

WORLD FAVOURITES—HARRY WHARTON & CO. AND THE "MAGNET"!

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The MAGNET

2^d

EVERY SATURDAY.

M^r QUELCH



SKINNER'S SHADY SCHEME!

BY WHOSE HAND?

(See this week's amazing school yarn featuring Harry Wharton & Co. of Greffrars.)

Turn Your Spare Time Into Profit—See Below!



Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address:
The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

NOTE.—All Jokes and Limericks should be sent to
c/o "Magnet," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

BEFORE I say anything this week about other matters, chums, I must let myself go about the stupendous new serial that is starting in next Saturday's issue. When I read this fine story it amazed me. The realistic atmosphere the author has worked into it is at once compelling and attractive.

"PETER FRAZER—IRONMASTER!"

is the title, and it is a story of industrial life in the Black Country, vividly told by a man whose knowledge of the great iron-works is unbounded. You'll like immensely the sterling qualities of Peter Frazer, too. He has to go through the "mill," but you will greatly admire the plucky and resourceful way in which he meets all emergencies. Don't forget—you are in for a first-class fiction treat next week—and for many weeks to come!

Now to the pleasurable task of answering readers' queries.

"Country Cousin"—a curious name that—wants to know how many

BANKS THERE ARE IN LONDON.

There are no less than 1,700, and any one of them would be pleased to look after your money. Yes, "Country Cousin," you have to pass a stiff exam. to get into a bank. But don't let this dishearten you, however. Carry on with your swotting and you'll make good. You have to work hard in this life for success.

THE MEANING OF I.D.B.

I have received an interesting letter from a South African reader, who has read the MAGNET for the last fifteen years. I was pleased to hear that my chum has enjoyed the stories and other features for such a time, and it only goes to prove that the old paper contains nothing but the best fiction. This South African chum says that I.D.B. is the great topic of talk in South Africa, and as it has also been mentioned several times in English newspapers, he thought that other readers would like to know all about it. Of course, I dare say all readers know that I.D.B. stands for Illicit Diamond Buying. There has always been a glut of police-court cases for this offence, and since great new diamond fields have been found in Africa, there has been the fear that diamonds might fall heavily in value. To keep prices up there are legal restrictions on the number of diamonds bought and sold. Despite every precaution, however, diamonds find their way from the fields into wrong hands by shady ways, and the police in some cases have had their hands full in dealing with the various cases.

ONE of the chief offenders in getting the diamonds away to the buyers is the nigger. Of course, everybody is searched when they leave the fields at night, but the niggers have many tricks. They have, for instance, been known to swallow diamonds to smuggle them out. Hiding them in their mouth or between their toes are other

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ways resorted to. They have even been known to cut their flesh and hide the diamonds underneath! But I should imagine that, besides being very painful, this is too obvious to be successful.

A CHUCKLE OR TWO!

By way of a change, we'll have a chuckle or two.

Weary Willie slouched into the pawnbroker's. "How much will you give me for this overcoat?" he asked, producing a faded, but neatly-mended garment. The pawnbroker looked at the article critically. "Four shillings," he said. "Why," cried

Weary Willie, "that coat is worth forty shillings if it is worth a penny." "I wouldn't give you two pound for two like that one," sniffed the pawnbroker. "Four bob or nothing." "Are you sure that's all it's worth?" asked Weary Willie. "Four bob," repeated the pawnbroker. "Well, here's your four bob," said Weary Willie. "This overcoat was hanging outside your shop, and I was wondering how much it was really worth!"

For this joke we are indebted to Master R. Pickham, Ruby Street, Tingha, N.S.W., Australia, who has been awarded a useful pocket knife for his effort.

WHERE IS DEATH VALLEY?

is the question sent in by a reader in Coventry. It is in California, U.S.A. The summer temperature there is one of the hottest in the world, and it is extremely humid, as it lies much below the sea level. The name was given to it in the early days of the colonisation of the West, when a party of migrants with their wagons mistook the trail and wandered to their death in this dreadful and almost waterless waste.

A curious query was asked in an interesting letter I received from a Blackpool chum. He wants to know

WHEN THE NEXT CENSUS IS DUE?

The census of a population takes place every ten years in this country, as a matter of fact, and the next one is due in two years' time. Some time back it was arranged to take a census for the first time in a certain big city in Afghanistan. On the day the counting was due to begin, the town was found to have only about a quarter of its usual inhabitants. The rest had cleared, being under the impression that the count was in connection with various crimes committed!

WHAT IS A LAIKLOLO?

THE reader who wants to know this had a very awkward experience. Being under the impression that a laiklolo was a musical instrument, he went into a musical instrument

shop to get one, as he plays in an amateur jazz band. To this reader's surprise the assistant in the shop had never heard of it. As a matter of fact, a laiklolo is a craft used in the South Seas.

A CLEVER GREYFRIARS LIMERICK

has been sent in by Henry Shaw, of 8, Turncroft Lane, Stockport, Cheshire, and he has been awarded one of this week's handsome pocket wallets. Here is his effort:

Coker started, with harmless intent

On a motor-bike journey thro' Kent.

He killed a fat boar

And chickens galore—
There was slaughter wherever he went!

BY ORDER OF THE LAW!

"Young Freddie," of Southport, wants to know if it is a fact that in U.S.A. there is a law compelling the owners of cats to fasten a bell round the neck of their pet. It is a fact, my chum. This law takes effect in Riverside in Illinois, U.S.A., for the purpose of protecting bird life in the town. It must be a jolly interesting sight to watch poor puss stealthily stalking a spadger with a merry bell clanging away telling master spadger just how much time he has before he need bolt.

WHO WERE THE MYRMIDONS?

This is a question from "Fifth-Former," who really ought to know better. And the answer is a tribe of warriors who went with Achilles to Troy.

YOUR EDITOR AMONGST THE LIONS!

I WENT out into the country for a quiet week-end the other day, and was walking by myself along a lonely road when I suddenly heard a terrible roar! There was no mistaking it—it was a lion's roar right enough! I stopped and listened. The roar was repeated. Well, to say the least of it, it was decidedly unexpected, and although I flatter myself that I am not inclined to "get the wind up" unnecessarily, I would have felt much happier if I hadn't been entirely on my own!

But, you might say, it couldn't really have been lions in England—and that's where I've got you! The roars came from lions all right, and when I'd hurried along the road and turned a corner I saw where they were. There, in a field ahead of me was a real, old-fashioned, honest to goodness circus!

I haven't seen a circus for more years than I like to remember, and I made a bee-line for it, and just got there as the lion-tamer was finishing his act—and a jolly fine act it was, too! I got quite pally with the manager of the "big tent," and he very generously gave me permission to "mouch" around the tent as much as I liked. I've always had a soft spot in my heart for circuses, and I found the artistes and the staff as likeable a crowd as you could hope to find. In fact, it's a wonder I returned to Fleetway House, for I felt as though I'd have given anything to run away there and then and join the company.

Goodness only knows what I could have done in a circus, though! The lion-tamer offered me a chance of going into the cage and getting pally with his charges, but I respectfully declined. Otherwise you might have found someone else writing this little chat of mine this week!

But it was a jolly fine circus, all the same.

A GORGON

is an ugly fabled monster, "C. S. K." In olden times a gorgon was an imaginary animal of which people were greatly frightened. It was considered that to
(Continued on page 28.)

HERE'S A COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY OF TIP-TOP QUALITY!

SKINNER'S SHADY SCHEME!



Introducing Harry Wharton & Co.,
the Popular Chums of Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Lines!

"BOB—" "Bunk!" "Bob, old chap—" "Hook it!" "But, I say—" "Buzz off!"

Bob Cherry, it seemed, was busy—too busy even to enjoy the society of William George Bunter.

He sat at the table in Study No. 13 in the Greyfriars Remove with a sheaf of impot paper before him, a pen in his hand, a worried frown on his brow, a blob of ink on his nose, several blobs on his fingers, and a Virgil propped against the inkstand in front of him.

Obviously, it was lines!

As it was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and a fine autumn afternoon, Bob was naturally in a hurry to get through and get out.

But a hundred lines had to be written first. Such was the order of Henry Samuel Quelch, Form master of the Remove. And the word of Henry Samuel Quelch was law.

It was never particularly exhilarating to see the fat face and glimmering spectacles of Billy Bunter blinking in at one's door. Now it was less so than ever.

In those pressing moments Bob would not have been pleased to see even any of his best chums. So he was not at all pleased to see Bunter. Hence his brief but emphatic remarks.

Bunter, however, though adjured to bunk, hook it, and buzz off, did not do any of these things.

He rolled into the study.

"Busy, old chap?" he asked affably.

Bob Cherry glared at him across the table. Really, the question was a little superfluous.

"You've got four eyes!" hooted Bob.

"Can't you see I'm busy?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Shut up!"

"But, I say—" "Will you dry up?" hooted Bob. "I've got fifty more to do before I can get out! The fellows have started, and I've got to catch them up. I've got to hand in this impot first. Now, cheese it!"

His pen scratched again, transcribing Virgil at a record rate. Billy Bunter stood and blinked at him.

"That's all very well," he said. "But the fact is—"

"Beat it!"

"I've got lines," explained Bunter.

"Look here, Cherry, you might listen to a chap! I've got fifty lines—"

"Go and get them done, then!"

"That's just the difficulty," explained Bunter. "I don't want to do them."

"Go and eat coke, then!"

"I say, old fellow, be decent, you know!" urged Bunter. "I daren't go out of the gates without getting those lines done. Quelch would go off at the deep end. And Mauly's started for Courtfield. He's going to tea at the bunshop. I want to catch him up."

"Does Mauleverer want you to catch him up?" Bob Cherry, busy as he was, paused a moment for sarcasm. "Would

can start. Think I've got time to do fifty for you as well?"

"Make time, old chap," said Bunter. "A fellow can always make time for things if he likes. Don't be a slacker!"

"What!"

"A slacker! Don't be selfish, you know!" urged Bunter. "Never mind about getting to Cliff House! After all, they don't want you!"

"Eh?"

"How could they?" argued Bunter.

Bob Cherry gazed at the Owl of the Remove. Bunter seemed to think that he was stating good reasons why Bob should do his lines for him. But he was, perhaps, a little lacking in tact.

"You do those lines for me, and I'll do as much for you another time," went on Bunter. "When you've done them, take them into Quelch's study and leave them on his desk if he isn't there. If he's there, tell him I asked you to bring them in for me—see? That will make it all right. Then I can get off at once."

"And what about me?" gasped Bob.

"You!" repeated Bunter.

Apparently Bunter did not consider that it mattered about Bob.

Bob Cherry stared round and picked up a cushion. He brandished it in the air.

"Will you cut?" he demanded.

Bunter eyed the cushion warily.

"Don't get waxy, old chap," he said. "Look here, if you won't do my lines, I've got another idea. What about getting Linley to do them? I've asked the beast, and he's refused! I don't see why he can't do them, as he's always swotting Latin as if he liked it. Look here, you could lick Linley, Bob, old chap!"

"Lick Linley?" repeated Bob.

"Yes. I'll help you, if you like. Well, let's make him do the lot. He's sitting at the passage window now with a rotten book. What about getting him to do the whole lot, and licking him if he refuses—what?"

Bob Cherry did not state what he thought of that brilliant suggestion. He hurled the cushion.

"Whooop!" roared Bunter.

The cushion landed with force on Billy Bunter's extensive waistcoat. It fairly lifted him into the Remove passage through the open doorway.

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For sheer reptilian cunning Harold Skinner has no equal at Greyfriars. Yet even Skinner's cunning schemes are apt to go astray, as he and you will find out in this splendid story by Frank Richards.

he be frightfully disappointed if you didn't?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter. "So, as you seem to be the only chap indoors now, Bob, I've come to ask you to do my lines for me."

"What!" gasped Bob.

"Quelch will never notice," explained Bunter. "You can make your fist as near like mine as you can. In fact, I'll do the first line myself to make it easier for you. There!"

Bunter blinked at Bob Cherry with the air of a fellow who had made a generous offer.

Bob glared at him.

"You fat frump—"

"Oh, really, old chap—"

"Wharton and Nugent and the rest have started for Cliff House!" roared Bob. "I've got to catch them up. I've got fifty more lines to write before I

Bunter fielded the cushion, and crept back to the open doorway of Study No. 13 wherein Bob Cherry was bent over his lines. The Owl of the Remove took aim with the cushion. Whiz! Crash! "Oh!" roared Bob Cherry, as the cushion landed on his bent head, and ink went streaming over his imposition. (See Chapter 1.)



On the lower staircase appeared an angular form and a frowning face; both belonging to Henry Samuel Quelch, the master of the Remove.

Mr. Quelch came whisking up the stairs, with a cane in his hand. The din had drawn him to the spot.

He reached the landing where the combat was going on; and the look in his eyes, as he gazed at it, was like that of the fabled basilisk.

"Boys!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "You—you young rascals! Cease this at once! Do you hear me? Cease this immediately."

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Skinner.

At the voice of command, the three dishevelled and dusty juniors separated. They stood in a gasping row before their Form master.

"How dare you!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "I repeat, how dare you disturb the House with this—this unexampled hooliganism! Follow me to my study!"

"I—I—" gasped Skinner.

"Follow me!" boomed Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Mark Linley. "We're for it now."

William George Bunter, the original cause of the trouble, had long disappeared. Mark Linley and Skinner and Snoop followed Mr. Quelch to Masters' passage and into his study.

There, the Remove master eyed them grimly.

"Skinner!"

"Ow! Yes, sir!" mumbled Skinner.

"Bend over that chair!"

"I—I wasn't to blame, sir! That rotter Linley pitched into me—"

"Bend over that chair!"

Skinner bent over the chair.

Mr. Quelch's cane rose, and fell, six times in succession; with sounds as if Mr. Quelch had been discharging a six-chambered revolver.

Whack, whack, whack, whack, whack, whack! Every whack was well laid on, and elicited a howl from Skinner. He was quite pale when Mr. Quelch had finished.

"Snoop! Bend over that chair!"

"I—I didn't—" began Snoop.

"Bend over that chair!"

Snoop groaned, and obeyed. Six of the best fell to his portion, and Snoop yelled wildly under the infliction.

"Linley! Bend over that chair!"

"Yes, sir!" said Mark.

The cane got going again. Skinner and Snoop, wriggling in anguish, looked on savagely. Mark was one of the Remove master's favourite pupils; being a hard worker and really keen on the acquisition of knowledge—rare enough in the Remove. But nobody would have guessed just then, that Henry Samuel Quelch had a high opinion of the Lancashire junior, and was accustomed to treat him with great kindness. Like the schoolmaster in the story, Quelch might be a beast, but he was a just beast. Linley, so far as the Form master knew, was as culpable as the others; and he received exactly the same as the others—six, and every one of the six a stinger. Mark, who was made of stronger stuff than the two slackers, uttered no sound under the infliction, but he was breathing very hard when he rose after it.

Mr. Quelch pointed to the door with his cane.

"You may go!" he said. "And if there should be any recurrence of your disorderly conduct—" He did not complete the sentence; leaving the rest to the imagination of the unhappy trio.

They limped away from the Form master's study. Skinner and Snoop breathed malice and malevolence as they went; but Mark, who really had more cause to complain, had no complaint to make. He really was not to blame for the uproar on the staircase; but he was a reasonable fellow, and he did not expect his Form master to guess that; and he was not given to grousing anyhow. Leaving Skinner and Snoop muttering malice and vengeance, Mark took his way, rather slowly and painfully, to his study in the Remove passage.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

"Bob!"

"QUELCHY!" murmured Harry Wharton.

"Bother him!" grunted Johnny Bull.

Four juniors were strolling, in a very leisurely way, along Friardale Lane, in the golden autumn afternoon, when the angular form of Henry Samuel Quelch loomed up astern.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, were not feeling pleased with their Form master that afternoon.

The Famous Five were going over to Cliff House School, on a visit to Marjorie Hazeldene & Co.; and Bob Cherry's detention rather spoiled the programme.

The Co. had been willing to wait for Bob; but he had insisted that they should not hang about waiting for him. He was going to get through his lines at record speed, and overtake them on the way, if he could. For that reason, the four juniors proceeded in a very leisurely manner, not wishing to arrive at Cliff House without their chum.

Really, Quelch had been unnecessarily severe, in the opinion of the famous Co. Bob's offence was not a serious one—merely that of descending the banisters instead of the stairs. Certainly, it was a rather dangerous performance, especially for anyone who might have got in Bob's way when he was sailing down the banisters. No doubt Mr. Quelch felt that such reckless proceedings should be sternly checked, and no doubt he was right. Still, master and pupil did not always see eye to eye. Harry Wharton & Co. felt that Quelch might very well have closed an eye, for once, to an infraction of the rules, rather than have spoiled a half-holiday.

They glanced back at the tall, angular figure, that was coming up the lane. Mr. Quelch was proceeding at his usual brisk pace, and was likely to overtake and pass them in a few minutes. There was a slight frown on his severe face, doubtless caused by the uproarious incident on the staircase.

"Blow the man!" said Frank Nugent. "These Form masters are a worry!"

"The worryfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But it is a boonful blessing that the esteemed Bob is not with us, to catch the preposterous eye of the absurd Quelch."

"Phew!" said Wharton. "Yes, rather."

The idea had been mooted, of Bob clearing off with his friends, and "chancing" it with Quelch about his impot. On second thoughts—proverbially the best—it had been decided not to take the risk. Which was, as the Nabob of Bhanipur pointed out, fortunate, in the present circumstances, as the Remove master happened to be following the same way.

A glimmer came into the dusky eyes of the nabob.

"My esteemed chums," he remarked, "the excellent Bob is not with us, but he might have been with us—"

"Jolly lucky he isn't," said Johnny Bull. "Quelchy looks as if he would like to jump on somebody."

"Precisely so. But as the absurd Bob is not in our honourable and execrable company, let us ludicrously pull the esteemed leg of the preposterous Quelch."

"Eh, how?" asked Wharton doubtfully. Pulling Mr. Quelch's leg was, as a rule, about as safe a game as pulling a tiger's tail.

"Suppose we were playing the esteemed game of leap-frog as we proceed on our harmless and necessary way," said the nabob. "In that case you would bob your esteemed heads."

"What on earth—"

"And if you, my worthy Wharton, call out 'Bob!' it would refer to our absurd heads—"

"But what—"

"But the esteemed Quelchy would probably infer that the excellent Cherry was somewhere about—"

"Oh!"

"Owing to the absurd idiocies of the esteemed English language, such a misapprehension might arise—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the excellent Quelch would be terrifically infuriated," grinned the nabob. "Which, in the present esteemed circumstances, would be preposterously entertaining."

Harry Wharton & Co. were quick on the uptake. In a moment the nabob's suggestion was acted upon.

"Bob your nappers!" chuckled Wharton.

And—apparently oblivious of the angular form that was approaching nearer and nearer with long strides—the four juniors leap-frogged along the lane for a short distance, and stopped again where a thick bush grew close to the roadside.

By that time Mr. Quelch was within easy hearing.

"Bob!" called out Wharton loudly.

He addressed Frank Nugent, who was in advance. But as the word reached Mr. Quelch's ears it was natural that he should not even dream that it was addressed to Frank.

Mr. Quelch gave a start.

"Bob!" called Wharton again. "Look out! Bob!"

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

He was well aware that the five juniors had intended to be together this afternoon, as they almost always were on a half-holiday. He knew, of course, that Robert Cherry was always called Bob by his friends. And he had not the slightest doubt that Bob Cherry, instead of staying in to write his lines as he had been strictly commanded, had left the school with his chums, and was now with them; and that Wharton was calling out a warning to him after spotting the Form master behind.

That was the conclusion to which Mr. Quelch jumped—and, indeed, in the circumstances, he could hardly have jumped to any other.

"Look out! Bob!"

Mr. Quelch came on with rapid strides.

"Stop!" he called out.

The four juniors faced round. There were only four to be seen; but the thick

bush at the roadside was good cover for another, if another had been there. How was Mr. Quelch to avoid the conclusion that Bob was there, and that he had taken warning and dodged out of sight into the bush?

