wouldn't know if a feller had been flogged? When it's a Head's flogging, ain't I always called in?"

"Well, weren't you?"

"No, I wasn't!" said Gosling. "And I know the 'Ead's been too busy to flog anybody this morning, too, seeing that he's gone off to Southampton in his car quite early."

"The Head's gone to Southampton, has he?" asked Bob. "Does that mean that Mr. Percy Locke has landed, after all?"

"It do!" said Gosling. "The 'Ead was off mighty quick; I s'pose he 'ad it by telephone. Jest a word as he went—he knowed 'ow glad I should be to 'ear that Mr. Percy was safe 'ome again." Gosling's crusty face was quite genial for a moment. "So don't you spin me any yarns about 'Ead's

floggings, Master Wharton, 'cause why, I know he ain't flogged anybody!"

"Well, my hat!" said Harry.

The juniors walked away from Gosling's lodge, quite mystified. In an official Head's flogging, Gosling had a part to play; and certainly he should have known whether it had taken place or not.

"I suppose it wasn't really a first-class, gilt-edged flogging," said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "The Head just made him bend over, like a prefect, I suppose. When it's an official ceremony Gossy has to hoist the giddy victim."

"I suppose that's it," said Harry. "Queelchy was awfully ratty with Bunter; but I dare say the Head didn't quite see it. He isn't quite such a Tarter as Queelchy."

"That's so."

"But where is Bunter?" asked Peter Todd. "If he's only had a mild licking, he must have got over it before this. Where is he? We've looked everywhere."

"Goodness knows."

It was near the end of morning break now, and Harry Wharton & Co. walked back to the House, much puzzled. In the quad they passed Coker and Potter and Greene of the Fifth. The three seniors were chatting and chuckling.

"Prouty was quite wild!" Potter was saying. "Can't quite understand it; but the Head must have said something to get his rag out. Did you spot his face when he came back to the Form-room in second lesson?"

Coker and Greene chortled.

"Didn't we?" said Coker. "I dare say the Head sat on him. My opinion is that Prouty needs sitting on at times."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Greene.

"And he didn't give us the Head's Latin paper, either," remarked Potter.

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"And he was in a fearful temper! I wonder what the Head said to him."

Harry Wharton & Co. paused and looked at one another. Then they walked on, leaving the three seniors still discussing—with hilarity—what the Head could possibly have said to Mr. Prout in second lesson.

"I say, that's jolly queer!" said Wharton. "You heard what those chaps were saying—the Head seems to have ragged old Prout in second lesson."

"And Gosling says he was gone to Southampton," said Bob, with a nod. "Wingate told Quelch that the Head was too busy to take the Sixth this morning—that must have been when he was going off, I suppose. But that was before second lesson."

"It's jolly odd!"

"The oddfulness is terrific!"

According to Gosling, the Head had departed in his car quite early; and it was at the close of first lesson that Wingate had come in to tell Mr. Quelch to take the Sixth in the Head's place. That should have marked the time of the Head's departure.

Yet after that—some time after that, in second lesson—Mr. Prout appeared to have had an interview with the Head, according to what the Fifth-Formers were saying. And Wingate had brought the information that Bunter had been flogged; and, according to Gosling, there had been no flogging. And Bunter had mysteriously disappeared! Really, it was very, very puzzling and mystifying, and the heroes of the Remove did not know what to make of it.

The bell for classes called them in to third lesson; and they found that Wingate of the Sixth was taking them again, in place of their Form-master. Apparently, Mr. Quelch was to stick to the Sixth that day—for which relief his Form were duly thankful. Yet how odd it was that the message had been that the Head was busy, and not that he had left the school for the day!

In third lesson the juniors forgot the matter—Wingate kept them up to their work. But if they had thought about it, with wet towels round their heads, they would not have been likely to guess the astounding truth, and still less likely to guess what was to follow during that remarkable day at Greyfriars.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Unprecedented!

MR. Quelch walked down the corridor to the Head's study with a very firm step and a knitted brow.

The Remove master was not in the best of tempers.

He was annoyed, and, like the ancient prophet, he felt that he did well to be angry.

The Head only the day before had been kindness and courtesy itself; discussing with Mr. Quelch his son's return in the most amicable spirit. That was only yesterday; and to-day there was an unpleasant change. To-day the Head lacked his usual polished politeness, always unfailing to his subordinates. He had let Bunter off lessons—although the mere fact that Mr. Quelch had sent Bunter to the Head demonstrated that the junior was most seriously an offender. He had sent quite a cavalier message to Mr. Quelch—merely saying that he was busy and

that Mr. Quelch was to take the Sixth while Wingate took the Remove.

Really, the Head, however busy, might have found time to tell Mr. Quelch this personally.

The Head's word was law, of course; but that only made it all the more imperative for a gentleman, in a position of unquestioned authority, to be meticulously considerate of the feelings of subordinates who were bound to obey—to temper the wind to the shorn lamb, as it were.

Seldom or never had the Head failed in this way. Now he seemed to have failed, and Mr. Quelch was annoyed.

Really, a gentleman, though only a subordinate, could not be treated with friendly courtesy one day and off-hand casualness the next. That was not the way to treat a Form master, a Master of Arts, an elderly scholastic gentleman of dignified character and rather touchy temper. It was not the way at all.

Moreover, it had not been stated how long Mr. Quelch was to take the Sixth and how long Wingate was to take the Remove. Such matters, too, could not be settled off-hand by a careless verbal message. If a prefect was to take his Form for a whole day, Mr. Quelch had to arrange matters accordingly. He was left quite in the dark as to what the Head really wanted, after third lesson. It was quite unprecedented.

For which reasons Mr. Quelch's brow was knitted, and his step had an unusual decided firmness, as he approached the Head's study in morning break. He wanted to know.

Knock!

It was a very decided knock at the Head's door. As the Head's message had been that he was busy, Mr. Quelch supposed that he was busy in his study. Mrs. Locke was away, so it could hardly have been any household matter that had so suddenly claimed the Head's special attention. Neither did Mr. Quelch suppose that it was any news of young Mr. Locke, for in that case the Head surely would have told him, after their very friendly discussion on the subject the day before.

Knock!

Mr. Quelch turned the handle of the door.

"Upon my word!" he murmured.

The door was locked on the inside. That was proof that the Head was there—at all events, it was naturally taken as such proof.

Had the door opened, Mr. Quelch would have beheld a fat and terrified junior shaking in his shoes.

Fortunately, it could not open. Billy Bunter was safe from observation, even if Mr. Quelch looked through the keyhole—which he was not likely to do. Bunter, judging others, even Form-masters, by himself, kept out of the line of vision from the keyhole.

He knew that it was Mr. Quelch who had knocked—he knew that determined tread. He knew that it was Mr. Quelch, and that Mr. Quelch was in an annoyed temper. And Bunter quaked.

But ventriloquial tricks were second nature to Bunter now; his facility in that curious line never failed him. It was in the Head's voice, to the final shade of a tone, that he spoke, as he answered the knock.

"Bless my soul! Really, I should not be disturbed like this, when I have given strict injunctions that I should not be disturbed this morning! Bless my soul!"

"Dr. Locke!"

"Ah! Is that you, Mr. Quelch?"

"It is I, sir," answered Mr. Quelch, in his iciest tone. Chilly dignity now

enwrapped Mr. Quelch as a garment. "I have no desire, sir—no intention to disturb you."

"Very good, Mr. Quelch! The fact is I am exceedingly busy."

"I simply desire to know your wishes, sir," said Mr. Quelch frigidly. "If I am to continue to take the Sixth—"

"Oh, certainly!"

"For the remainder of the day—"

"Precisely."

"In that case, I shall instruct Wingate, I presume, to remain in charge of my Form for the remainder of the day also?"

"Just so, Mr. Quelch."

"Very good, sir! That is all!"

Mr. Quelch's voice trembled a little, in spite of his icy self-control. It was the very first time in his long experience that he had ever been kept on the door-mat in this style.

He had never expected to talk with Dr. Locke through a door—the Head not even troubling to unlock the door to answer him. It was treating him like—like—Mr. Quelch scarcely knew what. But he knew that he did not like it—he knew that very clearly.

Bunter's fat heart was thumping.

He knew that Mr. Quelch was deeply, intensely angry; which made it all the more important that Mr. Quelch should not discover him in the Head's study. It was no time to think of remote consequences—even if Billy Bunter had been accustomed to looking far ahead. The immediate danger was pressing—Mr. Quelch had to be barred off.

"One word more, sir—"

"Really, Mr. Quelch, you are disturbing me seriously."

"I am sorry, sir!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "But I am bound to ask you concerning Bunter. Is he excused from third lesson as well as earlier classes?"

"Certainly."

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch.

"In fact, I have decided to excuse Bunter from classes for the whole day, Mr. Quelch."

"What?"

"The boy appears to me to be somewhat delicate, Mr. Quelch. Considering everything, I have given him a day's leave."

"It is for you to decide, of course, sir," said Mr. Quelch, almost choking. "As Bunter's Form-master, I feel compelled to say that I do not share your view. But, of course, it is for you to say."

"Quite so."

"Is that all, sir?" gasped the Remove master, pale with anger.

"Let me see! Yes! I have been somewhat disturbed by someone cleaning windows in the corridor, Mr. Quelch. Please give instructions that no one is to enter this corridor again unless I ring—either the boys or the servants."

"Regarding the servants, sir, doubtless you will ring for Mrs. Kebble and give her instructions."

"I have given you instructions, Mr. Quelch, and I expect you to carry them out."

"Oh!"

Mr. Quelch glared at the oak door.

"Kindly convey my wishes to Mrs. Kebble, sir."

"Very well, Dr. Locke."

"That is all," said the voice from the study. "You may go."

Mr. Quelch trembled with wrath. He was told that he might go—as if he were a fag of the Second Form—or Trotter the page! He could not trust himself to speak. He went.

(Continued on page 17.)



Harry Wharton's Football Supplement

No. 5 (New Series). Vol. 1

February 27th, 1926.

I have managed to secure the services of some of the finest football experts in the country as contributors to our new Supplement. MAGNET readers who follow it regularly can be sure of getting the very latest and most exclusive news, interesting gossip, and information.—H. Wharton, Ed.

Killed by Criticism!

A STRAIGHT TALK TO THE BARRACKING SPECTATOR.

HERE'S for a straight talk for a few minutes to the man who watches football—to those spectators who are not always as fair as they might be. I can quite understand the attitude of the ultra-partisan follower of this or that club. Indeed, I like to see the fellow who is desperately anxious for the welfare of his favourite side, for this is the fellow who will travel a hundred miles or more to give his favourites a cheer on an away ground—a cheer which puts heart and courage into them.

All the same, there are spectators who do need talking to in a fatherly sort of way, for it is undoubtedly a fact that plenty of players have been killed, in a football sense, by criticism. First of all, there is the fellow in the crowd who goes to the match with one eye closed—who only sees the side in which he is specially interested; who will howl at the mildest of fouls committed by a member of the visiting team, and almost literally encourage the player of his own side to dirty play.

On these lines I recall one most promising player of my acquaintance. In a certain match he was not too well treated by the opposition, and when he retaliated he was given a cheer, and told, in so many words, to go ahead with the business of getting his own back. He foolishly copied the advice, and was sent off the field, received a month's suspension, and was never the same player afterwards. "Getting your own back" is a game that doesn't pay, and the spectators who give advice on these lines are traitors to the game, and no friends of the players to whom they give such advice.

Sometimes we are told that footballers are too much alike, that they are all tarred with the same brush, and that the great majority of them play the same game in exactly the same way—that the sport is lacking in originality. I sometimes think this criticism is true, but certain spectators are to blame because they won't stand for originality; by their attitude they kill the young player with ideas of his own.

Let a lad be introduced to a team who does not play the game in the orthodox way—a full-back who dribbles a bit, a half-back who goes right up among the forwards occasionally, or a forward who takes on a roving commission. These lads are quickly told about it by people in the crowd who can't see beyond the ends of their noses, who think that originality is sure to lead to failure. Most of us who have much experience of football have seen lads come into the game with original ideas, but their originality has been quickly killed by severe criticism from the onlookers. I want to make an appeal here for such players to be given a chance.

More earnestly still, however, do I think it necessary to make an appeal for fair treatment for the player on trial—the lad who has his spurs to win and who gets a chance of winning them. Now, every young player has not the temperament which enables him, when promoted to a first-class side, to play up to his own standard. He is apt to be nervous and worried, to do things wrong in his early trials. This player is not deserving of criticism; he is deserving of sympathy, and if he gets it is much more likely to "come on" at a quicker pace than if his early efforts are jeered at. Give the lads their chance to make good is the soundest and fairest bit of advice I can give. I have known young players who have actually shed tears at the end of their first game; they have known that they have not done themselves justice, and the remarks of the onlookers have cut them to the heart.

There is another type of spectator whose attitude of mind I have never been able to understand—the one who barracks the efforts of his favourite team as a whole. I know that failure is galling to the enthusiastic partisan, but just as there must be some club at the top of the League, so there must be some club at the bottom. Early in the present season Sheffield United were doing badly—there is no doubt about that—and some of the players of the team were subjected to really harsh criticism, while the

efforts of the side as a whole were not given any credit at all. The captain, Gillespie, threatened to leave the club if this harsh treatment was persisted in, and he would not have been the first fine player to be driven from this or that team by criticism. But one day Sheffield United won a match away from home. The supporters immediately relented, cheered the players on their next appearance at Bramall Lane, and from that moment Sheffield United went from success to success.

This was a perfect illustration of a fact which is all too often overlooked—that many a team has been cheered to victory, but that no team has ever been jeered to success.

Flag-Kicks and Penalties

PARS ABOUT FOOTBALL MEN AND MATTERS.

By The Man in the Street.

PETER McWILLIAM, the manager of Tottenham Hotspur, says he greatly prefers married players to the single variety. But, then, the former Newcastle half-back always did consider football a partnership game.

David Jack recently scored his hundredth goal since joining the Bolton Wanderers club. But he didn't sing about it, although his second name is Nightingale.

When big crowds assemble at Stamford Bridge men go round with megaphones to get the people packed in their proper places. Wouldn't it be a better idea to employ fellows who have had experience in the sardine-packing industry?

