

YOU CAN'T BEAT THESE SCHOOL STORIES, BOYS!

The Magnet

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2nd

NOW
EVERY
SATURDAY.



BUNTER, THE BILK, IS BOOKED FOR TROUBLE!

(A diverting incident from the long complete school story inside.)



Notes of interest
concerning—

Portsmouth
the team that gained
promotion to the First
Division last season.

"O H, it's a sailor's life for me!" That is the song which the lads of Portsmouth are supposed to sing, for Portsmouth, as possibly you have been told at school, is a "naval port." There were some lads at Portsmouth last season who sang a different chorus though: "It's a First League life for us." They meant it, too.

Nobody expected them to sing a song on that line, of course. These lads who were the shirts of "Pompey"—that's a slang phrase which is used in connection with the club, and I use it because I don't know why it is used—just came along like, shall we say, a thief in the night and stole into the First Division. Thereby, of course, they carved for the town of Portsmouth a unique place in football history. They are the only club with its home on the south coast which has ever got into the First Division of the Football League. Incidentally, certain northern people, who think that all the good footballers are connected with northern clubs, were a bit annoyed.

A Narrow Margin!

Especially were the good folk connected with the Manchester City club annoyed. The last match of the season had been played. Manchester City had beaten Bradford City by eight goals to none, and the supporters of Manchester City were cheering loudly because they thought that the huge victory had given the side promotion. Then came a blow from the Navy—an eighteen-inch explosive, as we might call it—in the shape of news that Portsmouth had won their last match by five goals to one. And when the good people of Manchester had worked it out with pencil and paper, with the aid of one or two expert mathematicians, they discovered that it was Portsmouth and not Manchester City who had won promotion. And the margin in favour of the Navy was one two-hundredth part of a goal. That was cutting it fine, but the effect is just the same whether promotion is won with a ten points margin or on goal-average only—the

club goes into the top section. Whether it stays there depends on the players of the club. Personally, having run the rule over these Portsmouth players, I should say back the Navy every time.

Now let us talk about the men who put the Pomp in Pompey. Economy in the use of players is the strong suit at Portsmouth. No less than seven players of the side appeared in every League match last season, and the same team which won promotion was considered good enough to start in the top class. That's the right sort of confidence. Of course, they aren't sailors really; most of them are just canny Scots—canny, that is, in the footballing sense.

There is goalkeeper David McPhail. He comes from Cambeltown—the first of the Scots. They didn't find him ready-made, but he has either made himself or they have made him at Portsmouth into one of the best.

The No-Change Trio!

Another player who was "made" at Portsmouth is George Clifford, the right full-back. He was one of those who never missed a match last season. He got into the team just over a couple of years ago when some important Cup-ties against Blackburn Rovers were on

hand, and since then nobody has been able to move him.

The other full-back is Jack McColgan. Yes, you are right—he is Scotch! Here is a good story about him. One day Newcastle United sent a man to watch McColgan play for Albion Rovers. As it happened, Jack wasn't playing that day, and Newcastle forgot about him for a fortnight. They only remembered him when they heard that he had signed for Portsmouth. That was four or five years ago, and a fine fellow he has been ever since.

I have already told you about Portsmouth's ever-resents of last season who are doing so well in their new sphere. Well, all the three half-backs were included in the number. That was another record. I cannot remember any side going through a whole season in first-class football without having to make a change in the middle trio. The three are Reg Davies, who came from Mansfield; Harry Foxall, who went to Fratton Park—that is where Portsmouth play—from Merthyr Town; and Willie Moffatt, from Bellshill.

Foxall is the captain of the good ship Pompey, and a worthy skipper, too.

(Continued on page 24.)

THE PRIDE OF POMPEY!



Left to right (top): Clifford, McPhail, McColgan; (centre) Mackie, Davies, Foxall (capt.), Moffatt, Watson; (bottom): Forward, Haines, Cook.

WHEN THE CAT'S AWAY THE MICE PLAY! In the absence of Harry Wharton, captain of the Remove, Harold Skinner tries a wheeze to get even with his old enemy. But Skinner's very cleverness proves his own undoing!



A Rousing Long Complete School Story of Harry Wharton & Co., dealing with their return to Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Orders to Quit!

"**A** NYHOW, we're here!" said Harold Skinner. Frederick Stott and Sidney James Snoop assented to that remark.

It was not to be denied: they were there. That was a fact.

"There" was No. 1 Study in the Remove at Greyfriars School.

That study belonged—or had belonged—to Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, of the Greyfriars Remove.

Now it belonged to Skinner & Co.—in the firm opinion of Skinner & Co., at least.

There they were; and there Wharton and Nugent were not! If possession, as the proverb states, is nine points of the law, then nine points of the law were in favour of Harold Skinner and his friends.

"They'll kick up a fuss!" remarked Snoop.

"Let 'em!"

"They'll be back to-day, you know," said Snoop.

In spite of the nine points of law in favour of the new owners of No. 1 Study, Sidney James Snoop seemed slightly uneasy.

"I know! Let 'em come back! Fellows who want to bag a study should turn up on the first day of term."

"That's right!" agreed Stott. "It's understood that a fellow has his last term's study; but he's bound to claim it on the opening day. That's always been the rule."

"And a jolly good rule, too," said Skinner. "Wharton and his friends, for reasons only known to themselves, have snuck out their vacation till we're three weeks on in the term. We were here on the first day, and we bagged this study. What could be fairer?"

"Hear, hear!"

"They can have Study No. 11," said

Skinner. "We've left it empty for them. This is a better study. All the more reason why we should have it."

"Oh, come off!" said Stott. "The studies are much of a muchness. We've bagged it to take a rise out of the captain of the Form."

"Don't talk like that outside the study, Stott!" said Skinner unpleasantly. "It sounds unscrupulous. And we—"

The door of No. 1 Study flew open. Sampson Quincy Ifley Field, generally known in the Remove as Squiff, because life was short, looked in, with his cheery face.

"You fellows still here?" he asked.

"Naturally, we're in our own study!" answered Skinner airily.

"Wharton's study, you mean."

"Not the least little bit in the world," said Skinner. "If Wharton and Nugent wanted the study this term, they were bound to claim it first day."

"You know the rule, Field!" grinned Snoop.

The Australian junior nodded.

"Wharton and his friends were prevented from joining up first day of term, as you jolly well know," he answered; "they've been to the South Seas."

"The Southend Seas, you mean?" asked Skinner; and Snoop and Stott chuckled.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Squiff. "I know the rule, but there are exceptions to all rules. Fellows who go down to the Pacific for their hols are liable to get back a bit late for term. From what I've heard, they were wrecked in the South Seas."

"Collision with the pier, or something?" asked Skinner.

Again Snoop and Stott contributed a chuckle.

For some days, since it was known at Greyfriars that the schoolboy treasure-seekers had landed in England

after their long voyage to the South, there had been much excitement in the Greyfriars Remove on the subject.

It was very unusual for a whole bunch of fellows in one Form to return to school after the vacation three weeks late. That alone drew the general attention of Greyfriars to Harry Wharton & Co.

All sorts of stories were current in the Remove concerning their adventures under the Southern Cross. They had been seeking a pirate's treasure—they had been wrecked on a coral island—they had been fighting cannibals—they had found sea-chests stacked with pieces of eight—they had been through all sorts of wonderful experiences—and the Remove fellows were keen to hear the true story from their own lips.

Skinner, who prided himself on never believing anything, declined to believe a word of it.

According to Skinner, the South Sea story was "gammon" from beginning to end; and the chums of the Remove had never been farther than a well-known seaside resort within the borders of their native land.

It was just like Skinner to take that view.

Half a dozen fellows in the Remove had received letters from the returned juniors, telling a good deal of the voyage to the South; but that made no difference to Skinner. He persisted in his view that it was all "gammon," and that the South Sea yarn was all moonshine.

"I believe I've heard something about that wreck," went on Skinner, in his airy way. "Friend of mine sent me a Southend paper."

"Oh, don't be a goat!" said Squiff.

"So far as I remember, it was a collision with the pier at Southend," said Skinner. "As for the cannibals, I

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think that's an exaggeration. There aren't any cannibals at Southend."

"Look here, are you getting out of this study?" demanded Squiff.

"Out of our own study?" asked Skinner, raising his eyebrows. "Why should we?"

"It's Wharton's study, you outsider!"

"Your mistake! It was Wharton's study last term," said Skinner, in a tone of patient explanation. "This term it is our study."

"We claimed it first day of term," said Snoop. "Nobody else claimed it, and we had it."

"Nobody else was cad enough to bag a fellow's study, because the chap was kept away by accident," said Squiff hotly.

"We're not responsible for their accidents," said Skinner. "They should have been more careful of the pier."

"Oh, cheese it! Are you clearing out of this study? The fellows are coming back this afternoon, and Wharton will expect his study."

"Blessed are those who don't expect!" remarked Skinner. "They never get disappointed, you know."

"Then you're not shifting?"

"Not quite."

"I put it to you as a decent chap," said Squiff quietly. "You've got your own study. You've only bagged this one to take a rise out of Wharton. Go back to your own quarters, and don't have any unpleasantness on the day the fellows get back to Greyfriars."

"Nice afternoon, isn't it?" said Skinner, with a glance at the window.

"Eh?"

"They've got a pleasant day for their journey down," said Skinner affably. "I'm so pleased."

Squiff breathed hard.

"Will you clear out of this study, Skinner?"

"Ask me again at Christmas, old bean!"

"You won't shift?"

"No."

"Then," said Squiff emphatically, "you'll be shifted."

"Dear me!" said Skinner. "And who will shift us?"

"I'll come along with a few friends, and we'll shift you fast enough. Your things will be chucked after you, if you don't go."

"Isn't that rather high-handed?" yawned Skinner.

"It's what you'll get if you don't do the decent thing and shift out of Wharton's study!" answered Squiff. "Mind, I mean business. We'll give you till three o'clock to shift; after that, if you're still here, it will be the order of the boot, and plenty of boot, if you raise objections."

"Shut the door after you!" said Skinner, with undiminished politeness. Slam!

Squiff shut the door after him emphatically, and the slam rang from one end of the Remove passage to the other.

"What a life!" sighed Skinner. "Looks to me as if we're goin' to have a little excitement this afternoon—a really enjoyable half-holiday! Hard cheese that peaceable fellows can't be left in peace in their own study! But we're sticking up for our rights."

And Snoop and Stott nodded assent. The three black sheep of the Remove were going to stick up for their rights—such as they were.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Row in the Remove!

MR. QUELCH, the master of the Remove, sat in his study. On that pleasant October afternoon, freed from the cares of his class and at liberty to devote his attention to his celebrated "History of Greyfriars," Mr. Quelch might have been expected to look genial and agreeable. Instead of which, Mr. Quelch was looking quite cross.

Seven members of Mr. Quelch's Form had not joined up at Greyfriars School at the beginning of term.

As the Remove was a numerous Form, and Mr. Quelch generally had his hands full with them, it might have been supposed that he would not have missed the absentees—especially as one of them was the Bounder, the most troublesome fellow in the Remove, and another Billy Bunter, the laziest fellow at Greyfriars or in the wide world. But the Remove master, if he did not exactly miss the seven, was annoyed by their absence. Seven fellows who prolonged their summer vacation by several weeks were seven fellows with whom Mr. Quelch was certain to wax wrathful.

No doubt Harry Wharton & Co. had travelled to strange regions in that summer holiday—they had explored strange seas and lands, and had been wrecked on a Pacific island. But there was no reason, so far as Mr. Quelch could see, why they should have gone to the Pacific Ocean at all. Certainly they should not have gone if they had not been absolutely assured of returning in time for the new term at their school.

So far from returning in time, they were nearly three weeks late! A cable had been received by the Head from Mr. Vernon-Smith from far across the round globe, announcing that unavoidable delays had arisen. Dr. Locke had seemed satisfied. Mr. Quelch was far from satisfied. Obviously—from a Form master's point of view—there was nothing so important as turning up at school for the first day of term. In case of illness, of course, allowances had to be made, and in case of accidents. A few days' grace might be allowed in special cases. But three weeks! Mr. Quelch could not help feeling it as a personal slight upon himself.

It was just as if these seven fellows did not understand in the least the importance of the instruction they were wont to receive from their Form master—or, still worse, did not value it! Here was Mr. Quelch on duty at Greyfriars, charged with valuable knowledge like a battery with electricity—and there were the graceless seven, far from school, scampering over the earth's wide surface, regardless of what they were missing.

Hence the frown on the brow of Henry Samuel Quelch as he sat in his study. Bunter and the Famous Five were coming to Greyfriars that day, but even yet Herbert Vernon-Smith was not coming. No doubt the millionaire's son supposed that he could deal with his Form master as he liked, was Mr. Quelch's reflection.

Harry Wharton & Co. had a crowd of friends in their Form who were all greatly excited about their return, quite enthusiastic about it. Mr. Quelch did not share that enthusiasm in the very least. His reception of the late-comers was likely to be of the very chilliest description. He could not quite understand why the Head did not feel annoyed. Still, that did not matter, as Mr. Quelch felt annoyed enough for two. Tap!

"Come in!" snapped Mr. Quelch, as

the tap came at his door. He did not know at what time the late-comers were arriving, and he supposed that the tap meant that they had arrived and were coming to their Form master's study to report themselves.

But it was Skinner of the Remove who entered.

Mr. Quelch glanced at him coldly.

Skinner was the member of his Form whom he liked and trusted least. He had ample reason for not liking and not trusting a fellow who was as tricky as a monkey, and who had a sharpness and a cynicism far beyond his years. But Skinner's manner now was exceedingly respectful.

"What is it, Skinner?" asked Mr. Quelch briefly.

"If you please, sir, about my study," said Skinner.

"Well?"

"My friends and I took Study No. 1 at the beginning of the term, sir," said Skinner. "You were kind enough to allow us to do so."

"Well?"

"I hear now, sir, that some fellows who used to have the study are coming back. I thought they'd left Greyfriars, as they've been so long away; but I hear now that they are coming back."

Skinner knew by the glint in Mr. Quelch's eyes that he had touched the right chord.

"Well?" said Mr. Quelch, for the third time.

"Well, sir, we've made ourselves at home in the study, and we're settled down there, and we want to keep the room," said Skinner. "It doesn't seem fair to me to have to turn out because fellows who have chosen to stay away almost to the middle of the term choose to come back unexpectedly like this."

"Certainly not!" said Mr. Quelch. "There is no reason whatever why you should give up the study, Skinner, unless you choose."

"Thank you, sir."

"It is a rule that any study may be chosen on the first day of term," said Mr. Quelch. "Any boy who does not arrive on the due date, naturally, loses his choice."

"Then we can't be turned out, sir?" asked Skinner meekly.

"Certainly not."

"I—I'm afraid Wharton won't agree to that, sir."

Again Skinner had touched the right chord—and touched it hard. Mr. Quelch's lips set.

"Wharton will scarcely set himself up against the authority of his Form master, Skinner. You may tell him what I have said on the subject, and if he should be so ill-advised as to oppose my commands I shall deal with the matter personally."

"May I tell the other fellows, sir?"

"Certainly!"

"Thank you so much, sir!"

And Skinner withdrew meekly.

At the corner of Masters' Passage, Snoop and Stott were waiting for him. They looked at him inquiringly; and Skinner gave them a cheery grin.

"Right as rain!" he said. "I know how to pull the old scout's leg. I know he was waxy about the fellows staying away so long. The study's ours, my infants, and if there's any trouble Quelch will come down on our side."

"Wharton will cut up rusty," remarked Stott.

"Let him! He can't back up against Quelch."

"The fellows are jawing it over in the Rag," said Snoop.

"Let 'em jaw!"

Skinner & Co. strolled round to the Rag. The doorway of that apartment

was open, and they glanced in. Most of the Lower Fourth Form of Greyfriars seemed to be assembled there, and Sampson Quincy Ifley Field was mounted on the long table, addressing the meeting.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows," said Squiff, "I put it to you—are those worms going to be allowed to bag Wharton's study?"

"No!" roared a dozen Removites.

"The fellows are coming back this afternoon. Nobody thought of bagging Bob Cherry's study, or Bunter's, or Johnny Bull's. Are Wharton and Nugent going to be boosted out of their quarters?"

of feet in the Remove passage. The many footsteps stopped outside Study No. 1, and there was a shove at the door.

The door opened an inch or so, and jammed on the chair-back, and remained fast.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

"Open this door, Skinner!" said Tom Brown.

"Please don't make a noise, you fellows," answered Skinner gently.

"We're swotting."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"We're going it rather hard at Latin,"

Bang! Bump! Thump!

"Bust the door in, you fellows!" said Peter Todd. "There's only a chair against it; I've bagged the key. Put your shoulders to it and shove."

Outside the study half a dozen Removites put their shoulders to the door. The strain on the door was terrific, and it creaked and groaned, and the chair gave loud squeaks of complaint. Stott looked grim, and Snoop uneasy; but Harold Skinner still smiled cheerily.

Crash!

The chair gave way at last and spun across the study, in a legless condition. The door flew open and a crowd of the Remove rushed in.

Harold Skinner was grasped in a pair of strong arms and whirled unceremoniously from the study. Next minute all sorts and conditions of articles followed him, and there was a loud clattering and crashing as they landed around the cad of the Remove. (See Chapter 3.)



"Never!"

"Well, Skinner says he's not going to shift."

"We'll shift him!" said Mark Linley.

"Hear, hear!" bawled Tom Brown.

"Have 'em out of it!" shouted Ogilvy.

"Yaas, begad!" said Lord Mauloverer.

"I'll lend a hand, dear men. Boot 'em out neck and crop!"

Skinner smiled at his companions. Stott looked rather dubious, and Snoop decidedly uneasy. But Skinner was full of confidence and assurance.

"Let's get up to the study," murmured Skinner. "We'd better be on the scene when these lawless fellows try to invade our room and deprive us of our rights."

"But, I say—" murmured Snoop.

"No need to say anything—just come on!"

Skinner led the way up the Remove passage. It was rather unusual for three fellows to spend a sunny half-holiday in a study, and if Skinner & Co. ever did so it was for the purpose of playing banker or smoking cigarettes. On the present occasion, however, Skinner & Co. ensconced themselves in their quarters and took out their books and spread them about the table, to give Study No. 1 a studious appearance, calculated to have its effect upon Mr. Quelch, if he was drawn to the spot by a shindy. Mr. Quelch could not fail to be pleased if he observed that the three idlest slackers in his Form were putting in a little extra work on a half-holiday of their own accord. Skinner hooked the back of a chair under the door-handle to secure the door. The key had already been abstracted by some unsympathetic hand.

Five minutes later there was a tramp

said Skinner. "Can't you go farther along the passage if you want to kick up a row?"

"Swotting? You! Cheese it!" shouted Squiff. "You're coming out of that study!"

"Why should we come out of our own study?"

"We've had that. Cheese it! Come out!"

"Si vero solem ad rapidum lunasque—" said Skinner aloud, in a pondering tone. "I say, these Georgics are rather stiff. But keep at it, you chaps. A fellow must work sometimes."

Thump! Bang! Crash!

"Are you coming out?" roared Squiff.

"Sequentis ordine respicies," went on Skinner, in the same tone.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Mr. Quelch Comes Down Heavy!

"HAVE 'em out!" "Shift 'em!"

"Outside, you rotters!" The three studious youths at the table jumped up. Snoop backed into a corner and Stott clenched his fists. Skinner stood with his hands in his pockets.

"You fellows will bring Quelch up here," he said. "He's bound to have heard that fearful row."

"Outside!"

"Rats!" said Skinner cheerily.