The frown on the Remove master's brow was like thunder, and his eyes glittered under his bent brows. Defiance of discipline, like this, was intolerable, in Mr. Quelch's opinion. He was grimly resolved to root out the delinquent, march him back to the school, and give him a whole afternoon's detention, instead of the hundred lines.

"Oh! Mr. Quelch!" ejaculated Wharton, and he lifted his cap politely to his Form master, the other three following his example.

The Remove master frowned at them.

"I am surprised at this, Wharton!" he rapped out.

"At what, sir?" asked the captain of the Remove in mild surprise.

"At this disregard of my strict commands on the part of a boy in the Remove, in collusion with the head boy of the Form!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"But—what, sir—"

"Cherry was strictly ordered to remain in the House until his imposition was written and delivered in my study."

"Yes, sir."

"He has disobeyed my commands and—"

"Has he, sir?"

"I find him here with you!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "And you—the head boy of my Form, from whom I have a right to expect support in the maintenance of discipline—have actually uttered a warning to him to hide himself at my approach."

"Oh, sir!"

"I shall have no choice but to punish you for this, Wharton. As for Cherry, he—"

"But what have I done, sir?"

"Do not affect ignorance, Wharton!" Mr. Quelch turned towards the bush at the roadside. "Cherry! Stand forth!"

Four juniors with faces as solemn as owls stood waiting while Mr. Quelch addressed the bush, in the belief that Bob Cherry was hidden in it.

"Cherry!" repeated the Remove master.

There was no reply.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, greatly exasperated. "Cherry! I order you to show yourself! I know that you are there; I heard a warning given you as I came up. Stand forth at once!"

Bob Cherry did not stand forth. Mr. Quelch really was asking an impossibility, as Bob at that moment was in his study at Greyfriars grinding out lines.

"Bob isn't there, sir," ventured Wharton.

"Wharton! How dare you say so!"

"He isn't really, sir; he's at the school—"

"I am surprised that you should prevaricate, Wharton! I am surprised and shocked! I distinctly heard you warn Cherry."

"I—I didn't, sir!"

"What?" almost roared Mr. Quelch.

"I—I couldn't, sir, as he's not here."

"You dare to tell me, Wharton, that Cherry is not here!" exclaimed the Remove master.

"Certainly, sir!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "I will not listen to this audacious and unscrupulous prevarication! Cherry, I command you to stand forth at once—I command you, sir, for the last time!"

Still there was no movement from the bush. Mr. Quelch, with gleaming eyes, pushed aside the boughs and penetrated into the clump, with the intention of hooking the hidden junior out with his

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own august hands. But there was no hidden junior to be hooked out. Right through that clump of bush Mr. Quelch searched savagely; but he found nothing—except a few thorns, which did not help to placate him.

He stepped into the road again. The expression on his face by this time was terrifying.

"Wharton!" he gasped.

"Yes, sir?" said Harry demurely.

"Where is Cherry?"

"At the school, sir."

"It is true that I did not see him with you," said Mr. Quelch, breathing hard. "I concluded that he had stepped out of sight after you warned him. He does not appear to be here."

"I told you so, sir."

"But," said Mr. Quelch in a deep voice, "if Cherry is not here, Wharton, I can only conclude that you called out his name to delude me into the belief that he was here."

"But I didn't, sir."

"Take care, boy! I distinctly heard you utter the words, 'Bob! Look out!' Those very words! Do you venture to deny it?"

"Oh, no, sir!" said Wharton cheerfully. "But I was speaking to Nugent."

"To Nugent?" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir."

"Is this sheer insolence, Wharton? Or do you expect me to believe that you were addressing Nugent by another boy's name?"

"Not at all, sir! I never used any name—"

"I heard what you said, Wharton!"

"I was telling Nugent to bob, sir—"

"Eh?"

"We're playing leap-frog, sir, and it was Nugent's turn to bob down. I called out to him to bob."

"You—you—you called out to him to bob!" repeated Mr. Quelch, staring at Wharton as if he were mesmerised.

"Yes, sir! I said, 'Bob! Look out!'" said the captain of the Remove, with owl-like gravity. "As it was Nugent's turn to bob—"

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch.

He gazed at the four juniors.

The four juniors gazed at him gravely and respectfully.

A crimson spot appeared in either of Mr. Quelch's cheeks. Gradually it spread till his face was quite red.

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch.

"I—I hope there's no harm in our playing leap-frog in the lane, sir?" said Frank Nugent.

"It's a healthy exercise, sir, on a cold day," remarked Johnny Bull.

"Oh! I—I— Ah!" articulated Mr. Quelch.

"Sometimes we say 'Bob!' and sometimes we say 'Tuck in your tuppenny!'" explained Nugent gravely.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "I—I—I see! Yes! Quite so! It—it appears that I have been under a—a—a misapprehension! I certainly thought—"

"May we go on with the game, sir?" asked Wharton respectfully.

"Oh! Ah! Yes! Certainly!" stammered Mr. Quelch. "I—I have no objection—none whatever! Bless my soul!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Harry. "Bob! Look out—bob!" he added; and Frank Nugent bobbed, and the others bobbed in turn, and the four cheery Removites leap-frogged on their cheery way.

Mr. Quelch was left standing in the lane with a quite extraordinary expression on his face.

It was not till they were safe—quite safe—out of Quelch's hearing that the chums of the Remove ventured to laugh. Then they roared.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's little joke, as he expressed it in his own peculiar variety of English, had been a ludicrous and preposterous success.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Skinner Schemes!

BOB CHERRY looked up, and grasped the inkpot, at the sound of a footstep in the doorway of his study.

He was grinding wearily through a new imposition, the other reposing, with a considerable quantity of ink, in the wastepaper-basket.

With the inkpot in his hand he glanced round to the door. Then he grinned at Mark Linley.

"Oh, you!" he said. "I thought it was Bunter coming back."

"Not finished your lines yet?" asked Mark.

"That fat idiot Bunter upset ink over them, and I had to begin again," explained Bob. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! You're not looking chippy, Marky. Done too many parasangs with jolly old Xenophon?"

Mark made a wry face.

"I've just had six!" he answered.

"You!" ejaculated Bob.

"Yes—and rather tough! Quelch was ratty."

HAVE A LONG LAUGH

at this winning joke, which earns one of this week's pocket-knives for J. Jenkinson, of 45, Kelvin Road, Norbreck, Blackpool.

During the railway journey the bore was continually telling his fellow passengers of his dog Fido. Unable to stand the strain any longer a young man, sitting in a corner seat, ventured a question.

"If you went to an iron-monger's shop," he said, "and bought a muzzle for your dog and the man refused to put it on for you, what would you do?"

"Why," answered the bore instantly, "I would put it on myself."

"Of course!" said the young man. "And that's the cleverest thing you've said."

And the bore wondered why he smiled.

Pile in with your efforts, chums. These prizes are well worth winning.

"Well, my hat!" Bob, forgetful for the moment of his impot, and his desire to get out of doors, stared at his study-mate. "You hardly ever bag a licking, Marky; Quelch must have been in want of something to do."

"He went off rather at the deep end," said Mark wryly. "I was scrapping on the stairs with Skinner and Snoop, and we bagged six each."

"He's ratty to-day," agreed Bob. "Look how he jumped on me for sliding down the banisters! Quelch's forgotten that he ever was a boy himself! I suppose he was—once! Though it's hard to believe it, looking at him. But he's rather an ass! He ought to have known that if you were scrapping with those two rotters, they asked for it. You never do scrap."

Mark nodded.

"They were pitching into Bunter, and I stopped them," he said. "Of course, I couldn't tell Quelch all that!"

"No; but he ought to have known you weren't to blame!" said Bob warmly. "The man's an ass!"

Mark wriggled rather painfully. It was likely to be a considerable time before the effect of that "six" wore off.

"Can't be helped," he remarked. "No good grouching, anyhow."

"That's all very well; but he ought to have known better!" growled Bob. "Look here, Quelch is altogether too ratty to-day. He's going out this afternoon—what about japing him while he's gone? Fix up something in his study—"

Mark shook his head, with a smile.

"Fireworks in his grate, or something," suggested Bob. "I'll help! Or gum in his inkpot. I'm in rather a hurry; but I'll find time to help you get back on him."

"I don't want to get back on him. It's all right. I think he was a bit hasty this time; but—"

"What about sawing through the leg of his armchair?"

"Fathead!" said Mark, laughing.

"Well, he ought to get something, for giving you six for nothing."

"That's all right! How are you getting on with your lines?"

"Seventy more to do!" groaned Bob. And he dipped his pen in the ink again.

"You come in to swot?"

"No; I'm rather fed with Xenophon. I was going to write a letter—I thought you'd be finished by this time—"

"Squat down, then, and go ahead."

"I won't disturb you, old chap—I can write it in the Rag. Get on with your lines."

And Mark left the study again, leaving Bob to grind on wearily with P. Virgilius Maro. Wearily and drearily Bob laboured on with a task that seemed endless.

Mark went downstairs, and into the Rag. He expected to find that apartment quite deserted on a sunny half-holiday.

But a sound of growling and grouching and groaning greeted him as he entered.

Skinner and Snoop were there, bemoaning their damages. Mark glanced at them and smiled faintly. He was quite as much hurt as either of them, but he was not thinking of making a fuss about it.

Skinner gave him a black scowl as he seated himself at the table and drew pen and ink towards him. Snoop's eyes gleamed at him viciously.

"You rotten cad! I've a jolly good mind to give you the hiding of your life!" growled Skinner. "All your fault that brute Quelch laid into us."

"You should have let Bunter alone," answered Mark.

"Couldn't you mind your own business, you meddling rotter?" snarled Snoop.

Mark did not answer that.

He had no desire for further trouble with the two black sheep of the Remove. Not that Skinner and Snoop were likely to resume the interrupted scrap. Scrapping with a sturdy fellow who could take care of himself was not in their line.

Mark drew a letter from his pocket, taking it from an envelope that he tossed into the wastepaper-basket under the table. The letter he proceeded to read through, and then he began to write.

"There goes the old blighter!" remarked Snoop, who was glancing from the window. He had sighted Mr. Quelch on his way to the gates.

"Hang him!" growled Skinner.

"I'd like to make him sit up!" said Snoop viciously.

"Same here!" growled Skinner.

Mark Linley finished his letter home, and left the Rag, taking no heed of the two grouchers.

Skinner scowled after him as he went.

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"It's all that rotter's fault!" he growled.

"Well, he got six, the same as we did!" remarked Sidney James Snoop. "That's one comfort!"

"That tough brute doesn't feel it as we do!" snarled Skinner.

"He doesn't seem to! Ow!" moaned Snoop. "I feel as if I shan't be able to sit down again till to-morrow."

Skinner glanced from the window. Mark Linley was crossing the quad, a letter in his hand. Apparently he was going to the school box to post it.

Skinner's eyes glittered. "Quelch's gone out!" he said in a low voice, though there was no one in the Rag to hear him, excepting Snoop. What was in Skinner's mind made him instinctively lower his voice.

Snoop gave him a look. "What about that?" he asked. "I'm not larking with Quelch, if that's what you mean. Too jolly dangerous!"

"A fellow could get into his study—"

"Not a fellow with any sense. If you're thinking of ragging Quelch, you can leave me out."

"Don't get frightened before you're hurt!" sneered Skinner. "I've an idea for bagging two birds with one stone."

Snoop shook his head.

"I know your schemes," he answered. "Not good enough! I'd like to make Quelch sit up; but I jolly well ain't going to try."

"Look here," said Skinner.

He stepped to the table, reached into the wastepaper-basket under it, and drew out a crumpled envelope.

It was the envelope Mark Linley had thrown there, after opening his letter from home.

Snoop stared at it. The envelope was addressed to Mark Linley, at Greyfriars School, in the hand of his father.

"What's the good of that?" asked Snoop uneasily.

He could see that there was a scheme working in Skinner's vengeful mind, and he was a little scared. Skinner was a scheming fellow, and he was cunning; but his schemes did not always work out as per programme.

"Might be jolly useful!" drawled Skinner, slipping the crumpled envelope into his pocket. "Might be evidence as to who went into Quelch's study while he was out."

Snoop started.

"I—I say, that's rather dangerous, you—"

"Coming with me?" asked Skinner.

"No jolly fear!" answered Snoop emphatically. "You can jolly well leave me out of it, whatever it is. I don't want Quelch on my track."

"Funk!" jeered Skinner.

"Fathead!" retorted Snoop.

And when the two juniors left the Rag, and Skinner proceeded in the direction of Masters' passage, Sidney James Snoop was careful to proceed without delay in the opposite direction. If Skinner had evolved a scheme of vengeance, Snoop wished him luck; but he had no intention whatever of getting mixed up in it. Whatever it was that Harold Skinner intended to do he had to do it on his lonely own.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Record Rag!

BOB CHERRY yawned deeply. He was finished at last. Much later than he had anticipated, the hundred lines of Virgil were duly written out, and the seemingly endless task had come to an end.

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By that time he had no doubt his chums had reached Cliff House, even if they had loitered. But by trotting all the way Bob could still reach Cliff House in time for tea in the school-room with Marjorie & Co. And he was looking forward to a trot by the lane and the woodland footpath after his dismal confinement in the study.

He gathered up his impot, and left Study No. 13, and walked down the Remove passage towards the stairs.

A fat figure rolled out of Study No. 7 as he passed.

Bunter also had an impot in his hand. He had finished fifty lines by the time Bob had finished a hundred.

He went down the Remove passage after Bob Cherry.

"I say, Bob, old chap!" called out Bunter.

Bob Cherry did not heed.

He went down the Remove staircase three at a time, heedless of the voice of the charmer.

Bunter hurried after him.

"I say, you beast," he howled, "if you're going to Quelch's study, you can take my lines in as well."

But Bob was already at the bottom of the stairs, and he did not turn his head.

"Beast!" hooted Bunter.

And he rolled on.

Bob Cherry headed for Masters' passage without losing a second. Billy Bunter rolled more slowly in his wake.

The delinquents had been ordered to bring their lines to their Form master's study before they went out of gates. If Mr. Quelch was not there they had to leave the impots on his table, to catch his eye when he returned.

Bob knew that Quelch would have gone out long before this; but he tapped at the study door, and, receiving no answer, opened it and walked in. No one was in the study.

But Bob, as he entered, gave a jump. With his impot in his hand he stood staring blankly round the study.

Somebody evidently had been there since Mr. Quelch had gone out.

Generally, Mr. Quelch's study was meticulously tidy; hardly a pen-nib was over out of its place.

But now—

The glory had departed from the House of Israel, so to speak.

"My hat!" gasped Bob.

A ragger had been at work.

And it was "some" rag that had taken place! The study table was up-ended, and books and papers strewn on the floor. Chairs were overturned, the book-case had been gutted, and ink and cinders streamed everywhere. Mr. Quelch's study looked as if chaos had come again!

"Great pip!" gasped Bob.

"Ho, he, he!"

That fat cachinnation came from William George Bunter, who had just arrived with his impot in his hand.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. "Oh, my!"

"What benighted idiot has done this?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"He, he, he!"

"It won't be a cackling matter when Quelch comes back!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "My hat! He will raise Cain!"

"Frightful row for somebody!" agreed Bunter. "But it serves old Quelch right! He caned me this morning!"

"Was it you?" asked Bob.

Bunter jumped.

"Me! Why, you beast, I've been in my study writing lines, as you jolly well know! If you say it was me—"

"I'm not saying it was you, fathead. I asked you if it was."

"Well, it wasn't, you beast!"

"Some silly ass is asking for a flogging," said Bob. "Somebody who's had a licking, I suppose. The silly chump, Quelch's bound to run him down. He will be like a giddy bloodhound on the trail!"

"One of those chaps he licked this afternoon, I expect," said Bunter. "Skinner or Snoop or Linley—"

"Don't be an ass!" said Bob sharply. "Linley wouldn't be such a fool—or such a rotter, either!"

"Well, he's got more pluck than the other two—and it needs pluck to rag Quelch's study!" grinned Bunter.

"Marky wouldn't!" said Bob uneasily, though he could not help being struck by Bunter's remark. "Don't talk silly rot like that, Bunter! Phew! There will be a frightful row when Quelch comes in!"

"I—I say, he may think we did it—he knows we had to come here with our lines!" gasped Bunter. "We can't make out we never came."

"Fathead!"

"I—I say, old chap—you swear that I never came to the study, and I'll swear you never did!" said Bunter eagerly.

"Ass! We've done nothing—and even if we had, we're not going to tell lies!" growled Bob. "Hacker's door was open, too, as I came by, and he saw me."

"Oh dear! Then he must have seen me, too!" groaned Bunter. "Quelch will know we've been here—"

"He was bound to know it, anyhow, fathead. But we're witnesses for one another," said Bob. "Besides, Hacker saw us pass, and he will see us go back. This job wasn't done under a quarter of an hour, at least. Hacker will have to bear witness that we weren't here more than a minute or two. Shove your impot somewhere, and let's clear."

"Yes, rather!" gasped Bunter. "Why, Quelch will be like a tiger when he sees this—fairly thirsting for blood. He will take it out of somebody, you can bet on that!"

The two impots were laid on the mantelpiece. Bob Cherry, crossing to the door again, halted suddenly, with a startled exclamation.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

He stooped and picked up a crumpled envelope from the floor—with quite a dazed expression on his face. And there was an excited gasp from Billy Bunter as he blinked at it.

"Mark Linley. I jolly well knew it was Linley!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Paying for Silence!

GREAT pip!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

He stood staring at the crumpled envelope in his hand. It had lain on the study carpet, with the addressed side uppermost, in the full light of the window, and could hardly have escaped observation.

Bob knew the handwriting on the envelope, which he had seen often enough before—the handwriting of Mark Linley's father. That crumpled envelope belonged to Linley of the Remove.

Mark had dropped it—that seemed clear enough—without noticing it. No doubt the fellow who had ragged Quelch's study had been in a hurry and a state of excitement.

There was a stream of sticky gum over a number of the books that lay about the room. The crumpled envelope was sticky with gum, too.

It was easy to deduce that the ragger had brought a bottle of gum to the



The four leap-froggers had reached the thick bush near which Mr. Quelch was standing when Harry Wharton called out: "Bob!" Jumping to the conclusion that Wharton was warning Bob Cherry, the Form master stepped in front of the juniors. "So Cherry has disobeyed my commands!" he said in an acid voice. "He has broken detention!" (See Chapter 3.)

study with him, wrapped in that old envelope.

It was scarcely possible for Bob to draw any other conclusion. He stared blankly at the sticky envelope.

"Great pip!" he repeated.

"I say, I know it was Linley!" said Bunter. "Quelch licked him, you know—I saw him crawling away afterwards—and he's ragged Quelch's study to pay him out."

Bob Cherry was silent, still staring at the envelope.

"I say, come on!" exclaimed Bunter. "If we hang on here we shall get suspected of it. I say, what are you doing with that envelope?"

Bob was putting the crumpled, sticky envelope into his pocket. Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"Look here, Cherry——"

"Shut up!" muttered Bob. "We're not leaving this here, fathead, to give Marky away. Keep your mouth shut about it!"

"Well, that's all right," said Bunter, with a nod, "so long as we don't get suspected ourselves, of course."

"If we do, we're not going to give a man away!" snapped Bob.

"Ain't we—just!" said Bunter. "I know I'm jolly well not going to take a licking for something that Linley's done. No fear."

"There's no danger for us, fathead, if we clear off at once. Let's get out!" grunted Bob.

The two juniors left the study. They

went down Masters' passage. The door of Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, was wide open, and Hacker was seen sitting at his table, and he glanced up as the two passed the doorway. Billy Bunter stopped.

"I say, sir!" he gasped.

Mr. Hacker looked at him.

"Well?" he asked curtly.

Mr. Hacker was a gentleman of few words, and he had a way of snapping them out.

"If—if you please, sir——"

"Come on, Bunter!" grunted Bob.

"Shan't! I'm going to ask Hacker——"

"Come on, fathead."

"You see, sir," gasped Bunter, "we've just been to Quelch's study——"

"Are you alluding to your Form master?"