Burnley have never been the same team since their former centre-half retired. In other words, they have gone off the Boyle.

In a recent Welsh Rugby team there were five policemen. Small wonder that after the game some of the English players declared that they had been "pinched."

Preston North End have this season gained a reputation for being one of the best clubs in the country at home and the worst when playing on their opponents' grounds. The favourite ditty of the players is said to run like this: "Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home."

Quite a number of schoolmasters are now associated with the leading clubs. Whatever else happens, they should certainly be able to "stick" it.

The directors of Hull City recently gave it out that unless they got bigger gates they would have to dispose of some of their men. It would indeed be tragic if they had to sell the "hull" lot.

Andy Wilson has been telling the world that he has developed a series of secret signals for use on the field by players of the Chelsea club. I hope these weren't rendered necessary because Andy's colleagues could not understand his Scotch accent.

A well-known manager says that he sees no objection to players congratulating each other by handshakes when a goal is scored, but he does not think the congratulations ought to extend to kissing the successful marksmen. We agree. We have seen some of the footballers.

Alexander Keeping, the young full-back of Southampton, is very keen on flying, and we know some forwards who might also take up aviation to enable them to reach some of the passes which are made to them.

Noel George, the goalkeeper of Wolverhampton Wanderers, has such big hands that it is easy for him to grip a full-sized football and pick it up with one hand. When he does this his colleagues exclaim: "By George!"

Superstitions of Famous Footballers

Fads Alleged to Bring Good Luck.

ON the day when the Fourth Round of the present series of Cup ties was being played I happened to be walking into the ground of a big club with the manager of one of the teams concerned in the important game. Suddenly the manager darted away from me, and I heard him telling a fellow who was selling cough-lozenges, or something like that, to get away from the entrance to the ground as quickly as possible. This action on the part of the manager, whom I knew to be a kind-hearted man, surprised me, and when he came back I asked him why in the world he had sent the seller of the sweets away.

"Didn't you notice," said the manager, "that he had a pronounced squint? My players will be along in a minute, and if they happened to see that fellow with the squint they would be as certain as anything that it was a sure sign of bad luck, and that they would lose our match to-day."

This explanation of a quaint superstition—that to meet a person who squints a bit is sure to be followed by bad luck—set my mind running on the superstitions of footballers in general, and I hope you will be as interested as I was to discover the quaint fads and fancies possessed by some of our leading players. I would not go so far as to say footballers are more superstitious than other people, but they certainly do talk a lot about the things which bring them good luck or bad.

By way of example, it has frequently been noticed that Jock Rutherford, the famous outside-right of the Arsenal, whom we were all glad to welcome back to the game recently, is invariably last out of the dressing-room when his team is playing a match.

"I know why he does that," said a fellow to me the other day. "It is so that he can get an extra cheer all to himself." This is not the explanation at all. Jock firmly believes that unless he goes on to the field last, that match is going to be an unlucky one for him and his team, and right through his career he has always made a practice of being last out of the dressing-room at the start of a game and also at the restart after half-time. A superstition very much on the same lines is that held by Neil McBain, of Everton, who has come to the conclusion that if he is the last of the team's players to arrive at the ground, he will have a good day.

Meredith's toothpick provides a classic instance of the fads of famous footballers. The most wonderful winger of all time would never go on the field without a toothpick stuck in his mouth, and there were people at Manchester who used to say that they could tell whether Meredith would be in good form or not by the angle at which he held the toothpick.

I once knew a player who decided that he would copy the Meredith toothpick idea. The game had no sooner started than this player, heading the ball, completely forgot about the toothpick, and he had to retire for a few minutes while it was extracted from his throat. He never tried the toothpick as a talisman after that, having doubtless come to the conclusion that, although it might be lucky for Meredith, it was unlucky for him.

As Meredith wears his toothpick, so is Dick Pym always to be seen wearing a particular cap, and, although it is said at Bolton that it is high time the goalkeeper got a new one, he still stands by the one which he declares has brought him luck. But Pym is a fisherman, and, as we all know, the men who go down to the sea in ships are about the most superstitious of all people.

Our old friend, Dick Roose, who was killed in the War, could never be persuaded to put on a clean pair of knickers. The more muddy the state of his apparel, the better pleased was he; and I shall never forget, prior to the start of one big match, seeing him go out to the back of the dressing-room and rub the knickers he was to wear in some thick mud. He had been provided with a nice clean pair for the occasion, but he just hated to put them on.

The superstition which is held by many people about it being unlucky to pass a pin without picking it up is shared by many footballers, and one prominent player rather varied this. He could never pass a hairpin lying on the road, but always stopped, picked it up, and put it into his pocket. This particular superstition was known

to his colleagues, and one day while they were out for a long walk as part of their training a good practical joke was played on the "hairpin" man. Several of the players bought a packet of hairpins each, and, taking up their positions ahead of the superstitious player, dropped these hairpins at frequent intervals. Not one of them would the superstitious player pass, and it is said that he had a bad ache in the back before he had finished the walk through bending down to pick up all the hairpins which he found lying about. Not until he was back in the training quarters, with two pockets bulging full with hairpins, was the joke explained to him.

There are many footballers who object to being photographed just prior to a match because they feel certain that bad luck will be the outcome. Among these is Albert Fremonger, the famous goalkeeper of Notts County, who has surprised many a Press photographer by resolutely refusing to be photographed before the start of a game. There are whole teams which share this superstition that to be photographed is bad luck.

Charlie Buchan says that he has no superstitions about walking under a ladder, but he never does it because a paint-pot might come down on his head. But I happen to know that Charlie is not so free from superstition as he himself sometimes tries to make out, and if by chance he puts his football jersey on inside-out he would not defy Fate by changing it. "Billy" Walker, the famous inside-left of the Villa, always puts his left football-boot on first, because it would be unlucky to start with the right one. And so we could go on.

Of course, you don't believe, and I don't believe, that these things matter one little bit. But we should be a much less interesting people if we didn't have these funny kinks in our make-up.

LIGHTNING SKETCHES OF FOOTER CELEBRITIES.



An impression of A. J. CAMPBELL, the famous centre half-back of Southampton, by Jimmy Seed, of the Spurs.

TRAINING FOR FOOTBALL

The Benefits of Walking.

By PERCY LONGHURST.

THERE is one means towards getting and keeping fit which is far too little practised. I refer to walking. I suppose the prevalence of the bicycle, the motor-bus, and the tramcar have something to do with the neglect of walking; but the fact remains that walking as a training exercise is neglected except by the few. Long-distance and cross-country runners know how extremely useful is walking as a means of promoting extra staying-powers; swimmers—not sprinters—value the exercise; and walking is still just as much a part of a boxer's training as are the practice bouts with his sparring partners. Now, if a boxer, who needs both endurance and quickness, finds walking valuable, most certainly should the football player. Too many fellows, however, look upon walking as a disagreeable necessity. They utterly fail to realise the beneficial results to be obtained from the habit of taking a really long walk when the opportunity offers.

Sundays give the chance to most of us for taking a good walk—not the idle saunter of a half-mile or so along the pavements, but a jolly good stroll lasting several hours. There is no need to make such an outing a race, very far from it. What I suggest is a five or six hours' stroll at a pace of three and a half or four miles an hour. Any slight stiffness resulting from the vigorous exercise of the previous afternoon is very quickly worked off. From such a walk, particularly if taken in company—say, half a dozen fellows—a power of good will result, mentally and physically. The heart and lungs will be strengthened, the power of endurance of the leg and thigh muscles increased, not to mention the invigorating influence that the combination of moderate exercise and fresh air have upon the nerves. Such strolling parties should not be difficult to organise, and they are not impossible even if one happens to dwell in a large city. A walk of the length suggested should take one well beyond the extent of pavements and shops, and putting in now and again a fairly fast sprint of a quarter of a mile or so without attracting attention or being inconvenienced by other pedestrians.

There is other walking exercise which the chap anxious to keep fit should not neglect. This is a really fast two miles jaunt, being careful to take short strides. Such an exercise, taken once a day, is a great favourite with certain boxers who are anxious not to lose rapidity of footwork. And, although the average football club member has not as much time to give to his training as the professional boxer preparing for a contest, he should not find it impossible, with a little self-denial, to find the opportunity for such a training walk two or three times in a week. It might well be taken fairly late in the evening just before supper. A couple of miles can be got through in half an hour at the outside, and such a finish to the day is most beneficial. For one thing, such an evening walk is pretty certain to ensure a night's rest. No need at all to get into athletic togs for it. Ordinary clothes will do, with rubber-soled shoes to be worn when there is no rain or mud about. And when taking such a walk, don't forget that the swinging of the arms is a necessity. Goodwin, that prince of trainers, urges that the hands should be brought up almost as high as the shoulders every time. This is a dodge that not only loosens the shoulder muscles, but, by lifting the ribs, allows of a greater quantity of air being taken into the lungs. Now and again the pace should be lessened for a hundred yards or so to enable the walker to indulge in a spell of very slow and deep breathing.

Fast walking at first is liable to make the shins feel a bit sore, but continuance of the exercise will surely cure that, and the walker will have the added satisfaction of knowing that he is developing a muscle that comes in mighty useful when kicking a ball.



(Continued from page 12.)

Billy Bunter breathed more freely when his footsteps receded along the corridor. He had escaped once more—and if the corridor remained unvisited after that, he had an excellent chance of dodging unseen out of the Head's study later. Dinner would be coming along presently, and dinner could not be missed. That was very important.

Mr. Quelch's face was very set as he turned out of the Head's corridor. By the corner he met Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth. There was an unusual frown on Mr. Prout's flushed, portly face. He stopped Mr. Quelch.

"You have been to see the Head, Quelch?"

"I have!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Possibly you have noticed something a little unusual in the Head this morning, my dear Quelch—a lack of respect and consideration which members of Dr. Locke's staff had always considered that they had a right to expect."

Mr. Quelch started a little.

"I have certainly noticed it, Mr. Prout. May I ask if your experience has been the same?"

"It has, sir!" said Mr. Prout. "Most decidedly, sir!"

"It has pleased Dr. Locke, on this occasion, to talk to me through a locked door," said Mr. Quelch bitterly.

"Precisely the same as my experience, sir," said Mr. Prout, "and the expressions used by the Head, sir, were not such as I am accustomed to hearing."

"I can quite credit it," said Mr. Quelch, compressing his lips. "My experience is similar."

"It is very unpleasant and disconcerting, Mr. Quelch."

"It is exceedingly so, Mr. Prout."

"I scarcely understand Dr. Locke this morning, Mr. Quelch."

"I fail to understand him at all, Mr. Prout."

"It is really extraordinary!"

"Unprecedented, sir—unprecedented!"

And the two masters separated, having comforted one another a little by a mutual grouse.

Really, the proceedings of the Head that morning were decidedly extraordinary and unprecedented. But the occupant of the Head's study, at that time, was also rather extraordinary and unprecedented, if the two masters had only known it.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

No Exit!

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER gasped with relief when Mr. Quelch's footsteps died away down the corridor.

There was silence; and Bunter grinned.

Mr. Quelch was gone, and was not likely to return. The supposed Head's instructions would keep the corridor clear—and as soon as all the fellows were fairly settled down in the Form-rooms for third lesson, the fat junior would be able, at last, to make his

escape from the Head's study. The coast would be clear at last.

Once he had escaped unseen, who was to know that he ever had been there? Mr. Quelch did not know at what time the Head had started for Southampton—he did not know yet that the Head had gone at all. When he learned that much, he would not know how long the Head had been gone—he would suppose that he had started during third lesson—after that talk on the doormat. That was a reasonable expectation—and if it so turned out, it would see Bunter clear. Once he was safe out of the Head's study, all was serene—only it was frightfully important to get out unseen. The mere thought of the facts coming to light made Bunter shiver.

He waited; and a glance from the window showed him the quadrangle deserted. The Greyfriars fellows had all gone in to class.

Now was the time.

Tap! came at the door, as Bunter turned from the window. His eyes fairly glinted through his spectacles! It seemed to be raining visitors at the Head's door that morning.

"Who is there?" called out Bunter, with the amazing imitation of Dr. Locke's voice, which was now growing habitual.

"Me, sir!" replied the voice of Mrs. Kebble, the house-dame.

The handle turned.

"I cannot be disturbed now, Mrs. Kebble. Another time—"

"The door don't open, sir."

"I have locked it, Mrs. Kebble, in order not to be disturbed. Kindly go away at once."

"What! What did you say, sir?"

"Go away at once, my good woman! I am exceedingly busy."

Mrs. Kebble bridled, outside the study door. Annoyance seemed inevitable for all callers at Dr. Locke's study that morning—just as if it were catching, like measles.

"Far be it from me, sir, to disturb you, you being a busy gentleman, sir," said Mrs. Kebble, with dignified acerbity. "But you will remember, sir, I'm sure, that I asked you most particularly whether your study could be done this morning."

"Eh?"

"Now Mr. Quelch, sir, comes to me and says that no one is even to enter the corridor, sir."

"Quite so, Mrs. Kebble—quite so!"

"I thought, sir, that I had better speak to you, sir, as it was most distinctly said, sir, that your study could be done this morning while you was in the Sixth Form, sir."

"Nonsense!"

"Eh?"

"You are interrupting me, Mrs. Kebble. I am exceedingly busy with—a Greek translation. Kindly go away."

"Sir!"

"Go away at once, Mrs. Kebble."

There was a sound of flouncing in the corridor. Mrs. Kebble was going away—in a frame of mind that made things unpleasant for the maids when she arrived below stairs again.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bunter, wiping his fat forehead, which was perspiring.

A good part of third lesson had elapsed—and Bunter simply had to be clear of the Head's study before it ended, unless he was to remain there a prisoner. He waited anxiously at the door, listening, giving Mrs. Kebble plenty of time to get clear.

There was silence, and Bunter softly turned back the key at last. Softly he opened the door.

Footsteps!

With feelings too deep for words, Bunter shut the door again and turned the key once more in the lock. There was a renewed sound of flouncing in the passage. Mrs. Kebble had come back! In the name of all that was unfortunate, what did the woman want now?

Knock!

"Dr. Locke, if I may make so bold as to say a word, sir," said Mrs. Kebble, with dignified indignation.

