

HARRY WHARTON & CO. are the FINEST CHUMS YOU COULD MEET!

(Make their acquaintance in the grand school yarn inside.)

The Magnet

2^d





COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS—AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

A FEW days ago, chums, I came across a curious animal that I would hardly have believed existed. It was a tiger, but certainly an unusual one, for not only was it perfectly tame, but it was also

A WRESTLING TIGER!

Ever since it was a cub, this tiger has been very pally with its owner, and it loves nothing better than for him to enter the cage and indulge in a real good wrestling match. Despite its great size—it is one of the most magnificent specimens I have seen—this particular tiger is as gentle as a kitten when it wrestles. It is kept in a private zoo at Chessington, in Surrey, which is about one of the prettiest zoos one could find. Although it is privately owned, the public are admitted.

I had a long yarn with the owner of the zoo, who told me quite a lot of things about wild animals, although the word "wild" is something of a misnomer so far as this zoo is concerned, for all the animals there are most tame creatures—even the lions, tigers and leopards!

I wonder what my readers would have said had they been able to see their

EDITOR IN THE LEOPARD'S DEN!

Yes, chums, I actually bearded the leopard in its own cage, and a jolly pally leopard it was. The owner entered the cage and commenced playing with the leopard. I asked if I could do the same, and the next moment I was in the cage, with the leopard sniffing at me to make sure I was a pal. Apparently, it decided that I was, for it allowed me to pat and stroke it, and we got on wonderfully well together. I am afraid I decided that the tiger was a different proposition. It might not have taken a fancy to me as the leopard did. If any of my chums who live in Surrey want an interesting day's outing, I can recommend a visit to Chessington Zoo. It's not as large as the London Zoo, or Whipsnade, but it's equally interesting.

A TAUNTON reader of mine has written to ask me to tell him what is

THE LARGEST CAVE IN THE WORLD.

This distinction belongs to the famous Mammoth Cave, in Kentucky, United States, which contains several lakes and rivers, and has been explored for a distance of fourteen miles. The largest chamber in this gigantic cave is 450 feet long, 130 feet wide, and 50 feet high. Therein is an avenue called Cleveland's Avenue, which is more than two miles long. One of the rivers, known as the Echo, connects by an underground passage with Green River. Crayfish can be found in the rivers and lakes, and there are also a large number of insects and bats to be seen flying around. This cave was discovered 126 years ago by a hunter who stumbled across it by accident.

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There are, of course, many large caves in Europe, but none so large as this. In the Pyrenees, between France and Spain, the mountains are honeycombed with caves, one of the finest being the Grottoes of Betharan. Round about the town of Lourdes, in France, there are several series of caves with most wonderful stalactite and stalagmite formations.

In Belgium there are a large number of

GIGANTIC CAVERNS.

the principal ones being a series which are situated near the village of Han, in the Ardennes—where, you may remember, the previous King of the Belgians was killed whilst mountaineering. The largest of the chambers to be found there is the biggest in Europe. Other caverns are found round about the town of Dinant.

Do you realise that there are many caves in Great Britain so large that they

Our Cover this week, drawn specially for the "Magnet" by Mr. C. H. Chapman, is one of the finest studies of the popular Captain of the Remove ever published. Quite worth framing, isn't it, Chums?

Editor.

have not yet been explored? In fact, there are many clubs which have been formed recently for the purpose of

CAVE EXPLORING.

The principal caves in this country are found in Somerset. Two series of caves run from the Cheddar Gorge. One series, though small, contain such wonderful formations that they look like a glimpse of fairyland. The other series extend for a great distance. The general public cannot go through the whole series, however, owing to the fact that the passages are so narrow in places, and there are many pitfalls for the unwary. The cave known as Wookey Hole, a few miles away, near the city of Wells, has been extensively explored. But, here again, the public—although they can see a great deal of the caverns—cannot penetrate to the most inaccessible portions of the caves. An underground river floods part of the caves, and it is only when there is a drought that the inner caves can be visited.

FROM a Bolton reader comes a query concerning

THE SECRET OF THE SUNDIAL

My chum wants to know if a sundial

tells the correct time. No, it doesn't—at least, it doesn't tell Greenwich time. A sundial tells the kind of time which is called "Apparent Time," and which differs considerably from Greenwich Mean Time. Naturally, when we are using British Summer Time, the sundial is approximately an hour fast. But even when we are using Greenwich time, the sundial varies from it. In fact, from December 26th to April 15th, the sundial is slow. It is then fast from April 15th until Christmas Day.

Here is a little bit of information which perhaps you don't know. Time varies all over the country—that is, real time, which is called Apparent Time. For instance, when it is noon in London, it is five minutes to twelve in Newcastle-on-Tyne! Naturally, it would be impossible to reckon time if we had to take in all these considerations, which is why we have evolved Greenwich Mean Time, which is, actually, only strictly correct twice in a year.