"Chuck them out!" said Peter Todd. "Kick 'em as they go. Kick 'em every

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time you see 'em near the study after this!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I—I say, I'm going!" stammered Snoop. "I—it was only a lark, really. I don't want to bag Wharton's study."

"Funk!" sneered Skinner.

"Kick him out!" said Toddy. And Sidney James Snoop was promptly kicked out, and departed yelling.

"Now then, Stott—"

"Shan't go!" said Stott defiantly. Frederick Stott was made of sterner stuff than Snoop.

Five or six hands grasped Stott, and, struggling fiercely, he was hurled into the Remove passage. There five or six boots helped him along the passage, and he went, roaring.

"Skinner—last, but not least!" grinned Squiff.

Skinner dodged.

"I'll walk out, thanks!" he said coolly. "I protest against this—"

"Protest as much as you like, but get out!" said Peter Todd.

And Skinner walked out, and gave a wild howl as a boot landed behind him and helped him through the doorway.

"Yaroooh!"

"Kick him along the passage."

Skinner fled for his life.

"Now chuck out their rubbish," said Peter Todd. "We want to have the study clear for our pals when they get here."

"Yaas, begad!" said Lord Mauleverer.

All sorts and conditions of articles followed Skinner & Co. into the passage. There was a sudden yell from Russell.

"Cave!"

"Quelch!" gasped Bolsover major.

And the juniors in the passage disappeared, as if by magic.

But it was too late for the fellows inside the study to disappear. There were half a dozen of them, and they were cornered. In the doorway of Study No. 1 appeared the majestic and frowning face of Henry Samuel Quelch, master of the Remove. He stood there amid the heap of property that had been hurled out of the study.

The expression on his speaking countenance had a dashing effect on the spirits of the Removites. There was a sudden silence in the study, and they gazed at Mr. Quelch, in the doorway, as Priam of old might have gazed upon the startling figure that drew his curtains at dead of night.

"What does this mean?"

Mr. Quelch's voice was not loud, but deep—very deep.

Nobody answered. Every fellow in the study seemed rather anxious not to draw Mr. Quelch's special attention upon himself.

"What are you doing here, Field?"

Squiff coughed uneasily.

"We—we're getting the study ready for Wharton, sir," he stammered.

"Wharton's coming back to-day, sir."

"Putting it tidy, sir, ready for Wharton and Nugent," ventured Toddy.

"This is Skinner's study," said Mr. Quelch.

"Hem!"

"It was Wharton's study last term, sir," said Toddy boldly.

Mr. Quelch froze him with a glance.

"Skinner, and Snoop, and Stott have taken this study, with my full permission," he answered. "You are aware of that."

"Hem!"

"Field, Todd, Ogilvy, Mauleverer, Brown, and Hazeldene, you will take two hundred lines each for this riot."

"Oh!"

"You will immediately replace every

article you have removed from the study."

"Oh!"

"You, Todd, go immediately and request Skinner, Snoop, and Stott to return here."

Peter Todd seemed transfixed for the moment. Mr. Quelch's eyes glittered at him.

"Do you hear me, Todd?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Toddy.

"Then obey me at once."

Toddy almost limped from the study. Mr. Quelch made a gesture, and Squiff & Co. began, in grim silence, to pick up the things they had pitched out of the study and carry them in again. Their faces were black; but the authority of the Form master was not to be questioned. In the Greyfriars Remove Mr. Quelch's word was law.

The property of Skinner & Co. had been restored by the time those three agreeable youths returned with Peter Todd.

Mr. Quelch glanced at them.

"I understand that you three boys wish to retain possession of this study," he said. "You have my full permission to do so. In the event of your being disturbed again in this riotous way, all offenders will be reported to the headmaster for a flogging."

"Thank you, sir," said Skinner meekly.

Mr. Quelch left the study. The "rioters" had already disappeared, with the exception of Toddy. He lingered to tell Skinner & Co. what he thought of them before he went.

"You worms!" said Toddy, in the doorway, as Mr. Quelch sailed majestically towards the stairs.

Skinner winked at him cheerily.

"You cads!" hissed Peter.

Skinner smiled broadly.

"You sneaking, cringing worms!" roared Peter.

"Todd!" It was Mr. Quelch's voice.

"Oh dear!" gasped Peter, spinning round. Mr. Quelch had tacked, so to speak, and was sailing back from the stairs.

"Did I hear you apply opprobrious epithets to these boys, Todd?"

"Oh, yes sir!"

"I thought so," said Mr. Quelch. "You will follow me to my study, Todd."

"Oh dear!"

Peter Todd limped down the Remove staircase after his Form master. Skinner smiled pleasantly at his study-mates.

"Looks like our win!" he yawned. "I fancied we should pull it off. What a pleasant surprise for dear old Wharton, when he comes, to see us fixed up here so comfortably."

A few minutes later Peter Todd came back to the Remove passage. He came wriggling almost like a centipede.

"How many?" asked Squiff sympathetically.

"Ow! Six! Wow!"

"What about ragging those rotters now Quelch is gone?"

"No jolly fear!" said Peter Todd promptly. "Six is enough for me! I'm no hog; I know when I've had enough. Wow! Wow!"

And Peter limped away dismally to Study No. 7; and in Study No. 1 Skinner smiled cheerily. The ownership of Study No. 1 was settled now; the Form master's authority was indisputable. If Harry Wharton, when he arrived, made a fuss about it, Harry Wharton would find himself up against Mr. Quelch; and that was a prospect very agreeable to Skinner. He felt that he was entitled to smile, and he smiled.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Back to Greyfriars!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry.

He greeted Billy Bunter with a smack on his fat shoulder, which elicited a wild howl from Bunter.

"Yaroooh!"

Bob Cherry, at all events, had not left his exuberant spirits behind him in the South Seas.

Brown as a berry, and the picture of health, Bob looked as if he were thoroughly enjoying life—as indeed he was.

His comrades looked merry and bright also.

Harry Wharton and Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, certainly appeared none the worse for their perilous voyagings under the blazing sun of the southern hemisphere.

Probably the Famous Five of the Remove would have been willing to prolong their voyaging a little more, and return to Greyfriars at the half-term, or even at the following term. Still, they had had two or three weeks over the usual "hols," and they were satisfied. It could not be said that they were yearning to return to mathematics, Latin, French, and the rest of the valuable curriculum at their old school. But Greyfriars had other attractions; they looked forward to seeing all the fellows again. And, anyhow, they had to return, and the Famous Five were the fellows to take what had to be with cheery tolerance.

So there they were on the platform at Courtfield Junction, waiting for the local train to carry them on to Friar-dale and the school. And there William George Bunter, alighting from an express to catch the same local train, found them. All the fellows had had a few days at home after returning from their exciting cruise in the Pacific; though undoubtedly Mr. Quelch would have considered it more seemly on their part to catch the very first train for Greyfriars.

Bunter rolled up at once, and was greeted as aforesaid; and he spent the next few minutes in gasping and rubbing his shoulder. Bob Cherry's exuberance, at close quarters, was sometimes a little disconcerting. Then Bunter told Robert Cherry what he thought of him.

"You fatheaded hooligan——"

"What?" ejaculated Bob.

"You've knocked my shoulder nearly out of joint!" roared Bunter.

"All serene, old fat pippin; I'll give you a knock on the other shoulder, and set it right again," said Bob cheerily.

Bunter jumped back.

"Keep off, you howling ass!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, I'm glad to see you again," said Bunter, with a wary eye through his big spectacles at the exuberant Bob.

"The gladfulness of our esteemed selves is also terrific, my esteemed and idiotic Bunter," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh politely.

"Hasn't Smithy turned up?" asked Bunter.

"He's coming back a bit later, I heard," answered Harry Wharton.

"And that chap Redwing——"

"He will be coming along with Smithy."

"Bit thick, that sailorman fellow shoving into Greyfriars again, what?" said Bunter, blinking at the Famous

Five. "I'm rather surprised that the Head consented. What do you fellows think?"

"I think you're a fat idiot," answered Harry.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"I think you're a silly snob," said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"I think you're a footling fathead!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"I think you ought to be kicked!" said Nugent.

"Look here——"

"My own esteemed thankfulness is that the esteemed Bunter is a fat and ludicrous worm!" said Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky——"

And the Famous Five, having stated what they thought, walked along the platform as if already fed-up with the fascinating society of William George Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove rolled after them.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Johnny Bull.

"What are you getting waxy about?" demanded Bunter. "You can't expect a fellow of my connections to be pleased at a common fellow like Redwing being admitted to my school. Still, I shall be civil to the fellow. I shall take some notice of him. But never mind Redwing; and don't keep on walking away while I'm talking to you. The train will be in in a few minutes, and my ticket is up."

"Plenty of time to get a ticket for Friardale," said Frank.

"Lend me a bob, then."

"What?"

"I left home in rather a hurry, you see," explained Bunter. "I left my purse on the expensive grand piano——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! My pater took my ticket as far as Courtfield," said Bunter. "He told me I could walk from Courtfield."

"Good man," said Bob. "Your pater thinks it will do you good to bring down your fat a little."

"Beast! Of course, I can't walk," said Bunter. "I hoped to see my friend Smithy here; he would have lent me a bob."

"More likely to have lent you a boot!"

"Look here, I don't want a lot of vulgar back-chat," said Bunter peevishly.

"I want a bob for my ticket."

"There's a telephone at this station," suggested Bob. "Ring up Bunter Court, and tell the gilt-edged butler to get that purse off the grand piano, and send one of the diamond-studded footmen in the Rolls-Royce with it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, the train's coming in!" howled Bunter. "Are you going to lend me a bob, or aren't you going to lend me a bob?"

"Here you are," said Wharton, and William George Bunter's fat fingers closed on a shilling and he rolled away.

But he did not roll to the booking-office. He rolled into the buffet. There was time to get a ticket to the local station, but there was also time to get a cake and ginger-beer, and, in attending to the more important matter of the two, Billy Bunter naturally forgot the less important. A shilling's-worth of tuck kept him happily occupied till the train came in.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here she is!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, and the Famous Five stopped their stroll up and down

the platform and took their seats in the "local."

"Bunter looks like missing it," remarked Frank Nugent, with a glance from the window.

"Here he is!" grinned Bob.

Billy Bunter came rolling across the platform, blinking round through his big spectacles for the Famous Five. He sighted Nugent at the window and rolled up in haste. Bunter had not remarked, on the part of the chums of the Remove, any enthusiasm for his company. But their company was necessary to him, as he was going to travel without a ticket. Somebody would be needed to see him through at Friardale.

He butted into the carriage, and dropped, gasping, into a seat.

"Just in time!" he gasped.

"Oh, lots of time," said Bob. "They haven't looked at the tickets yet."

"Eh?"

"There's a man coming along the train for the tickets."

"Oh!"

An inspector arrived at the door of the carriage. Billy Bunter gave him a malevolent blink. Sometimes, on the

railway, they examined tickets at the start instead of the finish, and Bunter regarded such a proceeding as being in the worst of taste—just as if the railway company suspected fellows of wanting to "bilk." Certainly it was rather awkward for fellows who travelled, when they could, without paying their fare.

"Tickets, please!"

Five tickets were shown up.

Billy Bunter interested himself deeply in the scenery on the other side of the carriage. He hoped that the railway inspector would pass on and miss him. But William George Bunter was never likely to be passed over like that. He filled up too large a portion of the horizon with his ample circumference.

"Your ticket, sir!" said the inspector.

Bunter developed deafness.

"Ticket, sir! If the lad's deaf, would you mind nudging him, sir?" asked the inspector.

Bob Cherry nudged Bunter—a hefty nudge. There was a gasping howl from Bunter. He felt as if he had been rather punctured than nudged.

"Ticket, fathead!" said Bob.

"Yarooogh!"

"You're keeping the train waiting, sir," said the inspector impatiently. "Please show your ticket at once."

"My—my ticket?" stammered Bunter, fairly cornered at last.

"Yes, sir, quick, please!" The inspector was growing suspicious. "Can't keep the train waiting."

"D-d-don't keep it waiting on my account," stuttered Bunter. "I—I put my ticket somewhere. Did any of you fellows see where I put my ticket?"

"No, ass!" said Wharton. "For goodness' sake show it up, and don't waste all the afternoon."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Ticket, please!" rapped out the inspector sharply. "I must ask you to step out of the carriage."

"I—I think I've lost it——"

"Then you must take another, if you have lost it," said the inspector sarcastically. "You can't travel on this line without a ticket. Too much bilking on this line."

"If you are impertinent, I shall report you to the company," said Bunter loftily.

"Step out on the platform!"

"I say, you fellows——"

Bunter had no time for more. The inspector, convinced by this time that he had to do with a bilk, reached into the carriage and seized William George Bunter by the collar. Bunter was hooked out of the carriage like a very fat winkle from a shell, and he landed on the platform with a bump and a roar.

"Yooooop!"

The door slammed.

"Didn't that fat idiot take a ticket, after all?" asked Frank Nugent in wonder.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"There was a smear on his chivvy, which didn't look as if it had been made by a railway ticket," he remarked. "I fancy the bob went on jam-tarts."

"The fat boulder!"

"I say, you fellows!" roared Bunter. The train was moving now. "I say, chuck out a bob, will you? This beast makes out that I'm bilking the company! Chuck a bob—— Oh dear!"

The train was gone.

Mr. Bunter, when he had started his hopeful son on the journey to Greyfriars that day, had considered that a walk from Courtfield to the school would not hurt William George—in fact, might do him good. It was to be hoped that Mr. Bunter was right. For William

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George was ejected from the station with all sorts of unpleasant remarks; and while the train bore the Famous Five on to Friardale, William George was wearily, drearily hoofing it along a lengthy, dusty road, and wishing that all railway inspectors could be transferred suddenly to the South Seas, to a certain island he knew of, where the natives would have disposed of them effectually and internally.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Doubting Thomases!

"HOBBOY!"

"Hullo, old bean!"

Harry Wharton & Co. turned out at Friardale and walked down the old familiar High Street, and turned cheerily into the leafy lane that led to Greyfriars. Oaks and beeches and elms in their autumnal brown lined the lane, very pleasant to the view of the fellows recently back from the glare of tropical suns, and infinitely superior, in their opinion, to palms and banyans. For an adventurous trip on a long holiday the South Seas were all very well; but the chums of the Remove agreed that the old country was the "goods." Real trees, and real air to breathe, as Bob Cherry expressed it, and no dazzling sun to make the eyes ache. No doubt Bob was right, especially about the sun.

Sitting on the stile in Friardale Lane was Hobson of the Shell.

The chums of the Remove knew Hobby, of course, but had little to do with him at school, Hobby being in the Shell, which was two Forms above the Remove. Middle School had little to do with Lower School. Still, old Hobby was a decent chap, if rather a fathead, and he was the first Greyfriars fellow to greet the eyes of the returning wanderers. So they stopped to speak to him cheerily.

Hobson looked at them rather glumly. He did not seem to be in great spirits that golden October afternoon.

"Hullo! Who are you?" he asked.

"Fathead!" answered Bob politely.

James Hobson had not really forgotten their existence—that was only Shell swank.

"Oh, I remember you now," conceded Hobson. "You're the kids who have been to the South Seas, or somewhere, or something, what?"

"You've got it exactly," said Harry Wharton. "We've been somewhere, or something. Just that."

"Really go to the Pacific?" asked Hobson.

"The realfulness was terrific, my esteemed Hobson," said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I've heard a lot about it," said the Shell fellow. "They're telling weird tales in the Remove about treasure islands and pearls and cannibals, and things. Anything in it?"

"Lots!" grinned Bob.

"Not all gammon?" asked Hobson.

"No, you ass!"

"A fellow in your Form told me it was all gammon," said Hobson. "He says you've been to Southend-on-Sea, not to the South Seas."

"I can guess who that fellow is," said Bob, with a warlike look. "I'll punch Skinner's head first thing!"

"Bagged lots of bananas and coconuts, and all that," said Hobson.

"Lots!" said Nugent.

"Yes, I've heard about them. Skinner says you bought the bananas in bunches from a man with a barrow—"

"Eh?"

"And got the coconuts at a coconut-shy at Southend."

The Famous Five looked at Hobson of the Shell. They were mentally debating whether to up-end him over the stile into the field. Hobson seemed to think that Skinner's version of their adventures was funny. It did not strike the returned voyagers as funny in the least.

"I say, have you come back with lots of money in your pockets?" asked the Shell fellow suddenly.

"Not more than usual. Why?"

"Oh! Then it's gammon about the treasure?"

"No, you ass; but it belonged to Redwing," said Johnny Bull.

"Pity some of it didn't belong to you fellows," said Hobson. "Look here, like an ass, I blew five pounds on a printing outfit. I'm fed-up with it, and want to sell it. I'll let you fellows have it at half-price. You may find it useful for the 'Greyfriars Herald,' you know—what?"

The juniors grinned. They guessed now what had caused the cloud on James Hobson's brow when they had first sighted him on the stile. It was just like Hobson to "blow" all his available cash on something he did not really want, and find himself landed, like the seed in the parable, in a stony place, as a consequence.

"Thanks!" said Wharton, laughing. "We're not buying printing outfits at present. Try Fishy; he's the only merchant in the school."

"I've tried him," said Hobson dimly. "But he's a Yankee, you know; he wants it for ten bob. Look here, what do you say to two quids?"

"Wouldn't take it as a gift, old bean. Ta-ta!"

The Famous Five walked on, leaving Hobson of the Shell to his gloomy meditation on the subject of the printing outfit which had cost him five pounds, and which he did not want.

"Hold on a minute," called out Hobson.

The Famous Five held on.

"About that wreck you had?" said the Shell fellow.

"Eh?"

"Did you have to pay for the boat?"

"What boat?"

"The one in the wreck—the one you wrecked against the pier at Southend, when you were sailing in the Southend Seas."

The Famous Five gazed at Hobson of the Shell fixedly for a moment. Then, instead of answering him in words, they closed in on him, and grasped his ankles, and lifted them over the stile. By the time Hobson's ankles reached the top bar of the stile, Hobson's head had reached the ground on the other side. It tapped as it reached it.

Then the Famous Five threw Hobson's legs away, and the Shell fellow curled up in the grass, roaring.

Once more Harry Wharton & Co. sauntered on towards the school, leaving Hobson of the Shell to sort himself out at his leisure. Hobson's voice followed them for quite a distance; and, to judge by his remarks, Hobby found no pleasure at all in the return of the five juniors to Greyfriars.

The chums of the Remove smiled cheerily as they walked on, but Johnny Bull's smile gave place to a thoughtful frown.

"Seems to be some sort of a yarn going the rounds about us at Greyfriars," he grunted. "All Skinner, I suppose."

"The Skinnerfulness is terrific," said Hurree Singh. "The esteemed Skinner is a victim of envy, hatred, and the esteemed uncharitableness. He does

not like other fellows to have a ripping holiday, and he finds a harmless and necessary pleasure in the detractfulness."

"If he gives me any of his jokes about the Southend Seas, I shall jolly well punch him!"

"Oh, let him rip!" said Harry Wharton carelessly. "Who cares for Skinner?"

"Hullo, hallo, hallo! There's jolly old Coker," ejaculated Bob Cherry.

The juniors were within sight of Greyfriars when they spotted Coker of the Fifth walking majestically between Potter and Greene of that Form.

Coker of the Fifth was holding forth on the subject of football, and Potter and Greene were bearing it with great fortitude, what time they surreptitiously but skilfully steered him in the direction of Uncle Clegg's tuckshop at Friardale.