"Yes, sir. You see——"

"Then do not allude to him, in my hearing, in so disrespectful a manner!" snapped Mr. Hacker.

"I—I mean Mr. Quelch, sir. We've just been to his study to take in some lines, sir, and somebody's been there——"

"Well?"

"Quelch—I mean, our Form master—will be frightfully wild, sir."

"Eh?"

"Raging, in fact, sir!" gasped Bunter. "And we want you to witness, sir, that we didn't do it."

"Are you insano, Bunter?"

"Nunno, sir."

"Then what do you mean?"

"I mean, it wasn't me, sir. We didn't do it."

Mr. Hacker fixed him with a cold eye. It was not really very easy to deduce meaning from Bunter's remarks.

"If you mean anything, Bunter, make your meaning clear," rapped Hacker; "or, better still, go away, and do not disturb me."

"But you see, sir, Quelch—Mr. Quelch—will be frightfully ratty about it; and we're as innocent as the babe unborn, sir; but Quelch—Mr. Quelch—mayn't believe us, sir."

"Silence, Bunter! You may explain, Cherry. Has anything occurred in your Form master's study?" asked the master of the Shell.

"Yes, sir," said Bob. "Somebody's been ragging there. We found the room upset when we got in with our lines."

"Shocking!" said Hacker.

"Awfully, sir!" said Bunter. "I'm terribly shocked, sir—fearfully! But the chief thing is that Quelch—Mr. Quelch—may think that we did it, sir; and, if you please, sir——"

"The matter does not concern me," said Mr. Hacker.

"If Quelch asks you, sir, will you tell him you saw us, sir?" gasped Bunter. "You know we've only been a couple of minutes there, and even old Quelch——"

"What?"

"I mean, even Mr. Quelch will know

that all that damage can't have been done in two or three minutes, sir. You see, sir, we're rather anxious—"

Mr. Hacker smiled a little grimly. He could understand Bunter's anxiety, in the circumstances.

"No doubt," he assented.

"You see, sir, Quelchy is frightfully ratty to-day, sir, anyhow, and when he comes back and sees his study he will be like a—a—a tiger!"

"Don't be absurd, Bunter."

"No, sir! Oh, no, sir! But he will, sir! You—you see, sir, he ain't a nice man, like you, sir."

"That will do, Bunter."

Bob Cherry dragged the Owl of the Remove away.

Mr. Hacker smiled.

"You fat idiot!" growled Bob, as he jerked Bunter round the corner of Masters' passage.

"Oh, really, Cherry!"

Bob let go the fat arm and tramped away. He was deeply disturbed in mind. Bunter was concerned only for his own fat person, but Bob was thinking of his friend.

It was amazing to him that so quiet and level-headed a fellow as Mark Linley should have let himself go in this way. It was quite unlike Mark, who, so far as his friends had ever observed, was not in the slightest degree malicious or revengeful.

Bob felt, with a twinge of remorse, that his own thoughtless suggestion might have been the cause of it. Certainly, Bob had suggested only a "jape"; he would never have dreamed of the ruffianly ragging that had taken place in the Remove master's study. That study looked as if a hooligan had been let loose in it, and serious damage had been done. The more Bob thought about it the more he was perplexed at such an outbreak on Mark's part.

Yet there seemed no doubt about it. The gummy, crumpled envelope in Bob's pocket seemed conclusive evidence.

"I say, Bob, old chap!" Bunter followed him, breathing hard. "I say, old fellow, don't walk away when a chap's talking to you!"

"Oh, dry up!" grunted Bob.

"I say, we're all right, you know," said Bunter. "Hacker will tell Quelchy, now I've asked him. You never thought of speaking to Hacker. You haven't much brains, you know. I say, don't walk away, I tell you, when I'm speaking to you!" howled Bunter.

But Bob did walk away.

He went into the Rag, and, finding himself alone in that apartment, drew the crumpled envelope from his pocket. The sooner that piece of evidence was out of existence the better, in Bob's opinion. Billy Bunter followed him in, and he gave a yelp as he beheld Bob standing at the grate, with the envelope in one hand and a match in the other.

"I say, you ass, keep that!" howled Bunter. "We shall want that, to fix it on Linley, if Quelchy gets after us."

Bob, without replying, applied the match to the envelope. It burned away in his fingers, and he did not let go till only a fragment was left.

"You silly owl!" hooted Bunter.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bob gruffly. "You're in no danger, you fat toad; but mind you keep it dark about that envelope. If you give Marky away, I'll burst you all over the Remove passage!"

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles. There was a sly gleam in the little round eyes of the Owl of the Remove.

"Of course, I'm not going to give the fellow away, if Quelchy doesn't jump on me," he remarked. "I wouldn't, you

know. Still, he's an awful rotter, ain't he?"

"Oh, shut up!"

"A jape's all very well," argued Bunter. "But he's done a lot of damage to Quelchy's things; that's outside the limit. A lot of the books are spoiled, and Quelchy's fond of his books, for some reason. I dare say there's pounds and pounds of damage done. Well, that isn't a jape; that's beastly bad form, you know. It isn't done."

Bob grunted angrily, but made no rejoinder. He could not help being in agreement with Bunter on that point. A "rag" was all very well, but it was more than a rag that had taken place. What had happened in Quelch's study did not show a misdirected sense of humour, but a bitter and revengeful malice.

"I always did bar that fellow," went on Bunter. "Low sort of rotter, you know! Still, if you ask me, I won't give him away. I'll keep this dark, as a personal favour to you, old chap."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Oh!" said Bunter, with dignity. "Very well, if you don't want me to do you this favour, Cherry, I won't! The fellow's your friend; he's no friend of mine. If you don't ask me, as a favour, to keep it dark, naturally, I shall mention it to the fellows!"

Bob Cherry made an effort. Once the incident was chattered through the Remove, it was not likely that Mark's part in it would be kept secret long. The inquiry into the ragging of a Form master's study was certain to be deep and searching.

"I—I do ask you, Bunter," gulped Bob.

"As a favour?" persisted Bunter.

Bob gave another gulp.

"Yes."

"Well, that's all right; rely on me," said Bunter. "I'll keep it dark, to oblige you, old chap. I say—"

"That's enough."

"Don't walk away while I'm talking, you beast! I say, hold on; it's rather important!" yelled Bunter.

"Well, what is it?" growled Bob, turning back impatiently.

"I mentioned to you that I was expecting a postal order," said Bunter, blinking at him. "It hasn't come, old chap."

"You fat chump!"

"What I mean is, can you lend me half-a-crown till it comes?" asked Bunter. "First post in the morning, most likely."

Bob glared at him.

"No, I can't!" he snapped.

"Well, look here, a couple of bob—"

"Go and eat coke!"

Bob Cherry turned to the door again.

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter contemptuously. "All right! You ask favours of me, and you won't lend me a couple of bob till my postal order comes! And you expect me to keep shady secrets for your shady friends!"

Bob Cherry turned back once more. He gave Bunter a long, long look, and without speaking, dropped two shillings into a fat hand. Then he turned and walked away.

"Thanks, old chap!" said Bunter.

"I'll let you have it back when my postal order arrives."

"Bosh!" retorted Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter did not follow him farther. He was "through" with Bob Cherry now. He grinned serenely, and when he left the Rag his footsteps led him in the direction of the school shop.

There, sitting on a high stool at Mrs. Mimble's counter, William George Bunter, with a shiny sticky face, proceeded to consume refreshments, liquid and solid, to the exact value of two shillings.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Friends Divided!

"**A**NYTHING up, old chap?"

Mark Linley looked at Bob in surprise, as he met him in the quadrangle on his way to the gates.

It was so unusual for Bob to look anything but exuberantly cheerful, that his present aspect was quite striking. His face was gloomy, his brow dark with troubled thought. He did not even see Mark, on his way to the gates, till the Lancashire junior addressed him.

Then, as he glanced at his friend, his face did not relax. In fact, it grew more gloomy and troubled.

"Oh! You!" he said.

"You're looking down in the mouth," said Mark. "I suppose you haven't bagged six since I saw you in the study?"

"No!" grunted Bob.

He stared rather grimly at Mark.

"What the thump made you go to Quelchy's study, Linley?" he blurted out.

"Quelchy's study?" repeated Mark.

"Yes. You must have been an awful ass—"

"But I hadn't any choice about going there when I went," said Mark in astonishment. "Quelchy ordered me to follow him there, with Skinner and Snoop—"

"I don't mean that time," growled Bob. "I mean since Quelchy went out."

"I haven't been to the study since Quelchy went out."

"What?"

Bob Cherry fairly jumped.

"Well, I haven't," said Mark.

"What are you getting at? I don't quite understand you, Bob."

Bob looked at him hard. A revengeful act was unlike Mark, but a falsehood was still more unlike him, if possible. No doubt a fellow who had ragged his Form master's study could not be too careful to whom he confided what he had done. But Bob had never dreamed that Mark would tell an untruth on that subject or any other.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" he exclaimed blankly.

"What are you driving at?" asked Mark.

"You say you haven't been to Quelchy's study since he went out?"

"That's right; I haven't."

"Well, if you haven't, so much the better," said Bob grimly. "I had a sort of idea that you had."

"Blessed if I see why you should think so," answered Mark. "You seem to be talking in riddles."

"Quelchy's study's been ragged."

"First I've heard of it."

"Oh, draw it mild!" exclaimed Bob angrily. "Do you think you're talking to a fellow who could give you away?"

Mark looked at him quietly and steadily.

"I think—at least, I thought—that I was talking to a fellow who could take my word!" he answered. "I've told you that I haven't been near Quelchy's study, not since I was caned there, and if the place has been ragged I know nothing of it."

"Well, I suppose you'll have to keep that up if you don't want to bag a flogging from the Head," said Bob. "But you might have trusted me."

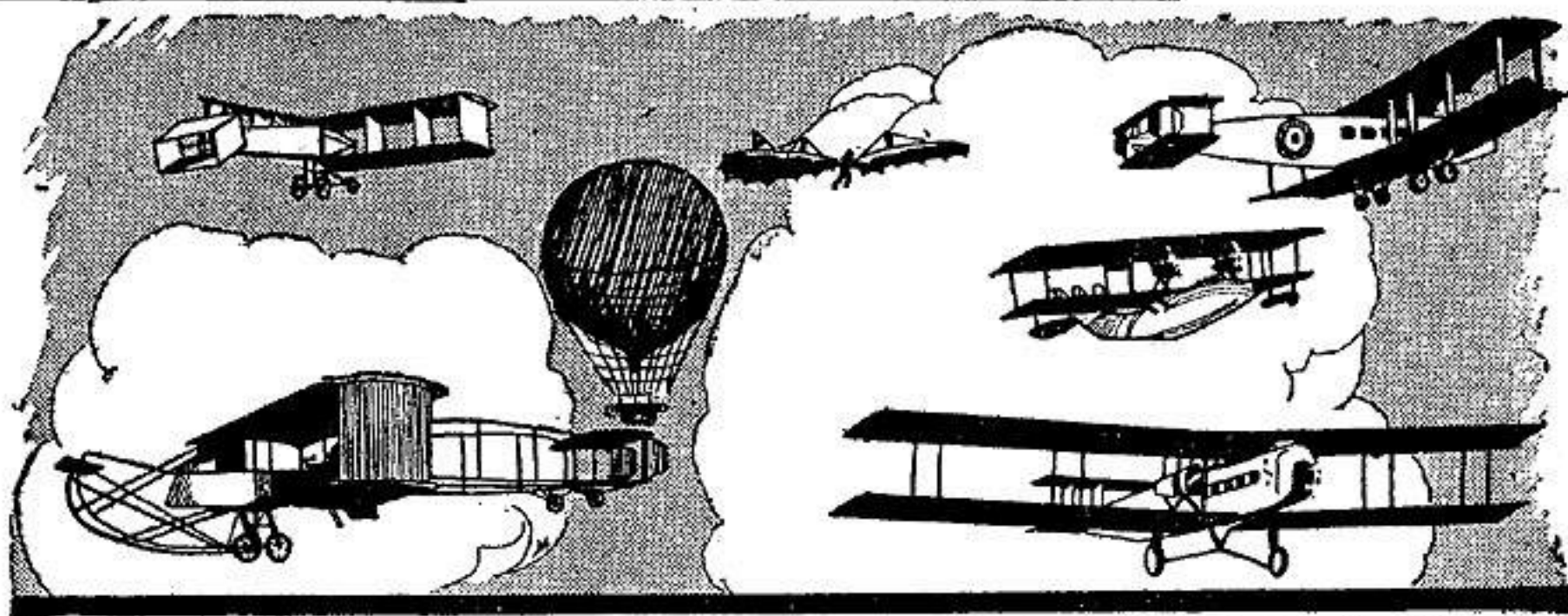
"Of course I would trust you. But I'm telling you the truth—I don't see why you should think differently."

Bob grunted.

"Let it go at that, then!" he said, and he strode past Linley and went on towards the gates.

Mark stared after him for a moment, and then followed him quickly.

(Continued on page 12)



LEARNING to FLY!

The tragic years of the Great War did more to perfect the construction of aircraft than centuries had done. For the plane as a war-weapon proved terribly effective both in attack and defence.

Setting the Pace!

EXPLORING the nooks and corners of Space, the great magnet which has such a tremendous attraction for numerous daring airmen to-day, was a project no one took seriously until a few years ago. Why, the greatest altitude pre-War aviators could get up to was a few hundred feet. They soar gaily up now to *thousands* of feet, and come down again blithe as birds and with the assurance of eagles.

It was the Great War that "did it." Just before the outbreak of hostilities it was beginning to dawn on the nations that in aircraft there was another fighting "arm." Get enough really good planes, with the right human stuff to man 'em, and—why, you might wipe out the other country's fleet and exterminate his armies before he knew what was what! If you pounced quickly enough!

But at first, those responsible for preparations for possible war saw no farther than air-scouts. Baby planes, these were, just for spying out the lie of the land and getting news of what the other fellows were doing in the enemy territory.

"Archies!"

When the Great War actually broke out, the experts began to think of air-fleets. England was not long in getting to work, and we had the finest material in all the world clamouring to be trained as fighting airmen. The R.F.C.—now known as the R.A.F.—was swamped with would-be recruits.

They were rushed through a course of theoretical and practical training, then out to the Front, where they flew over the enemy lines and used their machine-guns and bombs to the very best effect. That was another surprising development in flying—the carrying of actual weapons of war, other than the bombs the famous Zeppelins used to drop.

To combat the fighting airmen someone invented "Archies"—guns specially used for knocking the "innards" out of aeroplanes, and capable of hurling death and destruction to the amazing height of 20,000 feet or more. In due course there came along devices, mounted on the ground, which picked up the otherwise inaudible sounds made by enemy aircraft approaching a very long way off. That device indicated the direction from which the raider was coming, too, so that defending planes could go up and be in readiness to pounce on him and knock him to smithereens!

Wireless made unbelievable strides, too, during the Great War, and it was not long before aeroplanes were equipped with Marconi's wonder. Aerial photography was something of a new departure as well, and it played a very important part in the War and deservedly earns a place in the all-embracing conquest of the air.

Cargoes of Death!

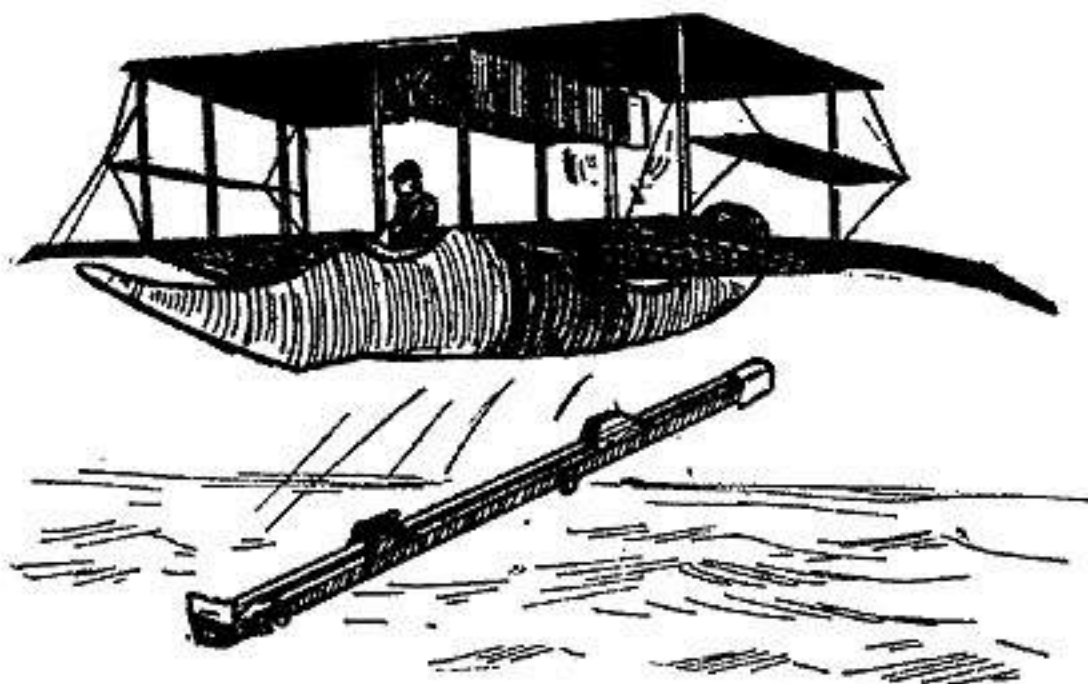
Until bomb-dropping from an aeroplane had developed into a science, the pilot had to lean over the side of the cockpit and pitch out the bomb by hand, trusting it fell somewhere near its intended objective. Then bomb-releasing mechanism came along—and the bombs themselves began to increase in weight from a mere ten pounds to super-gigantic things that could blow big buildings to splinters.

And they started filling them with poison-gas, by way of a change from high-explosive. There was great danger to be faced, when those stunts were coming to pass, that the flying pioneers of earlier years knew nothing of.

Those pioneers expected busted bones and broken necks whenever they went up. In the days before planes flew properly at all—whilst experimenters were trying to coax their machines for even a moment off solid ground—most of those expectations came true. But there was no danger of them being *blown* to pieces, as these bomb-carrying pilots of the war-days were in.

If the airman carrying a load of explosives bumped his machine roughly in coming down, he was extremely likely to go up again most rapidly—and descend in instalments!

Seaplanes were slowly being evolved, special attention being paid them during the War because they were as useful in the air as on the water, and the observer aboard the seaplane could see down into the water and spot any submarine that might be lurching along there.



As the seaplane is launched from the deck of a ship, it glides over the water and drops off its cradle—as shown—and the cradle is afterwards picked up again.

Floating 'Dromes!

They were slow old coaches, those early seaplanes, and the manner of launching them from the ship's deck which acted as seaplane carrier was far

from perfect. Now planes are shot from the deck of an aircraft carrier that houses eighty or more of them at a time—and even from liners—by means of a wonderful catapult arrangement.

Sometimes a seaplane would launch itself in this way. Mounted on a cradle fitted with wheels running along a rail on the ship's deck, the seaplane would be started up, its propeller driving it and its cradle to the rail-end. Then the plane shot into the air. As for the wheeled cradle, that simply flopped from under the plane and hurtled into the sea, whence it was hauled aboard the ship again in readiness for the next plunge!

Now, seaplanes like those that smashed all world's records for speed, in the recent Schneider Trophy Race, rise under their own power direct from the water at a hundred miles an hour!

Another war-time development was the construction of troop-carrying aeroplanes—tremendous weight-lifters for moving numbers of infantrymen about at high speeds over great distances. (There will be another interesting flying article by our special contributor next week.)

SKINNER'S SHADY SCHEME

(Continued from page 10.)

"Bob!" he exclaimed.

Bob Cherry did not turn his head. He tramped on his way, with a set face and a gloomy brow. Mark touched him on the arm.

"Bob! We can't let it go at that," he said quietly. "We've been friends, and you've been a good friend to me, but we can't keep friends if you call me a liar! Surely you don't mean it?"

Bob stared round at him.

"Did you go to Quelch's study?" he demanded.

"No!"

"That does it, then."