Talking of time reminds me of

THE TELEGRAM WHICH ARRIVED BEFORE IT WAS SENT!

This takes a bit of believing, doesn't it? But some little time ago a friend of mine sent me a telegram from Hong-Kong. The time of arrival in this country was given as some considerable period before the time of handing in the telegram at the post-office in Hong-Kong. This is due to the fact that the time in Hong-Kong is many hours in advance of Greenwich time. Although the telegram was dispatched in the afternoon, I actually received it on the morning of the same date.

HERE is an interesting paragraph which I unearthed for you last week. It concerns

BETTER AS BIG AS RATS!

Like many other strange creatures, this one hails from Brazil, and is known as the Giant Titan. It is the largest beetle in the world, and in appearance (except for size!) it is similar to the ordinary black-beetle found in this country. It ranges from six inches to nine inches in length. This particular species is also found in Guiana. I must confess that I wouldn't like one wandering around my house!

There's just enough space left to tell you about next week's programme before I bring this little chat of mine to a close. A long complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars is the first of a grand new Summer Holiday series, and is entitled:

"FISH'S HOLIDAY STUNT!"

By Frank Richards.

Harry Wharton & Co. are invited by Fisher T. Fish's popper, Hiram K., to spend the holiday vacation at Portercliffe, a grand old Sussex mansion. As Fish is very pressing, the chums of Greyfriars decide to take advantage of the invitation. But there's a catch in it, as you will learn when reading this grand new series of exciting holiday adventures. A real feast of summery fiction is this new series—just the type of yarns you'll enjoy reading. You know by now that neither Frank Richards nor Your Editor ever lets you down, so when I tell you not to miss this splendid holiday series, you'll take my tip and order your MAGNET well in advance.

As usual, there will be further gripping chapters of our magnificent adventure story: "Moose Call!", a special "Greyfriars Herald" supplement, an amusing effusion from our pet Greyfriars Rhymester, and my own little chat.

Meet you again next week, chums.

YOUR EDITOR.

WAVE YOUR HATS, CHUMS, AND GIVE THREE ROUSING CHEERS!

Harry Wharton Wins Through!

By FRANK
RICHARDS



A Story that will really GRIP you, featuring the CHUMS of GREYFRIARS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Whose Toffees?

WHAT have you got there, Bunter?"

"Nothing!"

The Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove grinned.

Billy Bunter's aspect at the moment was peculiar. There was a bulge on Bunter—a bulge that was not only noticeable but that leaped to the eye.

Any other fellow might have parked an article for concealment under his waistcoat without attracting particular attention. Not so Bunter!

Bunter's waistcoat fitted him like a glove—a rather tight glove! The fattest fellow at Greyfriars School, or in the wide world, had no space to spare.

Indeed, it was rather a problem how William George Bunter had succeeded in cramming anything between his waistcoat and his circumference. But he had done it. The result was a bulge which, as Bob Cherry remarked, a blind man could have seen a mile off.

Bunter came out of the House rather hastily. He almost ran into the chums of the Remove in the quadrangle. They playfully blocked his way, which was extremely annoying to Bunter, who was evidently in haste.

"I say, you fellows, get out of the way!" snapped Bunter. "I'm in rather a hurry! I haven't got anything here. I shouldn't be likely to walk about with a tin of toffee stuck under my waistcoat, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Look here, Stacey may come out any minute! I don't want to see that beastly relation of yours, Wharton."

Harry Wharton chuckled.

"Are they Stacey's toffees?" he asked.

"I haven't got any toffees! I haven't been in Study No. 3 and I never saw a tin of toffees on the table. It's a book I've got here," explained Bunter. "A—a Latin grammar! Queleh was down on me this morning in the Form-room, and I've got to mug up some verbs. I—I'm looking for a quiet spot to—to study—"

There was no doubt that Billy Bunter

Time and time again has Ralph Stacey schemed to bring disgrace upon the shoulders of Harry Wharton, his rival and "double" in the Greyfriars Remove. But his rascality has not prospered. His latest dastardly scheme, however, looks like proving a real winner—until Billy Bunter butts in!

was looking for a quiet spot. A secluded spot was necessary for a fellow who had snaffled a tin of toffees from another fellow's study.

"You fat burglar!" said Bob Cherry. "You'd better take Stacey's toffees back to No. 3—"

"I don't suppose they're Stacey's. Might be Ogilvy's or Russell's; they're in the same study!" said Bunter. "Not that I've got any toffees, you know! I hope I'm not the fellow to bag a fellow's

tuck. Look here, lemme pass, you beasts! I've got to look out some words in this dictionary—"

"That what?" ejaculated Frank Nugent.