Horace Coker ceased to expound the offside rule to his chums as he came on the Famous Five. A broad grin adorned his rugged countenance as he stopped to speak to them. Potter and Greene eyed them rather curiously. They, like all Greyfriars, had heard something of the strange adventures of the Famous Five during that eventful vacation in the Southern Seas; also they had heard Skinner's humorous version, in which the Southern Seas were changed to the Southend Seas. Horace Coker declared that it was all gammon about a Pacific voyage and a treasure island, which made Potter and Greene think there must be something in it.

"Hullo, you fags!" grinned Coker. "So you've got back."

"Hullo, old codger," said Bob cheerily. "Yes, we've got back, and we're glad to see even you again. That's a bit of a record, isn't it?"

"Eh?"

Coker was not quick on the uptake. "Ever heard of anybody being glad to see you before?" inquired Bob.

"You're as cheeky as ever, I see," said Coker. "Your manners haven't improved at Blackpool—was it Blackpool?"

"No, not quite Blackpool," said Bob.

"I mean, Southend," said Coker. "I understand that you've been having a holiday at Southend-on-Sea."

"Amazing!" exclaimed Bob. "Do you hear that, you fellows? Coker understands that we've had a holiday at Southend-on-Sea. Fancy Coker understanding anything!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't want any Lower Fourth cheek!" roared Coker.

"We don't want any Fifth Form swank," said Nugent mildly; "but we're getting it."

"There's a yarn going round about the South Seas and a treasure island and a schooner, and all that!" jeered Coker. "I want you to understand that you don't spoof me with a story like that. Tell it to the Marines! You've had a voyage from Margate to Southend on a steamboat—what? Did you dig up a treasure on Canvey Island? Ha, ha, ha!"

And Coker roared at his own wit.

Coker's wit was never like Yorick's, likely to set the table in a roar. But it was sufficient to set Coker himself in a roar. Coker often laughed with immense satisfaction at his own brilliant sallies, and was quite surprised to see grave and serious faces round him all the time.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker. "Yow-ow-ow-woooooop!"

Coker's roar quite changed, though it was as loud as ever, if not louder, as the Famous Five made a sudden charge.

"Ticket, sir?" asked the inspector. "If the lad's deaf would you mind nudging him, sir?" Bob Cherry gave Bunter a hefty nudge, and there was a gasping howl from the fat junior. "Yar-ooooogh!" "Your ticket, fathead!" shouted Bob. (See Chapter 4.)



The juniors went on their way, leaving Horace Coker strewn in the lane, with Potter and Greene gazing down at him.

By the time Horace Coker got his second wind the chums of the Remove were walking in at the gates of Greyfriars. Gosling, the porter, touched his hat, with a curious look at them. The story of the treasure island had penetrated to Gosling's lodge. Gosling did not believe that there was anything in it. He had heard exaggerative schoolboys "tell the tale" before about wonderful "hols" that never had happened. But he hoped there was something in it. For if the juniors had returned from far-off seas laden with treasure, surely it would mean at least a handsome tip for William Gosling! So the Greyfriars porter touched his hat with unaccustomed respect and geniality.

"Glad to see you young gentlemen back, sir," said Gosling. "I 'ear you've had a norful time, sirs, among cannonballs and pirates and sich."

"I don't know about the cannonballs," grinned Bob Cherry. "And there was only one pirate, and he was a mere amateur. But we found a giddy treasure, Gosling."

"I'm sure I'm glad to 'ear it, sir," said Gosling. "Bring any of it 'ome with you, sir."

"Not a bean."

"Ho!" said Gosling.

"You see, it wasn't ours," explained Bob; "it was Redwing's."

"Ho!" repeated Gosling derisively. And he withdrew into his lodge, with an expression of scepticism on his crusty face that Doubting Thomas himself could not have excelled.

"He, he, he!" Sammy Bunter, of the Second Form, greeted the Famous Five as they walked in, with a fat cackle remarkably like his major's. "I say, is Billy with you?"

"I think he's walking from Courtfield," answered Bob.

"He, he, he! Wouldn't the treasure run to a taxi fare?" asked Bunter minor.

"You fat little cheeky oyster—"

"He, he, he!" cackled Sammy. "I've heard all about it. I say, I expected something of the sort from my major. It's in his line. But fancy you fellows spinning yarns like my major! He, he, he! Whoooooop!"

Sammy Bunter was strewn in the quadrangle, roaring, and the Famous Five walked on to the School House to report their arrival to Mr. Quelch.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Not Nice!

"THEY'VE come!"
"Hurrah!"

"Here they are again!"

A dozen Remove fellows greeted Harry Wharton & Co. as they came away from Mr. Quelch's study.

Their reception by the Remove master had not been warm.

It had, in fact, been decidedly chilly. Mr. Quelch had taken official note of their rejoining the school, and told them, in the driest of tones, that they might go.

And they had gone, feeling rather damped.

But whatever their Form master's reception lacked in cordiality, was made up by the greeting of the Remove fellows. A dozen Removites surrounded the Famous Five in the passages, and marched them off to the Rag, and more fellows poured in when the news spread that the voyagers had returned.

It was quite an ovation; and there was no doubt that their friends were glad to see them again.

"So here you are, as large as life and twice as natural!" said Squiff. "Not gobbled up by the cannibals, what?"

"Not quite!" said Harry, laughing. "And you've really been wrecked on a desert island?" exclaimed Tom Brown. "Really and truly!"

"I wish I'd been there!" said Brown. "I wish you had, old bean—you'd have been useful," said Bob. "But we pulled through all right."

"It's true, then?" asked Bolsover major.

"What's true?" grunted Johnny Bull. "About the voyage in the Pacific, and
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the treasure island, and all that? It sounds a bit steep, you know."

"If you think we're telling lies——" bawled Johnny Bull.

"Well, fellows do exaggerate sometimes," said Bolsover major. "Look at that story Price of the Fifth told last term about mountaineering in the Dolomites, and gondolas and things at Venice, and all that? And Mr. Prout asked him, before a dozen fellows, whether his holiday in the Isle of Wight had done him good."

"Fathead!"

"Look here, Bull——"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Well, Skinner says——"

"Bother Skinner, and bother you!"

"Easy does it, Johnny, old chap!" said Peter Todd. "We know that your word is as good as gold; but it's a startling story all the same."

"Anyhow, if you've been lifting treasure in the South Seas, I suppose you've brought some of it back with you," said Hazeldene. "I've heard that it was a diamond mine, or something."

"Pearls!" said Nugent.

"And you got them?"

"Yes, we got them."

"The gotfulness was terrific, my esteemed Hazel."

"Well, let's see 'em!" said Hazeldene. "Seeing is believing. Of course, I know you fellows wouldn't spin yarns like Bunter, but I'd like to see some of the pearls."

"Yes, let's see the plunder," said Toddy.

"Show up!" said Bolsover major.

"We've nothing to show up," said Harry Wharton impatiently. "We found a box of pearls that belongs to Redwing. He offered to share all round, but we didn't want to rob him. That's all there is to it!"

"Rather unfortunate that the jolly old treasure is in the hands of a fellow who doesn't belong to Greyfriars!" murmured Hazel. "We shall never see it now!"

"If that means that you doubt my word, Hazeldene——" said Wharton, with a glint in his eyes.

"Oh, not at all!" said Hazel airily. "I merely said that it was unfortunate. So it is unfortunate."

Bolsover major chuckled, and two or three other fellows grinned. Certainly, the treasure story seemed a little discounted by the absence of any treasure. The Famous Five looked, and felt, rather uncomfortable. They had written to their friends in the Remove, on their return to England, and told them something of their adventures in the southern seas. That was a natural enough proceeding; and they were ready to tell the whole story if the fellows wanted to hear it. But assuredly they had never anticipated being put on their trial, as it were, as to the truth of the story. They realised that they owed that to Harold Skinner. Neither had they any intention of asseverating or proving the truth of the strange tale, as Billy Bunter might have done.

"Oh, cheese it, you fellows!" said Squiff, after a moment or two of silence. "We all know that that chap Redwing, of Hawkscliff, had a chart, left him by his uncle, and that these fellows went with him to find whatever it was. Naturally, they didn't bag any of the plunder."

"Not even a specimen?" sighed Hazel. "I should have been so glad to see a specimen."

Bob Cherry's hand went to his pocket, where he had a curiously-shaped coral he had brought back to adorn the mantelpiece in No. 13 Study. But he drew his hand out again empty.

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"Go and eat coke, Hazel!" he said.

"Tell us all about it, you chaps!" said Toddy.

"That's soon done!" said Wharton curtly. "We went to the South Seas to find some pearls; we found them, and came back again. That's all."

Peter Todd grinned.

"Now, don't put your back up with an old pal," he said. "I'm believing everything you tell me."

"Same here!" said Squiff.

"And here!" said Tom Brown. "Nothing to get your backs up about, old beans! Tell us the whole story."

"I've told you," answered Wharton. "No need to put in the details. We went and came back again. That's the lot."

"Now you're getting ratty!" grinned Bolsover major. "I say, hasn't Smithy come back with you?"

"He's coming back later."

"Well, Bunter, then. Bunter was with you. We shall get all the details from Bunter, and a few over. Where's Bunter?"

"Bother Bunter!"

"But we want to know——" urged Russell.

"Oh, let it drop!" said Wharton impatiently. "We're not setting up as

heroes who have done terrific things in perilous seas. We've had a vacation that was rather longer than usual, that's all. And I want my tea, for one. Let's get up to the study, you fellows."

"Not No. 1 Study!" grinned Bolsover major.

"Why not?"

"That's Skinner's study now."

"Oh!"

"Has that cad had the cheek to bag our study because we were late back?" exclaimed Frank Nugent indignantly.

"Just that!"

"We'll jolly soon shift him, then!"

"Go slow, you chaps!" said Squiff.

"We've tried shifting them, all ready for you, and Quelch came down heavy on us. We've got two hundred lines each for ragging the cads in the study, and Quelch has given orders that they're to keep it."

"Quelch seemed rather crusty when we saw him," said Bob. "What's the matter with the old bird?"

"He doesn't like you prolonging the hols!" grinned Squiff. "He's made a lot of nasty remarks in the Form-room about fellows who don't turn up on time after the holidays."

"What rot!" grunted Bob. "We didn't ask to be wrecked and sent adrift on the Pacific."

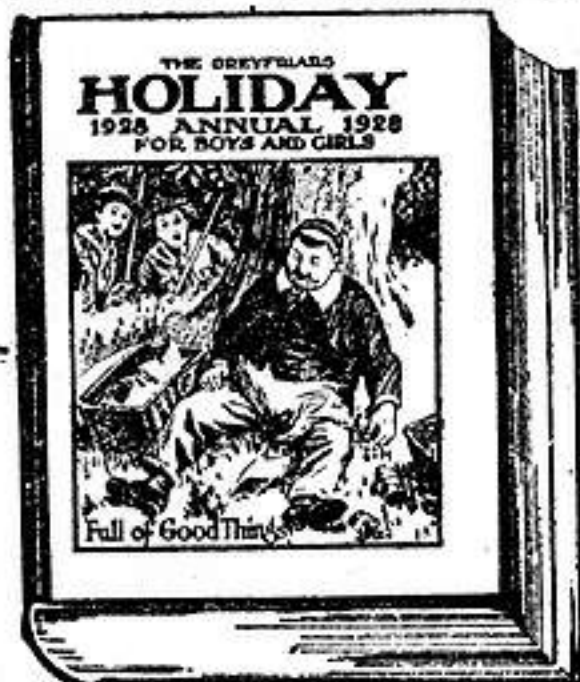
"Tell Quelch that yarn, and bring him round!" suggested Hazel. "He may swallow it."

"Oh, shut up!"

Harry Wharton & Co. left the Rag. Wharton's face was rather set in expression, and his friends were feeling uncomfortable. They had not forgotten the story about Price, of the Fifth, quoted by Bolsover major; but it was distinctly unpleasant to be classed with Stephen

Price, of the Fifth, as romancers. Certainly, their own friends did not think of doubting their word; but it was evident that Skinner's sly insinuations had had a good deal of effect elsewhere.

All the Famous Five were feeling disposed to punch Skinner, and the news that the cad of the Remove had bagged Study No. 1 was the climax. Wharton stopped at the door of Study No. 1 with a grim face. It was true that a fellow who did not turn up on the first day of term was not entitled to claim last term's study; it was true that Skinner was, strictly speaking, within his rights. But it was also certain that the bagging of Study No. 1 was simply one of Skinner's impudent tricks, intended to "take a rise" out of the captain of the Form. Harry Wharton did not feel inclined to submit. He threw open the



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door of Study No. 1 and walked in, and found Skinner & Co. at home and at tea in their new quarters.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Chucked Out!

HAROLD SKINNER glanced up with a smile. He was aware that the Famous Five had returned, and was expecting a visit. Skinner was quite enjoying the situation. Stott looked rather dubious, and Snoop uneasy. But Skinner was brimming with confidence and impudence.

"Hallo, you fellows!" he said amiably. "So you're back! So kind of you to give us a look-in!"

"What are you doing in this study?" asked Harry.

"Having tea," answered Skinner. "Sorry I can't ask you to tea—the supplies won't run to it. But I'm very

pleased to see you safe and sound after your wild adventures at Southend."

"We haven't been to Southend," said Harry quietly.

"Was it Margate?" inquired Skinner. "My mistake; I thought it was Southend. I heard something about an island. There's an island near Southend, I believe—Canvey Island, or something. Weren't you wrecked on Canvey Island?"

"This is my study," said Harry, without answering that question. "You will have to shift out of it, Skinner."

Skinner shook his head. "My study," he corrected. "I claimed it first day of term, and our respected Form master has confirmed it. I refer you to Quelch."

"Never mind Quelch now." "But I must mind Quelch," answered Skinner, with a pained look. "He's my Form master, and I'm bound to mind

cheap seaside places don't do you any good. Try Brighton next time."

"You cheeky rotter—"

"Or Worthing," said Skinner. "I really recommend you to give Margate a miss if it has this effect on you."

"Are you getting out?" asked Harry.

"Hardly!" smiled Skinner.

"You can have our old study," suggested Snoop.

"You can keep it!" answered Wharton. "This is my study!"

"Ours!" said Skinner gently.

"Are you getting out?"

"I've answered that question. You're beginnin' to repeat yourself, old bean!"

"I shall shift you!"

"I refer you to Quelch," yawned Skinner.

"Look here, chuck it, Skinner!" said Stott unexpectedly. "A lark's all very well, but it's a bit mean to bag a fellow's study. Let him have his room."

"Are you frightened already at the first sight of His Magnificence?" sneered Skinner.

Stott flushed crimson.

"I'm not frightened, you rotter—and you know it! I say it's a dirty trick to bag a fellow's study because he's late back."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry, at the door.

"The hear-hearfulness is terrific."

"If you're afraid of Wharton you can walk out when he orders you, Stott," said Skinner coolly.

"I'm staying! I'm not a funk!"

"If Wharton orders me out I shall jolly well stay!" said Stott savagely.

"If he asks me decently I shall go."

Wharton's angry face relaxed into a smile.

"You're too good a chap for the company you keep, Stott," he said. "I ask you civilly to let me have my study."

"That does it, then!" said Stott, and he rose from the table.

He gathered up his books and other things, Snoop looking more and more uneasy as he

watched him. Stott was the only fighting-man in the shady trio, and he was going. The Co. in the doorway made room for Frederick Stott to pass, and Bob Cherry gave him a cheery clap on the shoulder as he went.

"Good man!" he said; and Stott grinned and went on up the passage to Study No. 11.

"Now, you two!" said Harry.

"Oh, we're staying, thanks!" said Skinner. "You can't frighten us with your scowling."

"I've told you I shall shift you!"

"And I tell you that if you lay a finger on me, you bully, I'll yell for a prefect!" said Skinner.

Wharton's eyes gleamed, and he made a step towards the cad of the Remove. Sidney James Snoop jumped up. The look on Wharton's face was enough for him.

"Look here, it was only a lark!" he said. "Study No. 11 is all right

for me. Let the chap have his study, Skinner."

"You frightened, too?" sneered Skinner.

"Oh, rats!"

Snoop followed Stott. Skinner was left alone in his glory, so to speak. But Skinner had no intention of surrendering. He felt assured that he had the upper hand, with the support of the Form master, and that was enough for Skinner.

"I'm waiting!" said Wharton grimly.

"Would you mind waiting in the passage?" inquired Skinner. "I don't want to be personal, but I don't really care for your company in my study."

"Are you going?"

"Not the least little bit! Shut the door after you, Wharton. And knock before coming in if you pay another visit to my study. You seem to have forgotten Greyfriars manners on your trip to Margate!"

"Hold on, Harry!" murmured Nugent. "If Mr. Quelch says he's to have the study—"

"The word of the esteemed Quelch is law," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, shaking his dusky head.

Wharton did not heed. He was intensely angry—too angry to reflect. The discovery on his return to school that he and his friends were regarded by a good many fellows as romancers in the style of Billy Bunter owing to Skinner's sly malevolence, had exasperated him. But for that, probably, he would have accepted the new arrangement as a matter that could not be helped. Now he did nothing of the kind. He grasped Skinner by the collar and swung him away from the table.

"Get out!" he said.

Skinner spun towards the doorway. Skinner was strong in cunning and duplicity, but in other respects he was not sturdy. Too much slacking and too many surreptitious cigarettes made it difficult for Skinner to hold his own when it came to fisticuffs.

He reeled breathlessly against the door, his eyes gleaming with malice.

"You rotten bully!" he panted.

"Shut up and clear!"

"I shall go straight to Mr. Quelch and tell him that I've been turned out of my study!" yelled Skinner.

"You can go to Jericho if you like! Only get out of this study before you're chucked out!"

"Well, I won't get out!" snarled Skinner.

Wharton grasped him by the shoulders and whirled him into the passage. There was a crash as Skinner landed.

"O what a fall was there, my countrymen!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner staggered to his feet. With a face white with rage, he limped to the Remove staircase. The chums of the Remove looked at one another rather dubiously.

"Better come along to my study to tea," suggested Bob Cherry. "That worm has gone to call Quelch."

"I'm staying here," answered Harry.

"But Quelch—"

Wharton made no reply. As a matter of fact, it was already dawning upon him that he had acted hastily. That fact was still more clearly borne in upon his mind when Loder of the Sixth came up the Remove staircase.

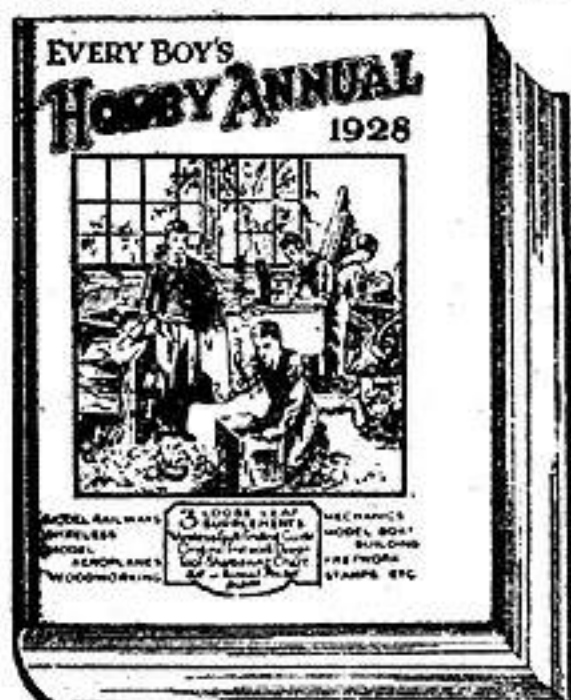
"Wharton here?"

"Yes, Loder."

"I'm to take you to your Form master. Come on."