"You don't believe me?"

"No; I don't!"

Mark compressed his lips.

"Then that does it, as you say!" he rejoined. "I've told you the truth, and I can't imagine why you suppose that I haven't. But so long as you do imagine so you'd better not speak to me again."

"Rely on that—I won't!" grunted Bob.

And he tramped on again, and this time Mark let him go. But Mark's face was now as glum as Bob's, as he walked away slowly towards the House.

Bob tramped out into Friardale Lane. He was worried and troubled, and no longer thinking with any keenness of the excursion to Cliff House—indeed, he had forgotten his intention of trotting all the way and arriving there in time for tea in the school-room with Marjorie and her friends.

Such malice as had been displayed in the ragging had shocked and troubled him, in a fellow he had liked and respected. But Mark's denial of what he had done put the lid on, as Bob would have expressed it. A fellow who was a liar as well as a hooligan was not the kind of fellow Bob could be friendly with.

But it was a blow to him—a heavy blow, it completely dashed his cheery spirits that afternoon.

Mark was not exactly a chum of Bob's, like the famous Co. But they had always been friends, and Bob's liking for him had been founded on respect for a sterling character. It was not pleasant to discover that he had been deceived, that the fellow for whom he had always stood up, through thick and thin, was capable of brutality and deceit.

There were fellows at Greyfriars who had a "down" on Mark because he came from a humble home, and had worked for his daily bread before he came to the school on a scholarship. Bob had always regarded them with a scorn that he never took the trouble to conceal. But he was forced to admit now that there might be something to be said for their point of view—since he had listened to Mark Linley uttering what appeared to him a deliberate falsehood. And it was not agreeable to reflect that he had been in the wrong, and that contemptible fellows like Skinner and Snoop and Angel of the Fourth had been right.

With such troublesome thoughts in his mind it was no wonder that Bob's usually bright face was deeply overcast.

His footsteps lagged as he went along Friardale Lane.

He was in no mood for the cheery company at Cliff House—he did not want to take a glum face into a pleasant party, and act the part of a killjoy. He determined to loiter on his way and fall in with his friends as they came back to Greyfriars.

He gave a sudden start as a tall and

angular figure came into view, from the direction of the village. He capped Mr. Quelch respectfully as he passed, receiving a nod in return, and then stood staring after the Form master as he went on towards the school.

Quelch was going in now—and he would arrive in his study and find it looking as if an earthquake had struck it. There was going to be a terrific row.

Changed as his feelings were towards his friend, Bob was glad, deeply glad, that he had picked up that tell-tale envelope in Quelch's study and destroyed it. There was nothing now to connect Mark Linley with the ragging; no reason to fear that punishment would fall upon him. Bob did not want to speak to him again, but most certainly he did not want him to be flogged by the headmaster.

He drifted into the footpath through Friardale Wood, the way by which Harry Wharton & Co. would return from Cliff House. Two juniors were loafing on the footpath, smoking cigarettes, and Bob gave them a glance of disdain—at which Skinner and Snoop grinned.

"Hallo, you're looking happy, old bean!" grinned Skinner. "Somebody left you a fortune? Why this jolly, smiling countenance?"

And Sidney James Snoop sniggered.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Bob. "Quelch's just passed the end of the footpath. If he'd come this way you'd have looked pretty green, with that muck in your silly mouths."

"Quelch?" repeated Skinner. "Has he gone back? Glad I didn't meet him. He's ratty to-day. The old jesser gave us six each for scrapping with Linley, and we came out here to walk it off."

"Serve you right!" grunted Bob.

"Well, your pal had six, as well!" grinned Snoop. "I rather thought that Quelch would let him off lightly as he's generally a favourite of his. But he didn't—not a bit! He gave Linley a topping six."

"And the brute wriggled," said Skinner with satisfaction. "I fancy he was rather surprised at Quelch giving him such mustard. But Quelch's ratty to-day; and Linley bagged six all right. He looked no end savage afterwards, I thought."

"Oh, rot!" growled Bob.

And he went on his way, glad to get away from the two shady slackers of the Remove.

"Wonder what's up with him?" yawned Skinner. "He's generally merry and bright. And now he looks as if he had bagged a front seat at his own funeral. The other cads left him in the lurch, perhaps. He's generally with them. But this afternoon they seem to have gone off and left him to stew in his own juice. Got a match?"

"What did you do in Quelch's study, Skinner?" asked Snoop, as he handed matches to his precious pal.

Skinner raised his eyebrows.

"Quelch's study? I haven't been there since we were licked by our beloved Form master."

"But you were saying in the Rag that—"

"Fellows say lots of things when they've just had a licking," remarked Skinner. "Generally they think better of them afterwards. I did."

"Then you didn't—"

"Not at all!"

"Well, that shows your sense, anyhow. Quelch's a jolly dangerous animal to play tricks on."

"I know that, old bean. I haven't nerve enough," said Skinner calmly. "A fellow like Linley might have—he's got tons of nerve. If anything's

happened in Quelch's study you can put it down to Linley, I fancy."

Snoop gave him a suspicious look.

"But has anything happened there?" he asked.

"How should I know?" yawned Skinner. "Didn't we walk out of the House, and out of the school, only a few minutes after Quelch licked us?"

"No, we didn't," answered Snoop. "It was a good half-hour afterwards that we came out—and you know it, as well as I do."

Skinner shook his head.

"We came out immediately," he answered. "I remember it distinctly—and you'd better remember it, too, Snoopey. Make it a point to remember it, in case any questions are asked. You'll have a row with me, old chap, if you happen to forget it."

"Oh!" said Snoop.

And he said no more.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Trouble on the Tapis!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

It was Bob Cherry's usual cheery greeting, but not in the usual cheery tones. Four juniors looked at him rather curiously as they met him in Pegg Lane.

"Oh, here you are at last!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"You're jolly late!" said Nugent.

"The lateness is terrific."

"I—I thought I'd meet you on your way home," said Bob, as he fell into step with his chums. "Had a good time at Cliff House?"

"The goodness of the time was preposterous," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "There was an esteemed cake that would have delighted the absurd heart of the disgusting Bunter."

"And you missed it, Bob!" said Johnny Bull.

Bob grinned faintly.

"But why didn't you come, Bob?" asked Harry, glancing at Bob Cherry's clouded face as they walked towards the footpath. "We hung about a long time going to Cliff House, thinking you'd overtake us."

"Well, I was rather delayed," said Bob. "For one thing, that idiot Bunter butted into my study and spoiled my impot, and I had to write it out over again. And—and there was one thing and another."

"But you could have got to Cliff House," said Frank Nugent.

"Well, yes."

"Why didn't you, then?"

"Well, I—I thought I'd meet you fellows on your way home," said Bob lamely. "I should have been jolly late, anyhow."

"Give it a name," said Johnny Bull abruptly.

"Eh?"

"Give it a name, ass!"

"Give what a name, fathead?"

"What's up? You're looking as if you were just going to be hanged. You're not, I suppose?"

"Ass!"

"Well, then, what's the matter? Something's up. Give it a name."

"The namefulness is the proper caper, my esteemed and absurd Bob," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The light of your benighted countenance has completely faded, and the smile of joyfulness has been replaced by the frown of gloom. What is the causefulness of this preposterous change in your ludicrous aspect?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Bob.

"Gammon!" said Nugent.

"Well, I don't seem to feel as chippy as usual," said Bob. "It was no good

butting in at Cliff House with a glum face."

"But what are you glum about?" asked Harry.

"The glumfulness is terrific and extraordinary. Confide it to your absurd and preposterous chums."

"Oh, it's nothing!" mumbled Bob.

The juniors walked through the footpath to Friardale Lane, and on to Greyfriars, four members of the Co. considerably puzzled. Bob Cherry spoke hardly a word on the way back to the school, though once or twice he endeavoured to join in the talk of the Co. All of them were rather silent by the time they reached the school gates.

It was obvious to Bob's chums that something had happened that afternoon to dash his spirits to such an extent, and it was surprising that he did not tell them what it was. The Co. were not accustomed to having secrets from one another.

As the juniors came into the House Peter Todd met them, with an unusually grave expression on his face.

"You fellows haven't heard?" he asked.

"What and which?" inquired Nugent.

"There's a frightful row on."

"Oh, my hat! What's happened, and who's for it?"

"Some silly ass ragged Quelch's study while he was out. Fairly wrecked it, I hear."

"Great pip!"

"Quelch raised Cain when he got in," said Toddy. "There's going to be an inquiry, and the howling ass that did it will get a Head's flogging, if he isn't bunked. I'm jolly glad I was at Courtfield this afternoon with Dutton. A fellow needs a good alibi these times."

"But who could have been idiot enough to do such a thing?" exclaimed Harry Wharton aghast.

"Goodness knows."

Peter Todd left them, and four members of the Co. looked very oddly at Bob Cherry, who was crimson.

"Bob, old man—" said Wharton, in a low voice.

Bob glanced at him, his ruddy face growing redder and redder.

"You ass!" whispered Nugent.

"What do you mean?"

"Was it you?"

"Me?" exclaimed Bob, with a jump. He stared round at his comrades. "You silly chumps, do you think I played such a fool's trick?"

"Oh! You didn't!" exclaimed Wharton, greatly relieved.

"No, ass!"

"Then what the thump were you as red as a turkey-cock for, as soon as Toddy mentioned it?" asked Johnny Bull.

"And what was up with you, anyhow, when you came along and met us?" asked Nugent.

"If Bob says he didn't do it, he

didn't," said the captain of the Remove. "But I fancy he knows who did."

"I—I don't see why you should think so," stammered Bob.

"Your speaking countenance, old bean!" said Wharton, with a grin. "You looked as if you'd got all the worries of the world on your shoulders when you met us. Now you turn as red as a beetroot as soon as Toddy mentions what's happened. Either you did it, or you know who did."

Bob was silent.

He had intended to keep secret the fact that he knew anything about the perpetrator of the outrage in Quelch's study, but he was a bad hand at keeping secrets.

"Did you know it had happened before you came out to meet us?" asked Johnny Bull.

Bob Cherry nodded.

"I had to take my lines in," he said. "I found the study in a ghastly state."



"Please, sir," gasped Bunter, "it wasn't me who ragged your study." "What?" snapped the Remove master. "You should say 'It was not I,' Bunter." "Oh, sir," said the Owl of the Remove, blinking. "I never thought it was you—" "Wha-a-at?" "It stands to reason you wouldn't rag your own study, sir!" (See Chapter 10.)

"Quelch will suspect you—"

"That's all right. Bunter was there at the same time, and we're witnesses for one another," said Bob, with a faint smile. "And Hacker knows we were only a couple of minutes in the study. Quelch can't put it down to me or to Bunter."

"Who did it?" asked Johnny.

"How should I know?"

"Can't say, but you do know. Are you taking to deceiving your old pals in your old age?" demanded Johnny Bull.

Bob wriggled uncomfortably.

"Well, if I happen to know, least said soonest mended," he answered. "I can't give a man away."

"Of course you can't. But we shouldn't give him away, either, if you told us who it was."

"Better not," said the captain of the Remove. "Things like that can't be kept too dark. If Bob knows, he'd better keep it to himself, and forget it as soon as he can."

"Well, that's so," agreed Johnny

Bull. "If we happen to be questioned, the less we know about it the better."

On the way to Hall for calling-over the Famous Five came on Skinner and Snoop. The latter was looking rather troubled, and was quite silent, but Skinner seemed in unusually good spirits.

"Heard?" he asked.

"Toddy's told us," said Harry. "Is it really serious?"

"Frightfully!" yawned Skinner. "From what I hear, some Johnny has ragged Quelch's study right and left, bunged ink and gum all over his books, sprinkled the room with cinders—all sorts of things. You fellows know anything about it?"

"How could we know anything about it, ass, when we've been at Cliff House this afternoon?"

"Lucky for you," said Skinner. "The Remove are going through a sort of giddy inquisition, I hear, after calling-over. Every fellow will be called on

to prove that he didn't do it. I've got a good alibi, for one—I was out of gates with Snoop. Cherry will remember seeing us in the wood, too."

"That was long after it happened!" grunted Bob.

"Still, it shows we were a mile from the school. But what about you, Cherry? You must have been in the House at the time."

"You needn't worry about me!" grunted Bob.

"My dear man, I'm not worrying about you," said Skinner cheerily—"not the least little bit in the wide world. Only wanted to know."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, here's Bunter!" said Skinner. "Bunter knows, of course. Bunter knows everything. I dare say he had his eye to the keyhole at the time!"

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Didn't you?" demanded Skinner.

"No, you beast!"

"Then what keyhole did you have your eye at?"

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued
from page 13.)

"Look here, you rotter," roared Bunter, "I was in my study writing lines, and I can prove that the room was ragged before I went there."

"But you know who did it?" urged Skinner. "Peeping Tom of Greyfriars knows everything!"

"Well, I'm not going to give a man away," said Bunter.

"Then you do know?" exclaimed Wharton.

Bunter winked.

"That's telling!" he answered.

Skinner's face had become quite pale for a moment, and his eyes glittered strangely. But he pulled himself together quickly.

"You fat idiot! If you were in your study writing lines, you can't know anything about it!" he growled.

"He, he, he!" was Bunter's reply.

Then, as he caught a savage glare from Bob Cherry, he went on hastily:

"Of course, I don't know anything about it. My mind's a perfect blank on the subject. I know absolutely nothing."

Wingate of the Sixth came along.

"You kids get into Hall!" he said.

The juniors went into Hall. Wingate's face was very grave—a sign that there was trouble on the tapis. In Hall there were many grave faces among those in authority, and among the juniors there was a buzz of excitement. The ragging of a Form master's study was an unusual and highly exciting happening, and all the school knew the story by this time. Who had ragged Quelch? was the question that was on every lip.

In the ranks of the Remove, Bob Cherry glanced at Mark Linley, and Mark met his eye. He made a movement as if to come over to Bob—at which Bob's face set hard, and he turned his head away. Mark's face set, too, and he gave no further heed to his former friend. Neither of them joined in the excited buzz that was going on, and which died away when the Head came in to take call-over.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Who Ragged Quelch?

"QUELCHY looks wild!" murmured Skinner.

"Mad as a hatter!" whispered Bolsover major. "I shouldn't like to be the sportsman who ragged his study!"

"Same here!" smiled Skinner.

"What silly ass, I wonder—"

"I fancy Quelch will nose him out! You know what a Nosy Parker he is!" remarked Skinner.

"Silence!" called out Wingate.

The whispering in the Remove died away as the roll began. Name after name was answered.

But most fellows in the Remove were giving their attention to Mr. Quelch.

Certainly he did not look "wild" or "mad as a hatter," but it was easy to see that his feelings were deep.

His countenance, always severe, now looked as if it were moulded in iron. His eyes, often compared by his pupils

to gimlets on account of their penetrating qualities, were now like gleaming pin-points. His jaw had never looked so square, his lips never so tight.

Plainly the Remove master was in a state of deep wrath, all the deeper, probably, for being carefully suppressed.

That really was not surprising. The mildest-tempered Form master might have been exasperated at finding his study looking as if a cyclone had struck it in his absence.

It was not merely the damage done, though that was considerable; it was the contemptuous disrespect implied in the ragging.

Some member, or members, of his Form had treated the Remove master in this outrageous way, doubtless in malicious revenge for some punishment. It was an unheard-of occurrence. It hinted at a state of insubordination in the Lower Fourth that reflected seriously on the Form master.

In the Common-room, where masters congregated, it was the subject of much discussion. The staff at Greyfriars were all on friendly terms, like the staff at most schools, and they liked to make the most of one another's little weaknesses or mishaps, also like the staff at most schools.

It made Henry Samuel Quelch writhe inwardly when Mr. Prout of the Fifth sympathised with him; it made him writhe again when Hacker consoled. In each case he detected a faintly lurking smile.

Capper, the master of the Fourth, had remarked that it was only in the Remove that these disorderly things seemed to happen; and Wiggins, master of the Third, had repeated that remark to Quelch; and Twigg, master of the Second, had sympathetically told Quelch that the Remove seemed really too much for him.

Prout had actually gone to the length of offering his advice and help in bringing the Remove to a better frame of mind and conduct, and Prout had had a narrow escape of hearing some bitter truths from Quelch. Even little Monsieur Charpentier, the French master, had offended; with brimming good-natured sympathy, he had spoken of "le pauvre Quelch," blissfully ignorant that it made Quelch grind his teeth to be spoken of as "poor Quelch."

Altogether, it was not surprising that Henry Samuel Quelch was in a state similar to that of Vesuvius on the eve of an eruption.

He had been treated with disrespect by some member of his own Form; and his colleagues, if not exactly rejoicing, at least were giving him the benefit of a barbed sympathy.

All that remained to Quelch was to find the offender, and take it out of him, which he was bitterly and ruthlessly determined to do.

After that offender had been found and dealt with, there was not likely to be another ragging of Quelch's study. The Remove master was determined on that.

Roll-call finished at last, and the school was dismissed, with the exception of the Remove. That Form was ordered to remain.

All the members thereof knew why. The inquiry into the ragging was going to begin.

There were uneasy faces in the Form. Fellows who had been out of gates that afternoon, and could prove as much, felt easier in their minds. But hardly any fellow was quite at ease. Quelch, they could read by the signs, was in a dangerous mood. As the song says, it sometimes happens that a victim must be found. If Quelch did not find the guilty party, the fellows did not feel at

all sure that he would not make up for it by dropping on an innocent one. Conclusive evidence might not be obtainable; and Mr. Quelch looked as if he would be satisfied with inconclusive evidence, rather than allow the outrage to go unavenged.

Some of the fellows reflected uneasily that in such circumstances the chief thing was to make an example of somebody; and the identity of the example was a matter of secondary importance. From of old they knew that Form masters were animals of uncertain temper.

It was the Head who addressed the Remove. He told them—what they already knew—that an outrage had taken place in their Form master's study, describing it as an unheard-of, unparalleled, unprecedented outrage. These impressive adjectives rolled sonorously from the Head. He went on to issue an invitation to the culprit, or culprits, to stand forth and confess what he, or they, had done. As it was clearly understood that the sequel to confession would be a flogging there and then, it was not surprising that there were, so to speak, no takers.

No culprit or culprits stood forth.

There was a brief silence, during which Skinner, with a curiously perturbed expression on his face, watched Quelch. It seemed as if Skinner was in expectation of something that did not happen.

Snoop nudged him, looking at him with mute inquiry. As Skinner took no heed, Snoop whispered:

"Didn't you—"

"Shut up, you idiot!"

Sidney James Snoop shut up, no doubt realising that it was neither time nor place for comparing notes on the matter.

Dr. Locke's voice broke the silence again.

"I repeat," he said, "that I command the culprit, or culprits, to stand out before the Form this instant."

Nobody stirred in the Remove.

"Very well," said the Head, in a deep voice. "The matter will now proceed to inquiry. The punishment of the offender, when discovered, will be very severe indeed. Instant confession and apology may induce me to take a more lenient view."

Still there were no takers.

The Head's brow darkened. This obstinate silence on the part of the offender seemed, to him, a flouting of his authority.

"Very well," said the Head, a second time, though his tone implied that it was far from well. "The inquiry will proceed. I leave the investigation in your hands, Mr. Quelch!"

"Thank you, sir!"

"On discovering the offender, you will report his name to me, and a most severe flogging will be administered, in the presence of the whole school!" said Dr. Locke.

"Very good, sir."

Dr. Locke swept from the Hall. The Remove, now, knew what the culprit had to expect; and they opined that he was less likely than ever to let the cat out of the bag, if he could help it.

The gimlet eye of Henry Samuel Quelch roamed over an attentive Form. For a full minute there was a dead silence, while the juniors shifted and stirred uneasily.

"Tryin' to rattle our nerves!" Vernon-Smith whispered to Redwing. "He's gettin' some of the fellows on the jump. Feelin' scared, old bean?"

Redwing smiled, and shook his head. He was one of the fellows who had been out of gates all the afternoon, and he was glad that the Bounder had been

with him. Smithy, the most reckless fellow in the Form, was as likely as anyone to be suspected.