"I mean this Latin grammar! I've got to look out some irregular toffees—I mean, irregular verbs!"

"Shake him!" suggested Johnny Bull. "Shake it out and then we'll see whether it's a dictionary, or a grammar, or a tin of toffees!"

"The shakefulness is the proper caper!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows— Leggo!" roared Bunter, as Bob Cherry grasped him by a fat shoulder and shook.

The hidden article did not drop out. It was too tightly packed for that. But there was a sudden pop. A button had parted.

"Ow! Leggo!" roared Bunter. "You're making the buttons come off my waistcoat, you beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pop!

Another button flew.

"I say, you fellows—" yelled Bunter.

Pop!

A third button went.

Then the waistcoat, no longer tight, released its hidden contents. A tin of toffees clattered on the ground.

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That doesn't look much like a dictionary!" remarked Frank Nugent.

"Or a Latin grammar!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter made a dive for the fallen tin. He clutched it up and

shoved it under his jacket. He blinked round uneasily through his big spectacles. Whether that tin belonged to Stacey, or Ogilvy, or Russell, it certainly belonged to someone in Study No. 3 in the Remove—and Bunter was anxious to avoid all three.

"I—I say, you fellows, this is my tin of toffees!" gasped Bunter. "It came from Bunter Court only this morning! Look here, I'll whack it out with you fellows—only let's get away from the House! I—I don't want to see Stacey, or Oggy, or Russell! I say——"

"They may want to see you!" chuckled Bob. "Come on!"

"Leggo!" roared Bunter.

"Keep your esteemed hands from the pickfulness and the stealfulness, my esteemed idiotic Bunter!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Honesty is the cracked pitcher that goes longest to the well, and saves a stitch in time, as the English proverb remarks."

"Leggo!"

Bob Cherry did not let go the fat shoulder. The grub-raider of the Remove, caught in the act of getting away with his plunder, had to restore the same where it belonged.

"Kim on!" said Bob.

"Beast!"

"Quick march!"

But Bunter was desperate. He clutched the toffee-tin and landed it with a sudden rap on Bob Cherry's features.

Bob gave a roar and relaxed his hold. He clapped a hand to a rather damaged nose.

"Oh! Ow! Why, I—I—I'll——"

Bunter flew.

With the toffee-tin gripped in a fat hand, the Owl of the Remove fled across the quad.

"After him!" chuckled Nugent.

"Tally-ho!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five rushed in pursuit.

Billy Bunter blinked back through his spectacles. He gave a yelp of alarm at the sight of the five juniors whooping on his track.

His fat little legs fairly twinkled as he raced.

But in a foot-race Billy Bunter had little chance. He had too much weight to carry.

He made a desperate rush at the gate of the Head's garden, which opened off the quad. It was a case of any port in a storm!

No junior was allowed in that garden without special leave. But Bunter did not stop to think of that. The chance of meeting the Head or one of his staff in the garden was uncertain—but capture, if he did not find a refuge, was certain.

He hurled open the gate, flew through, and slammed the gate behind him. Gasping and gurgling, the Owl of the Remove disappeared into the shrubberies, and Harry Wharton & Co. came to a halt at the gate.

Chasing Bunter up and down the forbidden precincts of the headmaster's private garden was not to be thought of. Bunter had escaped.

"The fat-villain!" said Bob Cherry, rubbing his nose. "I'll burst him next time I see him! They won't see those toffees again in Study No. 3."

"Not without X-rays!" grinned Nugent.

And the Famous Five walked off—what time Billy Bunter, having found the quiet and secluded spot he needed, proceeded to deal with the contents of the toffee-tin.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Where is Stacey?

"STACEY!" called out Mr. Quelch. Harry Wharton barely repressed a movement of irritation. Closely as he resembled his double, Ralph Stacey, it was not like the Remove master to make such an error. Mr. Quelch, looking from his study window into the quad, did make that error for once, but he saw it the next moment.

"Oh, it is you, Wharton!"

"Yes, sir!" said Harry, coming up to the window.

All that term Harry Wharton had been in Mr. Quelch's black books; but now that it was ending there had been a noticeable change in the Form-master's manner towards him. Quelch's voice seemed to have lost its sharpness; indeed, every now and then he spoke to Wharton very kindly. The fact was that a doubt was creeping into the Remove master's mind whether Wharton really was the black sheep he believed him to be. That belief had been shaken.

"Have you seen Stacey, Wharton?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Not since class, sir."

"Perhaps you will look for him," said Mr. Quelch. "His father is on the telephone, and desires to speak to him."

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

Looking for Stacey, or having anything at all to do with him was not agreeable to Harry Wharton. But he was very willing to oblige Mr. Quelch in this new and more genial mood of the Remove master.