Wharton drew a deep breath. For a

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him—as a good, obedient, respectful fellow, such as I pride myself on being."

Snoop grinned, but Frederick Stott still looked rather dubious. Stott was much under Skinner's influence; but he was not a bad sort of fellow when left to himself, or when he thought for himself. Since he had learned what the rest of the Form thought of the matter Stott had been cogitating, and he was not satisfied.

"Some lawless fellows actually tried to turn us out this afternoon," went on Skinner. "I'm sorry to say that they have received impositions from Mr. Quelch. But what could they expect! Defying the orders of a Form master is really too thick!"

"You measly cad!" growled Johnny Bull.

Skinner looked at him.

"Your manners haven't improved in the vac, Bull," he remarked. "Those

second he hesitated, and then, without a word, he followed the Sixth Form prefect down the stairs.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Tea in Study No. 13!

"I SAY, you fellows."

Billy Bunter had arrived. He blinked into Study No. 13 in the Remove passage—the study which belonged to Bob Cherry, Hurree Singh, Mark Linley, and little Wun Lung. All those fellows were there, as well as Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent, Peter Todd and Squiff and Tom Brown and Lord Mauleverer, and several more of the Remove. A celebration seemed to be toward in Study No. 13. A bright fire burned in the grate, the table was laid for tea, and several parcels of good things were being unpacked. Bunter looked upon the preparations for a feed, and saw that they were good, and smiled.

Hitherto his fat face had worn a frown.

Bunter had returned to Greyfriars; and that circumstance ought to have sent a thrill through Greyfriars from end to end. But it hadn't. There was no doubt, in Bunter's opinion, that it ought to have; and no doubt at all that it hadn't.

Here was Bunter, back from the South Seas, from perils of shipwreck and savages, bursting with the importance of his marvellous adventures—and nobody cared! Had he come back from a trip to Blackpool or Torquay, he could not have been less regarded. Fellows actually did not seem to care whether he had come back or not. He might have been gobbled up by cannibals, or sharks, in the far-off Pacific. He hadn't been, but he might have been. And Greyfriars generally did not seem to care a button whether he had or not!

He had met his minor, Sammy, as he rolled in, and greeted him:

"Well, here I am back from the South Seas, Sammy!"

"Liar!" was Sammy's brotherly reply.

He met Bolsover major next.

"Just back from the Pacific, Bolsover!" he said cheerily.

"Liar!" said Bolsover major, and walked on.

Then he came on Hazeldene and Fisher T. Fish.

"Here I am, fresh from the cannibal islands, you fellows," said Bunter.

"Liar!" said Hazel and Fishy together, like fellows speaking with the same voice.

It was getting monotonous.

Bunter rolled indignantly into the House. He reported himself to Mr. Quelch, and would gladly have given that gentleman a full and thrilling account of his marvellous adventures, which had grown much more marvellous since his return from the place where they had happened. But Mr. Quelch's manner was chilly, and did not invite such confidences. Bunter sniffed indignantly as he rolled away from his Form master's study, and on the stairs he met William Wibley.

"I'm back, old fellow," said Bunter. "I've had no end of a wild time in the South Seas."

"Liar!" said Wibley cheerfully.

In the Remove passage he came on Micky Desmond.

"Just back from the tropics, Micky," he said.

"Liar!" said Micky.

It really seemed as if the Remove fellows had a very limited vocabulary at their command; limited to one word, so

far as Bunter was concerned. No doubt they considered it a suitable word as applied to Bunter.

Bunter blinked into Study No. 1, and found it empty; he blinked into Study No. 7, and no one was there. Peter Todd might have been there to welcome a study-mate returning from wild regions of the earth, Bunter considered. But Peter wasn't there. Bunter rolled on, and arrived at Study No. 13. And there, as already related, the frown on his fat face gave way to a smile as he saw the feast that was toward.

But in Study No. 13 nobody seemed specially pleased to see him. Often and often it had occurred that nobody was specially pleased to see William George Bunter. Now it occurred again. Mark Linley, who was always civil, gave him a nod. That was all. Nobody even asked him into the study. That, however, was a matter of little moment; Bunter could dispense with an unimportant trifle like that. He rolled in.

"Here I am, you fellows," he said affably. "Feed on, what?" He blinked round at the busy juniors. "Sort of celebration, what?"

"Sort of," agreed Peter Todd.

"Killing the fatted calf for the returning prodigals, eh?" asked Bunter. "That's very thoughtful of you, Toddy."

"Go hon!" said Toddy.

"You haven't said yet that you're glad to see me back," remarked Bunter sarcastically.

"Why should I begin telling whoppers the minute I see you?"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Still, I should be glad to see your back," added Toddy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! I say, Mauly, old fellow, give us your fin," said Bunter.

Lord Mauleverer sighed and extended his fin. But as he saw Bunter's "fin" advancing to meet it, he withdrew his hand. Bunter's fat paw was in its usual state of requiring a wash, and was moreover smeared with jam and sticky with toffee. Lord Mauleverer was rather particular in such matters.

"I—I'll shake hands with you to-morrow mornin', Bunter," he said hastily.

"Eh! Why?"

"After you've had a wash."

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

"Oh, really, Mauly! I say, you fellows, I don't see anything to cackle at in Mauly's bad manners. When will the feed be ready?"

"When Wharton comes up," answered Bob Cherry.

"Blow Wharton! Wharton doesn't matter, I suppose," said Bunter warmly.

"Bother Wharton! Wharton can go and eat coke! Besides, where is he? How long will he be?"

"That's the lot," said Bob, turning out the last parcel.

"How long will Wharton be?" roared Bunter.

"Eh! Probably six feet, if he goes on growing."

"You silly ass! I'm hungry."

"I seem to have heard you make that remark before, Bunter. How on earth did you get here so soon?" asked Bob. "You seem to have walked from Court-field in record time."

"I got a lift on a market cart," said Bunter. "I tipped the man a bob for a lift. He made a lot of low remarks when I got off and told him that I'd left my money at home and couldn't let him have the bob. You know what the lower classes are! You know, Linley, especially, as you're one of them," added Bunter affably.

"I know what people feel like when they are bilked, at any rate," answered Mark.

"Just what I should have expected from a fellow like you!" sneered Bunter. "You naturally sympathise with low blighters."

"If I didn't, I shouldn't let you butt into my study to tea," remarked Linley.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you cheeky rotter—"

"Shut up, Bunter!" suggested Johnny Bull. "Hallo, here's Wharton!"

Harry Wharton came into the study. His friends looked at him rather anxiously. Wharton's temper was sometimes a rather uncertain quantity; and they had no doubt that he had had a painful interview with Mr. Quelch. The incident of Study No. 1 was annoying, but the fellows did not want the day of their return to Greyfriars to be darkened by black looks and angry resentment. Fellows at Greyfriars were expected to take things as they came and keep smiling.

Wharton seemed to have realised as much, for his face, though rather grave, was not at all sulky or angry.

"Quelch mad as a hatter?" asked Bob.

"Rather! I've been sent to the Head," answered the captain of the Remove, with a grimace.

"Oh, my hat! Licked?" asked Nugent.

"No; the Head gave me a jaw, and then asked me about the South Seas," said Wharton, with a smile.

"Good old sport!"

"The fact is, I went off rather at the deep end," confessed Harry. "Skinner is a cad; but I can't turn him out of the study Quelch's given him, of course! I've told the Head I'll let the matter drop, and he was satisfied with that. Let the cad keep the study, and be hanged to him!"

"That's all right!" said Peter Todd. "More ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream. Skinner won't keep the study long. I know how to persuade him to turn out. Now sit down to our giddy feast, and never mind Skinner. And we want the story of the South Sea trip over tea—all friends here."

"Yaas, begad!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"I say, you fellows, I'll tell you all about it—"

"You won't," said Peter. "We want the facts."

"Why, you beast—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

The Famous Five sat down in cheery mood to the feast, Skinner and all his works being dismissed from their minds. Over the feast the tale was told of the Famous Five's adventures in southern waters, Billy Bunter's jaws being happily occupied otherwise, in making a steady, determined, and unrelaxing attack on the good things on the table. And, as the poet has remarked, all was calm and bright.

**There's a Topping
Story of
GREYFRIARS
in This Week's
"POPULAR"!**



Instead of answering Hobson in words the Famous Five closed in on him, grasped his ankles and lifted them over the stile. By the time Hobson's ankles reached the top bar of the stile, Hobson's head had reached the ground on the other side. It tapped hard as it reached it! (See Chapter 5.)

not clearing out of Study No. 1. See? And if you pick a row with me I won't put the gloves on, I'll appeal to Mr. Quelch."

Peter smiled cheerily.

"Go ahead with it," he answered. "What do you think Quelch will say?"

"I fancy you will find yourself in trouble when Quelch knows that you've been put up to bullying me out of my study," sneered Skinner.

"Who's talking about a study?" asked Peter, raising his eyebrows.

"Oh, come off!" sneered Skinner. "What are we going to fight about, then?"

"I disapprove of you."

"What?"

"I think a licking would do you good," explained Peter.

"Put it how you like," sneered Skinner. "Mr. Quelch will know what to think; and I tell you plainly that I shall go straight to him."

"Nothing to stop you," said Peter. "I think very likely Quelch will approve if you tell him that I've licked you for smoking cigarettes in the Remove passage."

"What?" yelled Skinner.

"Of course, Quelch may think I've taken rather a lot on myself, licking fellows for smoking, as if I was a prefect," remarked Peter thoughtfully. "Still, I think that, upon the whole, he will approve. Don't you think so?"

Skinner gazed at the cheerful Toddy. It dawned on him that he was not the only fellow in the Remove who could be sharp. Certainly, Mr. Quelch would be extremely angry if he learned that a Remove fellow had thrashed Skinner for keeping possession of Study No. 1. But if he learned that a fellow had thrashed Skinner for smoking in the Remove passage that would be a gee-gee of quite another colour. Mr. Quelch had caned Skinner more than once.

"You see, we're fed up with your nasty little ways in the Remove passage," explained Peter blandly.

(Continued on page 16.)

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THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Perspicacity of Peter!

HAROLD SKINNER, the following day, wore a cheery smile. Skinner was still in possession of the study belonging to Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent.

He was "on his own" there, as Snoop and Stott had gone back to their old quarters. But Skinner did not mind that. He had "given Wharton a fall," as he had expressed it; he had bagged the Form captain's study, and was keeping it, and "His Magnificence," if he did not like it, could lump it.

It was quite a triumph for Skinner, who had often longed to give the captain of the Remove a fall, and had never succeeded in so doing.

What the other fellows thought of his conduct did not matter to Skinner. They told him what they thought, and found him impervious. It was no new experience to Skinner to be called unpleasant names by the other Removites.

He rather hoped that Wharton would raise the matter again, thus entailing more trouble with Mr. Quelch. Wharton, however, let the matter drop. Nugent said nothing more about it. Harry Wharton had taken up his quarters—temporarily—in No. 13, with Bob Cherry & Co., and Nugent had had room found for him in No. 14, with Johnny Bull, Squiff, and Fisher T. Fish. Fisher T. Fish had raised some objection to being crowded in the study, but had withdrawn that objection after Squiff had rapped his head on the study table.

Squiff was prepared to go on rapping till the objection was withdrawn; and Fishy withdrew it quite rapidly. Neither of the dispossessed juniors cared for No. 11, with Snoop and Stott, and certainly they would have declined to share No. 1 with Skinner. So they were scattered along the Remove passage, and Harold Skinner was left alone in his glory.

That was the end of the matter, in Skinner's opinion. Later in the day he discovered that the matter was not quite at an end.

After class Peter Todd looked for Skinner, and found him in the Rag. He tapped him on the shoulder.

"Looking for you, old bean!" said Peter agreeably.

"Well, here I am," replied Skinner, with rather a surly look. "What do you want?"

"Only to ask you a question."

"Cough it up!"

"What time will it suit you to have the gloves on?"

"Eh? I'm not fighting you, you ass!"

"That's your little error; you are," answered Peter amiably. "After tea, in the gym—what?"

Skinner backed away.

"Look here, Todd—"

"Who's your second?" asked Peter.

Skinner backed farther away.

"Keep your distance!" he said. "Do you think I don't know your game, you rotter? Wharton's put you up to this. Those cads can't turn me out of my study, and they've put you up to it. Well, I can jolly well tell you that I'm



(Continued from page 13.)

"I've decided that I'm not going to stand them any longer. Last evening you were smoking in your study."

"What business is that of yours?" hissed Skinner.

"I don't like it," said Toddy. "I'm down on it. Mr. Quelch is down on it, just as he was down on us for turning you out of No. 1. You seem to like your Form master butting in—when it suits you. You've got no end of respect for his authority when it comes to keeping another fellow's study. Well, I'm following your example. I'm respecting him to such an extent that I won't allow you to disregard his orders about smoking. I'm going to wallop you for smoking. See?"

"I'm not giving up that study!" hissed Skinner.

"You're wandering from the point, old bean. You keep on talking about a study, when I'm talking about your bad habits and your disrespect to Mr. Quelch."

"You cheeky cad!"

"Here and now, or in the gym?" asked Peter.

"Go and eat coke!"

Skinner backed farther off, and Peter followed him up, smiling, but implacable. A number of Remove fellows had gathered round, and all of them were grinning. The Famous Five were not there. Peter had requested them to keep out of the Rag till after tea. They were not to be mixed up in the affair. Skinner had a hunted look. He had fully expected Wharton's friends to give him trouble, if they could, over his sharp practice in bagging Study No. 1, but he had relied on Mr. Quelch's protection. Assuredly, the Form master would have protected him in possession of the study. But this little affair had—ostensibly, at least—nothing to do with the dispute about No. 1. Skinner certainly did not want to report to the Remove master that a Remove man had licked him for smoking. That would mean a caning to follow the licking.

"Keep off, you cad!" hissed Skinner. "I'm not going to fight you! I'll go straight to Mr. Quelch!"

"I've no objection," smiled Peter. "In fact, I'd like Quelch to know what a good boy I am, and how keen I am on upholding his orders."

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

"You mean that if I give up the study you'll let this drop?" hissed Skinner. "Think I'm a fool?"

"Not at all. I think you're a rogue," answered Peter. "Are you ready?"

"Keep off!" roared Skinner.

Tap!

Peter's knuckles landed on Skinner's sharp chin. Skinner made another jump back. Peter followed him up, and there was another tap.

"Go it, Skinner!" roared Bolsover major. "Don't be a funk!"

Skinner panted

"Keep off, you rotter! I tell you—"

Tap! Skinner broke off with a yell.

It was his sharp nose this time that received the tap, and it brought the water to his eyes.

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"Yaroooooh!"

"Go it, Skinner!" chuckled the juniors.

"Funk!" hooted Bolsover major.

Tap, tap, tap!

Skinner screwed up his courage at last and put up his hands and began to fight.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Not Good Enough!

"GO it!"

"Back up, Skinner!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was no help for it, and Harold Skinner put up the best fight he could. Peter Todd came on hard and fast, still with a smile on his face. It would not have cost him much effort to knock the weedy cad of the Remove out in one round; but he was in no hurry. He warded Skinner's vicious blows, and tapped him on the nose, and on the chin, and on the chest, with a series of rather hard taps, every one of them painful.

Skinner gave ground till he reached the wall of the Rag, and could give no more.

Then he had to stand up to it, and he fought savagely.

Two or three drives came home on Peter Todd, but he did not seem to mind very much; there was little force in the drives of the slacker of the Remove. And all the time Peter's hard knuckles were tapping and rapping.

Skinner almost hoped that Todd would knock him down, so that he would have an excuse for not getting up again. But Toddy did not knock him down. He tapped and rapped, and rapped and tapped.

Skinner seemed to be understudying a punch-ball. Certainly he was not much more dangerous to his opponent.

He dropped his hands at last.

"Keep off, you rotter!" he gasped. "I give you best!"

"Thanks," said Peter. "Think you've had enough?"

"Yes, you cad!"

"Sorry I don't agree. There's one for your boko!"

"Yaroooooh!"

"That's for your chin."

"Whoop!"

"And that—Hullo, you're going on again, are you? Good! I thought you had a little beef left in you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner put up a desperate effort. He was so enraged now that he had almost forgotten that he was a funk.

For several minutes there was quite a hefty fight in the Rag, and the Remove fellows looked on with interest.

Peter Todd received several rather severe knocks, one or two of which made him blink, but they did not make him recede. Hammer and tongs the two went at it, till Skinner's new-found courage suddenly failed him, and he flopped on the floor.

"Taking a rest?" asked Peter agreeably.

"Ow!" groaned Skinner.

"Get up, you funk!" growled Bolsover major. "You're not half licked yet."

"Ow-wow! Ow!"

"Go it, Skinner!" chuckled Stott.

"Waiting for you!" said Peter politely.

"You rotter! I'm done!" gasped Skinner.

"You mean you want a little rest?" asked Toddy. "All serene. We'll have rounds. You keep time for us, Mauly?"

"Yaas, begad!" assented Lord Mauleverer.

"Get up, Skinner!" roared Bolsover major.

"Ow! I can't!"

"You malingering worm," said Bolsover in disgust. "I'll jolly well help you, then!"

Bolsover major grasped Skinner by the collar and hauled him to his feet. Skinner staggered, panting, against the wall.

"Ready?" asked Peter.

"You rotter!" hissed Skinner. "I won't give up the study!"

"That's not the point. The point is will you give up smoking?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll go to Mr. Quelch—"

"And tell him you refuse to give up smoking?" asked Peter.

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

Skinner panted with rage. He sidled along the wall as Peter advanced on him and made a sudden rush for the door. A roar of laughter followed him from the Rag as he fled.

"Here endeth the first lesson," said Peter Todd cheerfully, and he dabbed his nose with his handkerchief and strolled out of the Rag.

Skinner had escaped to his study—No. 1 Study. He threw himself into a chair there, quivering with rage. He was about to light a cigarette to comfort himself, when he paused in time and refrained. It dawned upon Skinner that he had to give up smoking if he was not to give up the study. He was, so to speak, in a cleft stick. Mr. Quelch would have been severely "down" on any fellow who had undertaken to thrash Skinner into giving up the study, but he could scarcely have disapproved of any Remove man who had undertaken to thrash him into giving up nasty habits. Toddy was as keen as Skinner was sharp, and he had the upper hand now—so long as Skinner brazenly defied the Form master's orders in the matter of smoking.

Skinner gritted his teeth.

"The rotter! I'm keeping the study!" he snarled. "I'll jolly well chuck up smoking for a bit and take the wind out of his sails. I'm sticking to this study like glue!"

Sidney James Snoop looked in a little later. There was a grin on Snoop's face.

"You're dished, old bean!" he remarked.

Skinner gave him a glare.

"Toddy's pretty keen, what?" grinned Snoop. "He's going to thrash you for smoking till you give up Wharton's study. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up!"

"You can't do anything," chuckled Snoop. "Go to Quelch, and it will all come out about the smoking. You're cornered!"

"I've given up smoking!" said Skinner.

"Oh, my hat!"

"And I'm keeping the study."

"I'd rather give up the study, myself," said Snoop.

"Well, I wouldn't! Wharton's not getting the better of me so easily as all that," snarled Skinner.

Skinner was at prep in Study No. 1, all on his own, when Toddy looked in. He sniffed suspiciously.

"Not smoking?" he remarked.

"I've given it up!" sneered Skinner. "If you can find a cigarette in this study I'll eat it!"

"Good man!" said Peter heartily. "I'm jolly glad. It will be no end better for your health, old bean."

"So you'll have nothing to tell Mr. Quelch, and if you pick a row with me again I'll go to him," sneered Skinner.