"What is it now, Mrs. Kebble?"

"Which I am not accustomed, sir, to speaking to a gentleman through a locked door, sir."

"Nonsense!"

"Sir!"

"Go away, my good woman!"

"I have come back, sir, to ask you whether the corridor floor, sir, may be done? That being the arrangement made. You will remember, sir, that you told me quite distinct—"

"No!" roared Bunter.

"Very well, sir—very well. But I presume, sir, that it will not disturb you in your study, sir, if Trotter polishes the window fastenings. I will tell him to be very quiet."

Bunter shook a fat fist at the door. It was plain that Mrs. Kebble was annoyed at having her household arrangements thrown out of gear in this inconsiderate manner. She was annoyed, and she actually wanted to annoy the Head in retaliation. Knowing—at least, believing—that the Head was very busy, she was interrupting him again from sheer irritation of temper.

"Go away, Mrs. Kebble!" snapped Bunter. "Go away, and do not let anyone come anywhere near my study!"

"Very well, sir—oh, very well! I will tell Trotter not to come nearer than the corner of the passage."

Mrs. Kebble flounced away again.

Bunter stood rooted to the floor. If Trotter was going to polish window-fastenings at the corner of the corridor he might as well be just outside the Head's study—Bunter could not get away without being seen.

"Mrs. Kebble!"

But Mrs. Kebble was gone.

"Oh crikey!" murmured the new Head of Greyfriars, in dismay.

He had not calculated on this. Naturally he hadn't! Bunter had not come into personal contact before with the workings of the household. He had not, as it were, seen the wheels go round. But, naturally, they went round all the same. Mrs. Kebble and her staff were as busy every day in the performance of their own duties as the Greyfriars fellows were in the pursuit of classical knowledge. But Bunter had not foreseen anything of this kind. As a matter of fact, he very seldom foresaw anything at all.

The Head's study, which had been a refuge, now began to appear to Bunter a good deal like a lion's den—which it was easy to enter, but extremely difficult to get out of.

"Oh crumbs! What's a fellow going to do?" murmured the dismayed Owl of the Remove.

He dared not open the door.

Trotter was practically certain to see him if he emerged. Besides, as likely as not, Mrs. Kebble might be keeping an eye on Trotter, to see that he did his work thoroughly—which Trotter did not always do unless an eye was kept on him.

But to remain in the study—Later, doubtless, there would be plenty of opportunities of escape. But what

about dinner? Missing dinner was absolutely impossible!

And the minutes were passing fast! Every minute was precious to Bunter in this peculiar predicament—and the minutes were going!

He turned to the window at last.

It was risky. He might be seen dropping from the window—Gosling might see him—Mr. Mumble, the gardener, might see him—he might be observed from some other window.

But Bunter was getting desperate. He longed and yearned to be safe out of the Head's study.

He blinked from the window and groaned. There was Mr. Mumble, the gardener, sedulously attending to a grass border on the Sixth Form green—in full view! What he would think if he saw a junior dropping from the Head's study window Bunter could not guess. But he knew that he could not afford to give Mr. Mumble an incident of that kind to think about.

He watched the gardener savagely.

Mr. Mumble moved off at last. Bunter watched him go, and then—

Then there was a sound of a joyous whoop in the quadrangle. The spaces that had been silent and deserted suddenly swarmed.

Third lesson was over, and the Greyfriars fellows were out!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came out of the Remove room after third lesson and trooped cheerily into the quadrangle. They were the first out, but the Fourth were only a minute behind them, and then came a riotous swarm of the Third and the Second. The old quad was alive with voices.

Little dreaming of the dismay their appearance caused to a fat junior watching from the window of the Head's study, the Greyfriars fellows came out into the sunshine in cheery mood.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Anybody seen Bunter?" called out Bob Cherry.

Nobody had!

"The fat boulder's disappeared!" said Harry Wharton. "He must have gone out of gates without Gosling noticing him."

"He'll be back for dinner!" grinned Bob.

"Ha, ha! That's a dead cert!"

But it did not turn out to be a "cert." When the Remove fellows went in to dinner a place at the Remove table was empty. William George Bunter did not join up for dinner.

Mr. Quelch took his usual place at the head of the Remove table, with an unusual acerbity of manner. He noticed at once that one member of his Form was missing—the member who was already in his black books.

"Wharton!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir?"

"Where is Bunter?"

"I don't know, sir."

"What! Todd, you are Bunter's study-mate. Do you know where he is, and why he has not come in to dinner?"

"No, sir," answered Peter.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips hard. The Head had given Bunter a day off, as it seemed, and perhaps Bunter considered that he was free to go out of gates and "cut tiffin." If so, it was a mistake on Bunter's part, for which Mr. Quelch intended to call him to severe account when he turned up again.

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Dinner over, the Greyfriars fellows marched out, the Remove discussing Bunter's absence in wonder. It was remarkable—indeed, amazing—for the Owl of the Remove to miss a meal. Such a thing had never happened before in the memory of the oldest inhabitant.

"Bunter's going it and no mistake!" said Bob Cherry, as the chums of the Remove went out after dinner. "The Head can't have given him leave to cut tiffin."

"Quelchy looks waxy!" murmured Nugent.

There was no doubt about that. Mr. Quelch passed the juniors with rustling gown, like a thunderstorm.

The Remove master went to his study. He did not sit down there and take up a newspaper, as was his wont after lunch.

He was too disturbed and angry. Indeed, Mr. Quelch was seriously thinking of tendering his resignation to Dr. Locke. The Sixth had not had a pleasant time with Mr. Quelch that morning.

Buzzzzzz!

Mr. Quelch started angrily. He did not want to be worried with the telephone just then.

However, he jerked the receiver off the hooks.

"That is Courtfield 242?"

"Yes," snapped Mr. Quelch.

"A trunk call from Southampton."

Mr. Quelch sniffed. Then his face cleared a little. Dr. Locke's son was expected to land at Southampton any day; possibly the call was from Mr. Percy, a pleasant young gentleman, to whom Mr. Quelch was rather attached. Yet it was odd that he should ring up Mr. Quelch, instead of ringing up the Head—if it was Mr. Percy Locke.

"Is that you, my dear Quelch?" came the voice over the wires.

Mr. Quelch almost fell down.

It was not Percy Locke's voice. It was the voice of Herbert Henry Locke—Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars!

"Mr. Quelch!"

The Remove master could not answer. He could only stare dazedly at the instrument.

Was the Head ringing him up from his own study? Yet they had said from the exchange that it was a trunk call. What did it mean? Mr. Quelch wondered whether he was dreaming.

"Are you there, Mr. Quelch?"

The dazed master made an effort, and spoke.

"Who is speaking?"

"Dr. Locke, from the Grand Hotel, Southampton. Do you not know my voice, my dear Quelch? I recognise yours quite distinctly."

Mr. Quelch's head seemed to be turning round and round.

Certainly, he knew the Head's voice, just as he had known it from his study. There was no difference that Mr. Quelch could detect. But what could it mean? What could it possibly mean, in the name of all that was mysterious and miraculous? It was a long journey to Southampton; Dr. Locke could not have made that journey since Mr. Quelch had spoken with him at his study door. What could it mean?

"My dear Quelch, are you there?"

"Yes," gasped the Remove master, "I am here! But you—are you there? I do not understand this."

"What?"

"Are you not in your study? I mean are—"

"Mr. Quelch!"

"Is that really Dr. Locke who is speaking?" stuttered the astounded Mr. Quelch.

"Certainly, it is! I have rung you up, Quelch, because I left in so great a hurry this morning. My son telephoned that he had landed, and I left instantly to meet him here. I am glad to say that I have met him, and he is well—fit and well. You will be glad to hear that, Mr. Quelch."

"Undoubtedly, but—"

"Bunter gave you my message, I presume?"

"B-b-bunter?"

"Yes. Bless my soul, is it possible that the boy did not give you my message, Mr. Quelch?"

"Bunter gave me no message, sir. I have not seen Bunter since I sent him to your study during first lesson this morning."

"Bless my soul!"

"I received your message by Wingate—"

"Wingate! I have not spoken to Wingate this morning. I have not seen Wingate! What do you mean, Mr. Quelch?"

The Remove master's head spun. This was too much for him.

"Dr. Locke!" he gasped. "I—I suppose I am speaking to Dr. Locke? I certainly seem to know your voice. You—you are at Southampton?"

"Certainly!"

"Then—then what—who—how—" Mr. Quelch became almost incoherent. "Dr. Locke! When—when—when did you leave Greyfriars?"

"During first lesson. Bunter had just come to my study, and I gave him a message for you—"

"Upon my word! You—you—you left Greyfriars during the first lesson?" babbled Mr. Quelch.

"Certainly!"

"But I spoke to you, sir—I—I spoke to you in your study, sir, after second lesson—"

"Eh?"

"In the morning break, sir, I spoke to you at your study door—"

"Mr. Quelch!"

"There is some trickery here!" exclaimed the Remove master. "You, sir, cannot be in two places at once. If you are indeed Dr. Locke speaking it cannot be you who spoke to me from your study this morning."

"Decidedly not. Are you—are you ill, Mr. Quelch?" The Head's tone seemed to imply that he really meant had Mr. Quelch been drinking!

"No, sir; I am only amazed—astounded—dazed, sir! There is some trickery at work here! Sir, if you are Dr. Locke speaking, and you have met Mr. Percy, doubtless Percy Locke is with you."

"He is at my elbow now."

"Then kindly ask him to speak to me; I shall know his voice. If you really are Dr. Locke there is some unknown person locked in your study here, pretending to be you."

"Good heavens, Mr. Quelch!"

"Let Mr. Percy speak to me."

"Certainly!"

There was a pause, and then a fresh, cheery young man's voice came through over the wires.

ANSWERS
Every Saturday — PRICE 2

"Are you there, Mr. Quelch? Do you know my voice, my old friend, after I have been away all this time?"

"Yes, yes," gasped Mr. Quelch. "I know your voice, Mr. Percy. I am not likely to forget it, my dear lad. Your father is with you?"

"He is here now."

"Then that is proof! Some impostor—some wretched rogue and criminal—is locked in your father's study at this very moment, imitating Dr. Locke's voice with such extraordinary skill that he has deceived everyone who has heard him speak. Now I understand why the door was kept so carefully locked. Some criminal—probably a burglar or thief—tease me, I must go instantly! He must be seized—arrested——"

Mr. Quelch hardly stayed to jam the receiver back on the hooks ere he rushed from the room. He left the telephone rocking.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

An Amazing Discovery!

BILLY BUNTER groaned.

He groaned dismally.

The Owl of the Remove felt that it was hard cheese. Dinner, the most important event of the day, the central fact round which the whole universe revolved, dinner was going on, and Bunter was not there! Bunter was a prisoner in the Head's study. Once his refuge from classes, from lickings, from Quelchy, it was now his dismal prison. Like the flighty little fly who walked into the spider's parlour, he was in, and he could not get out.

After his series of amazing tricks he dared not—simply dared not!—let it be known that he had been in the study at all. He could not—must not—be seen leaving the study. Even the thought of dinner did not tempt him to run that awful risk. The flogging he had escaped would be as nothing compared with the flogging he might expect for playing such an astounding series of tricks—even dinner was not worth it. But it was hard cheese! Bunter had been hungry after breakfast—that had caused all the trouble. So at dinner-time he was famished. He understood, and sympathised with, the feelings of fellows lost in open boats at sea as the dinner-hour glided by dinnerless. He knew now what they must feel like!

Until the school had settled down for afternoon classes he dared not venture forth.

By that time he was likely to be in a ravenous state, almost on the verge of cannibalism.

But it could not be helped.

He roamed and rolled round his prison, his only solace the fact that the Head was far away at Southampton, and safe for the day, unlikely to return and give the game away.

That was a solace, as far as it went. But it came to little, when a fellow was so fearfully hungry. Missing classes was all to the good, but Bunter would have preferred even mathematics to famine. More than once he thought, in his desperation, of chancing it; but some sound without warned him, as he laid his fat hand on the door, that it was not safe, and he backed into the study again. Not until the Greyfriars crowd were busy in the Form-rooms once more could he venture forth. And then—then there would be a "grub raid" in the Remove studies that would break all previous records.

Footsteps in the corridor again. Was everybody at Greyfriars coming to the Head's study that day? Really, it



Bunter unlocked the Head's door quietly, opened it a few inches, and blinked into the corridor. The next moment, however, his head popped back into the study, like that of a tortoise into its shell; for a few yards along the corridor was a window, and at that window stood Trotter, the House page, polishing the glass. Bunter's heart thumped. (See Chapter 7.)

seemed like it, for this time the footsteps came in a swarm. Quite a crowd was gathering outside the Head's study, much to Bunter's surprise and alarm.

Knock!

"Bless my soul! Who is there?" Bunter put on the Head's voice again. "Kindly go away at once. I am very busy."

"Open this door!"

Bunter's heart thumped. Was it because "the Head" had not left his study for lunch that this crowd had come along?

"Nonsense!" he rapped out. "Kindly go away! I repeat that I am busy; I shall lunch later——"

"Upon my word, Mr. Quelch!" came Mr. Prout's deep voice. "Are you sure, sir, that you are not mistaken? That is certainly Dr. Locke's voice."

Bunter started. Did that mean that Quelchy was getting suspicious? Of old, Bunter knew that Quelchy was a downy old bird.

"Mr. Prout, I am not mistaken," said Mr. Quelch's voice. "Dr. Locke is at Southampton at this very moment."

Bunter quaked.

"There's no doubt about it, sir," came Wingate's voice. "I have spoken to Gosling, and he says that the Head left early in his car. He saw him go."

"Amazing!" said Mr. Prout. "That certainly seems to place the matter beyond doubt. But the voice——"

"The voice is undoubtedly remarkably like the Head's, but it cannot be the Head's voice, as Dr. Locke is now in Southampton," came Mr. Quelch's icy tones. "Some wretched impostor—some criminal—has obtained admission to the school. I have little doubt that he has robbed the Head's safe, and is now waiting for an opportunity of escape."

"Very probable, sir, very probable," said Mr. Prout. "Indeed, the scoundrel can scarcely have any other motive for this extraordinary imposture."

Bunter leaned on the Head's table, scarcely breathing.