Mr. Quelch spoke at last. His voice came like a whip-lash.

"The offender is in this Form, standing now before me. For the last time, I give him an opportunity to confess."

"Not original!" murmured Vernon-Smith. "He's repeatin' the Head's wheezes."

"Did someone speak?" asked Mr. Quelch.

Silence!

"Did you speak, Vernon-Smith?"

The Bounder breathed hard.

"Yes, sir!"

"Have you anything to confess?"

"Oh no, sir!"

"Then why did you speak?"

"I—I made a remark to Redwing, sir."

"What remark did you make to Redwing?"

"I said it was a shockin' thing for a fellow to rag his Form master's study, sir!" said the Bounder, with the utmost coolness.

Redwing bit his lip.

"Indeed!" Mr. Quelch's eyes glittered like ice at the Bounder. "A very proper sentiment, Vernon-Smith, if you have spoken truthfully—which I doubt."

"Oh, sir!"

"Where were you this afternoon, Vernon-Smith, after three o'clock—the hour at which I left the school?"

"At Hawkscliff, sir, nearly ten miles away."

"Can you prove that, Vernon-Smith?"

"Redwing was with me, sir."

"Is that the case, Redwing?"

"Yes, sir!" said Tom Redwing.

"Very good!" said the Remove master; and he let that line of questioning drop at once. Redwing's word was not to be doubted, whatever opinion he might have of the Bounder's.

There was another deep silence. And the Remove stirred and shifted with more and more uneasiness, as the seconds ticked away.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Going Through It

MR. QUELCH eyed the Remove. The Remove eyed Mr. Quelch.

Bob Cherry stole a glance at Mark. The Lancashire lad was standing quite calm and unperturbed; and Bob marvelled at his calmness.

"Linley! Skinner! Snoop!"

Mr. Quelch rapped out the three names sharply.

The three juniors named stepped out. Mark was quite calm; Skinner impudent; Snoop uneasy. The trio faced the Form master.

"I had occasion to punish you three boys this afternoon," said the Remove master. "I had occasion to punish you with some severity. What has occurred in my study was an act of revenge. I shall, therefore, question you three boys very closely."

The Remove waited in breathless silence.

"You first, Skinner! Where were you this afternoon, from three to five, the period of my absence from the school?"

"I went out of gates before three, sir, and came in for call-over," answered Skinner.

"Where did you go?"

"For a ramble in Friardale Wood, sir."

"Were you alone?"

"No, sir! Snoop was with me."

"You went out together?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you bear out Skinner's statement, Snoop?"

"Yes, sir," said Snoop, licking his dry lips.

"Another fellow happened to pass and see us in the wood, sir, during the afternoon," said Skinner.

"Who was that?"

"Cherry, sir."

"When did you first become aware of what had happened in my study?"

"When we came in for call-over, sir," answered Skinner. "I heard some Fourth Form fellows talking about it."

Mr. Quelch's gaze dwelt long and searchingly on Skinner and Snoop. Then he signed to them to go back to their places—much to their relief—and turned a gimlet eye on Mark Linley.

"Where did you spend the afternoon, Linley?"

"In the quad or the House, sir," answered Mark calmly.

"You did not go out of gates?"

"No, sir."

"How were you occupied after three o'clock?"

"I wrote a letter in the Rag, sir, about three, posted it, walked about the quad for a time, and after that, went to my study."

"What did you do there?"

"Greek, sir."

"Was anyone there at the time?"

"No, sir. My study-mates had gone out."

"Did you go into my study during my absence?"

"No, sir."

"Very well. I have always found you a truthful boy, Linley, and I do not doubt you for a moment. You may go back to your place."

Mark went back to his place.

He caught a look from Bob Cherry as he did so, and started at the involuntary look of scorn that flashed from Bob's eyes. He coloured deeply, and took his place among the juniors, at a distance from Bob.

"Cherry!" said Mr. Quelch. "Bunter!"

Bob Cherry stood out before the Form. Billy Bunter rolled slowly after him.

"Please, sir, it wasn't me!" gasped Bunter.

"What?" snapped the Remove master.

"It wasn't me, sir."

"I regret to hear a member of my Form expressing himself with such a complete disregard for the rules of grammar!" rumbled Mr. Quelch. "You should say: 'It was not I,' Bunter."

Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh, sir! I never thought it was you—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"It stands to reason that you wouldn't rag your own study, sir! Of course, I knew it wasn't you, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the Remove. The tension was broken for a moment. Billy Bunter could always be relied upon to provide comic relief in the tensest moments.

Mr. Quelch glared at the Form.

"Silence! Is this a laughing matter? Silence."

The laughter died away very suddenly. Whether it was a laughing matter or not, the Remove consulted the maxim "Safety First."

"Bunter. You are an utterly obtuse boy!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "You should not say 'It was not me—'"

"But I didn't, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"I said it wasn't me, sir."

"Are you totally ignorant of the distinction between the nominative and the accusative case, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir! I mean no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Oh, lor'!"

Mr. Quelch breathed hard, but he let the side-issue drop. He was not there, after all, to examine Bunter in the niceties of English grammar.

"You two boys," said Mr. Quelch, "had impositions to write this afternoon, and instructions to take them to my study. You did not hand in your lines before I went out. I presume that you took them to my study later."

"Yes, sir!" said Bob.

"And you, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir!" groaned Bunter. "But we never touched a thing, sir. I—I was shocked and—horrificed, sir, at the state the study was in. I said to Cherry, 'Isn't this awful?' I did really, sir."

"Am I to understand, then," said Mr. Quelch, in a deep voice, "that the outrage had already occurred when you went to my study?"

"We found the room ragged, sir," said Bob.

"And it was not your work?"

"Certainly not."

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "We were both horrified—fairly flabbergasted, sir! I said to Cherry, 'Isn't this frightful?' sir! I said—"

"I found your impositions in the study on my return," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "Was anyone in the study when you arrived there?"

"No, sir!"

"Did you see anyone leave the study?"

"No, sir!"

"You found the room in a state of disturbance and disorder?"

"Yes, sir."

"Hacker knows—" gasped Bunter. "What has Mr. Hacker to do with the matter, Bunter?"

"His door was open, sir," said Bob Cherry. "He saw us go, and saw us come back. He will tell you that we weren't two minutes in the study."

"I spoke to him, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I told him what had happened, and asked him to speak to you, sir."

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips.

"Very well, I will speak to Mr. Hacker on that subject. For the present, you may go back to your places."

Bob Cherry and Bunter retired, with deep relief. Bob had feared nothing for himself, but he had been uneasy lest Bunter should let something out.

Mr. Quelch had not finished yet.

He proceeded to question every member of the Remove in turn.

Most of the fellows were able to give accounts of their movements that afternoon. As the weather had been fine, and it had been a half-holiday, most had been out of gates, but a few had gone out alone.

When the questioning ceased, the innocence of the major part of the Form had become clear enough. Of all the Remove, only one fellow admitted to having passed the greater part of the afternoon in the House, and that was Mark Linley. But it was not unusual for the scholarship junior to spend his leisure hours in "swotting," and few in the Form suspected for a moment that Mark had committed the ragging. Such an act was quite out of keeping with the known character of the quiet, studious Mark. Mr. Quelch certainly did not suspect him for a moment.

His glance seemed to linger on Harold

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Skinner. But he did not question Skinner again.

The Remove were dismissed abruptly. Gladly they poured out of Hall. Mr. Quelch walked to his study with a grim face.

The culprit had not been discovered. There was no name to be reported to the Head, and the public flogging of the offender, in the presence of the whole school, did not seem likely to come off just yet.

"Quelch will get him!" said Bolsover major, in the Rag. "Quelch is a downy bird! He will get him."

"He's a thumping fool, you mean," said Skinner viciously. "Anybody but a blind owl would have got the man already."

Bolsover stared at him.

"How's that?" he demanded. "Think the fellow left a giddy clue behind him, like the man in a bob novel?"

Skinner did not answer that question. He strolled away with a dark and angry brow. Snoop joined him in a quiet corner of the Rag.

"Did you—?" he whispered.

Skinner gave him a fierce look.

"Not a word, you fool."

"The fellows can't hear us. Look here, what did you do with that old envelope you fished out of the waste-paper-basket in the Rag?"

"Nothing."

"Well, I suppose that's the truth," muttered Snoop. "If you'd planted it in Quelch's study, he would have found it there. You can bet he jolly well searched for a clue to the Johnny who ragged him."

"The blind old idiot!" said Skinner, between his teeth.

Snoop started, and stared at him.

"Do you mean—?"

"I mean nothing, you silly owl. Mind you remember that we cleared out of gates before three. As Quelch hasn't found out the man, he will go on asking questions, very likely."

"Linley knows we never went out before three," muttered Snoop. "He saw us here in the Rag, when he was writing his letter. That was about three, and we saw Quelch going out, from the window—"

"Hang Linley!"

"But he knows—"

"He's a low blighter, but he's no sneak. He'd be cut to pieces before he would tell tales about a chap."

"Well, that's so," agreed Snoop. "You can call him a low blighter if you like, but I'm jolly glad he ain't like you, Skinner. You'd give a man away."

"Oh, shut up!"

Skinner wandered out of the Rag, in a mood of deep uneasiness. For reasons best known to himself, Harold Skinner had expected Mr. Quelch to jump at once to the identity of the ragger, and he had had no doubt that Mark Linley would be up for a flogging. Something, evidently, had gone wrong. The best-laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley, according to the poet, and it certainly seemed that something had "ganged agley" with Skinner's scheme. And as suspicion had not turned on Mark Linley, and the affair was still unsettled, upon whom was it likely to turn? That was a most uncomfortable question for Harold Skinner.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Mysterious!

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH glanced at Bob Cherry. Then he glanced at Mark Linley.

The dusky junior was puzzled.

In Study No. 13 the fellows who belonged to that study had gathered for prep. There were four in the room—Bob and Mark, Hurree Singh and little Wun Lung, the Chinese. Generally, there was an atmosphere of cheery cordiality in the study. Now all was changed.

Bob Cherry on one side of the table, Mark Linley on the other, were elaborately unconscious of one another's existence.

There was no cheery nod or word when they met; and they sat down in silence, each busy with his books.

Often enough, Mark gave Bob a helping hand with his prep. Often he supplied him with a word or a definition, to save a long search through the "dick." There was nothing of the kind now. In grim silence the two juniors worked, never looking at one another for a moment.

The nabob glanced at one and then another, and very soon realised that there was trouble in the study. The same idea occurred to Wun Lung, and his almond eyes blinked curiously at the two silent juniors. Two fellows preserving an icy silence had the effect of lowering the temperature of the whole study, as it were. For once the cheeriest study in the Remove was the most dismal.

Hurree Singh was able to guess now why Bob had turned up in such low spirits on the Pegg road that afternoon. Obviously, there had been trouble between him and Mark.

But what the trouble could possibly be was a problem. Neither was a quarrelsome fellow, or quick to take offence. Bob was good nature itself, and it was difficult to imagine him on the wrong side of a quarrel. But Mark was quiet, kind-hearted, inoffensive, and as straight as a die; it was equally difficult to think that he was to blame. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, being strongly attached to both of them, was worried.

Prep in Study No. 13 passed off in almost complete silence. When it was over, Bob Cherry rose at once to leave the study. Mark had risen also; but as he saw that Bob was going, he sat down again. Their old liking for one another's company had quite vanished.

"My esteemed Bob!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Coming down, Inky?" asked Bob abruptly.

"Let us wait for the esteemed and absurd Marky."

"Oh, rot! Come along."

Bob left the study, and the nabob, after a dubious glance at Mark, followed him. In the Remove passage he dropped a dusky hand on Bob Cherry's shoulder. "My esteemed, fatheaded friend—" he began.

"Let's go and see if the other fellows are finished," interrupted Bob.

They went along to Study No. 1. Wharton and Nugent were already done, and Johnny Bull had joined them there. The three juniors were discussing the rag in Quelch's study, and the next probable step on the part of the Remove master, when Bob and Inky came in.

"Feeling better, old bean?" asked Johnny Bull.

"I'm all right!" said Bob shortly.

"The rightfulness is not terrific," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur gently.

"The excellent and execrable Bob has been playing the esteemed goat. What

is the absurd trouble, my worthy and fatheaded Bob?"

"Oh, nothing! Rubbish!"

"But you are on infuriated terms with the absurd Marky," urged the nabob. "Tell your ludicrous pals about it."

"My hat! You haven't rowed with Linley, surely, Bob?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in astonishment.

"Not exactly," said Bob, reddening. "But—well, let it drop. What does it matter, anyhow?"

"Is that what happened this afternoon to turn you into a bear with a sore head?" asked Nugent.

"Rubbish!" grunted Bob.

"Look here, have you rowed with Linley?" asked Wharton.

"No; we don't speak any more, that's all."

"Well, that's enough—in fact, a little too much," said the captain of the Remove. "What has he done?"

Bob grinned faintly.

"How do you know he's done anything? It might have been me."

"If Quelch was here he'd make you say 'It might have been I!'" remarked Nugent. "Are you totally ignorant of the distinction between the nominative and the accusative, Cherry?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fathead!" said Bob, laughing.

"Well, you never row with a man for nothing," said Wharton. "But Linley's not a quarrelsome chap. I dare say it's nothing. Tell us what it is, and let's set it right."

"It's nothing, really—nothing I can tell you fellows, anyhow," said Bob. "Least said soonest mended."

"But you're not barring Linley for nothing!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Well, no."

"Then he's done something?"

"I—I suppose so."

"Cough it up, then, whatever it is."

"I'd rather not," said Bob bluntly. "It's not my business, really, only it's altered my opinion of the chap. A fellow who can stand up and tell baro-faced lies—"

He broke off abruptly.

"Linley's done that?" exclaimed Harry, with wide-open eyes. "Bob, old man, you're dreaming. Linley wouldn't."

"Bosh!" said Nugent.

"The boshfulness is terrific."

Bob Cherry's colour deepened, and his eyes sparkled.

"I'd rather not talk about it," he said. "There may be trouble for the fellow if it's talked about, and I don't want to land him into trouble. What's the good of jaw, anyhow?"

"As a rule," remarked the nabob, "it is judicious to remember the proverb that a still tongue goes longest to the well. But in the present ridiculous circumstances—"

"You've said too much, or too little, Bob," said the captain of the Remove. "Cough it up—I'm sure there's a mistake somewhere."

"There's no mistake."

"There must be," said Frank Nugent. "Linley isn't the fellow to tell lies. You're rather an ass, old chap, to think so."

Bob Cherry gave a grunt.

"Well, I do think so—or, rather, I know it—and I'm not going to say a word about it, so let it drop. Let's go down to the Rag!"

"I say, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter blinked in at the doorway of Study No. 1. Five separate and distinct glares were bestowed on Bunter. Never had his presence been less welcome.

But William George Bunter did not mind that. He rolled in cheerily.

"I say, you fellows, is Cherry here?"

"What do you want?" growled Bob.

There's a topping school yarn of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's in this week's

GEM

WHY NOT READ IT, CHUMS?

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"Oh, here you are!" Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles. "I asked you to call at my study after prep."

"Did you?" grunted Bob.

"Yes, I did. And you didn't do it," said Bunter.

"Go and eat coke!"

"That's all very well," said Bunter. "If you don't want to be pally, Cherry, I'm sure I don't! I'm not the fellow to run after a fellow, I hope. My friends take up too much of my time, as it is, and a fellow hardly ever gets a minute to himself—"

"Oh, dry up!"

"I shan't keep you long," said Bunter, with dignity. "If you think you're good company, Cherry, you're making a mistake. The sooner I'm shut of you the better I shall be pleased."

"Get out, then, you fat ass!" said Wharton.

"The fact is," said Bunter, blinking round the study at the five juniors. "I've been disappointed about a postal order."

"You benighted owl, travel!"

"I'm not asking you to lend me anything, Wharton. I know jolly well you're too mean, after all I've done for you. All these fellows know how I stood by you when you first came to Greyfriars, and saw you through, and helped you, and all that—"

"Will you ever ring off, you podgy duffer?"

"The fact is, you're ungrateful," said Bunter. "I'm not complaining—I'm accustomed to ingratitude. But there's a limit. Bob Cherry comes to me and asks me favours. I do him favours, in my good-natured way. I never expect anything in return. Still, I think that when a fellow's stony, owing to a remittance having failed to arrive, a fellow who's asked favours of him might lend a fellow a paltry half-crown."

Bob Cherry's eyes gleamed; and the other four fellows stared at the fat junior in blank amazement.

"What is the fat owl drivelling about?" asked Nugent, in wonder.

"Oh, really, Franky—"

"Seems to have been a lot of things happening at Greyfriars, while we were out of gates this afternoon," remarked Johnny Bull. "Somebody's ragged Quelch, and Bob's rowed with Linley, and now Bunter—"

"As the matter stands, I'm stony," said Bunter. "It's hard cheese, with a remittance actually in the post—from one of my titled relations, you know. A paltry half-crown—"

"Why the thump should Bob give you half-a-crown?" demanded Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I hope I'm not the fellow to let a fellow give him half-a-crown! I was alluding to a loan, till my postal order comes. Didn't I mention to you men that I was expecting a postal order?"

"You burbling bandersnatch—"

"I'm not talking to you, Bull! Considering that Cherry comes to me and asks personal favours, I think he might oblige me with a paltry loan. I think it's up to him."

Bob's face was crimson with anger and discomfort. He could scarcely resist the temptation to take Billy Bunter by his podgy neck, and hurl him headlong into the Remove passage.

But that, obviously, was not the way to induce Bunter to keep the secret. It was the way to jerk the secret out of him on the spot.

So Bob restrained his wrath. But he glared at the Owl of the Remove as if he could have eaten him.

"Well, how about it?" asked Bunter.

"I shall return the loan to-morrow—as soon as my postal order comes, in fact. If there's any further delay in the post,

I dare say you wouldn't mind waiting a day or two, what?"

Bob breathed hard and deep.

"Mysteriouser and mysteriouser!" said Nugent, with a grin. "What favours have you been asking of Bunter, Bob?"

"Oh, rot!"

"Of course it's rot; but what has that benighted lunatic got into his fat head? He seems to think that he means something."

"Rot, is it?" sneered Bunter. "Well, Cherry knows! I'm willing to tell all Greyfriars, if he likes. In fact, I hardly think that I ought to keep the thing secret. This sort of syrupstitious secrecy is all very well for a fellow like Cherry! But I'm above it."

"You fat villain!" growled Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry! If you put it like that, I think I'd better tell these fellows the whole thing, and leave it to them," said Bunter. "I think I'd better

"Well, I'm blown!" said Johnny Bull at last, expressing in that ejaculation the feelings of all four.

"The blowfulness is terrific!" observed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "This is an esteemed and ridiculous mystery, my absurd chums!"

And a mystery it remained!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Supplies Cut Off!

WHO ragged Quelch!

That question was being asked all over Greyfriars the following day.

Every Form was deeply interested. From the high and mighty men of the



Bob Cherry put his hand in his pocket, drew out a half-crown, and dropped it into Bunter's fat palm. Four pairs of eyes fixed on Bob, and for some moments there was a deep silence. Then Harry Wharton spoke. "What are you bribing Bunter for?" he asked, a gleam of suspicion in his eyes. (See Chapter 11.)

tell the whole Form. If it comes to Quelch, that can't be helped. After all, Quelch has a right to know."

Bob Cherry put his hand in his pocket, and drew out a half-crown. It dropped into Bunter's fat palm.

"Thanks, old chap!" said Bunter. "Remind me of this to-morrow, will you, when I get my postal order? I might forget a trifle like this."

And Bunter, satisfied, rolled out of the study.

In Study No. 1, four pairs of eyes fixed on Bob, whose face was like unto a newly-boiled beetroot in its hue. For some moments there was a deep silence. Then Harry Wharton spoke:

"Will you tell us what this means, Bob?"

"No, I won't!" answered Bob gruffly.

"What are you bribing Bunter for?"

"Because he's a nasty little sneaking extortionate beast!"

"I know that; but why—"

"Let it drop!" growled Bob, and he walked out of the study, leaving his chums staring blankly at one another. There was another silence.