"My dear man, I've nothing to row with you about, if you've given up smoking," said Peter amiably.

"But I'm keeping the study," jeered Skinner.

Peter Todd made no reply to that; he departed to his own quarters for prep. Skinner went sullenly on with his work. He had finished prep when the door opened and Sampson Quincy Illoy Field looked in.

"What time to-morrow will suit you, Skinner?" he asked.

"Eh?"

"In the gym, or in the Rag?" asked Squiff.

"I'm not fighting you, you idiot!"

"You are, old bean," said Squiff cheerfully. "I've heard from Toddy how he had reformed you, and I'm taking a hand myself. Last Saturday you went into the Cross Keys to play billiards with the shady rotters there."

"No business of yours!" snarled Skinner.

"Lots!" answered Squiff. "I'm not going to have the Form I belong to disgraced by you, Skinner. I take this personally; and I am going to thrash you for breaking bounds and going into a pub."

Skinner glared at him, speechless with rage.

"If you'll tell me who's your second—" went on Squiff.

"You—you rotter!" gasped Skinner. "Peter Todd's put you up to this. It's a trick to get me out of this study."

"Who's talking about a study? I'm going to thrash you for pub-haunting and disgracing my Form. I'm quite prepared to have the matter reported to Mr. Quelch, if you choose."

Skinner almost choked.

"Think it over," said Squiff cheerily. "Tom Brown's my second, and he'll see your man about it any time you like. Only the fight's got to come off to-morrow. I'm fixed on that."

And Squiff strolled away.

Skinner sat for quite a long time, in savage silence, after the Australian junior was gone.

He realised that, owing to the deep sagacity of Peter Todd, the game was up.

A fight with Squiff, who was one of the hardest hitters in the Remove, was not to be thought of. Skinner shuddered at the idea of it. Had Squiff undertaken to thrash him for not

giving up the study, Skinner's course would have been easy; he would have appealed to Mr. Quelch. But he could not appeal to Mr. Quelch to protect him against a Remove man who was going to thrash him for pub-haunting. Skinner's manners and customs in that respect had, to be kept secret from Mr. Quelch.

Skinner thought it over, long and hard. He was up against it, and he could see no way out—except by the door of Study No. 1, as it were. Skinner prided himself upon his cunning, but his cunning had let him down. By his own bad habits and general shady rascality, he had delivered himself, so to speak, into the hands of the Amalekites. There was nothing for it but surrender—and he realised it. Otherwise, he had before him the prospect of a series of terrific combats—all of them on some subject that he dared not let his Form master hear of. Skinner's face was white with rage when he made up his mind at last; but at last he did make it up.

When he came down to the Rag he found the Famous Five there. He walked up to Harry Wharton, who gave him a careless glance.

"Wharton!"

"Well?"

"You can have your old study. I'm going back to Study No. 11."

"Oh, thanks!"

That was all!

Skinner left the Rag, and his ears burned as he heard the long and loud chuckle that followed him.

The next day, Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent took possession of Study No. 1, and Skinner was back in his old quarters, with Snoop and Stott. And Squiff forgot his intention of thrashing Skinner for pub-haunting. And if Skinner's eyes glittered with malice whenever he saw the captain of the Remove that was not a matter to cause anyone much concern.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Birds of a Feather!

FISHER T. FISH smiled with satisfaction. The keen, sharp, bony face of the bright youth from across the Atlantic positively beamed. Fisher Tarleton Fish was pleased with himself and things in general.

When Fisher Tarleton Fish smiled with satisfaction there was generally good reason for somebody else to frown with dissatisfaction. So it was in the present case. The business man of the Remove had brought off a bargain; and he was eminently satisfied because in the first place, he had secured an article for a tenth of its value; in the second place, had left the other fellow feeling very sore. The other fellow's soreness was a testimony to the exceeding sharpness of Fisher T. Fish—a quality upon which that true son of "Uncle Shylock" prided himself.

Hobson of the Shell, hard up financially, and deeply repentant of having "blown" five pounds on a printing outfit he did not want, had made the plunge at last, and sold it to the American junior. Fishy had given him ten shillings for it. Had Hobson of the Shell been as cute and smart as a youth raised in the great United States, no doubt he could have found a better market. But James Hobson was neither cute nor smart; and perhaps was all the better for that. But certainly he had landed a big loss over his dealings with a youth to whom cuteness and smartness were as natural as the air he breathed.

Fisher T. Fish knew that he could get a pound, at least, for that outfit at Mr. Lazarus' secondhand shop in Courtfield; but it did not seem to have occurred to poor Hobby to try Mr. Lazarus. Not that Fishy intended to let that printing outfit go for a pound. He intended to keep it till he found a likely purchaser, and he hoped to bag at least four pounds, perhaps even as much as the original cost—perhaps even more, if he came across a "mug" with sufficient simplicity. When Fishy was buying, he was quite a different sort of Fish from Fishy when he was selling.

Fisher T. Fish was in the Remove box-room now, contemplating his purchase. Any fellow with a taste for amateur printing might have been very well pleased with that natty little outfit. Fisher T. Fish did not care two straws about amateur printing, or anything else that had no money in it. But he was pleased with his bargain. Ten shillings had purchased that five-pound outfit—and even the ten shillings had not been Fishy's own, as he had drawn it on interest on certain

(Continued on next page.)

TO AND FROM YOUR EDITOR!

BUDDING POETS!

A LOYAL reader of the old paper wants to know if I could add a few extra pages to the MAGNET and devote it to poetry written by readers. My Liverpool chum's idea, though fruitful enough, is hardly practicable. Some of the other readers might jib at the poetry, you know. This is what my correspondent says about it: "And the shy poet, blushing unseen, would be able to blossom forth in a burst of poetical inspiration." Well, he can do that—but not in the MAGNET, please.

JIMMY SILVER & CO.

H. Ransome, of Coventry, wants to know what's happened to Jimmy Silver & Co., the cheery chums of Rookwood. Apparently my correspondent is not aware that the "Popular"—on sale

every Tuesday—contains a long complete story dealing with the adventures of Uncle James and his merry men every week, or that the "Gem"—on sale Wednesdays—contains an excellent serial story, entitled: "The Rookwood Dictator." Both these companion papers are well worth reading. Trot round to the newsagent, Ransome, old scout, and have a look at them.

MAGNET LETTERS.

Many thanks to these chums for their interesting letters: H. M. Gibson, Belgrano, Argentine; D. Lovelace, Manchester; H. Wood, Margate; "Regular Reader," St. Helens; G. Hollingworth, Bradford; D. C. M., Sydney; "Sid," South Norwood; "A Friend Overseas," Melbourne; R. Adams, Bringelly, N.S.W., Australia; Harley E. Millichap, Birmingham; Cyril A. Clode, Battersea; "Nemo," Eton; "Killarney Elise," Birmingham; C. N. Perry, Stourbridge; J. Mosendale, Bromsgrove; "Eva," West Norwood; Eric R. Mullaney, Ayr.

Next Saturday's Programme.

"TOM REDWING'S RETURN!"

By Frank Richards.

This story for next week deals with the return of an old favourite as, of course, the title suggests. Magnetites are strongly urged to read it.

"GOLD FOR THE GETTING!"

By Stanton Hope.

Then there's another fine instalment of our gold rush serial, full of thrills and exciting incidents. Don't miss it.

"DR. BIRCHEMALL'S ELEVEN!"

Is another effort from young Dicky Nugent's pen—and it's a scream, boys. And last but by no means least there's a topping, chatty article about the boys of

CHELSEA,

the popular London club in the Second Division which made a gallant but unsuccessful fight last season for promotion to the First Division. Order your copy of the MAGNET early, chums.

YOUR EDITOR.

SKINNER TRIES IT ON!

(Continued from previous page.)

loans made to his schoolfellows. So Fishy felt that he had reason to be pleased all round, and was glad, for once, that fortune had landed him in a played-out island where the natives hadn't an earthly in dealing with an American business man.

He smiled over his handsome bargain; and he smiled again at the recollection of the expression on Hobson's face when the bargain had been concluded. Hobson had even called him a dirty dog, which made Fishy chuckle. Hobson's soreness was a tribute to Fishy's astuteness. Fishy would never have enjoyed a bargain half so much had he not left the other fellow feeling "done."

There was only one fly in the ointment, so to speak. Fishy would have liked to carry his prize into his own study, and there show it off to his study-mates and the Remove generally, as a sample of what a real live "Noo-Yarker" could do in the way of business. But his study-mates were Johnny Bull and Squiff; and neither Johnny Bull nor Squiff would have admired his business acumen. More probably—much more probably—they would have repeated Hobson's injurious expression, with amplifications; as likely as not they would have bumped Fishy for playing Shylock, and it was not at all improbable that they might have jumped on the outfit he had secured at so remarkably low a price, as a warning to him. Such difficulties as these naturally beset a business man, whose Form-fellows had not had the advantage of being raised in "Noo Yark."

So Fisher T. Fish carried off the prize to the box-room, where he decided to bestow it in a trunk till an opportunity arrived for disposing of it at a whacking profit. And as he smiled with satisfaction over his bargain there was a footstep on the box-room stairs, and Skinner of the Remove looked in. It was Saturday afternoon, and most of the Remove fellows were at football practice; but football never bothered Skinner if he could get out of it.

Fisher T. Fish gave Skinner a rather startled look. Unlike the gentleman who did good by stealth, and blushed to find it fame, Fishy did mean things by stealth, and was afraid of being found out. It was really annoying that Skinner had had an eye on him that afternoon.

"So you've landed it?" said Skinner agreeably.

"Yep!" Fishy's manner was curt.

"How much did you give for it?"

"Find out!"

"I've found out!" grinned Skinner. "I heard Hobson of the Shell telling Hoskins what he thought of you."

"Hobson is a jay, and Hoskins is a mug!" retorted Fisher T. Fish. "No business of yours, anyhow."

"None at all," agreed Skinner. "I'd advise you, as a friend, to keep the transaction rather dark. The fellows are rather fed-up with your screwing money out of chaps. They bumped you the other day for making young Tubb pay you threepence a week interest on a loan of a bob."

"Tubb agreed to pay it, didn't he?" grunted Fisher T. Fish. "Ain't a man to claim his plain rights? Look here, what do you want?"

"Just a squint at Hobson's printing press," said Skinner. "I asked him to lend the thing to me, and he told me

to go and eat coke. I dare say you'll lend it to me, old chap."

"No fear! I'll hire it out to you if you want to do any printing," said Fisher T. Fish promptly. "You can use it for a shilling an hour."

"I'd rather you lent it to me."

"Nothing doing, you guy."

Skinner smiled.

"Right-ho! Sorry! I'll fetch a few of the fellows here to look at your bargain. They'll be glad to see it, I dare say—and to know that you screwed it off Hobson for ten bob, because he's got an account to pay at the tuckshop. I wonder if any of the fellows might think of putting a boot through it, as a lesson to you!" added Skinner meditatively.

Fisher T. Fish breathed hard through his long, thin nose.

"I guess you needn't hurry off," he said, as Skinner moved to the door. Skinner turned back, smiling.

Fisher T. Fish looked at him, and Skinner looked at Fisher T. Fish. As an astute, cute, and sharp and smart business-man, Fishy ought really to have been pleased to meet Skinner, who was the only fellow in the Remove anything like an equal to him in those respects. But he did not seem pleased. His own striking qualities in another fellow did not seem to appeal to him, somehow.

"You can use the thing if you like, s'long as you don't damage it," he said grudgingly.

"Thanks!" drawled Skinner.

"What do you want to print?"

"Only some notices for the debating club."

Fisher T. Fish made no reply to that. He knew that it was an untruth, but he knew that Skinner would not tell him the truth anyhow.

"Leave it to me," said Skinner; "I know how to handle the thing, and I shan't damage it."

"I guess I'll stay here while you use it."

"Guess again."

Fisher T. Fish gave him another long look. Then he left the box-room, and Skinner locked the door after him. He was curious, but he was aware that Skinner would not gratify his curiosity, and most assuredly he did not want Harold Skinner to bring a crowd of the Remove to the spot to learn all about his wonderful nose for a bargain. It was only too probable that his bargain would not have survived the visit.

So he left Skinner to his own devices; and for quite a long time Skinner was locked in the box-room, and when he emerged there was a smile on his thin face that boded no good to somebody. Fisher T. Fish observed him, and observed the smile, and wondered what kind of trick Harold Skinner was planning with the aid of Hobson's printing-press. But Skinner told him nothing, and Fisher T. Fish packed up his bargain and secreted it in a trunk, still wondering.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Skinner Going Strong!

"SOUTHEND!"

That familiar word caught the ears of Harry Wharton & Co. as they came into the Rag after tea on Monday.

Skinner was talking to Snoop and Stott and Hazeldene. His back was towards the door, and apparently he did not observe the Famous Five coming in. They could guess quite easily, however, that he knew they were there, and had timed his remark to catch their ears.

Most of the Remove fellows, and a good many of the Fourth Form, were in the Rag, and some of them grinned.

Harry Wharton & Co. had been nearly a week back at Greyfriars, and settled down, and their adventurous voyage in the Southern Seas seemed very far behind them now. Mr. Quelch was still a little chilly; but the Famous Five had made it a point to be very attentive in class, listening to the words of their Form master as if they were pearls of wisdom falling from his lips, and so the Remove master was beginning to take them into his good graces again. He was still deeply incensed with Herbert Vernon-Smith, who had not yet rejoined the school, the Bounder evidently having persuaded his indulgent parent to go extremely easy with him. But the Bounder was not there to see his Form master's frown, and would probably have cared little about it had he been there.

The Famous Five had succeeded in placating Mr. Quelch, and, owing to Toddy's diplomacy, Study No. 1 was once more occupied by its rightful owners. But Skinner was making himself as unpleasant as he could. His defeat over the ownership of the study had left him very sore; and there was one topic upon which Skinner could be annoying, and that was his version of the Famous Five's voyage in the Southern Seas, which Skinner persisted in alluding to as the Southend Seas.

It delighted Skinner to get Bunter talking on the subject, with a crowd of fellows to hear. Billy Bunter, of course, was always prepared to talk, especially about himself, and more than willing to oblige with accounts of his wild adventures in the Pacific. Wilder and wilder grew those adventures every time Bunter related them, and the Removites chuckled and roared over tales of shipwrecks, hurricanes, tornados, pirates, golden treasures, and man-eating cannibals—in all of which tales William George Bunter cut an heroic figure, his companions being very small beer in comparison.

The more the Owl of the Remove exaggerated and imagined, the more doubt was cast on the whole story. Bob Cherry had set up his coral on the mantelpiece in Study No. 13, and Skinner had affected to recognise it as a specimen of Birmingham art. Johnny Bull had brought home a bush knife as a souvenir, and Skinner remarked that they could be bought at a London stores, which certainly was the case. Most of the fellows, of course, were quite able to distinguish between Bunter's fairytales and the facts as related by the Famous Five; but Skinner kept to his version, and a good many fellows found amusement in it. The fact that Wharton was obviously annoyed made some fellows find diversion in pulling his leg on the subject.

Still, everything has a end—or ought to have an end—and the Remove began to think that Skinner's jest was growing a little stale. Skinner had caused entertainment with it, but he had not succeeded in convincing fellows that Harry Wharton & Co. had developed into spinners of yarns in the style of Billy Bunter. The cad of the Remove had not intended his version of the story simply as a jest; he had wanted to throw discredit on the fellows he disliked, and he was a believer in the proverb that if one throws enough mud some of it is sure to stick. Still, there was no doubt that fellows were beginning to yawn, instead of grin, when Skinner alluded to the Southend Seas, and the coconut shies, and bananas that

"Get up, you funk!" growled Bolsover major. "You're not half licked yet!" "Ow! I can't!" "You malingering worm!" said Bolsover in disgust. "I'll jolly well help you, then!" As he spoke he grasped Skinner by the collar and hauled him to his feet. (See Chapter 10.)



were gathered from barrows, and so forth.

But Skinner seemed to have revived the expiring interest in his humorous effort on the present occasion. Snoop and Stott and Hazel were listening to him very attentively, and Bolsover major and several other fellows stretched out their ears to catch what he was saying. And the entrance of the Famous Five caused a grin and a movement of interest. Skinner did not appear to know they had come in, and the chums of the Remove very distinctly took no notice of Skinner. He chattered on, raising his voice a little to make sure that they heard it.

"Southend, yes. I told you so from the first."

"Well, it was a good joke," said Hazel; "but you tell such a lot of things, Skinner. You're always running down somebody."

"I don't like footling swank," said Skinner. "I think that when a fellow swanks he ought to be shown up. Look at Price of the Fifth. All the Fifth laughed at him, and serve him right."

"Yes, rather!" said Snoop. "But—"

"When fellows tell lies—" went on Skinner.

"Look out!" murmured Snoop.

Harry Wharton came across the Rag directly towards Skinner. There was a glint in his eyes.

"Skinner!" He spoke quietly, but his voice was heard through the room, and fellows began to gather round, in anticipation of a "row." Most of the fellows thought that Skinner's jest was dead enough to be buried, but if the captain of the Remove was going to get his back

up about it in public that was sufficient to give it new life.

Skinner lounged round, and looked at him insolently.

"Your fatheaded jokes aren't worth a fellow's notice," said Harry. "But accusing fellows of telling lies is not a joke. I warn you to chuck it, or you'll land in trouble. That's all."

"Is that all?" asked Skinner airily. "Not quite, I think. You needn't tell me that you can lick me, Wharton—I know that; but if you think you can frighten me, you're making a mistake. I can give chapter and verse for what I say."

"If that means anything, it means that you can prove that those fellows have been pulling our leg about what they did in the vac," said Bolsover major.

"It means just that!" answered Skinner.

Wharton stared at him.

"You can prove it?" exclaimed half a dozen voices.

"Certainly I can!" Skinner glanced round. He had an audience now, there was no doubt about that. "I never believed the story. I've heard fellows tell the tale about their wonderful doings in the hols before now, and I've always taken them with a grain of salt. I took this yarn with a very big grain. Cannibals, and treasure islands, and so on—too thick for me! If they'd owned up it was spoof, I'd have said no more about it. As they keep it up that it all really happened, I felt bound to look into the matter and see whether there was anything in it. I found out that

there wasn't. And I'm ready to prove it to all Greyfriars, if Wharton looks as black as thunder, or blacker."

"I think you're out of your senses!" said Harry contemptuously. "All the fellows know we went to the Pacific for the vacation, in Smithy's father's yacht."

"Then you were in the South Seas all through August?"

"Of course!"

"Then you must have the rare and wonderful gift of being in two places at once," yawned Skinner. "For I've got absolute proof, in black and white, that you were at Southend-on-Sea in August."

And as Skinner made that startling statement there was a buzz all through the Rag.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

In Black and White!

HARRY WHARTON could only stare at Skinner.

The Co. stared at him, too.

That Skinner was irritated by fellows telling him that his jest was stale and that it was time he buried it, and so on, they knew. They knew that he was still more irritated, in fact, simmering with malice, at being driven into vacating Study No. 1; and any mean revenge that Skinner could have taken, they would have expected as a matter of course. But in taking his present line, the cad of the Remove seemed to have lost all his usual cunning, so far as the Famous Five could see. But surely it

was beyond the most cunning and unscrupulous fellow's power to prove what was untrue!

"What does the silly fool mean?" asked Jonnny Bull at last. "I've never seen Southend in my life!"

"I've been there, when I was a kid," said Frank Nugent, in wonder. "Jolly place, if you come to that. I shouldn't mind going again. But we never went within miles of it last vac."

"Skinner says he can prove it," said Hazel.

"Skinner's lying!" snapped Wharton.