Knock!

"Open this door, whoever you are!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "I warn you not to resist arrest; you will be seized and handed over to the police. Every point is guarded, and you cannot escape."

"Ow!"

"Will you unlock this door, you scoundrel, or shall it be forced?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

Bunter groaned.

The game was up now, with a vengeance! This was worse than missing dinner.

He rolled hurriedly to the window. At any risk, now, he had to get out of the Head's study before the door was forced.

But a glance from behind the window curtains made him jump back.

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Outside, there was a swarm of Greyfriars fellows.

Evidently the alarm had spread; all Greyfriars knew that some unknown person—probably a burglar—was hidden in the Head's study, no doubt robbing the safe!

Really it was not so bad as all that! But that was the most natural supposition, in the strange circumstances.

The window was guarded. Under it stood Loder and Gwynne of the Sixth, and half a dozen other sturdy seniors, and Mr. Mumble, the gardener, and a swarm of the Fifth. Behind the seniors was an army of juniors, all watching eagerly, all keen to lend a hand in collaring the unknown scoundrel, if he attempted to escape by the window. Harry Wharton & Co. were there, half the Remove with them, and a swarm of the Fourth and the Shell.

Bunter backed away from the window. There was no escape that way.

In desperation, he thought of the chimney! But there was a blazing fire in the grate!

"Oh dear!" groaned the Owl of the Remove.

Knock!

"For the last time!" came Mr. Quelch's grim voice. "Will you unlock this door, you scoundrel?"

The "scoundrel" was not likely to unlock the door. Bunter made no answer—it was useless to mimic the Head's voice further, now that the secret was out. Of all that crowd of Greyfriars fellows, not one was likely to heed "his master's voice"—in the circumstances.

"Very well! Gosling!"

"Yessir?"

"You will force the lock, Gosling. You have your tools."

"Yessir."

"Oh crikey!" moaned Bunter, as Gosling began operations on the lock of the Head's door.

He blinked wildly round the study, his eyes almost starting through his big spectacles. Almost, he forgot that he was hungry!

Crack! Creak! Groan! Creak! Crack!

The lock was strong, but it was giving! In a few minutes the door would be open. And then—

Bunter dived under the Head's writing-table. There were flaps to that table which let down when not in use. Between the flaps Bunter was well hidden from sight.

Really, there was little to hope from taking cover. The study was certain to be searched. But it was a case of any port in a storm. Perhaps Bunter indulged a wild hope of being overlooked;

at all events, he was postponing the awful moment of discovery.

Crash!

The door flew open.

"Take care, my dear Quelch!" came Mr. Prout's portly voice. "He may be armed—he may have firearms! Take care!"

Unheeding, Mr. Quelch strode into the Head's study.

Mr. Prout followed him in, and Mr. Capper, and Wingate of the Sixth, and several more hefty seniors. The rest of the crowd blocked the doorway, ready for a desperate rush on the part of the cornered "scoundrel."

But the scoundrel was not to be seen! Mr. Quelch stared round the study.

"Where is he?"

"The window is shut—he has not escaped that way," said Mr. Capper.

"He is in concealment!" exclaimed Mr. Prout. "The scoundrel has hidden himself! Take care—he may be armed! One moment while I get the poker." The Fifth Form master grabbed up the heavy poker from the grate. "Now I am ready for the villain!"

"Search through the study!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Come forth!" roared Mr. Prout. "Scoundrel, come forth!"

The scoundrel did not come forth.

"Under the table, I think, sir," said Wingate. "There's no other place. You fellows stand ready to collar him while I pull the table away."

"Ow!"

"I hear him!" exclaimed Mr. Prout, uplifting the poker. "Drag away the table, Wingate, and I will stand ready! I will brain him if he lifts a finger—before he can use his revolver—"

"Wow!"

Wingate grasped the table and whirled it away. There was a yell of terror from the revealed scoundrel.

"Ow! Keep him off! Keep that poker away! Yaroooooh!"

"BUNTER!"

"Great Christopher Columbus!" gasped Wingate.

"Bunter!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"Bunter!" went in a yell down the corridor.

"Bunter! It's Bunter!"

Mr. Quelch gazed spellbound at the fat junior. Mr. Prout, with a rather sheepish look, dropped the poker into the fender with a clang. Evidently that weapon of war was not required.

"B-B-Bunter!" stammered Mr. Quelch. "Can I believe my eyes! Bunter, is—was anyone else in this study with you?"

"Yes, sir! No, sir! Oh, sir! I—I—I wasn't—"

"What?"

"I—I didn't—I never—"

"Stand up!" bawled Mr. Quelch.

Billy Bunter quaked to his feet.

"Bunter! It's Bunter—Bunter of the Remove! It's Billy Bunter!" the fellows in the corridor were yelling, and word passed out to the eager crowd in the quadrangle.

"Bunter!" howled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my hat! That's where Bunter was all the time, then!" gasped Peter Todd.

"Bunter! Great pip!"

"The Bunterfulness is terrific."

"Bunter!" stuttered Harry Wharton.

"Bunter! The giddy ventriloquist! You remember his game yesterday mimicking the Head's foot! That's it! Bunter's giddy ventriloquism—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh dear!" gasped Peter. "Bunter will be the death of me!"

"I fancy Quelch will be the death of him—or jolly near it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The roars of laughter echoed in the Head's study. But in that apartment there was no merriment. Billy Bunter stood quaking before his incensed Form master.

"Bunter!" Mr. Quelch's voice almost seemed to bite. "Bunter! It—it—it was you! You! You have been locked in the Head's study during his absence—"

"No, sir! I—"

"What?"

"I—I mean yes, sir—"

"You have imitated the Head's voice. I remember now that I have had to punish you for similar trickery, though never before have you ventured to play tricks involving your headmaster. Upon my word! This is almost beyond belief!"

"Wretched boy!" thundered Mr. Prout. "It was you—you who answered me through the door, and made me believe that Dr. Locke was speaking to me discourteously."

"No, sir! Oh, sir! Yes, sir! Oh dear!"

"You!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh dear! I—I—I— The fact is, sir, I wasn't here! I mean, it wasn't me! I never did, sir—I wouldn't!" stuttered Bunter.

"Rascal!" boomed Mr. Prout.

"Ow!"

Mr. Quelch calmed himself with an effort.

"Wingate! Take that wretched boy to the punishment-room and lock him in! He will be expelled from the school for this offence; and he must remain in security till the Head returns to deal with him."

"Wow!"

"Come along, Bunter," said Wingate, dropping his hand on Bunter's fat shoulder.

"I—I say, sir—"

"Silence! Go!"

And Bunter quaked and went.

Greyfriars was in a buzz that afternoon over the mystery of the Head's study and its amazing outcome. There was only one opinion on the subject of Bunter—it was, as Smithy put it, Bunter for the long jump! Bunter, as a matter of certainty, would be "bunked" from Greyfriars. The Owl of the Remove, a dismal prisoner in the punishment-room, was of the same opinion, and fellows who passed near his quarters heard dismal groans proceeding therefrom. It was not a happy day for Bunter.

No doubt it was fortunate for Bunter that the Head, returning to Greyfriars with his son, was in a happy and amiable mood—a mood to regard even Bunter's heinous proceedings with a lenient eye. Certainly the Owl of the Remove had fairly asked for the "sack," and it seemed certain that he would get it. But under the influence of Mr. Percy's happy homecoming, the Head was unexpectedly lenient.

Bunter was not "bunked." He was handed over to his Form master for punishment. And Mr. Quelch did his duty well—too well, in Bunter's opinion. For a long, long time after Mr. Quelch had done his duty, nothing more was heard of Billy Bunter's ventriloquism. Bunter was fed-up with ventriloquism. And the Owl of the Remove was chiefly occupied with groaning, while the rest of the school were chuckling over the mystery of the Head's study.

THE END.

(There will be another rattling fine yarn of Greyfriars next week, entitled: "The Feud With The Fourth!" by Frank Richards. Mind you order your MAGNET in good time.)

YOU MUST READ

"SCORNE BY THE SCHOOL!"

BY

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

A Powerful School Story of the Chums of St. Jim's, featuring Ernest Levison, once of Greyfriars, in this week's issue of

"The Gem Library."

On Sale Wednesday. Price 2d.



The CASE of THE LANGSDALE WANDERERS



Introduction on
page 22.

A Powerful New Football and Detective Story, featuring Ferrers Locke, the private investigator, and his clever boy assistant, Jack Drake.

A Close Game!

"PLAYED, Woodward!"

"Two up!"

The home supporters wanted to dance a jig in their exuberance; two up in twenty-five minutes. Why, it looked as if the Wanderers would walk over their opponents. Football, however, is full of surprises. And this was proved a couple of minutes after the ball had been kicked off.

The Rangers went away like the wind. Half-backs were passed like so many hopeless marionettes on a bit of string, and the two full-backs—hefty fellows both of them—were made to look foolish. It was one of the quickest goals that had ever been scored from a kick-off on the Wanderers' ground, for inside a minute and a half the ball was drumming its harsh note up against the rigging at the back of the home side's net.

And no one seemed more surprised than Reggie Baker, the goalkeeper.

"Oh, well played, Rangers!"

"Played, sirs!"

The ground rang to the shouts of thousands of throats as the ball slammed home.

"Two—one!"

After the restart it looked for all the world as if the visitors would repeat that thrilling race for goal, and the point it had brought them. But Tiny Abbot, the full-back, came to the rescue. Two forwards crashed upon him as his foot went out to the leather, but Abbot was a mountain of flesh that could not be bowled over. The big back's powerful "kick" was a familiar sight at Langsdale, and no one in the home audience seemed surprised when they saw the ball sailing almost up to the penalty line in the enemy half.

But faces were soon aglow around the touchlines when it was seen that curly Taylor was on to that dropping ball like a cat pouncing on a mouse. He didn't wait to sight his shot for goal, but instinctively his right foot swung at the requisite angle and the ball flashed away and just scraped underneath the cross-bar. The goalkeeper made a futile attempt to save it, but all he got for his pains was a nasty mud-bath as he landed on all fours in a pool of soft earth and rain water.

"Goal—good shot, Curly!"

Three—one!

The Rangers were on their mettle now; they were determined that no more points should be notched during the remainder of the initial half unless they were scored by a member of their own side. And their determination bore fruit—a free kick a couple of seconds before the interval bringing them into position to score their second goal.

Three—two!

Not so much in it after all, the wisecrackers declared as the two teams came off the field. But these same wisecrackers wondered how much there would have been in it had Woodward and Tiny Abbot been out of the home team. And having conjured up a score resembling in total a page from a cricket scorer's book, these old lovers of the king of winter games left it at that.

Lionel Speedlow chartered a taxicab as soon as he was at a safe distance from the Wanderers' ground, and commanded the astonished driver to "run like the dickens for the Rookery."

In less than ten minutes the managing director of the Langsdale Club was keying himself into the house. Turville, the butler, eyed his master in some surprise, trained servant though he was.

"Don't stand there like a inummy," hissed Speedlow, brushing past him unceremoniously, **"or I'll fire you!"**

Speedlow was looking for someone upon whom he could vent his wrath, and the butler happened to be the first scapegoat.

"Pardon, sir!" muttered Turville, and he coughed.

"Don't stand there barkin' like a dog and talkin' like a parrot!" raved Speedlow. **"Get out my grey suit. And—and get my bath ready!"**

Turville hastened to obey, what time Speedlow hurried into the dining-room and poured himself out a stiff measure of spirit. As he did so his reflection peered out at him from the mirror at the back of the sideboard.

"Good gad!" muttered the new owner of the Rookery. **"The hooligans! I'll have the police on their track. I'll summons the lot for assault. Look at me—me! Why, I'll—"**

Words failed Speedlow, for he pre-

sented a truly amazing spectacle. Never in all his twenty-eight years of life had he been handled so thoroughly. He stood staring at his reflection for over ten minutes.

"The low rotters!" he hissed. **"The curs! I'll make every man-jack of them sorry for this before I'm much older. I'll—"**

"Your bath is ready, sir," Turville's voice broke in.

Speedlow glanced savagely at the servant, and then, his fury seeking an outlet, he picked up the decanter from the sideboard and hurled it at the innocent head of Turville.

Crash!

Turville dodged just in time, and the decanter struck the door of the dining-room and dropped in a shower of glittering pieces on to the carpeted floor.

And before Turville had recovered from the shock, before he had time to congratulate himself upon his lucky escape, Speedlow tore past him and mounted the broad staircase. Next moment came the sound of a key turning in the lock as Speedlow entered the bathroom.

Muttering under his breath to the effect that he was going to give notice, old Turville stood staring down at the glittering pieces of glass on the carpet for some minutes, until a ring at the outer door-bell brought him up sharp.

As he swung open the massive oak door a messenger-boy smiled cheekily at him, and presented a sealed envelope, addressed to **"Richard Taylor, Esq."** Turville signed the receipt-book, shut the door, and placed the letter on the silver salver on the oak hall-seat.

Perhaps if he had known the contents of that missive Turville would have been more particular as to where he left it; but ignorance is bliss, and the old servant thought no more about it as he busied himself with clearing up the pieces of the broken decanter.

But Lionel Speedlow, resplendent in a new suit and a complete change of linen, saw that letter addressed to his cousin twenty minutes later, and his curiosity getting the better of him, he stooped and swiftly picked it up.

The writing on the envelope conveyed nothing to his prying eyes, for the name and address were printed in capital letters.

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letters. But inside two minutes his fingers were busy fumbling with the edge of the envelope.

He had just drawn the single folded sheet of paper from its interior when there came an imperious summons on the door-bell. Stuffing the letter and the envelope hastily into his jacket-pocket, Speedlow swung open the door. He started guiltily as he came face to face with Ferrers Locke.

"Ah, good-afternoon, Mr. Speedlow!" smiled the great detective, noting at once that guilty start and the faint smudge of crimson that came and went in Speedlow's face. "I wondered whether I should find you at home."

"Won't you come in?"

Speedlow licked his dry lips. Somehow or other, he never felt at ease in the presence of this detective with the lynx eyes.

"No, thanks," replied Locke easily. "I merely called to say that the quill pen and the piece of blotting-paper I took away with me the day before yesterday are now in the possession of Scotland Yard. When they are returned rests with the officials there."