Sixth, down to the smallest fag in the Second Form, that question was on every tongue. Who had ragged Quelch?

The delinquent, or delinquents, had not been discovered. So far, the affair was wrapped in mystery.

In Form that morning, Mr. Quelch was very quiet—dangerously quiet. But that he was thinking of allowing the matter to pass into oblivion, nobody supposed for a moment.

Every man in the Remove knew that the less Quelch said, the more he thought. For the time, he was baffled; but a bloodhound on the trail was not more determined than the Remove master. To allow such a matter to pass, was impossible. Quelch was thinking it out, the juniors surmised; and he was well known to be a downy bird. Sooner or later he would drop on the offender like a bombshell. The Removites could only hope that he would drop on the right party.

It was not a happy day for the Remove. As Bolsover major expressed

it, Quelch had a thunderbolt up his sleeve.

Sooner or later, something was going to happen. Until the mysterious ragger was discovered, and condignly punished, the Remove were likely to remain in a state of painful suspense.

Who the offender was, was as much a mystery to the Form as to the Form master. That it was a Remove man went without saying. Plenty of Remove men had proved that they couldn't possibly have done it, having been far from the spot at the time. But there were many upon whom suspicion could fall. One member of the Form, at least, had told a whole hatful of lies, as Peter Todd put it. Many were the theories in the Form, when they discussed the matter in break. Many were the surmises as to what Quelch was up to; and what thoughts were passing behind his icy mask of a face.

That he would worry the thing out, and get at the truth, was a foregone conclusion, in the Remove. But how, and when, remained to be seen.

Billy Bunter, by this time, was feeling confident and serene. Mr. Hacker's evidence had cleared him and Bob Cherry, to the satisfaction of the Remove master. But as they were the only fellows who were known to have visited the study in Quelch's absence, this only plunged the matter into deeper mystery.

Some fellow had dodged into Quelch's study that Wednesday afternoon and had spent at the very least a quarter of an hour there—fifteen destructive minutes at the least. And—so far as was known—he had left behind no clue whatever to his identity; a circumstance that puzzled Harold Skinner more than anyone else.

Finding a fellow who had been careful to leave no clue behind, was not an easy task. Coker of the Fifth proposed tracking him down by his fingerprints; Coker being deeply read in detective literature. Coker had little doubt that he could have worked the oracle, had Quelch called him in to help. Quelch did not, however, call him in to help. Wingate and the other prefects made inquiries up and down and round about, but with no result. After the first excitement had worn off, the prefects grew rather perfunctory in the matter. They had plenty of other affairs to think about; and in the privacy of the Prefects' Room, they confided to one another their opinion that a Form master ought really to be able to keep his Form in order himself.

If Mr. Quelch had been disposed to slack in the pursuit of the unknown ragger, he would have been spurred on by the barbed sympathy he received in Common-room. The gimlet eyes of Henry Samuel Quelch detected many sly smiles on the faces of the staff.

At tea in Common-room that day, there was something perilously approaching a scene. Prout, in his ponderous way, proffered advice and assistance once more; and Quelch begged him, in icy tones, to reserve his energies for his own Form; the state of which, Quelch hinted, would not have satisfied him, had he been master of the Fifth. Upon which Prout became purple and almost apoplectic, and said in a choking voice:

"Indeed, sir! Indeed!"

"Yes, indeed!" said Quelch icily. "Indeed, sir!"

Fortunately it ended there. It did not proceed to "words"—beyond the word "indeed." But the amount of scorn that both gentlemen contrived to compress into that simple word was appalling.

All this was very discomfiting for Henry Samuel Quelch. It made him

more bitterly keen on the track of the ragger.

While all the Remove were more or less uneasy, Skinner was the most uneasy of all. How a sharp-eyed man like Quelch could have missed the obvious clue that had been left for him, Skinner could not understand.

That nothing had been found in the study to incriminate Mark Linley, was manifest, for the identity of the ragger still remained a mystery, and the Form master's manner to Mark indicated the same cordial confidence as of old with no trace of suspicion or doubt.

The schemer of the Remove wondered and surmised, and surmised and wondered, without coming to a solution. All he could be certain of was that in some inexplicable way Quelch had missed the clue, and that his suspicions were, in consequence, more likely to take the right direction than the wrong one. Which was disturbing knowledge for Harold Skinner.

At any other time, Skinner would have taken note of the breach between Bob Cherry and Mark, and done his amiable best towards making it wider. But now he was too concerned about himself to take heed of it, or to seize the happy opportunity of sowing trouble.

Many other fellows noticed it, but those who asked the two juniors what

A WORTHY WINNER

of one of this week's useful leather pocket wallets is Dudley Proudfoot. Bishop Road Crossing, Beaconsfield, Cape Town, South Africa, who sent in the following Greyfriars Limerick:

There's a Greyfriars fellow
named Cherry,
Who is always exuberant, very.
He jests and he jokes
And the fun that he pokes
Would make grumpy old
"geezers" quite merry!

Why not follow in Dudley's
footsteps chums, and win one of
these topping prizes?

was up, received no satisfaction. Mark was always a fellow of few words, and his words were fewer than ever now. Bob Cherry bluntly told the inquirers to go and eat coke, or to go and chop chips, or something equally elegant and polite.

Bob, though not concerned for himself like Skinner, was a worried fellow that day.

The division between him and an old friend was troubling, and the cause of it more troubling still. And then there was Bunter!

Bunter looked at the matter from his own peculiar point of view.

His view was that he had never liked that fellow Linley, and saw no reason to keep his secrets. This secret he was keeping, as a particular favour to Bob. One good turn deserved another. A fellow who did a fellow a favour, naturally expected that fellow to do him a favour or two in return—such as the cashing of a postal order that was unaccountably delayed in the post.

Had Bob been a wealthy fellow like Lord Mauleverer, possibly Bunter would have found him a sort of gold-mine, for undoubtedly Bob was very anxious that the secret should be kept. All the more because he had quarrelled with his old friend, he did not want to see a severe punishment fall upon him.

But Bob's resources were limited, also, his temper was very uncertain under the kind of pressure Bunter was putting on it. Instead of turning out a gold-mine, Bob was very liable to turn out an active volcano!

The half-crown he had handed Bunter in Study No. 1 was his last! When Bunter looked into Study No. 13 after tea, with a gleam in the little round eyes behind his spectacles which betrayed why he had come, Bob grinned rather sourly. He had a total sum of fourpence in his possession; the value of Bunter's secret had boiled down to that. More he could not give.

"I say, Bob, old chap!" said Bunter affably.

Bob was alone in the study after tea. Even Bunter had realised that it would be judicious to find him alone on such occasions. Bunter was quite satisfied with his proceedings, for did not one good turn deserve another? But he had a sort of feeling that other fellows might find fault with it, if they knew. Bunter had had a lot of experience of carping criticism.

"Well?" grunted Bob.

Bunter blinked at him reproachfully. "Don't snort at a chap like that, as if you weren't glad to see him," he said. "You can't call it civil."

"Oh, get out!" said Bob.

"If that's all you've got to say——"

"That's the lot."

"I say, old fellow, don't be stuffy," said Bunter. "After all, there's such a thing as gratitude, you know. I'm doing you a good turn. I don't ask anything back. That's not my way. Kindness and generosity—that's my style, as you know. Still, I think a fellow ought to do the decent thing. When a fellow's been disappointed about a remittance——"

"I've got fourpence," said Bob grimly. "I shan't have another bean till my allowance comes."

"Oh, crikey!" said Bunter.

"I shan't even give you the fourpence," went on Bob. "You'd only begin again if I did."

Bunter's fat lip curled.

"Keep it!" he said disdainfully. "A few coppers are no use to me. As for your allowance——"

"You won't touch it," said Bob.

"Who wants to touch it?" demanded Bunter indignantly.

"You do, you fat toad! Not a cent!" said Bob. "That's settled. I'm going to try another way. You've got to keep that secret about Linley's envelope in Quelch's study. You've been paid for it, if it comes to that."

"Why, you insulting beast!" gasped Bunter. "As for that paltry loan, I'm going to return that out of my postal order! Why, I told you so."

"Cheese it!" Bob Cherry rose to his feet, and stepped between Bunter and the door. "Now I'm going to lick you——"

"Yaroooh!"

"As a warning. If I hear that you've spoken a word about Linley, I'll lick you again, harder."

"I—I—I say, old chap—hands off!" yelled Bunter, as Bob's powerful grasp was laid on him. "Yarooogh! Help! I was only j-j-joking! I—I'm going to keep the secret, of course."

"This will help you!" said Bob grimly.

With a twist of his sinewy arm, he bent the Owl of the Remove over a chair. Then a folded exercise book rose and fell with mighty swipes.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Bob tossed the exercise book in one direction, and Bunter in another. The fat junior sprawled and roared.

"Now hook it," said Bob, "and mind, if there's a word said in the Form about Linley, I shall know it came from you—and I'll give you the licking of your life with a fives bat! I mean it! I'll give you two dozen as hard as I can lay them on, if you breathe one syllable. Now roll out, you fat worm!"

A lunge from a large size in boots helped Bunter out, and he rolled into the passage, picked himself up, and fled. Bob Cherry slammed the door after him.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Linley Sees Light!

LINLEY, old fellow!"

"Don't bother, Bunter."

"But I say, old fellow—"

Mark waved him away.

The Lancashire junior was in the Rag, with a Greek book on his knees. Most of the fellows were in the studies just then, and Mark was alone. He had had his tea in Hall, and retired to a quiet corner to put in a little work at Greek.

But he was not working with his usual keenness. His difference with his old friend weighed heavily on his spirits, and Bob's scornful face came continually between him and the page. What the cause of that scorn was in Bob's look was a mystery to Mark, but it made his cheeks flush as he thought of it.

For some reason Bob had lost his faith in him, and despised him, that was clear to his mind. Why, he could not fathom.

Bob suspected him of the ragging in Quelch's study, and believed that he had lied in denying the knowledge of it. But again, the "why" perplexed him. More than once he had thought of speaking out to Bob on the subject, but the cold, repellent looks of his former friend banished that idea. Mark was kind and good-natured, but he was as proud as any fellow at Greyfriars, and he could not humble himself more than he had done already. And a miserable doubt was in his mind now, that perhaps Bob regretted having made friends with a fellow who had come to the school from a humble home, on a scholarship won by hard work. If that was so, Mark was not the fellow to hang on where he was not wanted.

But if it was so, it lowered his opinion of a fellow he had always admired and liked, and it troubled him greatly. It was bad enough to lose a friend, without losing one's good opinion of him also.

He waved Bunter away impatiently. He supposed that the inquisitive Owl was there to ask questions, as several other fellows had asked them, on the subject of the rift in Study No. 13. And the more that rift hurt Mark, the less he was disposed to talk about it.

But William George Bunter was not the fellow to be repulsed. Only the application of a boot was likely to repulse Bunter.

"Don't get shirty, old chap!" said the Owl of the Remove. "After all, a fellow like you ought to be glad when a decent chap speaks to him. Don't you think so?"

Mark did not state his opinion on that point. He fixed his eyes on his book, disregarding Bunter.

"The fact is I've got to speak to you," said the fat junior. "Don't think I want your company; nobody's likely to want that. That cad Cherry has turned me down."

"What do you mean, you fat ass?" exclaimed Mark.

"I mean what I say! He's turned me

down—brutally," said Bunter. "Treated me in a really beastly way, after all I've done for him. I begin to think that there's no such thing as gratitude in the world at all." Bunter shook his bullet head sorrowfully. "But to come to the point! I'm not going to let the secret out—I've told Cherry I won't! I'm a fellow of my word!"

Mark stared at him.

"Mind, I don't mean because he says he'll lay into me with a fives bat," explained Bunter. "I'm not afraid of him, I hope! For two pins I'd give him a jolly good licking! But I'm a fellow of my word! I've said that I won't give you away—and I won't."

"Give me away!" repeated Mark.

"Yes. Mind, I'm down on what you did; a rag's a rag, but you went too far in Quelch's study. You jolly well ought to be flogged for it! I'm surprised at Cherry standing up for you. But, of course, he's not so particular a chap as I am. But to come to the point, Linley—one good turn deserves another."

Mark gazed at him silently.

"I've been disappointed about a postal order," Bunter proceeded to explain. "It's not often that a thing like this happens—but it has happened, for once. I'm actually stony!"

Bunter paused for a reply. As he received no reply, only a stare, he rattled on.

"I owe Cherry a few shillings, too; he lent me a couple of bob and a half-crown, and he's made a fuss about it. Talking about paying a fellow to keep a secret!" Bunter breathed righteous indignation. "I'm going to square him at once; I'd scorn to owe him sixpence after that. Can you oblige me with ten bob, Linley—only till my postal order comes, of course?"

"No!" said Mark.

"Well, if you haven't ten bob—I know you're measly poor—how much can you lend me?"

"I have more than ten shillings, but I shall not lend you anything," answered Mark.

"You won't? You don't think one good turn deserves another? Talk about the thankless tooth of a serpent's child!" said Bunter bitterly.

"Let's have this clear," said Mark, still gazing intently at Bunter's fat, indignant countenance. "What secret are you talking about?"

"You know jolly well!" grinned Bunter.

"You seem to have an idea in your silly head that it was I who ragged Quelch's study," said Mark.

"Well, my hat! Are you going to deny it—to me?" gasped Bunter.

"Does Cherry think so?"

"He jolly well knows it, if that's what you mean! Look here, what are you trying to gammon for?" demanded Bunter.

"I'm not surprised that you should think so; you're fool enough to think anything!" said Mark quietly. "But what makes Bob think such a thing of me?"

Bunter blinked at him in wide-eyed astonishment. His little round eyes seemed almost to bulge through his big round spectacles.

"Oh crumbs!" he said. "You've got a nerve! You jolly well know it was you who ragged Quelch's study!"

"It was not I!" said Mark.

"Gammon! Of course, you don't know how we know you did it; but we jolly well do know!" grinned Bunter. "You see, Bob picked up the envelope, and I saw it."

(Continued on next page.)

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"The envelope? What envelope?"

"The one you wrapped the gum-bottle in when you went to rag Quelch's room. You dropped it there." Mark drew a quick breath.

"Do you mean that it was an envelope belonging to me—an envelope that could be identified as mine?"

"Of course it was, as it was addressed to you in your father's fist. Think we can't read?" Bunter grinned. "It was yours all right, and if we hadn't gone to the study with our lines Quelch would have found it there when he came in. He couldn't have missed it, any more than Bob did. And you'd have been for it, I can tell you!" Mark Linley sat in silence.

It was light at last; he understood now.

That was why Bob had uttered those inexplicable words in the quad the previous afternoon; that was the cause of that look of scorn in Hall when Mark had denied all knowledge of the happening in the Form master's study.

"Got it clear now?" jeered Bunter. "Understand that it's no good gammoning? Bob knows and I know, and either of us could give you away to the beaks! Of course, I'm not going to give you away. But, as I said, one good turn deserves another—"

"What became of the envelope?" asked Mark.

"That ass Cherry burned it! He was jolly particular that it shouldn't come out that you'd ragged Quelch—blessed if I know why, especially as you don't seem to be friends now! But he's rather a silly ass—as I suppose you know."

"And Bob has been giving you money to keep it dark?"

"Why, you insulting beast, how dare you suggest anything of the kind!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "He's made me two small loans, if that's what you mean!"

Mark rose from his chair.

"I'm glad you've told me this," he said. "It may interest you, Bunter, to know that you can tell your story all over Greyfriars if you like, and I shan't mind. I never knew anything about the ragging in Quelch's study. You can sing it all out in the middle of the quad if you like, you fat rascal!"

Bunter blinked at him.

"You can't gammon me, you know," he said. "I'm wide—very wide! Nerve is all very well; but, you see, I know! Now, look here, Linley, five bob will tide me over till my postal order comes—"

Mark walked away.

Bunter blinked after him; and then jumped in pursuit, and caught the Lancashire lad by the arm.

"Look here, you beast—stop—"

Mark stopped. He grabbed the Owl of the Remove by the collar, jerked him to the wall, and banged his head thereon.

Bang!

"Whoooooop!"

"Do you want any more, Bunter?"

"Yow-ow-ow! No! Wow! Whoooooop!"

"Then shut up!"

Mark dropped the fat junior on the floor, and walked out of the Rag. His face was brighter than it had been for a considerable time as he went up to the Remove passage in search of Bob Cherry.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bowled Out!

"MIND what you say!" hissed Skinner.

Snoop licked his lips, which seemed very dry.

"That's all very well. But—"

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"If you give me away—"

"You shouldn't have—"

"I tell you—"

Skinner and Snoop had arrived at the door of Mr. Quelch's study in Masters' passage. They had been specially sent for; and never had two members of the Remove been so extremely reluctant to visit their Form master.

Outside the study Skinner paused to impress a last warning upon Snoop. He had only too much reason to fear what might come out when Sidney James was under the gimlet eyes and sharp tongue of Henry Samuel Quelch.

"Stick to what we've said already, and it's all right!" whispered Skinner fiercely. "The Beak can't know anything—"

"Why has he sent for us, then?" mumbled Snoop.

"I suppose he suspects. But he can't know—"

The study door opened suddenly.

Perhaps the keen ears of Mr. Quelch had detected some sound of that feverish whispering outside. The gimlet eyes scanned the two startled Removites.

"You may come in!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

He stepped back, and the two juniors entered the study. Mr. Quelch closed the door and stood with his keen eyes fixed on them. No doubt that whispered colloquy outside the study had strengthened the suspicion that was already in his mind.

Skinner faced him with hardy coolness, but it was all that Snoop could do to keep his knees from knocking together. Quelch had had twenty-four hours in which to pursue his investigations, and Snoop could not help feeling that a downy bird like Quelch had not wasted his time.

"I have sent for you two boys to question you," said Mr. Quelch in icy tones. "Yesterday I had occasion to punish you, and what occurred in my study later was obviously a revengeful act."

"Linley was caned, too, sir!" said Skinner sullenly. "I don't see why we should be picked on."

"I will make the reason clear, Skinner. You have many times played disrespectful tricks, and Linley has never done anything of the kind. As for Snoop, he's called in because he was your companion yesterday, and knows what your movements really were."

Skinner felt a chill.

Did the beast know anything, he wondered, or was he only suspicious? Had the tell-tale envelope been found in the study, suspicion could never have fallen on Skinner; but in the absence of any clue to the offender, he was the first the Form master was likely to think of. Yet the beast couldn't know anything, Skinner told himself desperately.

"You stated," resumed Mr. Quelch, "that you left the school yesterday before three o'clock, the hour at which I went out."

"That is so," said Skinner.

"It was at half-past two that I caned you in this study."

"I believe so, sir."

"Did you go out of gates immediately?"

"Within a few minutes, I think, sir; perhaps ten minutes," said Skinner, with an air of reflection, as if he desired to be very exact. "It wouldn't be more than ten minutes, would it, Snoopey?"

"About that," said Snoop in a dry voice.

"When did you come in again?"

"I told you yesterday, sir—just in time for call-over."

"During the interval you were out of gates the whole time?"

"Yes, sir. Cherry passed us in the wood a bit later."

Mr. Quelch's brows set more grimly, and Skinner and Snoop both realised that something was wrong, they could not guess what.

"You were together the whole time?" rasped Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir!" muttered Skinner.

"Do you say the same, Snoop?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Snoop.

"Then how does it happen," asked Mr. Quelch in a deep voice, "that at a short time after three o'clock Snoop was seen in the quadrangle alone?"

Snoop gasped, and Skinner set his thin lips.

"I—I wasn't, sir!" moaned Snoop. "I—I couldn't have been!"

"I have inquired very thoroughly into this matter," said Mr. Quelch. "It was obvious that some member of my Form had spoken falsely. Some boy had told me that he was at a distance from this study at the time when he was engaged in perpetrating an outrage here. You two juniors have stated—not once, but over and over again—that you were out of gates before three o'clock and stayed out till calling-over. Yet I learn from a Sixth Form boy that you, Snoop, were in the quadrangle after three o'clock, loitering as if waiting for someone."

Snoop almost groaned.