"Well, let him trot out his proof!" said Squiff. "I'm fed-up with this rot, for one. Trot your giddy proofs out, Skinner, if you've got any. We know they're lies to begin with."

"It's up to you now, Skinner," said Peter Todd, with a very curious look at the cad of the Lower Fourth.

"I know that," answered Skinner coolly. "As the matter stands, I accuse Wharton of telling a swanking yarn about his hols, and he accuses me of lying. I want the Form to judge between us."

"Right as rain!" said Bolsover major. "Go it!"

"I shall certainly not enter into any argument with you, Skinner, on the subject," said Wharton disdainfully.

Skinner smiled.

"You'd rather not see my proofs, what?"

"You cannot have any proof of what is false. My friends and I were in the Pacific all through August."

"So you say!" sneered Skinner.

Wharton clenched his hands, and made a step forward. Skinner did not recede. He stood firm, eyeing the captain of the Remove bitterly.

"You can't settle this matter by punching," he sneered. "Let the fellows hear what I've got to tell them, if you're not afraid."

"Afraid!" Wharton laughed with angry scorn. "Afraid of you, or anything you can say!"

"Well, let him trot it out," said Temple of the Fourth. "You can punch his head afterwards if he's spoofing."

"He can say what he likes."

"Thank you for nothing," said Skinner. "I'm going to, anyway. I say that it's all spoof about your wonderful doings in the South Seas, like Price's tale about the Dolomites, and that you never went further than a seaside resort on the coast of Essex."

"Liar!" said Bob Cherry.

"We're waiting for that proof!" said Squiff.

"I say, you fellows, we really did go to the South Seas!" exclaimed Billy Bunter indignantly. "I've told all you chaps about what I did there—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"These fellows didn't do much—practically nothing. But they were there. I took them with me."

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Shut up, you fat idiot!"

"Shan't!" roared Bunter. "I've told you all about how I faced a mob of cannibals single-handed—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And how I swam ashore from the wreck among the sharks—"

"Shut up!" roared Peter Todd.

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Kick him, somebody!"

"Yaroooooh!"

"Now then, Skinner, step out and say your piece," said Squiff. "We know it's all whoppers, in advance; but get it off your chest."

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"The fellows can judge when they see it in print," said Skinner.

"In print!" exclaimed a dozen Removites.

"Just that! You see, when I heard that story of a shipwreck I knew it was all gammon; but there's generally some little bit of truth at the bottom of a yarn. Take Bunter's yarns, for instance. He tells us about Bunter Court. But there really is a Bunter Villa, or a Bunter pub, or something—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you beast, Skinner—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Same with Wharton's tall story about shipwrecks and things," went on Skinner. "I knew a fellow who had a holiday at Southend this summer, and I wrote and asked him. He told me that there was a boating accident there. Some schoolboys had a boat out at a shilling an hour, and ran it into the pier, and jolly near drowned themselves. That was the little bit of truth at the bottom of the tall story."

"And you want us to believe that those schoolboys were Wharton and his friends?" asked Squiff.

"Yes, as I can prove it."

"How?" demanded half the Remove.

"By the report of the accident in a Southend paper."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Any names given?" yelled Squiff.

"Yes."

"Whose name?"

"Wharton's!"

"My only hat! But there are lots of Whartons, after all. It's not a common name, but there must be some hundreds."

"It's a jolly queer coincidence, anyhow," said Bolsover major.

"Jolly queer!" said Hazeldene.

"The queerfulness is terrific, if true," remarked Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh. "But the truefulness is a boot on the other leg."

"I wrote to my pal, and asked him to send me a copy of the paper that had the report in it," said Skinner. "He sent it. Wharton's name is there, as large as life. I can show you the paper."

"You utter fool!" said Harry contemptuously. "There may have been five or six Whartons, for all I know, at Southend this summer."

"Not all belonging to Greyfriars!" grinned Skinner.

"My hat! Was Greyfriars mentioned?" exclaimed Bolsover major.

"It was."

"Oh!"

"That must be false!" said Harry.

"There's only one Wharton at Greyfriars, myself. You are telling lies, Skinner!"

"We'll soon settle that," said Bolsover major. "Skinner says that he can show us the paper. We'll make him do it."

"I don't want any making," answered Skinner. "I've got the paper in my pocket, and I've already shown it to some fellows."

"Trot it out!"

Skinner groped under his jacket, and drew out a folded newspaper. Interest in the Rag was at a point of breathlessness now.

Skinner had succeeded, to a certain extent, in throwing an air of dubiousness about the story of the Famous Five's voyage to the Pacific. Certain little circumstances had helped him. A treasure had been discovered, but none of it was to be seen. It belonged to Tom Redwing, who was not at Greyfriars. Billy Bunter had been with the Famous Five wherever they had been, and Billy Bunter, at least, had told the most astounding fibs about it. And the

true story was a very unusual one. Nevertheless, the good faith of the Famous Five was known and trusted in the Remove, and Skinner's want of faith was equally well known. Harry Wharton & Co. could have produced evidence enough; but they were not likely to take the trouble to sort out evidence that they had not been indulging in empty swank like Price of the Fifth. Now Skinner's statement that he had incontrovertible evidence on his side had a great effect on the juniors.

All eyes were fixed on the folded newspaper that Skinner produced.

He unfolded it, and the fellows read the title on it—the "Southend Weekly." On the back page, as is often the case with local papers, as well as papers with a national circulation, a half-column was left blank and headed "Stop Press News."

In the Stop Press column of this particular paper was a paragraph, apparently inserted as the paper was going to press.

The juniors crowded forward to read it as Skinner held the newspaper up to general inspection.

It was brief, but it was, in the circumstances, pithy. It ran:

"An accident, which was very nearly a fatality, took place this morning off Southend Pier. A boat, taken out by a party of schoolboys on holiday from Greyfriars School, Kent, collided with the pier and sank. Boatmen rescued the boys, one of whom, named Wharton, was in a rather serious condition when landed. We are glad to learn, however, that he has since fully recovered."

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Skinner's Triumph!

"OH!"

The crowd in the Rag fairly gasped.

They stared at the paper—they stared at the paragraph—they stared at the Famous Five, and they stared at Skinner.

There it was, in black and white, as Skinner had said.

"What's the date of that paper?" asked Peter Todd suddenly.

Peter was the first to recover from his astonishment.

"Look at it," answered Skinner.

"August 19th," Peter read out.

"Oh crumbs!" said Squiff.

Harry Wharton & Co. simply blinked. Never in their lives had they been so astounded.

On the date when the Southend paper had been issued they had been in the South Seas, there was no doubt about that. With Smithy and Tom Redwing they had been on Mr. Vernon-Smith's yacht, somewhere about the Marquesas. Yet to whom could this description apply if not to themselves? A party of schoolboys on holiday from Greyfriars School, Kent, one of them named Wharton! Only to the Famous Five could that description apply. There was only one Wharton at Greyfriars, and that was Harry Wharton of the Remove.

Peter Todd looked perplexed, Squiff extremely puzzled, the other fellows amazed and dubious. Some of them were laughing now. Bolsover major sneered openly, and Hazel sniggered, and Snoop and Stott chuckled. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth obviously had no doubt on the subject.

"Oh gad! What a show up!" said Cecil Reginald Temple.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"So it was the giddy Southend Seas, after all!" chuckled Fry of the Fourth. "This is a give-away, and no mistake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What price cannibals now?" roared Bolsover major. "We've heard a lot about cannibals. Are there cannibals in Essex?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Essex County Council ought to be told about it," grinned Hazel. "They ought to put it down."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared. Certainly, the tale of adventure told by the Famous Five did not agree with the locality in which most of the fellows now believed they had passed their vacation.

"I fancy it's true about the coconuts and bananas," yawned Skinner. "They got the coconuts on the shies and the bananas on the costers' barrows."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But the cannibals had better take a back seat now, and the pirates and the schooners and the pearls and treasures," said Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I ever heard of such a spoof!" exclaimed Wibley. "I took it all down like milk."

Wharton set his lips.

"I can't make out what that paragraph means," he said, his eyes flashing. "It must be some mistake. Certainly it does not apply to us."

"It says Greyfriars fellows plain enough," jeered Bolsover major.

"It must be a mistake. Either the name of the school or the name of Wharton is a mistake."

"What utter rot!"

"Do reporters make mistakes like that?" grinned Hazel. "Fancy a party of schoolboys from Harrow, one of them named Smith, being reported in the paper as a party of schoolboys from Greyfriars, one of them named Wharton! Does it sound likely?"

Wharton was silent.

Not only did it not sound likely, but it was impossible, and all the fellows knew it. Reporters made mistakes, like the rest of humanity, but not mistakes to that extent.

Skinner looked round vauntingly.

"I said I wanted the Form to judge between us!" he exclaimed. "I've proved my case, I think."

"You jolly well have," agreed Bolsover major.

"Yes, rather! It was all spoof."

"Own up, Wharton!" taunted Snoop. Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"I've nothing to own up to, you cad!" he snapped. "I simply can't understand that being in the paper. But it's a silly mistake of some sort. That's all. Any fellow who doubts my word needn't speak to me again; and any fellow who calls me a liar had better put up his hands when he does so!"

"Same here!" roared Bob Cherry in great wrath.

"The samefulness is terrific."

"What?" bellowed Bolsover major.

"You're shown up as spoofing braggarts, and we're not to say that we think so! Why, you liars—"

Crash!

Bolsover major measured his length on the floor of the Rag.

Harry Wharton stood over him with blazing eyes.

"Now get up and have some more, you cheeky cad!" he shouted.

Bolsover did not need telling twice. He leaped to his feet and charged at the captain of the Remove like a bull.

In a moment they were fighting hammer and tongs.

The juniors backed away to leave them a ring. It was easily to be seen that the general sympathy was on

"TOM REDWING'S RETURN!"

At long last Tom Redwing has realised the ambition of his life, namely, to return to Greyfriars on the same footing as the other fellows there, and without being beholden to anyone for a penny.

But in the eyes of his Form-master he makes a very bad start, how bad you will discover when you read next week's magnificent long complete tale of the Greyfriars chums.

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Bolsover's side for once. Skinner had proved his case, and almost every fellow there believed that the Famous Five had been shown up in a "spoof." Even the fellows who still had faith in them were utterly puzzled and perplexed, and did not know what to think. Wharton's anger was natural enough; but to most of the fellows it looked as if the captain of the Remove was simply trying to carry off the matter with a high hand.

"Go it, Bolsover!" shouted Snoop.

"Back up, Bolsover!"

Bolsover was going it as hard as he could, and he was a hefty fellow. But Wharton knocked him right and left, and at the end of ten minutes Percy Bolsover lay on the floor, gasping for breath, beaten to the wide.

Wharton glanced round with glinting eyes.

"Who's going to repeat Bolsover's words?" he demanded. "I'm ready for the next."

"Oh, chuck it!" said Temple of the Fourth. "Do you think you're goin' to make us believe lies by knockin' a fellow about?"

Crash!

Cecil Reginald Temple was on the floor almost before he had finished speaking.

He was up again in a twinkling and rushing at the captain of the Remove, and another fight was quickly in progress.

Wingate of the Sixth came striding into the Rag.

"Stop that!" he snapped.

Wharton dropped his hands, panting; and Cecil Reginald Temple backed away, and leaned on Dabney, gasping wildly. Never had Cecil Reginald been so glad to see the captain of the school.

"What's all this thumping row about?" demanded Wingate gruffly.

"Wharton doesn't like being called a liar!" grinned Snoop.

"I suppose he doesn't," said Wingate. "What do you mean?"

"These fellows have been spinning a yarn about a cruise in the Pacific Islands among the cannibals," said Skinner. "It's come out that it's all spoof. So Wharton's got his rag out."

Wharton turned on him.

"You lying cad! I—"

"Chuck that, Wharton!" Wingate

caught Harry by the shoulder and jerked him away from Skinner, much to that youth's relief. "Let's have this clear. I've heard all about the Pacific voyage. What do you mean by saying that it was spoof, Skinner?"

"It's in the paper!" yelled Bolsover major.

"What's in the paper?"

"Look!" said Stott.

Wingate, of the Sixth, stared at the paragraph in the stop-press column of the Southend paper.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated.

"Rather a show-up, what?" said Fry.

"It's some mistake in the paper, Wingate!" said Wharton, as calmly as he could. "That doesn't apply to us."

Wingate gave him a searching look.

"Well, if it's a mistake, it's a jolly odd and unusual mistake," he said. "I don't see how any paper could make such a mistake. Anyhow, stop scrapping about it—any more scrapping here and you'll get into trouble."

"I'm not going to be called a liar!" exclaimed Wharton fiercely.

"I don't see how you'll help it, in these circumstances," said Wingate coolly. "Don't cheek me, Wharton! Go to your study at once, and stay there till you know how to behave yourself."

Wharton clenched his hands hard. But Frank Nugent slipped a hand through his arm, and led him away, and the Famous Five left the Rag. There was mocking laughter from one end of the Rag to the other now. Skinner had triumphed at last, there was no doubt about that. All through the Remove

and the Fourth, with very few exceptions, Harry Wharton & Co. were looked upon as reckless, empty braggarts—boasters who had been completely and hopelessly shown up and exposed. Harold Skinner felt that his defeat over No. 1 Study was paid for now.

There was just one little fly in the ointment, however. When Skinner strolled out of the Rag later on, in a mood of great satisfaction, Fisher T. Fish tapped him on the arm in the corridor.

"I guess you owe me a bob!" said Fishy, grinning.

Skinner stared at him.

"What do you mean, you ass?" he snapped.

"Hire of a printing-machine!" grinned Fishy.

Skinner started.

"I guess it's no funeral of mine," said Fisher T. Fish; "but in the circumstances I calculate you'd better pay up, Skinner. You can spoof those guys as much as you like—but I guess you'll find it convenient to pay for the hire of my printing outfit after all. What?"

Skinner, in silence, dropped the required coin into Fisher T. Fish's bony hand.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Quelch Takes a Hand!

MR. QUELCH eyed his Form rather curiously, and very keenly, the next day in class.

Mr. Quelch's eyes were often compared, by his pupils, to gimlets, on account of their penetrating qualities.

Certainly, there was little that went on in the Lower Fourth that escaped the gimlet-eyes of Mr. Henry Samuel Quelch.

That there was "something up" in the Remove was as clear as daylight to Mr. Quelch that morning.

Five members of his Form sat with clouded, angry faces; and among the

rest there was an unusual amount of grinning and whispering. The five members of the Remove who were, like Olympus, veiled in clouds, were Harry Wharton & Co.

Now, Mr. Quelch had been exceedingly cross with those five members of his Form, who had so inexplicably preferred a prolongation of the summer holiday to class-work in the Form-room at Greyfriars. He had been angry, and, like the ancient prophet, he had considered that he did well to be angry.

But exemplary conduct on the part of the delinquents had placated him; and his wrath was now reserved for Vernon-Smith, who was still away from school, and still recklessly missing the valuable knowledge on many subjects that he might have been acquiring from Mr. Quelch.

The Remove master had forgiven the quintette; and—although he had said nothing on the subject, and had appeared to be ignorant of it—he was pleased to learn that Wharton and Nugent had their old study back, Skinner having apparently conceded it to them of his own accord.

But it was obvious now to Mr. Quelch that the five were on the worst of terms with the rest of the Form, and he was concerned. Little as any fellow would have guessed it from Henry Samuel Quelch's crusty exterior, the Remove master had a kind heart, and took a deep and friendly interest in the well-being of the boys under his charge.

During the morning, Mr. Quelch observed the state of affairs with a keen eye, but without making any remark on the subject. In morning break, Mr. Quelch took a little stroll in the quad, while the Lower Fourth were "out," and heard many of the remarks made among the juniors. For some reason the finger of scorn was pointed at the fellows whom he knew to be among the finest characters in his Form; and Mr. Quelch, like the kind and dutiful Form-

master that he really was, decided to look into the matter.

In third lesson, he noticed that Bob Cherry rubbed his knuckles a good deal, surreptitiously, under his desk. He noticed, too, that Hazeldene dabbed his nose a good deal. He did not need telling that Bob's knuckles had recently come into violent contact with something, and that Hazel's nose was the something.

After third lesson, when the Remove were dismissed for the morning, Mr. Quelch called to Wharton to remain behind. It was not unusual for the head boy of the Remove to have a few words with his Form-master after class. Wharton stayed behind when the Form streamed out.

Mr. Quelch, sitting at his high desk, eyed the junior before him very curiously.

"There appears to be some trouble, Wharton, between you and your friends, and the other boys in the Form," he remarked.

Wharton coloured.

He had supposed that Mr. Quelch desired to speak to him about some of his duties as captain of the Form, and it had not occurred to him that the Remove master had noticed anything of what was going on in the Remove. He looked, and felt, very uncomfortable.

"I am sorry to see it, my boy," went on Mr. Quelch. "Possibly it is some matter on which a Form-master's advice may help."

"You're very kind, sir," faltered Wharton, "but—"

"If you care to confide in me, my boy—"

"It's nothing sir."

"It can scarcely be nothing, Wharton, when it appears to have led to fighting in the Form," said Mr. Quelch.

"Well, not exactly nothing, sir, but—"

Wharton's face was crimson.

"Some sort of a misunderstanding?" suggested the Remove master.

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NOW. That's the best way to avoid disappointment, boys!

"In a way, sir, yes."

"Tell me about it."

Wharton hesitated.

"The fellows think we've been telling silly lies about what we did in the holidays, sir," he stammered, at last. "They think we've been bragging like silly asses and drawing the long bow."

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows.

"I am sure that you, at least, Wharton, have done nothing of the sort," he said. "Your faults are certainly not of that kind. What has given the boys that impression?"

"I don't really blame them, sir," said Wharton honestly. "Some reporter in a paper has made a silly mistake, which makes us look like a lot of lying duffers. But it looks like proof to all the fellows that we've been telling lies about our voyage to the South Seas."

"That is very extraordinary, Wharton. Give me the particulars, please."

Wharton reluctantly described the paragraph in the Southend paper, Mr. Quelch listening with growing astonishment. The Remove master, of course, was fully aware that the five had gone to the Pacific for the summer vacation, in Mr. Vernon-Smith's yacht.

"This is inexplicable, Wharton," he said, when the captain of the Remove had finished. "How did this Southend paper come to be at Greyfriars at all?"

"A fellow in the Remove had it sent to him by a friend, sir."

"Which boy?"

"Skinner."

"Is the paper still in Skinner's possession?"

"I suppose so, sir."

"I am glad you have told me about the matter, Wharton. I shall make it my business to look into it and cause the reporter's strange mistake to be explained, and I hope that that will set you and your friends right with your Form."

"Thank you, sir!" said Harry.

And he left the Form-room, leaving Mr. Quelch looking exceedingly thoughtful. At dinner that day Mr. Quelch spoke to Harold Skinner at the Remove table.

"Skinner, I think you have a copy of a paper called the 'Southend Weekly,' dated August 19th?" he said.

Skinner looked startled.

"I—I had, sir," he stammered.

"I should like to see it, Skinner."

"I—I'm sorry, sir; I—I used it to light my study fire last evening, sir," said Skinner.

"Oh! In that case, never mind."

And the matter dropped.

"Quelch's got on to it now," grinned Bolsover major, when the Remove left the dining-room. "I wonder what he thinks of his head boy? You ought to have kept that paper, Skinner."

Harold Skinner did not reply. His face was deeply troubled, and there was a chill of dread in his heart. The way of the transgressor had seemed prosperous enough so far, but if the gimlet-eyes of Mr. Quelch were looking into the affair Skinner realised only too clearly that the way of the transgressor was likely to be hard.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Vindicated!