"Oh, those!" smiled Speedlow. "You needn't have bothered to call about such a small thing as that, Mr. Locke."

"It's the small things that count in this world," replied the detective, with a peculiar smile. "But as I hold myself responsible for taking them from here, I thought it right to acquaint you of what had happened to them, small as the articles are."

As he spoke the detective's eyes roamed casually over Speedlow's well-cut suit, and they stealed imperceptibly as, for a fleeting second, they came to rest on the portion of an envelope that peeped out of Speedlow's jacket-pocket.

There was nothing surprising or extraordinary in the fact that Speedlow should have an envelope in his pocket, but that the name on the envelope should be "Richard Taylor, Esq.," certainly was surprising. Knowing the bad feeling that existed between the two cousins, Ferrers Locke began to wonder how it was Speedlow came to be in possession of something evidently belonging to Curly Taylor.

And then in a flash he remembered the guilty start Speedlow had given as the door had been opened.

Strange thoughts passed through the detective's mind as he stood smiling in the doorway—thoughts that flashed and were gone in a couple of seconds.

"Well, I'll be off, Mr. Speedlow," he said, with a genial smile. "Good-day!"

Speedlow murmured something and shut the door after his departing visitor. Then, as the detective's feet crunched through the gravel drive, Speedlow entered the dining-room, and, seating himself in an armchair, pulled out the letter intended for his cousin.

And as he read the peculiar and startling message on the single sheet of note-paper his face went white and strained, his hands shook; for in a spidery hand, traced in block capitals, were the following words:

**"LOOK BETWEEN THE PAGES
OF 'NICHOLAS NICKLEBY'
AND YOU WILL FIND A WILL
LEAVING THE ESTATE AND
FORTUNE
OF THE DECEASED MARCHANT
TAYLOR
TO YOU.**

FROM A FRIEND."

Might well have Speedlow's hands shaken, for in his mind's eye he already saw himself deprived of the vast fortune
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that had come his way—already saw his hated cousin reigning in his stead over that fine old house.

"N-Nicholas Nickleby," he muttered, and beads of perspiration broke out upon his brow. "Heavens! What a lucky stroke that made me pick up this letter!"

He glanced about him furtively, for fear that someone had seen him give way to his terror. But the room was deserted save for himself. Certain it was he did not see the face of Ferrers Locke that had peered in at the window—that had observed his every movement—that had witnessed those shaking hands and the look of terror, for the face of the famous detective was withdrawn a second before Speedlow had glanced up from the letter.

Pulling a silk handkerchief from his pocket Speedlow mopped his brow, and then sat staring dumbly into the fire. The realisation of what that letter meant to him, if it were true, if Curly once got hold of it, brought him to his feet excitedly. The envelope was first cast to the flames, and a sardonic grin spread over Speedlow's face as he watched it burn. Perhaps he spent too much time watching the envelope burning, for he paid but half as much attention to the letter containing that all-important news. It was tossed on the fire, and the corner of it began to smoulder.

Then, with a cunning laugh, Speedlow turned on his heel, and almost ran out of the dining-room.

"The library," he muttered. "Of course. I'll find that will. I'll see whether my cousin will rob me of everything, the worm!"

In his haste to find the volume, Speedlow naturally thought only of the library, and once in that apartment he commenced to tear the books from the shelves as though his life depended on it.

But the moment he had passed through the dining-room door the long french win-

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

At the close of a match between the Wanderers and the Treadwell F.C., the home eleven, upon entering their dressing-room, discover the body of Marchant Taylor, the founder and managing-director of the Wanderers, stretched out on the floor in an apparently lifeless heap. Kneeling over him they see Sanky Badger, the trainer, a smoking revolver in his hand. Sanky is accused of murdering the old man, but he stoutly denies the charge, and then, seizing an opportune moment, bolts from the dressing-room. The team gives chase, but Sanky eludes them.

On returning to the dressing-room the Wanderers find that the body of Marchant Taylor has mysteriously disappeared.

Investigations lead to the finding of an anonymous letter received by the old man just before his death couched in the following terms: "TO-DAY AT FIVE-THIRTY WE STRIKE." The police theorise that the assassination is the work of a secret society, and the Home Secretary engages Ferrers Locke to investigate the affair.

Meanwhile, after a deal of legal argument, Marchant Taylor's will is settled in favour of his eldest nephew, Lionel Speedlow, who receives the entire fortune, with instructions to allow Curly Taylor, his cousin, ten pounds a week, on the understanding that he continues to play for Langdale Wanderers. Speedlow, in his new role of managing-director, loses no time in showing himself in his true colours; for, after a set-to with Curly, he creates a great sensation by suspending two of the team's most valued players. A heated discussion takes place in the dressing-room prior to the Wanderers' next match, and the delayed game raises the ire of the fifty thousand spectators. Speedlow tries to pour oil on the troubled waters, but with no avail, for the angry crowd, resenting his rash action, swarm on to the field of play and force the elegant dandy to make a hurried exit. Then the Wanderers kick off, and twenty-five minutes later two goals are scored in their favour!
(Now read on.)

dow of that apartment was suddenly flung open and the stalwart figure of Ferrers Locke trod noiselessly into the room. What had made him come back to the dining-room window and play the spy the great detective hardly knew, but he was convinced now that something of great importance had been committed to the flames.

Without loss of time, therefore, the sleuth was across the dining-room in two strides. His right hand shot out and fastened on the burning letter that Speedlow had so carelessly tossed into the grate. His disengaged hand crumpled the half-burnt sheet of paper to stop the flames from spreading over it.

But what he had salvaged from the fire was meagre enough in all conscience, for on the strip of paper were the following words:

**LOOK
OF NICHOLAS
YOU WILL FIN
LEAVING
OF THE
TO**

Making History !

THE detective gave but a glance to these meaningless words, for his business was to make himself scarce as quickly as possible. Carefully placing the burnt scrap of paper in his coat pocket, he darted to the french window, passed through it, and closed it to, and then made his way by a circuitous route out of the grounds.

Barely had he gained the main road when a roar as of distant thunder wafted slowly towards him from the direction of the Langdale playing-fields. The detective smiled grimly as he caught the sense of it, for it signalled something noteworthy that had happened in the match between the home side and Peterham Rangers.

As a matter of fact, Curly Taylor had started off to notch another goal for the Wanderers—five minutes before the long whistle. During that second half, Peterham had scored their third goal, thus drawing level with their opponents. Thence onwards had been seen a ding-dong struggle for mastery.

The Wanderers had played like a "book," as one of the reporters had remarked, and the Rangers had run them close.

Backwards and forwards went the play, one minute in the home half the next almost on the goal-line of the visitors. Never had a game been fought out at such a pace. And then, when Curly, seeing his opportunity, had got possession of the ball, the crowd around the touchline had let themselves go.

"Go it, Curly!"

"Curly's the boy for us!"

Curly was the boy. He was speeding towards the Rangers' goal like a meteor—his turn of speed surprising even himself. His ears were tingling with excitement, his nerves were thrilling with the roars of encouragement from the crowd. But his football sense remained unimpaired. He knew that it was useless to pass to Woodward, his skipper, for that redoubtable player was three yards at least in his rear. The rest of the forwards were straggled out too in an uneven line behind him. He must go through on his own.

It was delightful to watch that passage through the defence. The burly centre-half came at him, his face set with a deadly purpose. But Curly made as if to boot the ball straight at that set face, and for once in a way the centre-half

was caught napping. Instinctively his head half turned so that the force of the travelling ball should not catch him on the tip of his nose. It was an old trick—frightening a man—and it worked. Curly sped round him like an eel, and a roar of laughter, anxious laughter for all that, resounded through those four walls of humanity gracing the stands and terraces.

"It's yours, Curly!"

"Oh, well played, sir!"

Two half-backs came tearing down the turf to meet this intrepid invader to their territory. Two half-backs hurled themselves at him in quick succession; two half-backs met Mother Earth with more force than gracefulness; and two half-backs sprawling in a heap had the mortification of seeing their erstwhile opponent racing goalwards.

"That's the game, Curly."

"You've got 'em beat!"

Now the full-backs were closing in on him; Curly saw them signal to each other as he sped on. The right-back, a hulking fellow shambled forward like a mountain in eruption. His feet seemed to spread out in all directions, and those feet gave Curly his opportunity. As they parted—one to the right, the other to the left—he tapped the ball between two massive legs, heard the muttered curse the back let fall from his lips, and then was racing round the other side of the fellow, the ball still at his feet.

The crowd was in hysterics now. Never had such wonderful "solo" football been seen on the Langsdale ground.

The remaining back lurched forward, feeling instinctively that he was to be beaten. Perhaps the wish was father to the thought, for Curly made him look foolish in the short skirmish for possession that ensued, and he sped on with only the goalkeeper to beat now. He, poor fellow, little liked the responsibility that rested on his stalwart shoulders. If he failed to stop the shot that was coming he knew full well that after the match there would be heaps of people eager and willing to tell him how "they would have stopped it."

He danced up and down in his citadel like a Jack-in-the-Box, knowing not whether it would be better policy to stay

there or come out. And with every passing second of his hesitation that curly-headed youth in the royal blue jersey drew nearer.

Ah, Curly was seen to steady himself for his shot. A great silence rested on the fifty thousand people present, a silence that the newspaper reporters made full play on when they came to write up their copy. It could almost be felt.

The goalkeeper anticipated the direction in which the ball would come; he saw that Curly's foot was shaping to drive the ball in the right-hand side of the net. Anxiously, the custodian flashed a look in that direction, to reassure himself that he hadn't underestimated the distance. Then, just as Curly's right foot was about to meet the leather and send it on its fateful journey, a startling thing happened.

With incredible swiftness the young forward changed feet. Some there were in that vast spectatorate who silently censured Taylor for his folly, but they were not blessed with overmuch faith or optimism.

Folly or not, that sudden change threw the goalie completely off his balance, completely upset his faculties of anticipation inasmuch as he leapt for the right-hand side of the net like a panther whilst the ball whistled into the left-hand corner of the net.

The shout that went up was heard for miles round; it seemed to shake the stands to their very foundations. Spectators young and old were waving their hats, were yelling themselves hoarse. Rattles and trumpets with which the younger members in the sixpenny stands had thoughtfully provided themselves, sent forth their screeching notes of acclamation; and in the midst of it all Curly felt Strang and Woodward deliver two hearty thumps of congratulations on his youthful back.

"Well done, Curly boy!"

The remaining three minutes of play are not worth recording. The Rangers were completely demoralised by that solo effort of Curly Taylor's, and they muddled and fuddled with the ball until the call of time.

And then, as the teams trudged off the field of battle, for a battle of the giants it had been, the crowd let themselves go once more. They had had their moneysworth—more than their moneysworth; they had experienced an afternoon's entertainment that was not likely to be repeated for many years to come. Starting with a wait of thirty minutes, followed by a mild ragging of the new managing-director of the club they supported, these footer fans had wound up their afternoon with a game that would rank as one of the most historic in Association football.

No wonder Curly Taylor felt elated with himself as he came out of the dressing-room. Elation was in the air. All the Speedlows in the world could not damp it. Thus it was he entered the Rookery, feeling pleased with life in general and Langsdale footer in particular. In his generosity he inquired of Turville where Speedlow was, eager to tell him that the Rangers had been beaten, forgetting in his excitement that Speedlow was not likely to be very interested whether the Rangers had been beaten or whether the Wanderers had been blown sky high for that matter.

"He's in the library, sir," said Turville, lowering his voice. "I don't know what he's doing. I haven't had the nerve to go in there. But I can hear him muttering to himself. Between you and me, sir, I shouldn't wonder if Mr.

Speedlow isn't a bit woozy in the head."

"Woozy?" queried Curly.

"Potty, sir—loony! Every now and then I've heard a thump on the floor, as if he's smashing something."

Curly laughed at the old man's seriousness.

"Why, you're imagining things, Turville!" he chuckled.

"There ain't no imagination about that decanter which the master hurled at me!" he said, jerking his thumb in the direction of the broken decanter that now reposed on the sideboard.

And to Curly, the old servant quickly outlined how that decanter had come to be broken.

Curly listened in amazement.

"The cad!" he said. "Really, Speedlow is the limit! Hallo! What's—"

He broke off and stood listening as there came the sound of something heavy falling on the floor of a room not far away.

"That's him!" said Turville, looking scared. "Sounds as if he's pushed a bookcase over!"

"I'll go and see what's happening," said Curly, knitting his brows.

And, followed by the nervous servant, he strode towards the door of the library. As he stood for a moment hesitating outside he heard for himself the mutterings of his cousin, followed by the rending of paper.

Without further ado Curly thrust open the door of the library and looked in. An astonishing sight met his gaze. The centre of the room was littered with books of all sorts and sizes that had been torn from the shelves of the bookcases ranging the walls of the library. A bookcase, its glass doors smashed to smithereens, rested at an uncertain angle against a pile of classical works that had been the apple of old man Taylor's eye.

And at one end of the room, standing before a range of shelves that had been half denuded of their contents, was Lionel Speedlow, a maniacal light in his eyes. In his hands was a book that he had half torn through, the entry of his cousin having arrested him in his work of destruction.

At sight of Curly, Speedlow's jaw dropped, his eyes opened wide like those of a hunted animal, and then passion surged over him in a terrifying whirl that caused Curly involuntarily to start back.

"You!" screamed Speedlow, his hands working convulsively at the damaged book. "Get out!" His voice rose to a shriek. "Get out, or I'll kill you!"

Speedlow Schemes Revenge!

LIONEL SPEEDLOW looked capable of killing anyone at that moment, but Curly never flinched.

"What's the game, cousin Lionel?" he asked coolly.

"Game?" shrieked Speedlow, foam gathering at the corner of his mouth. "By Harry—"

Before Curly knew what was happening the book Speedlow had been holding flew through the air. It caught Curly full between the eyes and momentarily blinded him. Then, before he could recover from the shock, before the terrified Turville could intervene, Speedlow leapt at his cousin and dragged him to the floor.

Those next few moments Curly was not likely to forget all his lifetime. He seemed as a babe in the savage, maniacal strength of his cousin. And between the blows Speedlow rained upon him came patches of incoherent talk.