He had hung about, waiting for Skinner, at that time, and he knew that it must have been near half-past three when they went out of gates together, and he knew how Skinner had been occupied while he was waiting for him.

Skinner gave him a bitter, venomous look.

"Do you still deny, Snoop, that you were within gates after three o'clock yesterday?"

Snoop mumbled miserably.

"N-n-no, sir! I—I forgot—"

"You had better tell the truth now, Snoop! You were waiting in the quadrangle after three o'clock yesterday afternoon?"

"Ye-e-es, sir!" gasped Snoop.

"For whom were you waiting?"

"Skinner, sir."

"Where was Skinner?"

"In the House, sir."

"Very good! Skinner, do you persist in your statement that you were out of gates at three o'clock?"

Skinner breathed hard.

"No, sir! I—I admit that I was not out of gates. I—I said I was because I was afraid you might think I'd been in this study, sir. I had nothing to do with the ragging."

"You desire me to believe that you lied to me, in order to avoid possible suspicion?"

"Yes!" gasped Skinner.

"I cannot believe that statement, Skinner! I shall now take you both to your headmaster! Dr. Locke will—"

There was a howl of terror from Snoop.

"I had nothing to do with it, sir! I warned Skinner that it wasn't safe. I tried to stop him, sir—I did, really! I refused to have anything to do with it! I told him I wouldn't! I told him he was a fool to do it!"

"You may make your statements to the Head, Snoop, if Skinner persists in his denial. But I warn you, Skinner, as your Form master, that if Dr. Locke detects you in falsehood, you will be expelled from the school!"

Skinner set his teeth. He knew that he dared not lie to the Head, with Snoop blurting out the truth at the same time.

"I—I own up, sir!" he muttered.

"I—I'm sorry, sir! I—I was feeling wild, sir, because—because I was licked, and—and I—I apologise, sir!"



Mr. Quelch stepped back, and Skinner and Snoop entered the study. Skinner faced the Remove master's keen eyes with hardy coolness; but it was all that Snoop could do to keep his knees from knocking together. "I have sent for you two boys to question you about the revengeful act which has been carried out in my study," said Mr. Quelch in acid tones. (See Chapter 14.)

"You admit that you perpetrated the outrage in this study, Skinner?"

"I—I never meant—"

"Yes or no?"

"Yes!" stuttered Skinner.

"Very good! You will take five hundred lines, Snoop! You, Skinner, will follow me to Dr. Locke's study!"

It was a dismal schemer that followed Mr. Quelch to the Head's study. How his scheme had gone wrong, even yet Skinner did not know. It had been one of his best-laid schemes, and Skinner prided himself on his cunning. But there had been a hitch somewhere, that was certain. And Skinner trailed dismally after Mr. Quelch to a most uncomfortable interview with his headmaster.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Clouds Roll By!

"BOB!"

Mark Linley came breathlessly into Study No. 1 in the Remove. Bob Cherry was there with the Co.

"Bob, old chap—"

Bob stared at him.

Mark's face was eager and his eyes bright. But Bob's look was gloomy and unfriendly.

"Look here, Linley—" he began.

"Hold on!" said Mark. "I've just been speaking to Bunter, and I've found it all out, Bob."

Bob Cherry grunted.

"You needn't be afraid," he said. "I'm saying nothing. And Bunter knows that I'll squash him if he gives you away. Let it drop."

"You don't understand," said Mark patiently. "I had nothing to do with

the rag in Quelch's study. You fancied so because you picked up my envelope there. If I'd known that before—"

"What on earth is all this about?" asked Harry Wharton.

"I'll tell you," said Mark. "Bob took his lines to Quelch's study yesterday and found the room had been ragged. I've just learned that he picked up an envelope there that had been dropped by the ragger. That envelope belonged to me."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "So that's it, is it?"

"That's it," said Mark. "I had a letter from my father yesterday, and I answered it in the Rag, and threw the old envelope into the wastepaper-basket, under the table, there. That was the last I saw of it—or thought of it—till now."

Bob Cherry started.

"Look here, Linley! That envelope was used to wrap a gum bottle in, and was dropped in Quelch's study by the fellow who chucked the gum about—"

"He must have picked it out of the wastepaper-basket for the purpose," said Mark quietly.

"You—you mean to say—" stammered Bob. "Look here, you know what Quelch would have thought if he'd found it?"

"I know, and I'm afraid the ragger knew, too," said Mark. "He may have taken that old envelope by chance to wrap up a gum bottle, or he may have intended to put Quelch on my track. I don't like to say. But, in any case, it was some other fellow; and I give you my word that I never saw that envelope after throwing it into the wastepaper-basket in the Rag."

Bob Cherry stood silent.

"You can take my word, surely?" said Mark.

"Of course!" said Harry Wharton, at once.

"Of course!" said Frank Nugent. "We know you, old bean. But it's jolly lucky Bob picked it up in Quelch's study."

"The luckfulness is terrific."

Bob's face was growing crimson. Such a trick as this had never occurred to his simple, honest mind.

"Oh!" he gasped. "I—I see! Of course, I—I thought— Bunter thought, too— You see, it was your envelope—and it was there. It looked as if—"

"I know what it looked like," said Mark, "and if you hadn't picked it up I'm afraid that Quelch wouldn't have had any doubt on the subject. I'm afraid it was meant to get me into a row with him. But—but you can take my word that I never dropped it there."

"Yes," said Bob slowly. "I—I've been rather a fool, Mark. I thought you were telling a heap of rotten lies, and—and—and I ought to have known you better, old chap. I—I'm sorry!"

"It's all right, if you believe me now," said Mark. "I don't blame you for being taken in, but—"

"I was a blithering ass not to think of it," said Bob ruefully. "But—but I never dreamed—"

"You were an ass!" agreed Wharton. "Passed unanimously!" said Johnny Bull.

"Nem. con!" said Nugent.

"The nem-confulness is terrific!" Bob grinned.

(Continued on page 28.)

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By
GEO. E. ROCHESTER.

(Introduction on
next page.)

An Urgent Call!

FOUQUIER-TINVILLE glared at Sansarge for a moment, then flung away and fell to pacing the floor, his hands clasp- ing and unclasp- ing behind his back.

"He must be found!" he snarled suddenly, bringing up short in front of Sansarge. "The insolence of the cub to return thus to Paris! He must be found, I say!"

"Assuredly he must," responded Sansarge, and there was that in his voice which might well have been a thinly-veiled mockery. "That is why I ask the whereabouts of Malliard, who—"

"Malliard is dead!" cut in the Public Prosecutor savagely. "He has been killed in an English inn by that cursed Will-o'-the-Wisp!"

"Mordieu!" breathed Sansarge, in astonishment. "You mean that? But, name of a name, how do you know?"

"How do I know?" shouted Fouquier-Tinville.

"I know because Will-o'-the-Wisp has told us so."

His voice was shaking with passion. He explained about the missive which had borne news of the death of Malliard, and in which Will-o'-the-Wisp had threatened to get Lord Percy Woolerton out of the Temple Prison.

And as he concluded all restraint and self-control seemed to slip from him. In maniacal frenzy he beat on the table with his fists, and his distorted face, with its blazing eyes and livid lips, was that of a fiend.

"How much longer is this cursed Englishman to plague us so?" he cried hoarsely. "How much longer is he to laugh at us, mock us, taunt us, whilst moving in our very midst. Is he the

devil himself that he can do these things?"

"I have thought so more than once," interposed Sansarge heavily. "If he is not Satan, then he is his son. But see, now. If we can find Paul Darc we will find Will-o'-the-Wisp."

Fouquier-Tinville stared at him, motionless.

"There is none in Paris," continued Sansarge sagely, "who dare give Paul Darc shelter. But he has his companions, as we know through the delivering of the letter he has sent to me. Who are they? Again, there is nothing to bring Paul Darc back to Paris, where every moment he is in deadly peril. Why, then, has

A few hours to go, and then one more hated enemy of the People will writhe in the dreaded embrace of Mother Guillotine. But in those few hours Will-o'-the-Wisp achieves the seemingly impossible and rescues his friend from the very jaws of death!

he come? To aid the man who rescued him from the guillotine."

"Mordieu!" muttered the Public Prosecutor. "I believe you are right!"

"I am right!" returned Sansarge confidently. "You will see." Then roughly he went on: "You have seen the letter which he has written to me. I will be honest with you, Citizen, for I care not what you or any man thinks. There is little room for love in a heart such as mine, but such love as I was capable of was given to that boy. Yet his life is forfeit to France, and my duty was to come to you with the information that he is in Paris. Well, I have done my duty. Now do yours—find him!"

"Find him!" snarled Fouquier-Tinville. "Where am I to find him if he is with this Will-o'-the-Wisp? Has not Paris been combed and re-combed without success—"

He broke off sharply as there came a sudden loud and prolonged hammering on the street door below. With rapid strides he crossed to the window and, pulling aside the curtains, peered down.

In the darkened street below was a cabriolet with an escort of four mounted soldiers.

"Well, what is it?" rapped Fouquier-Tinville, wheeling from the window as the aged hag who tended to his needs presented herself apologetically on the threshold of the room.

"It is soldiers of the National Guard, Citizen," whined the old woman. "The sergeant bears an urgent dispatch for you from the Citizen-Governor of the Temple Prison."

"Then show him up!" shouted Fouquier-Tinville. "Show him up, you baggage!"

Mordieu, what had happened? Had that cursed Will-o'-the-Wisp carried out his threat and rescued Lord Percy Woolerton?

Sacre nom! The thing was impossible! He couldn't have done it with the prison full of soldiers!

There came a clump of booted feet, and a sergeant of the Guard strode into the room.

"Dispatch from the Citizen-Governor!" he said stolidly, with a perfunctory salute, and held out a heavily-sealed envelope.

With shaking hand the Public Prosecutor took it. Half dreading what he would read, he ripped open the envelope and withdrew the single sheet of paper which it contained. Rapidly he scanned the hastily-written words, then swung on Sansarge, a glitter of triumph in his eyes.

"At last, Sansarge!" he cried wildly. "His name at last!"

Without ceremony Sansarge snatched the dispatch and read in the familiar sprawling scrawl of Le Valle:

"To the Public Prosecutor, Citizen Fouquier-Tinville.

"The English prisoner, Lord Percy Woolerton, has asked to see you in his cell. He is, I think, becoming alarmed at the imminent approach of death, and is now prepared to divulge the name and identity of his leader. Come immediately. I await you in his cell.

"Signed,

"LE VALLE,

"Citizen-Governor of the Temple Prison."

Sansarge lifted his eyes from the paper with a grin.

"I thought that Englishman would break down sooner or later," he observed. "I said so when I saw him before the Bar of the Tribunal."

Fouquier-Tinville, donning his long black cloak, had no time for reply, so great was his haste.

Sansarge turned to the sergeant.

"All is quiet at the prison, I suppose?"

The sergeant, a tanned and lean-jawed fellow, nodded.

"All is quiet, Citizen," he replied.

"I am ready!" cut in the Public Prosecutor harshly, cramming his wide-brimmed hat on his head. Then to Sansarge: "What of you?"

"I will remain here until you return," replied Sansarge. "It will save you the trouble of sending to the Rue Couteau for me."

It almost seemed as though this simple arrangement was not to the mind of the Public Prosecutor. But there was no time for argument, so, with a grunt, he strode scowlingly from the room, followed by the sergeant.

Sansarge listened to their tread descending the stairs, then crossed to the curtained window.

Drawing back the hangings, he watched the black-cloaked figure of Fouquier-Tinville enter the coach. The sergeant swung himself up into the saddle of his horse, and to the ears of Sansarge came the harsh command:

"Forward!"

Then, as the coach rumbled away along the cobbled street, accompanied by its escort, Sansarge dropped the curtains back into place and crossed to the door.

"Citoyen!" he bellowed, thrusting his head out into the deserted landing.

In response to the summons, the aged hag appeared at the foot of the stairs.

"A bottle of the best, Citoyen!" ordered Sansarge. "And a glass!"

"But I—I don't know if I dare—" began the old woman fearfully.

"Dare?" bellowed Sansarge.

"Dare? Ma foi, woman, since when has the Public Prosecutor taken to hoarding his wine? Has he yet to learn the first principles of Equality and Fraternity? A bottle—at once!"

Hah! A pretty state of affairs indeed when a guest was refused a paltry bottle of wine.

Returning to the room, Sansarge

slumped heavily into a chair, and hoisting his feet on to the table, produced his blackened clay pipe. The trembling old woman appeared with the required refreshment, and having placed it convenient to Sansarge's hand, shuffled away, closing the door behind her.

And thus, comfortably established in Fouquier-Tinville's best chair and with his feet on Fouquier-Tinville's table, Sansarge sat puffing and drinking—puffing and thinking.

Curse that Englishman—that Lord Percy Woolerton! Why couldn't he keep his mouth shut? They were bound to capture Will-o'-the-Wisp sooner or later without his aid. And Sansarge didn't want it to be sooner. And why not? Because undoubtedly Paul Darc—Paul Hungerford—was with Will-o'-the-Wisp. And if the latter was captured, then his companions, including Paul, would doubtlessly be captured as well.

Sacre nom, but if he, Sansarge, had known that Lord Percy Woolerton was going to betray the identity of his leader, then he wouldn't have shown Paul's letter to Fouquier-Tinville. Sansarge didn't want to see the boy captured. Not he!

He had told Fouquier-Tinville to do his duty and find Paul. But he certainly wouldn't have said that if he'd thought Fouquier-Tinville could possibly have carried out such an exhortation. No, he'd only shown Fouquier-Tinville the letter and told him to find the boy in order to annoy him. He liked to annoy Fouquier-Tinville. And now, it seemed, he'd given him a valuable bit of information instead.

Paul was with Will-o'-the-Wisp, and within the hour Lord Percy Woolerton would have betrayed Will-o'-the-Wisp.

Curse Lord Percy Woolerton!

INTRODUCTION.

It is the year 1792, when the long-threatened revolution in France has burst into flame. Paul Darc, a peasant lad, is made Commissioner of the Revolutionary Tribunal, but for saving his boyhood friend, Armande de St. Clair, from the fate which has befallen so many of the hated aristocrats, he is himself sentenced to the guillotine. In the condemned cell, Paul learns from his friend Sansarge that he is not French, but English. His real name is Paul Hungerford, and his father, Sir Crispin Hungerford, from whom he was kidnapped when only a few months old, mourns him as dead. The lad despairs of ever seeing his father again, but rescue comes at the eleventh hour. Together with the Comte D'Espany, Paul is saved from death by Will-o'-the-Wisp, a mysterious Englishman, whose daring and resource had aided many aristocrats. The fugitives escape to England, and at Hungerford Manor, in Dorset, comes Paul's glad reunion with his father. In the happy, care-free days that follow, the lad tries to forget his grim experiences during the Terror, little dreaming that Malliard, the chief spy of the Revolutionary Committee of Public Safety, has followed him to England and is planning to trap him and take him back to France. Lord Percy Woolerton, one of Will-o'-the-Wisp's band, has already fallen a victim to the cunning spy, but before the plot against Paul can be carried out Malliard meets his death at the hands of Will-o'-the-Wisp himself. A week later, in Paris, a surging mob gathers outside the Temple Prison, wherein is Lord Percy Woolerton, condemned to death. With his usual audacious coolness, Will-o'-the-Wisp has announced his intention of rescuing his comrade, but such precautions are taken that rescue seems impossible. The evening before the execution, Fouquier-Tinville, the notorious Public Prosecutor, is visited by Sansarge, who shows him a message he has received from Paul Hungerford. "In Paris!" shouts Fouquier-Tinville. "That traitor—in Paris!"

(Now read on.)

And Fouquier-Tinville. His wine was like himself—sour!

With which reflection Sansarge angrily swept the offending bottle to the floor and proceeded moodily in search of another.

The Secret Out!

MEANWHILE, Fouquier-Tinville was finding the short journey to the Temple Prison all too long for one so fired with impatience as he.

More than once he let down the window and, thrusting out his head, had snarlingly bade the coachman make more haste. Then throwing himself back on the cushions, he continued to ponder on this latest development.

All word of it must be kept from Robespierre, of course, until after the execution. The English prisoner would naturally expect to be freed in exchange for the information which he was now prepared to give. Well, the fool would soon be disillusioned. He was going to die on the guillotine. But he would not know that until after he had spoken. Until then, Fouquier-Tinville was prepared to dangle the tempting bait of freedom and safe conduct to the coast in front of the trusting fool.

If Robespierre discovered that the prisoner had at this eleventh hour given the desired information, he would insist upon keeping his bargain and letting him go free. Therefore all knowledge of it must be kept from Robespierre until Lord Percy Woolerton had passed from this world. It would be too late then for Robespierre to carry out a bargain which he had had no right to make; a bargain which promised to cheat the people of both their sport and their lawful prey.

No, Fouquier-Tinville would warn Le Valle to keep his mouth shut; and after having divulged the name and identity of his leader, the Englishman would die.

A swelling, tumultuous roar laden with a strange, dread menace, came to the ears of the Public Prosecutor, and a few minutes later the pace of the cabriolet slowed down to a crawl as it reached the outskirts of the mob which was keeping an all-night vigil outside the prison.

Faces like those of leering, grinning fiends were pressed against the windows of the coach. Hoarse questions were flung at the escort of soldiers. Then came a burst of wild cheering as the word flew round that it was Fouquier-Tinville who was approaching the prison.

For the Public Prosecutor was popular; the idol of the people. None so venomous, so vindictive as he when dealing with the cursed aristocrats. So the mob cheered him again and again, and his cruel lips twitched into a smile of complacent self-satisfaction.

The cabriolet rumbled through the great gates into the prison yard and came to a stop at the main entrance. Alighting, Fouquier-Tinville brushed his way past the sentries and passed into the prison, escorted by the sergeant, who led the way through the vast entrance lobby, where lounged a

full score of soldiers, and along the stone corridor, at the end of which was the cell where Lord Percy Woolerton was lodged.

At a sharp command from the sergeant, the armed gaoler on duty in front of the cell door turned the key in the lock and, drawing back the bolts, swung open the heavy iron door.

Fouquier-Tinville strode into the cell, followed by the sergeant, who paused an instant to close the door behind him. Lord Percy was seated, writing, at the rough deal table with which the cell was furnished. Behind him, on a bench against the wall, sat two soldiers of the National Guard, their carbines resting between their knees.

At the entrance of the Public Prosecutor, Lord Percy raised his head to stare at him, then rose slowly to his feet.

"So you have changed your mind!" said Fouquier-Tinville harshly. Then, to the guards: "Where is the Citizen-Governor? I expected—"

That was as far as he got. For a hand behind him swept the hat from his head, and simultaneously something crashed down with sickening force on his skull. He staggered forward a pace with hands outstretched, then his knees gave way beneath him and he slithered to the floor.

"Move a muscle, and I will blow your brains out!"

The two soldiers froze into immobility, gaping dumbly in fear and amazement at the two horse pistols which had appeared in the hands of the sergeant, and which were covering them with deadly intent.

It was with one of those weapons that he had struck down the Public Prosecutor, now lying a limp and unconscious heap on the floor of the cell. They had not seen him draw them, for he had been standing too close behind the Public Prosecutor for that. And with such swiftness had he acted that they had not had time to raise even a finger before those pistols were covering them.

Name of a name, who was this devil?

But the prisoner knew

"Will!" he ejaculated hoarsely, staring wide-eyed and incredulous at the grim-visaged sergeant.

"Yes!" rapped the other. "But quick, man! We haven't a moment to lose. Disarm those fools, and bind and gag them! Here! You'll find rope in my pocket!"

Then, to the soldiers, in a voice harsh with the deadly menace which it held

"One false move, and I fire!"

With eyes a gleam, Lord Percy whipped into action, snatching a length of fine rope from the pocket

of this sergeant, whom he knew to be none other than his splendid leader, Will-o'-the-Wisp. And covered by those black, unwavering barrels, the two soldiers offered no resistance.