ALL the Remove noticed that Mr. Quelch's face was grim in expression when he came in to take his Form that afternoon.

"Something's up!" Squiff murmured to Peter Todd; and Peter nodded. Plainly something was up.

Latin prose was the order of the day in the Remove-room; but, for once, Mr.

Quelch did not heed the time-table. Latin prose had to wait.

"My boys," said Mr. Quelch, from his desk, "there is a matter to which I must refer before lessons commence."

Dead silence!

"Certain boys in this Form made a voyage to the Pacific in Mr. Vernon-Smith's yacht in the vacation," said Mr. Quelch. "I was consulted in the matter, naturally, and was aware of all the circumstances in which Wharton and his friends made that unusual excursion."

"Oh!" gasped Bolsover major.

"I say, you fellows, I told you so—"

"Silence, please!" said Mr. Quelch,

appeared in the 'Stop Press' column of his paper in the issue of August 19th, or any other issue."

There was a silence of amazement in the Form-room.

"That paragraph," resumed Mr. Quelch, "was added by some person unknown after the paper was in circulation. This unknown person obtained a copy of the paper, and, taking advantage of the blank space left for the 'Stop Press' news, he audaciously and unscrupulously made up that false item of news and printed it in the blank space, no doubt with some amateur printing machine that he had at his disposal."



With a face of immense length Fisher T. Fish watched while the Remove committee entered the box-room, where every member in turn jumped on the printing outfit as a warning to him that the methods of "Uncle Shylock" were not popular at Greyfriars. (See Chapter 16.)

with a severe glance at Billy Bunter. "It appears that doubt has been cast on the matter. The matter is, in itself, of little importance; but it would appear that some person has been guilty of a disreputable trick in order to cast doubt on the statements made by Wharton and his friends. A certain paragraph appeared in the 'Stop Press' column of a Southend paper, which appeared to prove beyond all doubt that those boys had passed their vacation at that well-known and popular seaside resort."

"It did jolly well prove it, sir!" blurted out Bolsover major.

"That paragraph was a forgery," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!"

"I have telephoned to the office of the 'Southend Weekly,'" went on Mr. Quelch. "I have spoken to the editor. He informs me that no such paragraph

"Oh!"

The Remove fairly gasped.

"Whether this form of forgery is punishable by law I am not quite clear," went on Mr. Quelch grimly. "But I have, naturally, promised the editor of the Southend journal that if it proves that his news was falsified by a Greyfriars boy, that boy will be very severely punished."

Skinner kept his eyes on his desk.

Most of the Remove fellows were glancing at him now and he dared not meet their eyes. His face was sickly.

"Such a trick," went on Mr. Quelch, raising his voice a little, "cannot be passed over. The trickster will be taken to the headmaster, to be severely flogged for his offence. It is my duty to ascertain whether this wretched forger is a boy in this Form."

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"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"The false paragraph must have been printed by means of some amateur printing outfit," said Mr. Quelch. "Is it known whether there is such a thing in the school?"

"Hobson of the Shell has one, sir," said Bob Cherry. "But Hobby wouldn't do a dirty thing like that, sir."

"Hobson may have lent it to another boy," said Mr. Quelch. "I require to know whether any boy in this Form has, or has had, a printing press recently in his possession."

Silence.

Fisher T. Fish wriggled uncomfortably on his form. It looked as if his great bargain with Hobson was bound to come to light at last. Fishy, proud as he was of his bargaining powers, did not wish to boast of them to his Form master—far from it!

Skinner's face was almost green.

"If no one can give me the information I require I will inquire of Hobson of the Shell—"

Fisher T. Fish gasped. It had to come out now.

"I guess, sir—" he stuttered.

"Have you anything to tell me, Fish?"

"I—I—I bought that printing press from Hobson of the Shell, sir," said Fishy. "It's mine now, sir."

"Was it you, Fish, who printed this false and misleading paragraph in a newspaper stop-press column?" demanded Mr. Quelch in a deep and rumbling voice.

The transatlantic junior quaked.

"Nope, sir! Nope! Nix! Not on your life!" he spluttered.

"Speak English!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"I didn't do it, sir—never thought of it—wouldn't waste the printer's ink on it!" gasped Fishy. "Ink costs money."

"To whom, then, did you lend the printing outfit you bought from Hobson of the Shell?"

"Oh dear! I never lent it, sir. A—a galoot might have butted in and bagged it, sir—"

"That will do! Skinner!"

Skinner could not answer. His voice died in his throat as he found himself favoured by a full, fixed stare from Mr. Quelch's gimlet-eyes.

"Skinner, you were the person who showed the rest of the Form the paper containing the forged paragraph. How did it come into your possession?"

Skinner mumbled helplessly.

"Answer!" snapped the Remove master.

"I—I asked a fellow I knew at Southend to send me a copy of the paper, sir," faltered Skinner.

"For the purpose of playing this miserable trick to bring discredit on your Form-fellows?"

No answer.

"Do you dare to tell me, Skinner, that that forged paragraph was in the paper when you received it from your acquaintance at Southend?"

Skinner groaned. He would willingly have made that statement, or any other, had there been any possibility that Mr. Quelch would believe him. But that was not likely to be the case.

"No, sir!" he gasped.

"Then the false paragraph was added to the paper after it came into your possession Skinner?"

"Yes, sir," almost whispered Skinner.

"By your hand?"

Skinner mumbled. He was at the end of his tether now.

"It—it was only a joke, sir!" he groaned. "Those—those fellows had

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been gassing, and I thought I'd take them down a peg. It was simply a jest, sir—a practical joke."

"Well, my hat!" said Hazeldene, staring at him.

All the fellows were staring at Skinner. They knew how the matter stood now, and knew that the cad of the Remove had deceived the whole Form by what amounted to a forgery.

"Of all the rotters—" breathed Bolsover.

"Silence! Skinner, I do not believe for one moment your statement that you acted in jest. You caused your Form-fellows to be regarded as boastful and untruthful; and that evidently was your object. You had no intention of confessing the facts of the case. What you

have done, Skinner, was not only a dastardly trick on boys in this Form; it was an offence against the law. I shall take you to your headmaster, Skinner, and request him to deal with you. Follow me."

"Ow!"

The wretched Skinner limped out of the Form, and cringed after his Form master to the door. Never in all his mean and malicious career had Skinner cut so pitiful a figure.

There was an outburst of voices as soon as the Form master was gone.

"I say, you fellows, I told you so all along!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "Perhaps you believe now that I swam thirty miles from the wreck, and shot sixty cannibals dead—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Sorry, Wharton," said Bolsover major. "We were taken in. But who could have thought of a trick like that?"

"Sorry, old bean," said Hazel.

"I needn't say sorry," grinned Peter Todd. "I was sticking to you, old beans, though I admit I couldn't make it out quite."

"Same here," said Squiff.

"Who'd have thought of such a trick?" said Russell. "You never guessed it yourself, Wharton."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"That's so," he answered. "Let it drop. I couldn't make it out myself. I never knew Skinner had a printing outfit on hand, and it certainly never struck me that he had forged a paragraph in a newspaper. I dare say he's sorry by this time."

"No doubt about that!" grinned Squiff.

"The sorrowfulness probably equals the terrific birchfulness," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

There was no doubt that Harold Skinner was sorry that he had been found out. After his visit to the Head, he came back to the Form-room fairly wriggling. Mr. Quelch, at some length, explained to him what a discredit to the school he was, and how fortunate he was not to be expelled for what he had done. Skinner did not look like a fellow who felt fortunate. He looked the picture of misery.

After school, Skinner looked a little better. Cold looks and scornful words from his Form-fellows did not worry him so much as a flogging. And he revealed that Fisher T. Fish had known of his trickery all along; and Fishy's wonderful bargain in printing outfits came into the full glare of publicity. That was followed by a visit of a Remove committee to the box-room, where every member of the committee in turn jumped on the printing outfit, as a warning to Fisher T. Fish that the methods of "Uncle Shylock" were not popular at Greyfriars. Fisher T. Fish was left contemplating his bargain—now worth about twopence—with a face of immense length.

But nobody bothered about Fisher T. Fish, or much about Skinner. With the Famous Five of the Remove, all was calm and bright. They had been fully vindicated, and all was serene. Indeed, as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh declared, the serenity was terrific!

THE END.

(Now look out for: "Tom Redwing's Return!" next week's topping long story of Greyfriars. As there is bound to be a rush for the issue containing this great yarn, Magnetites should be on the safe side by ordering their copy well in advance.)

FAMOUS FOOTER CLUBS.

(Continued from page 2.)

The man at the helm should be the centre-half, because that is the position from which a ship can best be steered through troubled waters—and the waters of Second Division football are often troubled more than a bit.

Turning to the forwards, the prize shooter is in the centre—Willie Haines. He is a farmer's boy from Frome, and he gathered last season a rich harvest of forty League goals—an average of nearly one a match. Haines doesn't care if it snows ink when he has the ball at his toe and the goal is in sight. He just goes straight for it.

"Heave-Ho!"

Outside-right is Fred Forward—that's a good name for a footballer if you like! You can call him Forward Fred if you like. It fits just as well that way round. Forward he goes down the wing like a hare, with Mackie, the inside-right, and another Scot, to see to it that he gets plenty of chances of going full steam ahead.

Watson, the inside-left, comes from Bannockburn. That's a place where, if my memory serves me, a certain battle was fought in the long ago. I wasn't there—neither was Watson—but he is a bonny fighter all the same. (I had to put the word fighter in English, because they don't spell it in Scotch.) To complete the team is Fred Cook, the outside-left from Aberaman, and whose football life started at Aberdare.

There you have the Portsmouth team—a jolly lot of sailor lads, if you like. You should hear some of the critics talk the highbrow business about Portsmouth's team as a whole. They say they are not artistic; that they are just a "get there" lot. Well, there's nothing to be ashamed of in that. I have seen more scientific teams myself, but that isn't the same as saying they have been better from a match-winning point of view.

The secret of their success is just this: When the skipper says "Heave-O!" they just "Heave-O!" altogether. It was a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether, boys, which got Portsmouth where they are. And if the same sort of pulling can keep them in the First Division they will be there for a long time to come.

Manager John McCartney, who has now gone to Luton, got the team together. It is now held together by Manager Jack Tinn, who went to Portsmouth from South Shields.

JACK'S UNCLE ARRESTED! If grit and all the money he's got can clear Uncle Dave's name of the monstrous charge laid against him, Jack Orchard is prepared to fight tooth and nail. But the fight is destined to be a long one!

Gold for the Getting!



The Story of a Thrilling Gold Rush to the Land of the Midnight Sun!

Dave Orchard's Arrest!

"DAVE ORCHARD, the crook!" The words of Sergeant Curtis struck Jack like the lash of a whip. The statement, too, roused Uncle Clem in a way which surprised both the boys, and, with a growl like a wounded bear, he made a dive for the gun beside Terry on the sledge. "None of that, Orchard!" rapped out the sergeant. "My men have you covered. Gun-play won't do you any good!"

The rage died out of Uncle Clem, and left him a wilting, pathetic figure as he stood facing the troopers in the Yukon snow.

"No," he muttered, "I was a fool even to think of fight! I ought to have stopped way back on Starvation Creek, and never come near Dawson!"

He looked sadly towards Jack, who stood utterly dismayed again by the attitude of his old pard.

"Maybe I should have told you before, Jack," he said, "but I'd completely buried my identity, as I thought, under the name of Clem Hardy and I didn't want either you or Terry to know who I really was until I'd cleared my name. You've been good lads, and I know that neither of you will believe that I did the job they're holding me for."

Leaning forward, the moisture swimming in his eyes, Jack clasped one of his uncle's mittened hands in both of his own.

"I'll never believe you did such a rotten thing, Uncle Dave!" he cried. "You've heard both me and Terry say many a time that we believed in you, and were keen to spend some of our takings from the mine to clear your name. It's those beasts Morgan and Simons who've got Simpson's gold, though we can't make the police believe it. But, by jingo, I'll find out how they got it, and bring them to book before I'm through!"

And Terry, from the blankets on the sledge, said fervently:

"And, me bhoy, I'll help you!"

"Thanks, Jack! And you, Terry!" returned Dave Orchard. "I knew if I hit the Dawson trail I should run the chance of being recognised, but I was dead keen to come into contact with Bull Morgan again. Since the time you

told me how you saw the Bear's Claw nugget on him I suspected that it was he and that jackal Lefty Simons who attacked me in 'Frisco and robbed me of the gold I had charge of. I was a fool to have made this journey; I should have stayed on the Yellow Horseshoe. Though how the sergeant knew me with this beard and in this rough get-up I can't guess."

"You were recognised by a fellow in Bear Creek Camp," Sergeant Curtis said; "and he was obliging enough to come to Dawson and put us wise."

Light burst upon the pardners.

"Lefty Simons!" cried Jack. "So that's why the skunk was in that shanty quizzing at you so closely, uncle! I wish now I'd let daylight through his beastly carcass!"

A wan smile lighted his uncle's face.

"No, Jack," he said quietly; "you'll have to adopt other measures than that if you're going to help me out of this

INTRODUCTION.

JACK ORCHARD arrives at San Francisco to find that his uncle,

DAVID ORCHARD, is missing, having apparently absconded with a bag of gold which had been entrusted to him by an old friend named

SIMPSON. In consequence of this, Jack is forced to apply for a job. In the city he falls in with a cheery Irish boy,

TERRY O'HARA, and later the two new chums decide to join forces with

CLEM HARDY, an old prospector, whom they come to call Uncle Clem, in a gold rush up the Yukon. At times during their rough journey the three have trouble with a pair of bullies named Bull Morgan and Lefty Simons, and on one occasion Jack sees a gold nugget, shaped like a bear's claw, hanging round the neck of Morgan. He recognises it as part of the gold his uncle is supposed to have stolen. At long last they make a great "strike" at Starvation Creek and scoop up gold amounting to something over a thousand pounds which they decide to deposit at the bank in Dawson. The journey proves a hazardous one, however, for the pards are attacked by a pack of ravenous wolves which so severely maul Terry that it is thought necessary to remove him to hospital. Uncle Clem and Jack are trudging along in the snow in the wake of the sledge when a party of Mounties appear upon the scene. To Jack's astonishment the sergeant in charge singles out Uncle Clem and arrests him, in the name of Dave Orchard, for the theft of the Bear's Claw and Joe Simpson's golden nuggets in San Francisco!

(Now read on.)

hole. Believe me, boy, I never took Simpson's gold, in spite of all the circumstantial evidence against me!"

"And what you wrote to Mr. Welbeck, the bank manager in 'Frisco, was true, uncle?" cried Jack. "You were attacked and robbed of the gold?"

"That is as true as I'm now a captive, Jack," replied Dave Orchard solemnly. "Simpson, whom I had known some years, was an easy-going sort of fellow with a strange, old-fashioned dislike of banks. He begged me to look after his gold for him, as he was going to investigate a mine for someone in Mexico. The responsibility didn't appeal to me, and I suggested he would be better advised to hand it into the care of a safe deposit company. He refused. For the time being, I kept the gold on me till I got a chance of handing it over to Mr. Welbeck, when the bank opened on the following day."

"And the theft?"

"I'm coming to that, Jack. On the same evening I had occasion to go down to the docks on business; and on my way back I was struck down from behind. I saw no one, and my last recollection was of a blinding flash of light as the sandbag—or whatever weapon was used—came down on the back of my head. Shortly afterwards I came to, but my mind was a blank as far as my former life was concerned. I walked on in a dream, and was only aware that I was in a place called Spanish Causeway when I saw the name up."

"Spanish Causeway!" echoed Jack. "Why, it was there those rotters Morgan and Simons ran their notorious Red Rat Saloon. You can bet it was either they or someone in their employ who laid you out."

"Humph!" grunted Sergeant Curtis. "But I guess that doesn't quite explain, Orchard, why you found it necessary to make your get-away out of 'Frisco. Except for that note which was sent to the bank manager, nothing has been heard of you for months."

"It will be hard to make you understand, sergeant," replied the mining engineer dejectedly; "and harder, too, I guess to explain to a judge. For a time I was in 'Frisco with my memory completely gone. When I got it back

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I was frantic with dismay because of the loss of the Bear's Claw and other gold belonging to Simpson.

"At first it seemed like a terrible dream, and I couldn't even feel any effects of the blow which I knew must have laid me out. To assure myself of its reality I called on a doctor—a stranger to me—gave a false name, and asked him to run over me. He looked at me queerly and said there was no sign of a bruise on my head, as I insisted there must be—but then this was three or four days after the event."

"Huh!" ejaculated the sergeant. "And where were you during that time?"

"In 'Frisco, I suppose?" returned Dave Orchard. "All I am certain of is that I was never challenged once as to my identity. Then I saw a police poster bearing the word 'Wanted!' and I knew I should be accused of stealing the nuggets. Instead of waiting for arrest I cleared out and, deeming the recovery of the gold unlikely, set to work to earn until I could make enough to repay Simpson his loss."

The sergeant shrugged his broad shoulders.

"Maybe the judge will think it's plausible," he remarked dryly, "though I guess you'll allow, Orchard, that you've seriously prejudiced the case by absenting yourself all these months, knowing you were a wanted man."

"I only wish I'd still got my liberty," cried Dave Orchard. "I've already earned a fairish amount of gold which will go to Simpson. He's back in California now, so I've heard. If I'd had the time I'd have made up the full amount of his loss and found out as well how Bull Morgan came by the Bear's Claw nugget."

Jack gave his uncle's arm an affectionate grip.

"Try not to worry more than you can help, Uncle Dave," he murmured. "We'll see your share of the gold stays in the bank until you give orders for it to be handed over to Simpson. And I'll use my own share of the gold for but one purpose—the clearing of your name."

"Mine, too!" breathed Terry weakly from the sledge. "I've cent."

Their old pard swallowed quickly, and turned his face towards Dawson, the gay city he was destined to enter as a captured felon.

In solemn procession the whole party hit the trail, Jack walking beside the sledge, whereon lay his injured chum, and Uncle Clem—or Uncle Dave, as the boys were in future to call him—dragging wearily onward through the snow, with Sergeant Curtis and the four troopers as his guard.

Dawson Days!

TO Jack, the days that followed that distressing arrival in Dawson City were the most miserable of his life.

His uncle was a prisoner in gaol, and there he would have to stay until the arrival of the circuit judge at some indefinite future date. His chum Terry was in the hospital, a screen round his bed, his body a feverish battleground between invisible conflicting forces with his own life as the stake.

In the eyes of Dawson, Jack found himself both a notorious and heroic character. His relationship with Dave Orchard, the alleged thief of the famous Bear's Claw nugget and other gold, gained him the notoriety. His part in the gallant battle against the wolf-pack, which had not lost in the repeated telling by many mouths, accounted for the respect which honest citizens accorded him.

Jack himself cared nothing for what men said or thought, save that he writhed because of the gloating of those scoundrels, Bull Morgan and Lefty Simons. Actually, he saw neither of the rogues, but understood they were running a "sporting club" on White Street, though what particular sport, other than draw-poker and faro, might be indulged in on the premises he could not conceive.

At rare intervals Jack was allowed a brief interview with Uncle Dave in the local gaol. These interviews were painful for both, and Jack always felt the more downhearted after leaving. Even the open-hearted friendliness of Sergeant Curtis and other members of the Royal Mounted Canadian Police failed to rouse him. Boy-like, he could not forget that it was the sergeant who had taken his uncle and put him in that cell, even though it had been a plain matter of duty.

For many days Jack's visits to Terry were equally distressing to him.