So he hurried away to look for Stacey of the Remove.

"Seen Stacey?" he called out to every fellow he met.

"Saw him in the quad ten minutes ago!" answered Hazeldene. "He was loafing along by the Head's garden."

Wharton hurried in that direction.

But Stacey was not to be seen. It did not seem likely that he had, like Billy Bunter, ventured to trespass in the sacred precincts of the Head's garden. If he had, Wharton could not search for him there.

He turned back towards the House.

"Seen Stacey?" he called out, as he came on Vernon-Smith.

"Bother Stacey!" answered the Bounder. "What the thump do you want Stacey for? Going to punch his head?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"No, ass! I don't want him—Quelch wants him. His father's on the phone."

"Well, I haven't seen him, and don't want to."

"Seen Stacey, Skinner?"

"No."

"Oh, blow!"

Wharton went into the House and up to the Remove studies. He looked into Study No. 3, which Stacey shared with Ogilvy and Russell. The latter was there alone.

"Know where Stacey is?" inquired Wharton.

Russell shook his head.

"Out of the House, somewhere," he answered. "Haven't seen him lately."

Wharton went down again.

Greyfriars School was an extensive place to search for a junior who was out of sight, and might have gone out of gates. As Captain Stacey was apparently waiting on the telephone all this time, Wharton thought it best to go back and report to Mr. Quelch.

He went to the Remove master's study, tapped on the door, and opened it.

The receiver was off the telephone.

Evidently Stacey's father, at the other end, was still waiting. Mr. Quelch was looking irritated. Telephone calls from the parents of boys in his Form did not please or gratify a busy Form-master; and Mr. Quelch, too, had been about to leave his study when the call came.

"Oh, Stacey!" he said, as Wharton appeared at the door. Then he bit his lip with vexation as he saw that he had made the same error over again.

"Really, Wharton——"

"I can't find Stacey, sir," said Harry. "I thought I'd better come and tell you before looking for him further."

"Probably he has gone out of gates," said Mr. Quelch. "Thank you, Wharton!"

He crossed to the telephone and picked up the receiver as Wharton left the study.

"I am sorry your son does not appear to be within gates, Captain Stacey," said Mr. Quelch into the transmitter. "Any message?"

"I will ring again later," came the answer.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

Really, his telephone was not intended for the use of boys of his Form—not even for Stacey, his head boy, generally considered in the Remove to be his favourite. Mr. Quelch came very near telling Captain Stacey so. However, he refrained.

"Very well!" he rapped curtly, and replaced the receiver on the books.

Mr. Quelch gathered up a sheaf of papers from his study table. It was his custom on hot July afternoons to take the examination papers which he had to prepare for the end of the term to the shady little summer-house in the Head's garden.

There he could work in peace and quiet, preparing posers to catch careless and unwary youths on exam day.

That call from Captain Stacey had interrupted him just as he was about to set forth, and wasted more than ten minutes of his valuable time.

However, he was off at last, blinking as he went out into the blinding sunshine of the quad.

It was a hot July, the sun rather like a furnace. Mr. Quelch was glad to get into the shade of the old trees that overhung the walls and gate of the headmaster's garden.

He passed through the gate and walked up the path under shady trees towards the wistaria-clad arbour at the end.

All was quiet and peaceful in that shady garden. But as Mr. Quelch neared the summer-house the silence and peacefulness were suddenly broken by an outbreak of wild and extraordinary sounds.

"Urrgh! Gurrgh! Yurrgh! Wurrgh!"

Mr. Quelch jumped and dropped the sheaf of papers from under his arm. They scattered like snowflakes.

"Wurrgh! Urrgh!"

"What——" gasped Mr. Quelch, in startled amazement.

"Gurrgh! Ooooooh! Ooooooh!"

There was a sound of running feet and rustling shrubberies, as of someone in rapid retreat. But Mr. Quelch did not heed it. He heeded the wild and spluttering gurgles and howls that came from the arbour.

"Yurrrroogh! Groooh! Wooooh!"

Mr. Quelch did not stop to collect his fallen papers. With a grim brow and a glittering eye he hurried on to see what was happening.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Who Squirted the Ink?

BILLY BUNTER had been enjoying life. He had suddenly ceased to enjoy life!

What happened, Billy Bunter hardly knew. He was so completely and utterly taken by surprise.

In that shady little arbour Billy Bunter had been seated for some time, disposing of toffees. Whether those toffees had belonged to Stacey or to Ogilvy or Russell, Bunter did not know. Really, it was immaterial. They belonged to Bunter now.

With the tin open on the seat beside him, the Owl of the Remove helped himself to toffee after toffee, and grew happy, and shiny and sticky.

In that quiet corner of the Head's garden he was safe from pursuit, if the

bench, but before he could even turn his head a hand came through, with a squirt in it.