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"You'd take it away from me—The book! You young cub— Mine—all mine!"

Curly struggled desperately to shake off the grip his cousin had fastened round his throat, and hit out with all his strength at the rage-distorted face bent above him. But, for once in a way, Speedlow was blind and insensible to pain.

Then it was that Turville recovered his power of movement. With a muffled roar he sprang upon Speedlow's back, and, getting a powerful grip round the younger man's neck, gradually drew his head back. It gave Curly the respite he needed. Those choking fingers relaxed their strangling hold; and, with a desperate push, Curly sent his cousin reeling backwards.

Thud!

As he fell Speedlow's head came into contact with the floor, and he collapsed and lay still.

"Heavens!" quavered old Turville. "He's not—"

Curly sensed the meaning of the unfinished sentence, and bent over his cousin.

"He's all right!" he muttered. "Just partially stunned, I think. But what do you make of it all, Turville? Has he gone potty?"

"Lor' bless me, sir!" answered the old servant, with a shake of the head. "He seemed reg'lar crazy, didn't he?"

"I should leave him to get over it," said Curly, straightening his tie, as Turville knelt down beside his master. "No, no, Turville; do as I say! Let the fellow look after himself. If he found you hanging round when he came to he'd probably bite your head off. Beat it, Turville!"

Washing his hands in invisible soap, the old servant hurriedly withdrew. As a matter of fact, he had no great desire to be near Speedlow when he recovered from that blow on the head—and a memory of the broken decanter helped to speed his aged footsteps below stairs.

When he had gone Curly stood looking down at his cousin, a thoughtful expression upon his clean-cut features.

"Jolly rummy!" he reflected. "Now, what the thump was cousin Lionel looking for? That he was hunting for something is obvious. Why, he's ruined the library!"

But no solution would come to Curly, puzzle his wits as he might; and, with a shrug of the shoulders, he passed out of the room.

It was some five minutes before Speedlow recovered complete consciousness. He sat up and stared about him, in bewilderment. Then memory came back to him with a flood of passionate rage.

He scrambled to his feet and swayed unsteadily.

"The book!" he muttered. "The young hound mustn't get that book!"

He pulled himself up sharp, as though fearing his words might have been overheard. But the house, save for himself, was deserted, Turville having hastened down to the town to interview a friend, whilst Curly, in accordance with a previous arrangement, had decided to give Ferrers Locke a look-in.

Having satisfied himself that the house was deserted, Speedlow immediately made tracks for the study. A small bookcase stood in the corner of the apartment, and with scant ceremony Speedlow tore the books from its shelves and scanned the titles of each volume.

But the book he sought was not amongst the number, and with a muttered curse he retraced his steps to the dining-room. There he poured him-

self out a stiff measure of spirit, and then settled down in the big armchair before the fire.

"What a fool I am!" he muttered thickly. "For all I know that confounded letter might have been a hoax. Bah! I've turned out every blessed book in the house! Someone playing a practical joke, I expect."

But for all these reassuring thoughts, something kept on hammering into Speedlow's brain that the missing book, when found, would reveal all that the writer of the anonymous letter had said.

"If the worst comes to the worst," he muttered moodily, "I'll fire the blessed house! That will settle Mr. Nicholas Nickleby, anyway!"

The idea seemed to please him the more he ruminated upon it, and then his thoughts reverted to the affair of the afternoon—to his unhappy debut amongst the Langsdale folk.

"How I hate them!" he ground out betwixt clenched teeth. "They adore football in Langsdale, do they? Well, I'll teach these Langsdale curs that they can't handle Lionel Speedlow with impunity! I'll pull down their footer! I'll make the name of the club stink in the nostrils of everyone connected with football!"

That vicious thought also helped to restore Lionel Speedlow to a state of good-humour, and then his thoughts fastened on his cousin again.

"And as for that whelp, I'll put him away—"

Of a sudden Speedlow's eyes gleamed cunningly. Prison! Why hadn't he thought of that before? A dose of prison life would knock all the conceit out of his cousin.

And it could be worked. Speedlow knew enough about "frame-ups" to tell him that, properly handled, a charge could be faked for Curly's especial benefit. For a few moments longer Speedlow sat musing before the fire; then, of a sudden, he jumped to his feet.

"I'll trot round and see Marlow," he muttered. "He'll work the trick for me."

The "trot round" meant a journey to London, but that was not sufficient to dismay Lionel Speedlow, for his impetuous nature drove him into action the moment a thing suggested itself as being worth while.

In less than five minutes his two-seater car was snorting outside the garage door; five minutes later and it was racing through the gates at the end of the drive. A beam of light from a street lamp settled for a few seconds on Speedlow's face as the car was swung out on to the London road. The expression on it was one of anticipant triumph that boded ill for the peace of mind of Curly Taylor.

The Anonymous Letter.

"BEATS me, guv'nor!"

The exclamation proceeded from the lips of Jack Drake. Locke's boy assistant was seated before a blazing fire, a scrap of burnt paper in his hand. There was a corkscrew twist in his brows that more than indicated puzzlement.

Ferrers Locke, seated opposite his youthful assistant, nodded grimly.

It was half an hour since he had played the burglar at the Rookery. With all speed he had hastened back to his suite of rooms at the Princes' Hotel—about a quarter of a mile from the Rookery—bent upon reconstructing, if possible, the message which had so alarmed Lionel Speedlow.

"So you can't make any sense of it,

my lad?" he remarked, more to himself than to Drake.

"Only nonsense," replied Drake ruefully, surveying the fragment of paper which contained the following words: "LOOK . . . OF NICHOLAS . . . YOU WILL FIN . . . LEAVING . . . OF THE . . . TO."

"It was a rare pity I didn't get more of that message," said Ferrers Locke, his long tapering fingers beating a tattoo against each other, "for I have not the slightest doubt that the letter, or message, was addressed to Curly Taylor. That it contained some very alarming news was obvious by the general uneasiness of his cousin. I don't trust that fellow Speedlow—"

"Trust him!" exclaimed Drake with some heat. "I should jolly well think not! Personally I wouldn't trust him round the corner with a ha'penny."

"Perhaps I ought to give young Taylor the tip," muttered the detective. "But I rather fancy he will be along shortly."

"Good!" exclaimed Drake. "Perhaps he will be able to help us. I must confess that I can't make much of this message except—"

He paused.

"Except?" said Ferrers Locke gently. "Well, guv'nor, I don't suppose you'd entertain the notion for a moment, otherwise you'd have remarked upon it yourself; but—"

"Except?" repeated the detective, a smile playing at the corners of his mobile lips.

"Except that the message—or what we have of it—gives me the impression of having been written by the merchant who sent Marchant Taylor that cheerful little note announcing his fate."

Ferrers Locke sat bolt upright.

"Give me the letter!"

There was a tense note in his voice which Drake noticed and marvelled at, for Locke seldom allowed emotion of any kind to disturb him.

The torn scrap of paper was given to the detective, and for several minutes dead silence reigned in the room. Then Ferrers Locke looked up.

"Now the letter, that was sent to Marchant Taylor," he said eagerly. "You'll find it in the secret compartment of my razor-case."

Drake rose to his feet with alacrity, some of his chief's enthusiasm spurring him on. He knew the secret compartment in Locke's razor-case—a very simple hiding-place for anything of documentary importance—which the detective often used when travelling.

Inside two minutes Drake had returned to the sitting-room with the required paper.

"Ah!" The moment Ferrers Locke compared the writing of the two missives that ejaculation escaped him.

In formation the printed capitals were exactly the same, the only difference between the two writings lay in the fact that where one was thick and bold the other—the burnt scrap—was thin and spidery.

"My lad, you've hit the right nail on the head," said Ferrers Locke at length.

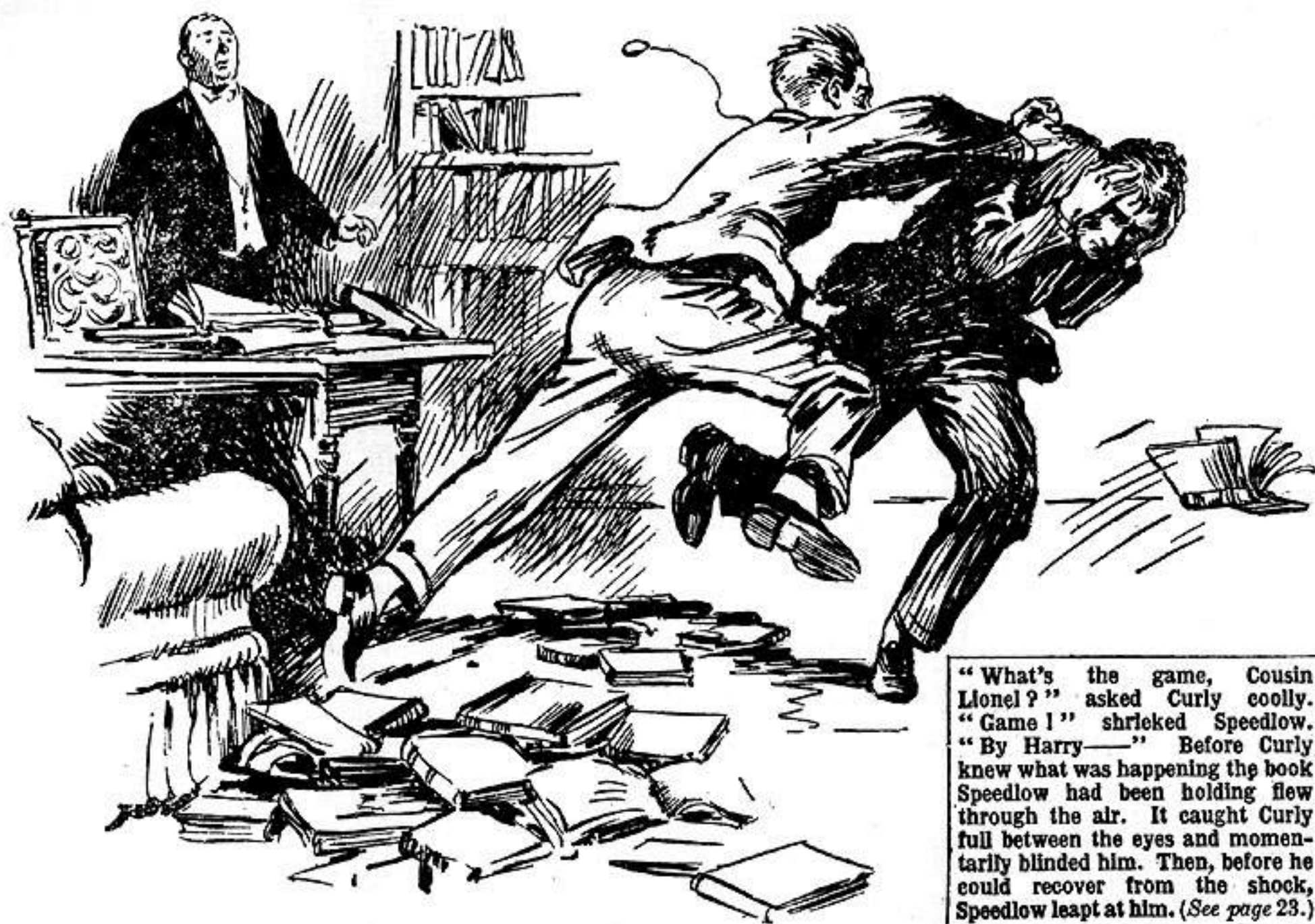
"Then the message might be a warning to Curly Taylor?" said Drake. "The same as his uncle received before he was killed—"

Ferrers Locke shook his head.

"I think not," he replied, and his eyes gleamed strangely. "If I could only learn where the second letter was posted I should have a story that would cause a great sensation."

"Then you think—" began Drake.

Ferrers Locke's reply was, strange to say, the least indicative that he had, perhaps, said more than he intended.



"What's the game, Cousin Lionel?" asked Curly coolly. "Game!" shrieked Speedlow. "By Harry——" Before Curly knew what was happening the book Speedlow had been holding flew through the air. It caught Curly full between the eyes and momentarily blinded him. Then, before he could recover from the shock, Speedlow leapt at him. (See page 23.)

"Nothing!"

"Oh!" Drake's face fell. He knew instinctively that Ferrers Locke had indeed hit upon a likely theory, and the lad was all agog to share it.

Ferrers Locke noticed his assistant's disappointment and smiled.

"All in good time, my lad!" he said gently. "You shall be the first to be let into the secret. This much I will tell you now. The fragment of the message I burgled from Speedlow's house to-night was not—I feel positive on the point—couched in the same tones as the message that seemed to predict Marchant Taylor's end, so you needn't begin to feel worried on young Curly Taylor's account."

"Oh, good!" breathed Drake. "Young Curly's a nice chap. I'd much sooner see him handling the old man's money than that waster Speedlow."

"Perhaps you will—one day," said Locke. "Somehow I think that the broken message, were it made complete, would bring that about."

"Too deep for me," said Drake, with a rueful grin. "I don't get you. Surely you don't mean that the message gave directions as to where another will would be found—a later will leaving the old man's money and estates to young Curly?"

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"'Tis not improbable," he answered.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Drake. "That certainly would account for Speedlow wishing to destroy the message. But it means, too, if we accept the theory, that he will destroy also the will!"

"I must confess that point worries me," said Locke thoughtfully. "But

not unduly. We must keep a close watch on Speedlow from now on. And I'll have a talk with young Curly when he turns up to-night. But for the moment we will endeavour to piece together, from imagination, a message on the lines we have just remarked upon, taking care to fit it with the key words we have on this torn piece of paper."

"Good!" whooped Drake. "Much better than a Cross Word puzzle. Now I have something to work upon."

Detective and assistant drew up their chairs to the table. Before them they placed the torn fragment of the letter which Curly Taylor should have received. And for the next hour they grappled with the task of filling in the missing words.

But the task was more difficult than it looked, and the twain had made little headway when there came a discreet tap at the door. The pageboy entered in answer to Ferrers Locke's invitation, and he presented a visiting card.

"Young Taylor," said Ferrers Locke in an aside to Drake. Then: "Show him up."

The pageboy departed and reappeared within a few moments with Curly Taylor at his heels.