They were not of the stuff of which martyrs are made, and they knew that should they attempt to raise the alarm by either shout or struggle, then sudden lurid death would belch from those muzzles. It wasn't their fault that this cursed son of Satan had succeeded in penetrating thus far into the prison. No, indeed it was not. It was the fault of those blind and blundering fools on duty in the corridors and outside the prison. And life was too sweet to be sacrificed merely to repair the ill-work of others.

So they submitted tamely enough, with fear in their eyes, and within a few moments both were securely bound and gagged.

"Now that fellow!" said Will-o'-the-Wisp tersely, indicating the now stirring form of Fouquier-Tinville. "You will need his cloak and hat."

Working with frenzied haste, Lord Percy possessed himself of the Public Prosecutor's long black cloak, then securely trussed that individual by wrist and ankle, completing the operation by thrusting a makeshift gag into his mouth and tying it with his own handkerchief.

Consciousness had returned to Fouquier-Tinville by now, and he squirmed and writhed frantically, glaring up at the two Englishmen with hate and malignant fury in his blazing eyes.

"Quick, Percy! Thrust them against the wall out of sight of the open door!"

Lord Percy obeyed his leader's command; then, donning the long cloak of the Public Prosecutor, he clapped the wide-brimmed hat on his head, pulling it well down over his eyes.

"Ready?" whispered Will-o'-the-Wisp tensely. "Right! Tread close behind me, and walk with your head bent."

Pocketing his pistols, Will-o'-the-Wisp stepped to the door and opened it sufficiently wide to allow the muffled Lord Percy to pass out into the dimly lighted corridor. Then instantly he followed, clanging shut the heavy iron door behind him and thrusting himself in front of the armed gaoler.

"Lock this door, and guard the prisoner well!" he said harshly.

Pausing an instant to see the great key turned in the lock, Will-o'-the-Wisp swung on his heel and set off along the corridor, followed closely by the pseudo Fouquier-Tinville, who walked with his cloak wrapped tightly about him and his head, with its wide-brimmed hat, bent downwards, as though he were plunged in thought.

On they went along the corridor, which, illumined by flickering oil lamps and guttering candles, was full of soldiery. They walked steadily, without undue haste, but every moment was an age to both.



"Will-o'-the-Wisp!" ejaculated Lord Percy, hoarsely, staring wide-eyed and incredulous at the grim-visaged sergeant. "Yes!" rapped the other. "Be quick, man! We haven't a moment to lose. Disarm your guards and bind and gag them!" (See this page.)

Yet the soldiers, lounging against the walls, with carbines grounded, or else languidly patrolling, suspected nothing. Lord Percy's features were in shadow. And, for the rest, was he not alike both in stature and garb to the Public Prosecutor, who had recently passed along the corridor with that same sergeant? It did not occur to any one of them to step forward and peer beneath the brim of the Public Prosecutor's hat. Why should it?

With shoulders slumped and head sunk on chest, Lord Percy passed into the entrance lobby on the heels of Will-o'-the-Wisp, who, imperceptibly, had quickened his pace. For here lay the greatest danger. But at that hour there was none about who had either the right to approach the Public Prosecutor or the temerity to give him greeting.

Outwardly calm, but inwardly tensed, and ready to whip into instant action, sergeant and civilian crossed the lobby and descended the prison steps to where the cabriolet was waiting. One of its escort of four soldiers had dismounted, and was standing with the door of the coach open. Lord Percy, stepping into the coach, glanced at him, and was rewarded with a sly wink.

Then, as the door slammed shut, and Lord Percy, with a sobbing gasp of relief, threw himself back on the cushions, soldier and sergeant swung themselves up into their saddles.

"Forward!" said the sergeant harshly.

The coachman whipped up his horses, the soldiers closed in about the coach, and it rumbled away out of the prison yard. The mob surged back to afford it passage. They cheered. Ma foi, how they did cheer! For no day was too long, no hour too late, for the Public Prosecutor—the Citizen inside the coach—to be abroad on the business of the people. So they acclaimed him with deep-throated roar which died slowly away with the vanishing of the coach and its escort beyond the outskirts of the mob.

Poor fools! It was not till nigh on an hour later that they learned the truth—learned that Will-o'-the-Wisp, that hated Englishman, had tricked them once again and carried off his comrade beneath their very noses.

And by that time, Will-o'-the-Wisp, Lord Percy, and the four soldiers who had formed the escort of the cabriolet, were galloping madly through the night towards the distant coast.

With them rode Paul Hungerford, for it was he who had acted as coachman, and it was he who had supplied the information which had made possible the forging of the letter from Le Valle.

By noon the whole party was aboard the Firefly, which was lying in readiness off a lonely part of the coast south of Dieppe. And as they weighed anchor, and stood out for England with all sails set, Paul turned to the grim-faced man who, with him, was standing in the stern watching the receding coast of

WONDERFUL SCOOP FOR THE "MAGNET"!

Peter Frazer-Ironmaster!

By JOHN BREARLEY



There had been a Will to read, a dickens of a lot of swearing and signing legal papers, a long, dry speech of advice from the lawyers—and then Peter Frazer, fresh from school, understood that he was the master of Frazer's Foundry. What Peter didn't know about foundry work would have filled the library at the British Museum. But that did not deter him. With a cheery smile upon his clean-cut face and a light heart backed with inexhaustible courage, he set out single-handed to take possession of his strange legacy.

And from that moment Peter was treading the broad road of adventure—a road beset with unknown perils and unscrupulous enemies!

"PETER FRAZER—IRONMASTER!"

By JOHN BREARLEY.

is the scoop MAGNET readers can look forward to in next Saturday's MAGNET in which the opening chapters will appear.

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France merging slowly with the greyness of the distant horizon.

"Sir," he said suddenly, "you promised that when this task was done I would learn your name."

"Did I, lad?" laughed Will-o'-the-Wisp. "Go down to your cabin, then, and I will join you when I have got rid of this disguise!"

Wonderingly, Paul obeyed and went below. Minutes passed, then the door of his cabin opened, and there on the threshold stood a pale-faced, elegant figure, foppish in silk and fine brocade.

Paul caught his breath, staring in incredulous amaze at that simpering dandy. It could not be—

"Eustace!" he cried hoarsely.

The other laughed, and, straightening up, came forward with outstretched hand.

"Yes, Eustace!" he replied. "Egad, brother, but I scarce know which was the most difficult role—that which it was necessary to adopt in England, or that of a blustering, swaggering, devil-may-care son of the people, which I adopted in France."

"But—but I never knew you!" gasped the boy.

"Nay, now, do not blame yourself for that!" laughed Eustace Hungerford. "For there was a vast difference between the drink-sodden fellow whom you met yon morning at

Hungerford Manor, and the unshaven sergeant of the National Guard, or the vile old hag whom you know in France!"

Laying his hand on the boy's shoulder, he went on softly:

"Paul, when I rescued you from the guillotine and found you were my brother, I nigh betrayed myself to you then. But there were many reasons why I could not divulge my identity even to you—not least of them being the oath of secrecy which bound my comrades and I together."

"Who are your comrades, Eustace?"

"Algy Loder, son of Sir Giles Loder, and others whose people you will doubtless have met in Dorset," replied Eustace. "But I will introduce you to them when they have rid themselves of their guises, for now you are one of us."

"Do you mean that you are going back to France?" demanded Paul.

Eustace nodded.

"We must go back, Paul," he replied sombrely. "There are still many innocent lives to be saved."

Then slipping his arm round the boy's shoulders, he said with sudden gay change of tone:

"But come on deck, brother, for soon we will be sighting the white cliffs of England—and for the present, we are homeward bound!"

THE END.

SKINNER'S SHADY SCHEME!

(Continued from page 23.)

"I'm sorry, Marky, old man! You can kick me, if you like."

"I'd rather kick the fellow who rooted out that old envelope and planted it in Quelch's study," said Mark, with a smile. "You've done me a good turn, Bob, anyhow—though you were rather an ass to think that I had ragged Quelch. And you're sure you believe me, without knowing who it really was?"

Bob did not hesitate a moment.

"Of course, fathhead!" was his answer.

"Then it's all serene. If it ever comes out who did it—"

There was a bang at the door of the study. Vernon-Smith looked in.

"Get down to Hall!" he said.

"What the thump for?"

"The Head's ordered the whole school into Hall," said the Bounder. "Big scene, with a punch in it—"

"But what?"

"Public flogging," said Smithy.

"Oh, my hat! Who's the happy man?"

"Skinner."

"And why?"

"Ragging Quelch's study yesterday," grinned the Bounder. "I had an idea it was Skinner. It's in his style, and—"

"But—is it certain?" asked Bob Cherry.

"He's confessed."

"Oh, scissors! That settles it."

The juniors crowded down to Hall. Bob Cherry slipped his arm through Mark Linley's as they went.

"Marky, old man—" he mumbled.

"It's all right," said Mark.

And Bob pressed his arm and said no more. The rift between the two old friends was a thing of the past.

There was quite an impressive scene in Hall. Every Form ranked there, with the Form masters, and the prefects walking up and down with their canes. There was a buzz, that died away in a hush, as the Head came in, with the wretched Skinner trailing after him.

What followed was impressive—especially for Skinner. The Head was not a severe gentleman, as a rule. But on this occasion he considered it his duty not to spare the rod. And he did not spare it.

When it was over Skinner looked as if he hardly found life worth living. And it was absolutely certain that never, never again would he occupy his idle moments in ragging Quelch.

THE END.

(There'll be another great story of Harry Wharton & Co. in next week's MAGNET, entitled: "BLACKMAIL." You can only make sure of reading it, chums, by ordering your copy WELL IN ADVANCE.)

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS!

(Continued from page 2.)

meet one meant death or some other dreadful disaster, though no authentic account exists that one was ever encountered.

NEXT WEEK'S SPLENDID PROGRAMME

First on the list is another sparkling story from the pen of Frank Richards entitled: "Blackmail!"

Mr. Prout, the pompous master of the Fifth at Greyfriars, is the victim, and Horace Coker, the champion duffer, comes into the picture, too. You'll enjoy this yarn no end.

"PETER FRAZER—IRONMASTER!"
By John Brearley.

This will be the first long opening instalment of the new serial of which I spoke earlier on. Nuff said. I know you are already looking forward to it. Then Master Dicky Nugent obliges with another delightful "shocker" which bears the title of

"FOILED AT THE FINISH!"

Next on the list comes another topping article by our Air expert, which incidentally winds up this interesting series, and finally there's another invitation to all you fellows to "Come into the Office." A good programme, what—and one which must not on any account be missed. Cheerio my hearties.

YOUR EDITOR.

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WHEN ANSWERING ADVERTISEMENTS PLEASE MENTION THIS PAPER.

FOOTBALL FEVER at ST. SAM'S!

By Dicky Nugent



Another lively, side-splitting yarn by that humorous member of the Second Form at Greyfriars—Dicky Nugent.

"G.O.A.L!"

The defending roar went up for the umpteenth time from the spectators on the Junior football field at St. Sam's.

The Fourth Form were playing their old rivals, St. Bill's, and St. Bill's were getting it where the chicken got the chop.

Jack Jolly & Co. were fairly making mincemeat of them. Goals had piled up merrily until everybody had lost count except the referee, and Talbot of the Sixth, who was acting in that capacity, had to keep the score in a little notebook to make sure of remembering it. That was the sort of game it was.

Among the spectators who lined the pitch were Monsieur Frogg, the French master, and another forth-looking gentleman who seemed to be keenly interested in the play.

As a matter of fact, the French master's friend was none other than Monsieur Sporter, the famous French footballer. This gentleman was a nephew of Monsieur Frogg. At present he was touring England as captain of Lay Rodents, the celebrated French team.

None observed more loudly than Monsieur Sporter when Jack Jolly and Frank Fearless and Merry and Bright noticed goal after goal against their demoralised opponents.

"Mong dew!" he ejaculated, after Merry had scored a specially brilliant goal. "How these boys do play, isn't it? I suppose they are the best players in the school?"

(Naturally, he spoke in French, but the other is translating the remarks into English for the benefit of those readers who are unacquainted with the French language.)

"Well!" ejaculated Monsieur Frogg, replying to his nephew's question. "May non! These boys are merely juniors belonging to the Fourth Form. The boys of the Sixth Form, they play still better, is it not?"

"Mong dew! Then my mind is made up with itself!" said Monsieur Sporter eagerly. "Our famous team, Lay Rodents, they shall challenge the First Eleven of St. Sam's!"

This was the decision that led to quite a lot of excitement and fun at St. Sam's in the days that followed.

"Grooooo! Silence, you disrespectful rotters!"

"Take a thousand lines for jarring, all of you!"

"Do you mind chucking over the ball, when you've finished, sir?" asked Talbot.

That calm, relaxed seemed to add fuel to the fire so far as Dr. Birchell was concerned. He turned as red as a pony, and gave a most of rage.

"Katte, Talbot! I shall do nothing of the kind. I have come to the conclusion that the game that is being played here this afternoon is endangering the lives of peaceful citizens, and I therefore declare it at an end."

"But you can't do a thing like that, sir!" gasped Talbot. "It simply isn't done!"

"A good many things are done at this school, Talbot, that are not done elsewhere. You will oblige me by formulating the game without arguing the toss any further!"

It was, of course, impossible to go against the wishes of such an important personage as the Head, so Talbot obeyed the request and called the game off there and then.

Thus ended the game match between St. Bill's and the St. Sam's Fourth.

The St. Bill's men, as a matter of fact, were only too glad of a rest, and as they dragged their weary limbs back to the pavilion they had to admit they had met their masters at Soaker.

When Jack Jolly led his men off the field, he noticed for the first time, Monsieur Frogg's nephew, who was just being introduced to the Head.

Jack started at the sight of Monsieur Sporter.

"My hat! I've seen that chap's face in the papers recently," he remarked.

"I believe he's Sporter, the famous French footballer, captain of Lay Rodents."

"Quite right, old chap!" nodded Talbot. "Frogg's just been telling some of the chaps that he wants to fix up a match with the First Eleven."

The footballers of the Fourth felt keenly interested in that announcement at once and they could talk of nothing else when they got back to the pavilion.

"It will be a grate honor for the First Eleven if they get a game with Lay Rodents," remarked Frank Fearless. "They're an awfully hot lot, you know."

Only last week they beat Aston Hotspur and Tottenham Villa all hands down!

Suddenly Jack Jolly whizzed. "Here's a wheeze, you fellows! What's wrong with the Fourth, playing Lay Rodents?"

"What, us?" eggs-claimed Bright. "Little us! Why not?" asked Jack Jolly.

"After all, we're heaps better than the First Eleven."

"True! But the First Eleven is the reckoned St. Sam's team," said Frank Fearless with a shake of his head. "I'm afraid we shan't be asked."

"Well, 'nothing vencher nothing gain,' as the old motto says," he remarked. "I'll go and see the Head about it later on, anyway."

"I'll go and see the Head about it later on, anyway."

season," he said. "If so, I'm afraid I shall have to decline—without thanks!"

The Head frowned. "Indeed, Burleigh! Mine I ask what causes you to make such a decision?"

"Well, sir, to be quite frank, you can't play Soaker for toffee!"

Dr. Birchell snarled furiously. "Pray don't talk out of the back of your neck, Burleigh. Without blowing my own trumpet, I may say that I am far and away the best footballer at St. Sam's. But this is all beside the point. As a matter of fact, I have no intention of offering my valuable services to the First Eleven."

"Hem! My mistake. I beg your pardon, sir!" murmured Burleigh, looking gratefully relieved.

"Granted! The fact is, Burleigh, that much as I should like to assist the team, I find my age and temperament more suitably catered for in the royal and ancient game of hopscotch," roared the Head.

The reason I have sent for you is to make an announcement concerning a fixture I have just arranged."

"Indeed, sir!" said Burleigh, beginning to look interested.

"Yes, indeed, Burleigh! Regardless of egotism, I have just arranged for the St. Sam's First Eleven to play a famous fourth team who are at present touring England. The name of the team in question is Lay Rodents!"

"My hat! You've fixed up a game with Lay Rodents!" gasped Burleigh.

"Eggregally!"

"The team that whizzed Aston Hotspur and Tottenham Villa?"

Dr. Birchell sighed. "Burleigh, how many times must I tell you not to use slang expressions like 'whizzed'?"

What you mean is 'the team that licked Aston Hotspur and Tottenham Villa hollow!' If that is your meaning, the answer is in the affirmative."

"Grate pip! This is good of you, sir, and no mistake!" cried Burleigh, his rugged face beaming like a fool moon.

"Why, Lay Rodents are considered one of the crack Continental teams."

"Precisely. Hence my reason for seizing the opportunity of arranging the fixture. Now, Burleigh," continued the Head, wagging a solemn forefinger at the captain of St. Sam's, "I want you and your team to go into strict training for the game match."

"With pleasure, sir!" grinned Burleigh.

"You must admit, Burleigh, that the First Eleven have not been eggregally one grand sweet song of a Soaker team this year. You only beat the Muggleton Buddlers by the smallest possible margin, while the Morthaven Ramblers simply mopped up the giddy floor with you."

"I'm afraid there is something in what you say, sir," admitted the captain of the school reluctantly. "However, I promise you we will go into strict training for the game with Lay Rodents. I will cut down the players don't ration to begin with."

"An eggregious suggestion! By the way, you must send all the surplus ones up to me and I will see that they are properly disposed of," said the Head, with a cunning expression on his face.

"Well, I think that's all, Burleigh. You may buzz off now!" Burleigh turned to go. At the same moment the study door was opened from outside.

"You shouldn't have allowed it to get in the way, old bean!"

"Tut-tut! Restrain yourself, my good Burleigh!" broke in the Head. "As the poet Shakespeare truly observed, 'Don't get the wind up, Walter!' Now, Jolly, what the merry dickens do you want?"

"Please, sir, I've come to ask whether you can arrange for our Fourth Eleven to play Lay Rodents instead of the First Eleven," said the captain of the Fourth boldly.

"En?"

"Why, you cheeky young ass—began Burleigh, forgetting his damaged nose and bestowing a glance on the junior."

Monsieur Frogg has told me that you have fixed up the match with his nephew," went on Jolly, "and I'm afraid the First Eleven won't do justice to St. Sam's. So why not give the Fourth Form team a chance to distinguish themselves?"

For a moment a tense silence brooded over the Head's study. Jack Jolly's bold offer had come as a bombshell.

Then the Head grinned. The grin changed to a chuckle, the chuckle to a laugh, and the laugh to a roar. And Burleigh, rather relieved to find the Head on his side, followed suit.

"He, he, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my giddy aunt! If you don't take the biscuit, Jolly! I almost wept Dr. Birchell. 'Just fancy the Fourth playing Lay Rodents! He, he, ha, ha!'"

"Look here—said Jack Jolly indignantly. "Don't say any more, or I shall bust my sides with laughter!"

"No, Jolly! I'm afraid I can't even consider allowing you to play the sally-brated team. But I'll make you a fair offer."

"What's that?" asked Jack.

The Head winked slyly at Burleigh. "If you like, Jolly, I'll arrange another fixture for you with the Muggleton Grammar School. But not at Soaker. For preference, some other game at which your youthful abilities will have more chance of achieving success. I suggest marbles."

"He, he, ha, ha!" shrieked Burleigh, and the Head himself condescended to join in again with a hearty:

"Ho, ho, ho, ho!"

Jack Jolly frowned.

"Look here, sir, this is no laughing matter—"

"Your mistake," chuckled the Head. "It is!"

"Don't forget we beat St. Bill's 86—all to-day!"

"Bah! Who are St. Bill's, anyway?" snorted the Head. "If I had been playing, you would have broken them by several hundred goals."

"Then you won't agree to it, sir?" asked Jack Jolly.

"Not to-day, baker!" grinned the Head. "Now buzz off, my boy! I have a lot of work to do."

And he picked up his communique paper again and resumed his studies.

So Jack Jolly returned to the Fourth disappointed. But the brainy captain of the Fourth hadn't reached the end of his resources yet. By hook or by crook, he intended the Fourth to play against the grate French footballers. How he could achieve his wish remained to be seen.

THE END.

(The second yarn in this grand "fooler" series is entitled: "FOILED AT THE FINISH!" Don't miss reading it, chums, whatever you do!)

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