Squiiiish! Something wet and clammy caught Bunter in the back of the neck. And as he spun round, with a startled gasp, he captured the rest of the contents of the squirt with his fat face.

Then he knew what the wet and clammy stuff was. Some of it went into his open, gaping mouth!

It was ink! The hand and the squirt vanished instantly. Bunter spluttered and gurgled wildly.

The ink in his mouth quite washed out the delicious flavour of the toffees. Bunter gurgled and gasped, and spluttered and blew.

He had not seen the fellow who handled the squirt. Neither, it was

"Bunter!" hooted Mr. Quelch. Bunter's fat features were hardly recognisable. But his circumference was unmistakable.

"Bunter!" "Grooogh! Oooogh! Oooch!" "Bunter! What—"

"Wooooogh! I'm chook-chook-choking! Oooogh!" gurgled the hapless fat Owl. "I—I'm all inky! Grooogh!"

Mr. Quelch did not need telling that. Bunter was drenched and dripping with it. His fat face, thickly streaked, had a zebra-like look.

"What are you doing here, Bunter?" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Who has played this absurd trick?"

"Oooogh! I don't know!" gasped Bunter. "Some beast—wow—got behind the arbour—groogh—and squirted ink at me! Oooch! I'm smothered!"



Pop, pop, pop! Button after button parted, and Billy Bunter's waistcoat, no longer tight, released its hidden contents—a tin of toffees. "Beasts!" roared Bunter. "That doesn't look much like a dictionary!" remarked Frank Nugent. "Or a Latin grammar!" grinned Johnny Bull. "Ha, ha, ha!"

owners of the toffees had got on to his track. But he was in danger of being spotted by a master, who might have walked in the garden.

So, while he masticated toffee, Bunter listened with both fat ears, prepared to dodge at the sound of a footstep.

But he heard no sound.

The arbour was merely an open framework of rustio wood, covered by thick masses of wistaria, which shut out the sun. Thick as it was, Bunter could have squeezed a way out, at the back, had he been alarmed by a footstep coming along the path in front.

But, naturally, it was from the path in front that he expected danger, if danger came. He never dreamed of an attack from the rear.

And it was from behind that it came—suddenly, unexpectedly, taking the fat Owl utterly by surprise.

He heard a rustle in the thick wistaria behind him as he sat on the

certain, could that fellow have seen him, through the thick wistaria.

Whoever it was had crept silently behind the arbour, and had been guided by the merest glimpse of Bunter's back through the leaves and tendrils.

And, whoever it was, he was gone.

Billy Bunter gurgled horribly.

There was ink down his neck, ink splashed over his fat features, ink in his capacious mouth. He was of the ink inky!

"Gurrgh! Wurrgh! Oooooch! Wooooch!" gurgled the fat Owl. "Oh crikey! Ow! Beast! Wow! Grooogh!"

A minute ago Bunter had been listening for a sound of footsteps on the path. Now he was too busy, gurgling and spluttering, to hear or to heed.

A tall and angular figure cast a shadow at the entrance of the arbour, and two glinting, gimlet eyes fixed on the gurgling Owl.

"How dare you come here without leave!"

"I—I didn't—"

"What?"

"I—I mean—groogh—I wasn't—that is, I—I—I came here to—to be quiet, to—to—to study, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"With the assistance of a tin of toffee?" asked Mr. Quelch, with almost ferocious sarcasm.

"Oh! I—I mean, I—I—"

"Go to the House at once, Bunter! You may leave the toffee there! The tin will be confiscated! Go and clean yourself immediately—"

"Grooogh!"

"And then go to my study—"

"Oooogh!"

"And wait for me there until I come in!"

"Oooogh! Wha-a-at for, sir?"

"I am going to cane you, Bunter, when I return to the House!"

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"Oh lor'!"

"Go!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Urrrggh!"

Bunter went, gurgling!

He was willing to go and clean himself—even Bunter realised that he needed a wash—but he was extremely unwilling to wait in Quelch's study till his Form-master came in to cane him.

It was a dismal prospect, but there was no help for it. The Owl of the Remove rolled away, gurgling and gasping, in the lowest of spirits. The tin, and what remained of the toffees, had to be left behind. The hapless Owl wished that he had never spotted that wretched toffee-tin in Study No. 3 at all!

Mr. Quelch, frowning, gathered up his papers scattered on the path. Then he stared into the arbour, frowning more deeply. There was ink spattered over the oak bench, where he had intended to sit and con over those exam papers.

"Atrocious!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

He walked round the arbour and glanced over the shrubberies behind it with a glinting eye. He had little hope of spotting the perpetrator of that extraordinary jape on Bunter, but he would have been very glad to spot him. He would have been glad to impress upon the festive youth, with the aid of his cane, that the headmaster's private garden was no place for such pranks.