Ferrers Locke rose to his feet with a smile and a greeting. But Curly seemed to be labouring under some excitement, for he paid but a scant heed to either.

"Get it off your chest," said Locke encouragingly as Drake pushed forward a chair for the visitor. "You have some sensational news for me, Curly?"

"I don't know about sensational," replied Curly. "But I have just come from the Rookery, which at the moment seems to house a lunatic."

"Explain!"

Curly drew in a deep breath and got a better grip of himself as he gazed at the reassuring face of the great detective.

"Well, I came home from the match about an hour ago," he said, "and discovered my beautiful cousin turning out the books from the shelves of the library."

"Books!" whooped Drake, his mind fastening on one word in the burnt fragment. "Guv'nor, I've got it!"

Ferrers Locke's eyes glinted.

"Nicholas Nickleby!" he ejaculated.

"That's it, guv'nor!" exclaimed Drake; and Curly Taylor wondered whether he had bumped into another pair of lunatics.

"We must explain," said the detective, reaching for the fragment of the letter. "Drake and I are trying to reconstruct the original text of this letter which was, incidentally, addressed to you——"

"Eh?" Curly Taylor's brows wrinkled in perplexity. "Addressed to me?"

"Exactly! Only cousin Lionel appropriated it this afternoon before you set eyes on it," said Ferrers Locke.

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" ejaculated Curly feebly. "My head's in a whirl with all this! Be easy with me, Mr. Locke, and kindly explain what it's all about."

And Ferrers Locke did.

Curly Taylor listened in growing wonder and interest.

"Then you really think the writer of this letter gave information as to where another will would be found?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 942.

he exclaimed as Ferrers Locke concluded his account of how Speedlow had destroyed the letter.

"I do!"

"But why a will?" asked Curly. "It might have been a message about anything. Again it might be a practical joke on someone's part."

Ferrers Locke chuckled.

"It's no practical joke, my lad," he said. "The writer of that letter is very well disposed towards you—very well disposed. How I reach that conclusion I need not explain at this juncture. But let us take the words on this fragment of the message. It commences with 'LOOK,' is followed by 'OF NICHOLAS,' by 'YOU WILL FIN,' by 'LEAVING,' by 'OF THE,' by 'TO.'"

"Which is all double Dutch to me!" grunted Curly.

"But even from those scattered words we can build up the theory of a fresh will," smiled Locke. "From your own account of what has been going on at the Rookery it is reasonable to assume that 'Nicholas' was originally coupled with 'Nickleby'—one of Dickens' classics."

"My hat! That certainly would account for Cousin Lionel turning out the library," agreed Curly.

"Right, then," said Locke. "Take the words 'YOU WILL FIN.' Obviously, the unfinished word is 'find,' if we accept the first word of the message as being a term of direction."

"I get you!" exclaimed Curly, his eyes lighting up. "I suppose the message began something like this, 'Look for a book by Nicholas Nickleby—'"

"Not quite like that," corrected the detective. "For the message says 'OF NICHOLAS,' which implies something on these lines, 'Look through the volume of Nicholas Nickleby,' or 'Look through the pages of Nicholas Nickleby.' I think the latter is nearer the bullseye. Anyhow, for our purpose, either of those will do. We have made a start. Now, then, accepting this phrase, 'Look through the pages of Nicholas Nickleby,' as being the correct one, and remembering the sense of the phrase, we can, I think, fill in the word 'and' to follow it."

"Which gives us, 'Look through the pages of Nicholas Nickleby, and you

will find—blankety-blank!" said Drake chipping in.

"Exactly!" said Ferrers Locke. "Still, remembering the sense of the theory we have formed," he added, "let us construct still further. We will add the words 'a will,' which is then followed by 'leaving,' again to be followed by an imaginative phrase of 'the entire fortune.' Next we come to the words 'of the.' To them we will add 'deceased Marchant Taylor,' which again fits in with the one remaining word 'to.' After that word we fill in a 'you.'"

While Ferrers Locke was speaking Drake swiftly filled in the blanks of the message which now read as follows:

"LOOK THROUGH THE PAGES OF 'NICHOLAS NICKLEBY' AND YOU WILL FIND A WILL LEAVING THE ENTIRE FORTUNE OF THE DECEASED MARCHANT TAYLOR TO YOU."

Curly Taylor eyed it in great astonishment.

"It certainly reads sensibly enough," he remarked. "My hat! But if it's true that scoundrel Speedlow will have destroyed the will."

"I don't think so," replied Locke thoughtfully, "for from your own statement he attacked you; that he was in a state bordering on frenzy. Both go to prove that he had been disappointed in his search. But you must lose no time in acting upon this information. Do you happen to know where this book, 'Nicholas Nickleby,' is concealed?"

"Not the foggiest idea!" admitted Curly, with some reluctance. "I'm not given to reading a great deal. But, as you say, it could not have been in the library."

"Then you'd better get back to the Rookery without delay and start a search," advised Ferrers Locke. "But cousin Lionel must not be put wise to what you are doing. Just go about the task in a quiet way when he is not about. If I accompany you he might get wind of our intentions despite the fact that, in his own mind, he thinks he has destroyed the message sent to you."

"Right-ho!" agreed Curly, who was now eagerness itself to get back to the Rookery. "But you don't think the whole thing a hoax, do you, Mr. Locke? Remember, we have no signature to tell us from whom it came."

"I know," admitted the great detective; "and I feel confident that no signature was attached to the message. All the same for that, I could tell you now—if it were not inadvisable to do so—the identity of the writer of that message."

Curly Taylor and Drake looked up in astonishment.

"What?" they exclaimed, in unison. "I am not talking through my hat. I assure you," returned Ferrers Locke. "But the name of the writer of the message is my little secret just now. Just bide your time, and you will know all."

It was evident that the great detective regarded that side of the discussion as closed, for he moved doorwards and beckoned Curly towards him.

"Get busy on the job I have set you," he said kindly. "And don't get excited about it. Everything will come right in due course. Good-night, my dear chap, and good luck."

(Continued on page 28.)

"MAGNET" PORTRAIT GALLERY.

No. 25—Harold Skinner (of the Remove.)



Not at all a pleasant character to write about, for Harold Skinner is a mixture of cleverness, cowardice, envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. He is for ever deep in some intrigue to blacken the characters of those who tell him plainly what they think of him. Usually, however, Skinner's plans recoil upon his own head. Possesses a sarcastic tongue which comes into frequent use and which, it must be admitted, carries a nasty sting with it. Is a cartoonist of no mean ability. Exercises an unwholesome influence over the weaker-minded fellows in the Remove, such as Snoop, Stott, Bolsover, Hazeldene, etc., who seem to think that smoking, card playing, and gambling are better forms of amusement than cricket or football. If Skinner employed his talents in the right direction he would make a name for himself—as it is the name he is known by now is the Cad of the Remove.



TWENTY PRIZES A WEEK!

IN addition to the bumper programme of good things for next week, as outlined below, I am introducing a little feature—a sort of competition, delightfully simple and attractive to all—to which I am attaching an offer of Twenty Magnificent Prizes each week. Now these prizes have got to be won, you understand? And you can take it from me they are really worth having. Only one more thing am I going to say in this week's Chat about this little treat, and that is—although the new feature is connected with football, it is not a forecasting competition of match results, or a picture puzzle; it's much easier than either of those. Twenty prizes a week, my lads! That gives a lot of you a chance, doesn't it? Right, then; look out for this new feature next week!

A "MAGNET" LEAGUE!

A request comes from a reader at Rock Ferry for a MAGNET League. I'll admit that the notion is a good one, but unless I receive a few thousand similar requests from my chums, I'm afraid it will have to be shelved. If I ran such a League merely to please a very small minority of my readers it would mean that a certain amount of space now devoted to reading matter or illustrations in the MAGNET would have to be used for League announcements, rules of membership, etc. While doubtless this would please the fellows keen on the League, it would rouse the antagonism and disapproval of those not interested. And my idea always, as you know, is to please the majority. So if any of you chaps are in sympathy with my correspondent at Rock Ferry drop me a line, and we'll see what can be done.

For Next Monday!

"THE FEUD WITH THE FOURTH!"

By Frank Richards.

That's the title of the next grand, long complete story of the Chums of Greyfriars. Cecil Temple, the skipper of the Upper Fourth, thinks it high time his Form took its proper place in junior sports at Greyfriars. This reflection on the lordly Temple's part leads to some friction with Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove. A good story, boys—don't miss it!

THE FOOTBALL SUPPLEMENT.

Already letters are pouring in praising this new venture of Harry Wharton's. Good! I don't like the man who habitually comes out with—"I told you so." Still, an Editor is a privileged person. I knew that supplement would catch on like hot cakes. Look out, boys, for another next week!

"THE CASE OF THE LANGSDALE WANDERERS!"

There will, naturally, be another long instalment of this popular footer and detective story for next week. This is just a reminder that the MAGNET comes out on a Monday. Leave your order until Wednesday, and perhaps your news-agent will say, "Sorry; sold out." Now, don't let that happen. Cheerio, chums!

YOUR EDITOR.

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THE CASE OF THE LANGSDALE WANDERERS!

(Continued from page 26.)

Curly Taylor pressed the hand of the detective warmly, threw a cheery, "So long, old scout!" over his shoulder to Jack Drake, and passed out of the room.

He felt a thrill of satisfaction when, arriving at the house, he saw the open gates of the garage. Lionel's two-seater car was not to be seen—sure sign that Speedlow himself was not at the Rookery.

"Nothing like a good start," muttered Curly, as he keyed himself into the house. "I'll get busy right now."

And get busy he did. But nothing in the shape of the required volume rewarded his labours.

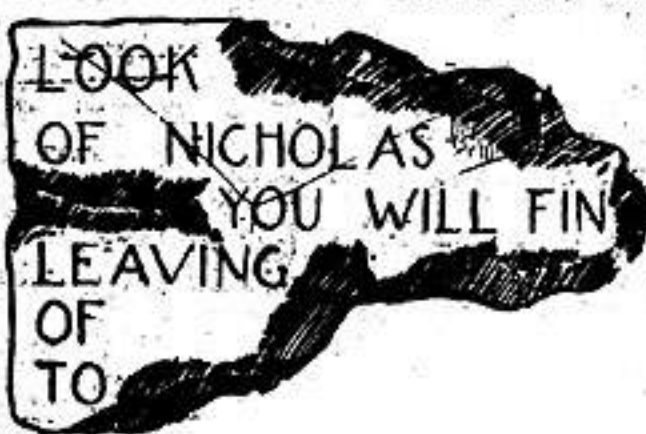
For the next few days Lionel Speedlow was amiability itself to his cousin, which gave that youngster a nasty feeling that something was in the wind. Amiability and Speedlow were never allied, unless it was to someone else's disadvantage and discomfort.

Once and once only did he ever mention the words "Nicholas Nickleby," asking Curly, in a casual

tone, if he had seen the book lying about. Curly had kept a good grip on himself as he replied in the negative. But the query told him plainly enough that Speedlow hadn't found the precious volume.

He had apparently given up the search for the book, choosing to regard the whole affair as a hoax; but Curly, unbeknown to his cousin, persevered in the task—always with the same result. A blank! Really, it seemed that every book which had ever been published had found its way into Marchant Taylor's library or house, with one exception, namely, "Nicholas Nickleby."

At timely intervals between these snatched "searches" Curly informed Ferrers Locke of his non-success; but



the great detective merely advised him to persevere, saying that he felt convinced the writer of the anonymous note knew of its existence in the house. There was an air of mystery about the whole thing, however, that struck Curly with growing force every time he considered it. Who possibly could know of the existence of this book outside old Curville, for he was the only servant Marchant Taylor had ever had with the exception of a cook, who was considered a "daily help."

The more Curly thought about it the more inclined he was to regard it as an ill-timed practical joke himself and with the passing of days his enthusiasm for the search suffered. Apart from the book, too, football occupied a great place in his mind, for everyone knew that Langsdale football was on the change. Now that Speedlow had shown the Langsdale folk exactly the sort of fellow he was, local interest in the luck of the Wanderers was not so strong as before his coming. The pessimists openly prophesied the end of the team as a fighting force, and their pessimism was justified in the next match the Wanderers played.

(There will be some startling situations in next week's thrilling instalment. So don't miss it.)

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GALLACHER the GOAL-GETTER!

By "REFEREE."

A Scottish Youth who has caused some sensations

WE have all heard of Hugh, of course, who has been in the news for some time. I seem to have been hearing of him for the last five years, and always in connection with goals, which, when you come to think of it, you might say is just the connection one should associate with a centre-forward. And Hugh Gallacher is a centre-forward—very much so.

I don't set out to be a football critic— which, perhaps, is just as well for me—but I'm entitled to an opinion. I hope, and I think, that with your permission, I'll set down upon paper, I've seen Gallacher play, and I've enjoyed watching him. I wouldn't call him the greatest centre-forward ever, or even the greatest centre-forward of the present day. But I will say this for him— he's one of the greatest, and could a vote be taken as to the greatest modern centre-forward, I'm willing to wager you'd find Hugh very near the top.

The primary duty of a centre-forward is to score goals, and that's just the thing Hugh does. He does it, too, in a manner that makes goal-scoring look easy. When he's in form he does not score them in ones either. Two is a common bag for him; three is not uncommon, and I have known times when he has scored four, and even five, in a match.

That's leadership for you, if you like. Tip to the end of last year Gallacher had played in seven representative games for Scotland—International and inter-league matches—and in those seven games he had managed to score no less than eleven goals. As a Cup goal-scorer, too, he wants a bit of beating; and as for his League record—well, how does 91 goals for 111 matches sound? For that was the number he netted for the Airtronic while he figured on the old system—most of them scored under the old system, too, when goals were jolly hard to come by.

Both goals and Gallacher begin with a "G," and both are synonymous. If Hugh isn't among the first three of the season, proving goal-scorers at the end of the season, then I'll never venture an opinion again. So much for his net-putting feats. Examining the history of the player himself, we are struck at once by the meteoric rise to fame this goal-scoring ability has gained for him. We can't say a job about his youth, I'm afraid, for the simple reason that there's not much to be told. Such as there is—here goes!