Even after the Irish boy had passed the worst crisis there were days of grim anxiety while surgeons almost despaired of saving his left arm. But youthful blood and vitality triumphed, and Terry O'Hara, a mere wisp of his former robust, cheery self, at last got on the mend. Then, despite the anxiety about his uncle, Jack cheered up wonderfully.

With what joy he ransacked the Dawson stores for luxuries for his chum. Prices ruled high, but he secured a small pot of calves' foot jelly for the equivalent of thirty shillings, and a few oranges which cost him three shillings each.

These luxuries he took to Terry, whose eyes, now so hollow, lighted at the gift. And when, later, Jack stole out of the ward, his last glance back was at his chum peacefully asleep with the gifts stowed beneath his pillow.

Visiting Terry became a daily privilege, an event Jack looked forward to above all else. When next afternoon he went to the hospital he found his chum sitting up in bed, his left arm heavily swathed in bandages, and wearing a slightly puzzled look.

"Good ould Jack!" was Terry's joyful greeting. "Bedad, me bhoy, I had a strange dream about you! I thought you came here wid some juicy oranges for me."

"So I did, Terry," laughed Jack, "and I've brought you some bars of chocolate to-day."

"'Tis more than kind of you, Jack," answered the convalescent. "But shure 'twas no dream, after all, about those oranges and the jelly. And, faith, all the toime I thought meself dreamin', I knew I was wide awake entiroly. I wish you'd ask the nurse, me bhoy, what's happened to the goodies, for me mouth waters for a bite o' jelly and fruit afther too much boiled fish and rice pudding."

It annoyed Jack that his previous day's gifts should have been removed

from beneath Terry's pillow without his chum's knowledge, and he turned to look for the ward nurse. She was not present, but his eyes fell on a bed near by occupied by a yellow-haired youth, who was sitting up and clearing out the remains of a jar of calves' foot jelly with obvious enjoyment. And peeping from beneath the fellow's pillow was a juicy orange.

Rising from his chair, Jack made a step in the direction of the other bed, when a bearded patient in the cot immediately next to Terry beckoned to him. The man, a packer who had met with an accident on the ice of Sixty-Mile River, made a gesture for the boy to bend his head towards him.

"Don't you say nothin' to that young he-bear," he warned. "And in future when you bring your pard anythin', tell him to hand it right into the charge of the nurse."

Jack's eyes involuntarily glared across at the yellow-haired youth in the next bed. He was an unpleasant lad of Swedish nationality, with a face rather like a pug-dog, his flattened nose occupying most of the centre portion of his countenance. He met Jack's glance with a grin that revealed several spaces between his uneven teeth, and after tapping the now empty jar of jelly, rubbed a hand over the lower front of his pyjama jacket to indicate his appreciation.

"Aw, don't take any notice of him, boy!" grunted the bearded packer. "They'll be turning him out of here in a day or two, for he's got over the frostbite he came in with. You don't want to bump up against him as an enemy outside. That's Yap Hemmens."

"Never heard of him!" said Jack.

"You would ha' done, boy, if you'd ever followed sport on the Pacific coast," returned the other. "That Swede was the coming lightweight champion o' the Western States, and there was sartingly no one in Oregon to touch him. Like many another poor fool he threw away a mighty good living to come up here into this frozen muck-heap. He squandered what money he made in the prize ring, and all he's got to show for it at the moment are the scars o' frostbite."

There was no use in making a fuss about the mean theft by the Swede. But it fairly made Jack's blood boil to see the ex-pug take out one of those three-shilling oranges and begin to suck it noisily.

Turning away, Jack began to talk to his chum about the future.

"I've got a small room in the Last Chance Hotel, Terry," he said, "but the city's overcrowded, and it's the very dickens of an expense. My idea is that when you come out we should rent or buy a small shack outside the city limits and batch together."

"Shure," agreed Terry. "Cooking our own food would be good fun, and I could show you how me ould mither used to prepare Oirish murphies for the table—that is, if there are any good murphies to be obtained in Dawson."

"I'll have a cellar stocked with spuds for you before you come out, Terry!" laughed Jack. "I've got my eye on a shack now which used to be rented by a couple of Englishmen who've gone trapping somewhere away in the Soda Creek district. I vote we buy it."

"Whatever you think best, Jack."

"We'll stay in Dawson till you're quite fit, old man," Jack said. "Also, I want to stay near uncle and those rotters, Morgan and Simons, too."

"'Twill be hard getting proof against that pair, me bhoys. The spalpeens know we smell a rat, and are trying to nip it in the bud. And you bet they'll take good care we don't catch 'em bending and so be able to give them a hefty smack in the eye."

Jack laughed.

"We'll hand it to 'em good and proper one day, Terry," he chuckled. "And, by the way, Uncle Dave wants to buy a team of dogs. He thinks we can make better money packing goods over the trails for other prospectors than getting out more dirt on the Yellow Horseshoe. I'm dead keen on it, Terry. Just imagine us drivers of a dog team with good old Skookum as a leader. What fun if we get some

good experience of driving, to enter for the great Dog Derby!"

Terry's eyes sparkled eagerly.

"Arrah!" he cried. "'Tis meself that's all in favour. Shure I'll soon be getting meself better and join you outside before Christmas."

While Terry was completing his convalescence in hospital Jack found a deal to occupy him.

At some considerable expense he bought the green-painted shack called the Wigwam, situated beyond the outskirts of Dawson. Some rough furniture went with it, and he bought several other things, including cooking utensils and other necessary articles.

There was a root cellar about fifteen yards distant from the back of the shack with a double wooden door. This Jack stocked with potatoes, turnips, eggs in isinglass, dried apples, and so forth.

He also discovered something which the previous occupant had never known, that there was a rough tunnel leading from the shack into the back of the potato cellar. The builder had made it doubtless to save himself the chilly task of going outdoors in winter, and Jack, pulling up some old oilcloth, found a small trapdoor in the floor. Amused at his find, he told no one about it, except Terry, who, with his arm in a sling, came out of hospital shortly before Christmas.

"Bedad, we'll have some rare fun in that 'secret tunnel!" cried Terry exuberantly.

He little guessed, however, the grim purpose to which it so soon was to be put.

(There's a thrill in every line of next week's rattling fine instalment, chums, so don't miss it, whatever you do.)

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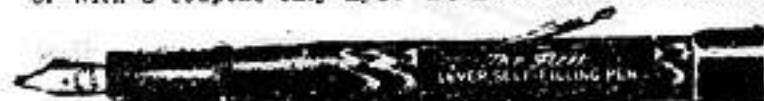
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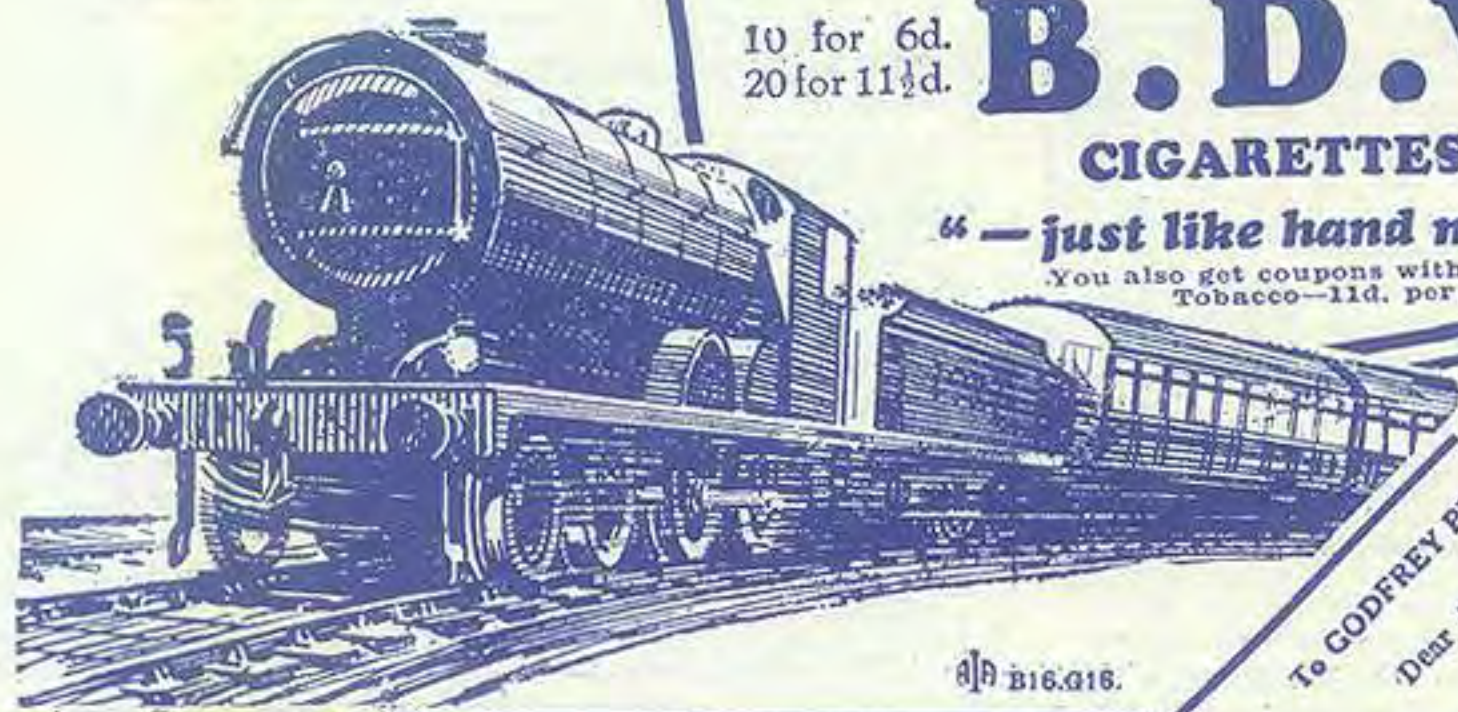
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I.

"THE End wants Master Jolly!" Binding, the page at St. Sam's, looked into the Junior Common-room, and made that announcement. His simple words were followed by a death-like silence in that sequestered apartment.

Before Binding had looked in, a genial atmosphere of friendliness and bonhomie pervaded the room. Merry and Bright, of the Fourth, had been having a terrific scrap with Loylo and Trev for the possession of the Cross-word Puzzle out of the "Evening News"; a fierce argument had been going on round the fire on the subject of the approaching Hopscotch Tournament; and Jack Jolly had been taking vengeance over a cake which Tubby Barrett had pinched from him, by kicking that fat junior round the room. Cheerfulness and camaraderie had reigned supreme.

But at Binding's announcement, all that ceased, and in its place a death-like silence reigned.

Summoned to the dreaded study of Dr. Birchemall were few and far between, and usually they meant only one thing—trouble with a capital tea.

"What does the old codger want?" asked Jack Jolly, trying not to appear blue, tho his handsome dial had turned white and a black look had come over him. "Dunno, Master Jolly!" answered Binding.

"Suppose I'd better hop along!" murmured the kaplin of the Fourth uneasily. "See you later, you chaps!" He knitted the Common-room, and turned his footsteps in the direction of Dr. Birchemall's study, followed by sympathetic glances from his chums.

As Jack Jolly strolled along, he turned over in his mind all the possible causes of this unexpected call. But he couldn't find a satisfactory solution. "Trew," he had smashed all the windows in the jim; he had set a dreadful booby-trap for Mr. Liekham, the master of the Fourth; and on the previous day he had accidentally burned down the Fizzix Laboratory. But such things were not regarded as of very great importance at a high-spirited school like St. Sam's, and fond as the Head was of welding the bunch, it was doubtful whether he would wield it on such flimsy pretexts.

Crash!

Reaching Dr. Birchemall's dreaded room, Jack Jolly summoned up courage to give a timid tap on the door.

There was a moment's pause, then Jack heard from within the study the grim command in the Head's masterful tones:

"Trot in, fathead!"

Jack Jolly entered, and stood in the presence of the august headmaster of St. Sam's.

Jack was quick to notice that Dr. Birchemall was worried. The revered gentleman was pacing the room feverishly, growling, tearing wildly at his beard, and occasionally biting his nails with a spasmodic movement. Most juniors would not have noticed such details, but Jack Jolly was an observant fellow, and he shrewdly guessed that the Head was worried.

"You sent for me, sir!" murmured the kaplin of the Fourth quickly.

"Ah, Jolly, you have come!" said Dr. Birchemall, regarding Jack Jolly with his eagle eyes. "As Shakespeare remarked: 'Good egg, I!'"

"Wan't it Bacon, sir?" corrected Jack Jolly mildly.

"I said 'egg,' and I mean 'egg,'" grunted the Head, in tones that permitted no argument. "Any more back-chat from you, Jolly, and you'll find you've jumped from the frying-pan into the fire. But let's get to business!"

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There's more rags than one of killing a cat, and there's more teags than one of raising five bob! See how Dr. Birchemall, broke as ever, raises the wind!



Turning the Tables

DICKY NUGENT

A most amazing and amusing story of the Chums of St. Sam's.

you black and blue!"

"My hat!" gasped Jolly. It looked as though he was on the horns of a dilemma. He could certainly retain the cash he had obtained with the postal-order that day. But in that case he would be occupying the vices of the Head's wrath. On the other hand, if he handed it over to the old scamp,

his term's pocket-money would be gone. "But can't you try someone else?" asked the unhappy kaplin of the Fourth hopefully. "What about Mr. Liekham, or Burleigh of the Sixth?"

"Nix!" said the Head tersely. "I've owed nunny to all the masters and the Sixth for several terms and none of the beasts are good for any more. Now, Jolly, what about it?"

"I—I—" For a moment Jack Jolly hesitated, then he made his decision. With his head erect and a scornful look in his eyes, he gave Dr. Birchemall his answer.

"Nothing doing, old scout!"

"Ha! Like that, is it?" grunted the Head. "Very well, Jolly! Bend over there, and take your gruel!"

Let us draw a veil over the painful scene that followed. Suffice it to say that when, some hours later, Jack Jolly staggered out of the study, the savage blows of the Head's heavy birch rods had covered him in wheels from head to foot. He was properly in the cart, in fact. But General Jolly's five bob still reposed in his pocket, and Jack felt that he had not suffered in vain.

II.

Tinkle! Tinkle! The solemn strokes of midnight boomed out from the old Clock Tower at St. Sam's. At such an hour, all St. Sam's ought to have been asleep. But sad to relate, at St. Sam's, as at other great public schools, the boys did not always do as they ought to have done. And there was one at least who was not asleep at that solemn hour.

Jack Jolly, the kaplin of the Fourth, was climbing over the old ivy-covered walls of the School. As a matter of fact, he was on his way to the Green Keys, a disreputable inn on the outskirts of Mingleton.

Not that Jack Jolly was a pub-hawker. He was a manly British boy, with a healthy contempt for pubs, and in the ordinary

way he would have scorned to go near one. But just before bed-time on this particular night, he had received a mysterious note, reading as follows:

"Dere Jolly,—Please meet me in the Green Keys without fail at 8 past midnight tonight. It is a matter of life or death.—A friend."

Jack Jolly, always a generous-hearted fellow, had fallen for that, little dreaming that it was a trap laid by one who meant him no good. If only Jack Jolly had examined the note more carefully he might have guessed who had written it. The spelling alone betrayed the identity of the writer. Who else would spell "fale" with a "y," but Dr. Birchemall, the cunning and avicious Head of St. Sam's?

Yes, it was none other than he. Fear of the local baker had driven him to extreme measures. He was determined that if he could not get Jack Jolly's five bob by fair means he would get it by foul.

Reaching the Green Keys, Jack Jolly slipped cautiously through the back door into the billiards-room. He knew the place well, although there was nothing flimsy about this fact. Jack Jolly was, as we have said, a manly British boy, with a healthy contempt for pubs, and the only reason for his knowing the place well was that he had occasionally visited the Green Keys to field for the masters when they played skittles.

Jabez Stout, the rascally proprietor of the inn, came forward, with a leer on his evil dial as Jack entered the billiard-room.

"Master Jolly? Ah, there's a friend of yours waiting over there for you!" Jack Jolly swung round, and as he saw who was there, his face dropped with a sickening thud.

"Grato pip!" he gasped. "The—the Head!"

"Don't be alarmed, my dear Jolly!" said Dr. Birchemall graciously. "You got my note, did you?"

"W-was it yours?" stammered Jack Jolly.

"Eggsactly! A little joke on you, my boy! He, he!"

Considering he was still black and blue all over from the effects of his severe flogging, Jack Jolly wasn't in the mood to appreciate the Head's little jokes and he turned a little pink.



"Now that you are here," continued Dr. Birchemall craftily, "I propose we have a little game of billiards. Just a friendly game, you know—for five bob!"

"Oh, I see!"

The light of understanding came to Jack Jolly and he frowned darkly.

"Of course, don't play if you don't want to," said the Head nonchalantly. "But if you don't, our friend Stout will hand

which he transferred to his cephalus mouth.

"Pay up, my little tulip!" said Dr. Birchemall, beaming. "I had a pre-sentiment, somehow, that I would beat you. From childhood I was able to beat!"

"Mate!" chimed in Jack Jolly.

"What do you mean, you insolvent young rascal?" roared the Head, pulling savagely at his flowing beard. "Fair play's a duel, even when the stakes are high. You should learn to pay up and look pleasant. You never see me—"

"Only too orphan, I'm afraid," ventured Jack Jolly.

But Dr. Birchemall did not stay to argue. He'd got Jolly's five bob, and that was all that mattered.

III.

On the following day, Dr. Birchemall was industriously preening tiddly-winks in his study when Binding the page looked in.

"Ah, Binding! Have you come for a game?" asked the old scondrel jauntily.

"No, sir! I've come to tell you that the baker's collector has called!"

"Show him in, then, Binding! Don't keep the laddie waiting!"

A sinister-looking figure entered, wearing a suite several sizes too large for him, and a neatly-trimmed beard.

"Good-morning! I represent Mr. Scomes—about that five bob—"

"Oh, my giddy aunt! Fancy me forgetting that!" said the Head, in faked surprise. "Here is the nunny!"

He fetched out the five bob he had filched from the kaplin of the Fourth, and handed it over with the air of a lord.

Mr. Scomes' representative, looking very pleased, pocketed the nunny, and took up his hat to go.

"At reservoir, Mootoor!" he said, in fluent French. "I'll send the reset on!"

"Any old time will do!" said Dr. Birchemall agreeably, and with a wave of his bony hand he resumed his interrupted game.

Had Dr. Birchemall known the truth he would not have been so agreeable. Fortunately for his piece of mind, he didn't.

The baker's collector quitted the room, and outside, strange to relate, he was joined by Merry and Bright, of the Fourth.

"Everything O.K.?" asked Bright. "Worked like a charm!" answered the baker's collector. "The old villain parted up like a lamb!"

And then the sinister-looking figure jerked off his beard, revealing the smiling dial of Jack Jolly, the kaplin of the Fourth!

The baker's collector had been none other than Jack Jolly, disguised!

What would happen when the Head found out that he had been misled, our heroes didn't know. And now that they had recovered Jack Jolly's five bob, they didn't much care!

"I vote we adjourn to the tuck-shop, and blow the lot!" suggested Bright. "If we don't do it soon, the old rogue will think of another ruse for bagging it!"

"Here, here!" said Merry cordially. "Thanks for offering to help!" said Jack Jolly dryly. "As it's my five bob, I think I'll blow it myself, without your assistance. However, we're all pals, so you can come and watch!"

And wearing cheerful grins, the three chums strolled arm-in-arm towards the School tuck-shop.

THE END.

(Now look out for another long laugh in "Doctor Birchemall's Eleven!" next week's screamingly funny yarn of Jack Jolly & Co.)

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