As he feared, he saw nothing of the japer; the fellow, whoever he was, had lost no time making his escape.

But his keen eye fell on a cap lying among the wistaria behind the arbour. Apparently the fellow had dropped it in his hasty retreat after discharging the squirt.

Mr. Quelch smiled grimly as he picked it up. Every hat and cap at Greyfriars School had to have the owner's name written in it. It was an infallible clue.

The Remove master turned the cap over in his hands, and looked at the name in it. He was hardly surprised to read "H. Wharton."

The worst boy in his Form!

Of late Mr. Quelch had begun to doubt whether Harry Wharton was indeed the worst boy in his Form. All through the term Wharton had been in disgrace; but all the time he had maintained that the fellow who had been spotted out of bounds, in disreputable resorts, was not himself, though mistaken for him.

That meant that it was his double, Ralph Stacey—the only fellow at Greyfriars who could possibly have been mistaken for Harry Wharton.

Mr. Quelch had believed in Stacey, even to the extent of making him head boy in Wharton's place. But two or three little incidents of late had rather shaken that belief.

Almost in spite of himself, he had begun to wonder whether, after all, a mistake might not have been made—whether the black sheep of his Form was not Harry Wharton, but his double.

But now—

This time it did not depend on deciding "which was which" between two fellows as alike as twins. This time the culprit had left a definite and unmistakable clue.

Billy Bunter had got the ink. But for whom had it been intended? Bunter was there only by the merest chance. Had not Bunter been there, Mr. Quelch would have been sitting where Bunter sat—and would have got the ink!

Had that been intended?

He had no doubt of it! Any fellow larking with Bunter would certainly not have picked the Head's private garden as the scene of the "lark." The squirted ink had not been intended for him, but

for the Form-master, who nearly every afternoon sat in that arbour busy with his Form papers.

Quelch was certain of it. And Wharton's name was written in the cap he had picked up in the wistaria.

Slowly he went back to the arbour, taking the cap with him.

He selected a spot on the bench that was not inky, and sat down to his exam papers. But during the next hour his thoughts wandered a good deal from the work in hand, and his brows knitted grimly.

Harry Wharton, in trouble all through that troubled term, was booked for more to come!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Stacey Loses His Temper!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Is that Bunter?"

"Behold, he is black but comely!"

"The blackfulness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—"

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

"Where did you get the ink?"

"Beast!" howled Bunter. "You jolly well did it!"

A dozen fellows stared at Billy Bunter as he emerged from the Head's gate and trailed wearily and inkily across the quad towards the House. They roared with laughter.

Bunter blinked at them wrathfully through inky spectacles.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" howled the fat Owl.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors. Evidently they, if not Bunter, saw something to cackle at!

"It was you, Cherry, you beast!"

"Not guilty, my lord!" chuckled Bob. "Where on earth did you pick up that ink?"

"Some beast squirted it over me in the arbour in the Head's garden. If it was you, Nugent—"

"Not little me!" chuckled Frank.

"Bull, you beast—"

"You silly ass!" grunted Johnny Bull. "I haven't been trespassing in the Beak's garden!"

"Then it was Inky—"

"The innocence of my absurd self is as spotless as a ridiculous lamb!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh solemnly.

"It was one of you!" roared Bunter. "Nobody else knew I was there! It was Wharton, I suppose! Where's Wharton?"

"Gone to the tuckshop for grub for tea!" answered Bob. "It wasn't Wharton, you fathead! But who the dickens can have been playing tricks in the Head's garden?"

"Yah!" snorted Bunter. "It was one of you! Beasts! Quelch caught me there, all inky, and he's going to lick me—"

"Didn't you see who inked you, fathead?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"How could I see him when he squirted the ink through the creepers from behind?" howled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed the Bounder. "The jolly old japer might have got Quelch! He often sits in that arbour of an afternoon."

"I wish he had!" groaned Bunter. "I'd rather Quelch had got it! Oh dear!"

The fat junior rolled on, inky and disconsolate, leaving the other fellows chortling. Every fellow he passed

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when you go on
Holiday!



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stared at him and chuckled—as if there was something funny in a fellow being smothered in ink!

Bunter could see nothing funny in it! He was feeling horrid! He trailed dismally up the stairs to the Remove passage.

A junior was lounging on the Remove landing, and he stared blankly at Billy Bunter as the fat Owl appeared.

Bunter gave him an inky and furious blink.

"You beast, Wharton! You rotter! Smothering a fellow with ink—"

"You!" exclaimed the Remove.

"What—" He made a stride at the fat Owl and caught him by the shoulder.

"Where did you get that ink?"

"Leggo, Wharton, you beast!"

"I'm not Wharton, you fat fool!"