Well, then, you must know that Hugh is twenty-three years of age. He was born in Heshill, a Laneshire town, and there, presumably, found his liking, and developed his inborn talent for the Scotsman's greatest game. As a youth, after playing in many games where goals and goalposts and a slight heap was the pitch, he became attached to Heshill Athletic.

It was here that he started to score goals. Even in those early days he was noticed, and those who saw him always had a good word to say for him. But he did not set out to be a star, and, in fact, won no outstanding junior honours. In 1920-21, however, Queen of the South became interested in young Hugh, and the Queens, seeing that Gallacher was a lad likely to suit them, made up their minds to place him on their books.

St. did you be a Scottish reader you will, of course, know all about Queen of the South. If you belong to this side of the Border the chances are that you will not, for, unfortunately, a great deal of publicity is not given to Scottish Second Division football in our newspapers. But Queens have had almost as rapid a push to the front as Hugh Gallacher, the lad they made. They were a comparatively new club when Hugh joined them, and at the time were making their mark in junior football. Since then

they have won the Scottish Qualifying Cup (1923), and last season won promotion from the Third Division of the Scottish League to the Second Division.

Well, then, Queens signed on Hugh Gallacher, and with Queens Hugh began to develop. He scored goals, he learnt all there was to know about the centre-forward's job that, before the end of one season with his new club, several other and bigger clubs had cast anxious eyes upon him. Among those were the Airtronic, who have made Scottish football history during the last few years. They liked Gallacher from the moment they set eyes upon him.

Therefore, it will come as no surprise to you to learn that in the end they signed Gallacher on. That was in 1921-22; but, being wise, the Airtronic organisation did not find him a place in their First Division eleven immediately, preferring to allow him to develop with the reserves. Only once or twice was young Hugh called upon to take the field with the senior eleven that season, but the displays he gave satisfied everybody that the Airtronic management had picked upon a winner. The following season, however (1922-23), Gallacher came out with a vengeance.

It was largely due to Gallacher's prowess in the goal-scoring department that Airtronic in the season won the Scottish Second Eleven Cup and also the Scottish Alliance Championship. After that, of course, he was made, and from then on became a regular member of the League side. In 1923-24 he was one of the men who so ably assisted Airtronic to win the Scottish Cup and finish as runners-up in the League Championship.

In 1924-25, through Airtronic were knocked out in the Third Round of the Cup, he again had the honour of helping them to finish as runners-up in the League. In addition to this, he had caught the eye of the Scottish International Selection Committee. His first appearance as the leader of his country's forward line came on March 1st, 1924, at Parkhead, Glasgow, when he played against Ireland. The Scots won—doubtless you will remember—and Gallacher, though he did not score himself, earned golden opinions from all who saw him. He has more than vindicated that omission since; for, besides having played for Scotland against England, Ireland, and Wales, he scored five of the eight goals which last season earned Scotland the International Championship.

Oh, yes, a great lad is Gallacher—a lad, if present indications are anything to go by, who is going to become even greater, and who may add an English Cup medal and an English Championship medal to his already crowded case of football trophies. At present, of course, he is scoring goals for Newcastle United, to which team, for a consideration said to be over £5,000, Gallacher was transferred last December. Airtronic didn't want to part with him at the time, but Newcastle were desperately keen.

That was during the big transfer boom of last year, you will remember, when a scandalised sporting Press viewed with dismay the sensational transfers of Scottish players to English clubs, and once again released all the old tripe that has been written about big prices.

The question is, one newspaper wanted to know, is Gallacher worth £5,000? I unhesitatingly answer "Yes." A big club manager once told me this season, if we are to accept that figure, then Gallacher has only to score sixty to reimburse the Newcastle club for their expenditure. He's started, anyway. In his debut against Everton on December 15th he got two; in his second game for his new club against Manchester City he got one. During the Christmas holidays he scored four, and on January 2nd he got four. A good and promising beginning, anyway.

A PEEP at the SPURS

By "PAUL PRY."

(Our Travelling Correspondent.)

ONE of the unsolved mysteries of football is why the Tottenham Hotspur Club is known as "Spurs." Hart Lane, and as always referred to as such. The only thing wrong with the name is that the ground is not at White Hart Lane at all. How, of Hinton, and the Greek—I think it is Greek—probable ever, that is a detail which we can pass over, because the of Frank (who once took a bit of beating. I am not going to say so much—more money in the bank than any other club in the country—that it doesn't matter very much for the matter of it among themselves.

Spurs, ground the other morning I did solve one mystery— "Matt." Forster play the piano. He is very much in why these players of Tottenham Hotspurs are so immaculate. Jimmy Seed is always asked to do sketches of all the people and their kilties from so that they have a cross down at the middle like those now forsores I had five or six years back, and which are not paid for yet!

The secret of the clean shirts and all that sort of thing I connected with the Spurs is that they do their own laundry work on the premises. I know of no other football club which does this, and the reason is not because they have some subtle connection between the fact that the Spurs never have a laundry bill to pay—or any other bill which they can possibly avoid—and the fact that they are the richest club in the country.

First of all, I blew into the billiard-room at White Hart Lane, and found that Spurs officials gave careful consideration to the creature comforts of their players. Indeed, I'm surprised that the Spurs players ever do any other training besides walking round their billiard-room, but they do—our old friend Billy Hunter still sees to that. Tommy Clay is one of the best billiards players on the staff, but he was not playing that morning when I went in; he was trying to impress some of his pals with a very fishy story. In the summer months it is no unusual thing to see Tommy off with his rod and line at six in the morning, and "Pat" McWilliam, the manager, is the only fellow Clay doesn't tell his yarns to. Mac knows too much about fishing himself, you see.

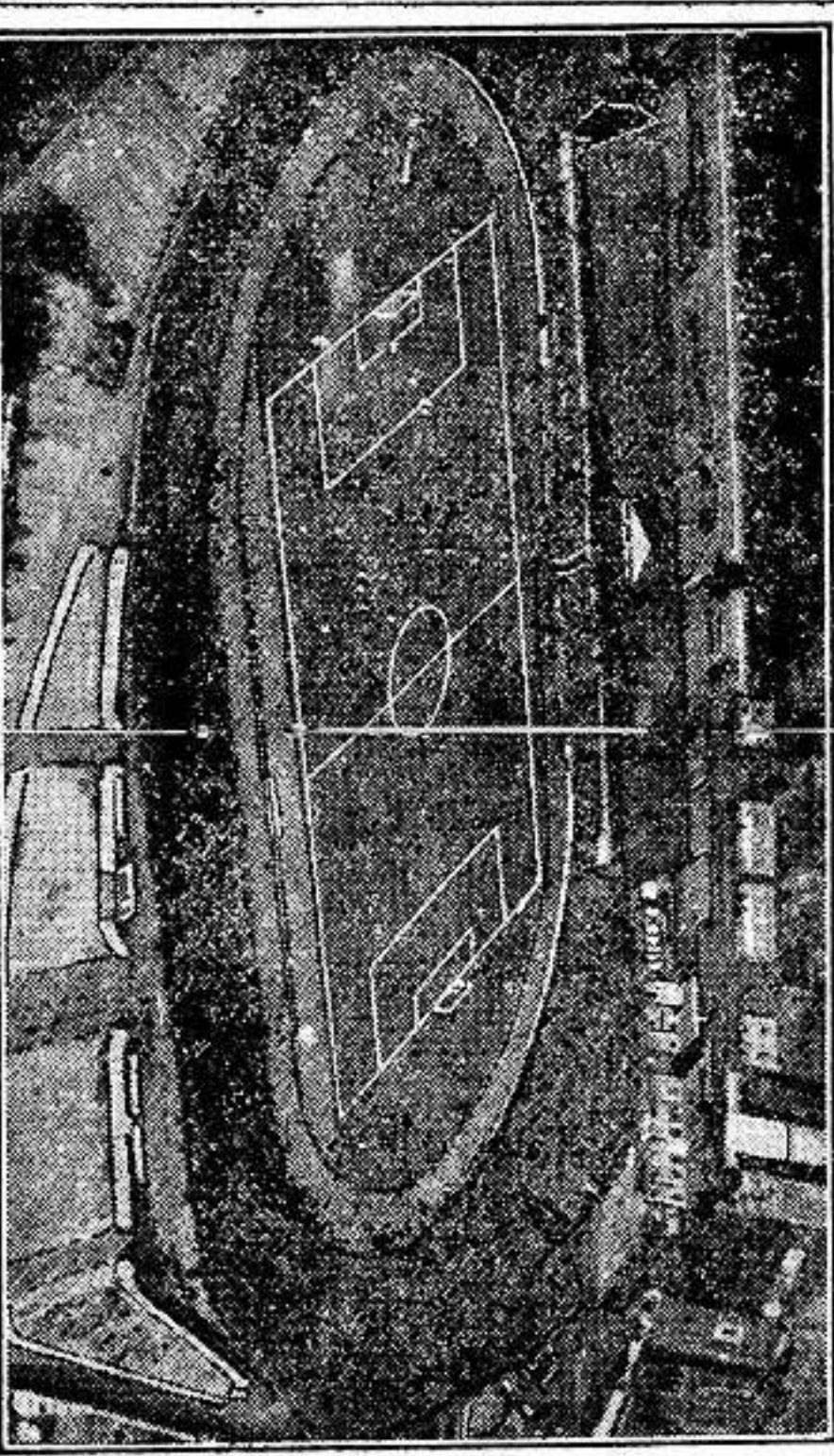
It is just as well that there are some talkers on the staff at Tottenham, for there are some very silent members, too. It is said that the centre-half, Harry Skitt once gave the whole of the players a tremendous shock by speaking one solitary word on the football field, but there is no confirmation of this yet. At least, Skitt himself wouldn't confirm it.

There is very real talent in the Tottenham team, however, and never a dull moment when they are travelling. Goal-keeper Fred Hinton will sing a classic song any time in a nice tenor voice; and incidentally I



JIMMY SEED (As "Seed" by himself.)

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TOO BIG for THEIR SHOES!

The Trouble with Young Footballers is that they think they know Everything

By FRED C. KEENOR,

(The Welsh International Centre-Half of Cardiff City.)



THE other day I was chatting with a friend about the promising players of the present football season, comparing notes as to the players we thought likely to make good. He compiled a list, and I was rather surprised at the number of young and coming players of whom he seemed reasonable to hold high hopes. When we had put down several names, my friend suddenly turned to me with this remark:

"I say, Fred, what happens to all these youngsters who come up so regularly? Every season seems to produce plenty of promising lads, but before they have fully developed they drop back, and nothing more is heard of them."

The remark of my friend set me thinking seriously. It is a fact that every season of this present football season after season find their way into football season after season did fulfil the expectations which they made good in the football world. It is equally true, however, to say that, so far as a fair number of them are concerned, they fade away almost as rapidly as they come to the front. They fail to come anywhere near expectations.

PLENTY OF MATERIAL.

One thing we can say with a fair amount of assurance is that, if the young lads who find their way into football season after season did fulfil the expectations which they made good in the football world. It is equally true, however, to say that, so far as a fair number of them are concerned, they fade away almost as rapidly as they come to the front. They fail to come anywhere near expectations.

There are several possible answers to the foregoing questions. For instance, it might be said—and I think with a certain degree of truth—that some of the failures are due to the fact that the hunt for good men is so desperate. The right sort of material being as scarce as it undoubtedly is, it necessarily follows that clubs are apt to gamble with the lads they do find. They promote them in a hurry, and in a sort of fortune hope that they will make good in the best class of football. Here and there these men who jump from obscurity to fame in a night, as it were, stick it. But the great majority of them don't, and it is my opinion that a proportion fail because they are not ready. Being unready, they get downhearted and disappointed.

A FATAL MALADY.

So far as my experience goes, however, I think there is a deeper reason for the fact that the lads do not all develop as they are expected to do. This reason is that they very rapidly get too big for their shoes. I know plenty of lads who have got into first-class football around the age of twenty. They have been promising lads, too, possessed of a certain amount of footballing instinct. Alas! far too many of them have suffered from that terrible malady which is best described by the words "swelled head."

They have acted as though, once having got into a first-class side, they know everything there is to know about the game. They will

scarcely listen to the advice of those who have been much longer in football, and the result is that, instead of progressing, they stand still.

SPOILED BY HIS FRIENDS.

I am not just merely giving these lads a good talking, as it were, because I can quite understand them. They spring up like mushrooms in the night, and wake to find themselves famous. They are popular heroes, and every man they know—and many they don't know—is ready to take them by the hand. But many of the so-called friends of the footballer do not lead him the right way. On the contrary, they tempt him to drink out late, perhaps to have more to drink than is good for any young lad who wants to get on in football with the result that the youth can't stand the hurry-burry. His head is turned. He is the great "I am."

THE EXAMPLE OF MEREDITH.

Personally, I am always very sorry when I see young lads going that way, and I should like to refer them to the greatest footballer ever produced by my native country of Wales. I refer, of course, to "Billy" Meredith. Meredith was a great natural footballer; but, as he will tell you, he owed a great amount of his continued success in the game to the fact that he was always ready to learn. I remember talking to Meredith some little time back, and this is what he said: "I wish I could do some tricks I should still like to practise and to perfect myself in." When Meredith used those words he was nearly fifty, and had been an acknowledged master of the game for thirty years. The man who thinks that at the age of twenty-two he knows everything about football is riding for a fall. The man who is always trying to learn new tricks, to perfect the old ones, who is ready and willing to put in a bit of extra practice instead of trying to dodge the practice which is arranged for him, is the player who is going to develop.

THE LAD WHO GETS ON.

After all, the young players of to-day have a much better chance than the young players of previous generations. Practically all the big clubs have their expert coaches nowdays—men who know the game, and are ready to teach the youngsters in the right way. I know that there are limits to what can be taught; but, on the other hand, I have come across plenty of youngsters who failed to make good because they considered that they knew better than the men whose business it was to teach them. There is just one thing more I would say to the players who decline to learn—who think they know everything. It is this: The heroes of the football field are only heroes so long as they are successful. Remember that, you lads. It is a sobering thought.

"When I was quite a boy," says Steve Bloomer, "I was always impressed with the teaching that, if you found a centre-half, you could build a team round that one good player; and if you were lucky enough to have a brilliant centre-half and a brilliant centre-forward—well, the rest of the team didn't matter so much."

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