"Oh, It's you, Stacey!" Bunter blinked at Harry Wharton's double.

"Leggo! I say, that beastly relation of yours, Wharton—"

"Where did you get that ink?" snapped Stacey, his eyes gleaming at the fat inky face. He shook Bunter angrily, as if to shake an answer out of him.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Leggo! Wow!"

"Will you answer me?" hooted Stacey.

"Ow! Yes! Leggo! I was in the Head's garden—"

"In the Head's garden!" repeated Stacey. "Not in the arbour?"

"Yes! How did you know? Some beast squirted ink through the creepers at me, and—"

"Oh!" gasped Stacey.

Why the head boy of the Remove was excited about it, indeed, why he was interested in the matter at all, was a mystery to Billy Bunter.

But there was no doubt that he was interested and excited, and intensely angry! His lips set hard, and his eyes glittered, and he compressed his grip on Bunter's fat shoulder till the fat junior yelped.

"You—you—you—" panted Stacey.

"What were you doing in the Head's garden at all, you fat freak? You know that fellows are not allowed there!"

"No bizney of yours!" gasped Bunter. "Leggo, my shoulder, you beast! Wow!"

"You—you—you fat idiot!"

Stacey spun the Owl of the Remove round. Anticipating what was coming, Billy Bunter gave a yell of apprehension.

His apprehension was well founded. Stacey's boot landed on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars, with what a novelist would call a dull, sickening thud!

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter.

He tore himself away and rushed up the passage to escape. But Stacey, apparently, was not satisfied yet. He followed behind the fat Owl, letting out kick after kick, dribbling Bunter up the passage like a football.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter. "Leave off! Wow! What's the matter with you, you beast? Wharrer you kicking me for? Yarooooop!"

The door of Study No. 12 opened, and Lord Mauleverer looked out. He stared in surprise at the exciting chase in the passage, and stepped out between Billy Bunter and his pursuer.

"Nuff's as good as a feast!" said Mauleverer amiably. "Chuck it, Stacey!"

"Get out of the way, you fool!"

"Ow! Keep him off, Mauleverer!" yelled Bunter. "Keep the beast off, old chap, will you?"

"Yaas!"

Bunter rolled on. Lord Mauleverer

calmly and cheerfully blocked further pursuit.

Stacey clenched his hands, as if with the intention of pitching into his lordship on the spot. Mauleverer eyed him coolly.

But the head boy of the Remove changed his mind. He swung away and tramped down the passage to his own study. Lord Mauleverer waited till he had gone into Study No. 3, and then lounged back into Study No. 12.

Billy Bunter proceeded to get the much-needed wash.

He spluttered with indignation as he did so. He could not begin to guess why Stacey had kicked him along the passage. A fellow smothered with ink might have expected sympathy—not a savage kicking.

Had Billy Bunter been a fighting-man, he would have followed up that wash by going to look for Stacey and giving him that for which he had asked! But the fat Owl was no fighting-man—and when he passed Stacey's study on his way to the stairs again, he went almost on tiptoe, dodging past as quietly as he could, in case the beast came out!

In the lowest of spirits, the Owl of the Remove went down the stairs and headed for the Masters' Passage.

He had to wait for Quelch in Quelch's study till the Remove master came in—to cane him!

Really, the tin of toffees was not worth all these trials and tribulations! Not for the first time in his fat career, William George Bunter realised that

IMPORTANT!

Will readers please note that owing to the August Bank Holiday next week's issue of the MAGNET will be on sale FRIDAY, August 2nd.—Ed.

after the feast came the reckoning! The feast was over, and the reckoning yet to come—and Billy Bunter, in Mr. Quelch's study, waited for it in a dismal, misanthropic, pessimistic frame of mind.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Trick on the Telephone!

B UZZZZ! It was the telephone-bell.

Billy Bunter turned from the window of Mr. Quelch's study with a grunt. From that window he had been watching for Quelch to come back to the House for a good half-hour. Quelch had not come.

Perhaps Quelch thought that the pleasure of anticipation would do Bunter good! Or perhaps he had forgotten his fat existence.

Anyhow, he did not come, and Bunter watched, like Sister Anne, in vain! Certainly he was not anxious to see Quelch. But he was anxious to get it over. He reflected bitterly, that if Quelch had come in at once and whopped him, the whopping would be wearing off by this time.

The buzz of the telephone interrupted his dismal meditations. He blinked round at the instrument, stepped across to it, and took the receiver off.

Quelch was not there to take the call! Bunter was! And it was barely possible that if he took a message for Quelch, Quelch might feel obliged, and let him off the licking. Moreover, by taking

the call, he might derive information concerning matters that were no business of his—always an attractive idea to the inquisitive Owl.

"Hallo!" squeaked Bunter, into the transmitter.

"Hallo! Is that Mr. Quelch?"

It was a voice Bunter had never heard before—a rather deep voice, with rather sharp tones. He wondered who was speaking.

"Mr. Quelch is out—"

"Oh! Is it you, Ralph?"

Bunter jumped.

There were not many Ralphs at Greyfriars School. So far as Bunter knew there was only one—Ralph Stacey of the Remove.

Obviously Stacey was the "Ralph" mentioned. He was certainly the only Ralph in the Remove. The Remove master's telephone was not likely to be used to call up a fellow in another Form.

This call was for Stacey.

Billy Bunter's little round eyes glittered behind his big round spectacles! The call was for the fellow who, half an hour ago, had kicked him almost the length of the Remove passage!

One thing, on the spot, was quite certain: Stacey was not going to be summoned to take that call! Fellows who wanted fellows to oblige them shouldn't kick fellows along a passage! That was Bunter's immediate idea.

"Captain Stacey speaking!" went on the voice. "Is it you, Ralph? You were out when I rang before, and I told your Form-master I should ring again. That was nearly an hour ago."

"Oh! Yes!" gasped Bunter.

"I don't seem to recognise your voice, Ralph. The telephone, I suppose. Did Mr. Quelch tell you to wait for my call?"

"Oh! Yes!"

"I thought perhaps he would. I suppose he's not in the study now?"

"No!"

"He seemed rather shirty at my ringing up, I thought. Is it against any of your dashed rules at the school?"

"Well, it's rather unusual," said Bunter. The fat Owl made his voice as like Stacey's as he could. That was a kind of trickery at which Bunter was rather good, as it happened. The man at the other end was satisfied.

"But it's all right," Bunter went on, "Quelch told me to wait in the study."

Bunter grinned over the telephone. Inquisitiveness was his besetting sin, and he was very keen to hear what Captain Stacey was going to say to Ralph!

Stacey's father had never been seen at the school, and Bunter was not the only fellow who was rather curious about him.

Most of the fellows knew that Stacey was a poor relation of the Whartons, taken up by Harry's uncle and sent to Harry's school at the old colonel's expense. He seldom or never spoke of his father, and only on very rare occasions did he receive a letter from him.

Indeed, it might have been supposed that, having landed his son on old Colonel Wharton, the gallant captain had ceased to be interested in the boy at all.

That, of course, did not matter in the least to Bunter; which, however, was a reason why the inquisitive fat junior was very curious on the subject.

"How are you getting on at the school, Ralph?" went on the voice over the wires.

"Oh, fine!" said Bunter.

"Would you be sorry to leave?"

Bunter started.

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Was there an idea of Stacey leaving, then?

He had heard that either Wharton, or Stacey, was to be taken away at the end of the term. But it was supposed in the Remove that it was Wharton who had to go.

Dr. Locke, long puzzled and perplexed to decide which of the doubles was the black sheep, had decided that both should not remain at the school, and left it to Colonel Wharton to decide which should go elsewhere.

The old colonel, strongly influenced by Mr. Quelch's opinion, had decided against his nephew, and in favour of Stacey.

"Did you hear me, Ralph?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Yes!"

"I understand that you have been doing well at school," went on Captain Stacey, evidently nothing doubting that he was speaking to his son. "But I have gathered from your letters, that the position of a poor relation, taken up and provided for, has been rather disagreeable."

"Oh! Yes! Rather!" said Bunter.

"Your young relation, Wharton, has rubbed it in, I dare say," said the captain. "Is he that sort of a young cad?"

"Oh, no! I mean, yes! Exactly!"

"I fancied so, from what you have written! I've not had a lot of time to write myself—I've been busy. I told you in my last letter that I'd had rotten luck on the gee-gees."

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bunter.

"But things are looking up, Ralph, and that's what I wanted to speak to you about. If you're keen to stay at Greyfriars, say so, and I'll let you have your way. Are you?"

"No! Not at all! Like to leave!" replied Bunter, grinning from one fat ear to the other. Certainly he would have liked Stacey to leave—Stacey having kicked him along the Remove passage!

"I'm glad to hear you say so, Ralph! I don't like you being dependent on old Wharton. The old boy means well, no doubt, but I never liked him, and I suppose you like him no more than I do."

This, it seemed, was the Stacey brand of gratitude!

It is not a small matter for the old colonel to take up a penniless relative, provide for him, and send him to a school like Greyfriars. But it weighed for little or nothing with a shiftless adventurer whose son was head boy of the Remove.

"I've got a chance," went on Captain Stacey. "It means going abroad, Ralph—you'll like that, I think. You used to like our runs on the Continent. I've been offered the management of a racing stable near Paris. Unless you're keen to stay on at Greyfriars, I'd be glad to take you with me—I fancy you'd enjoy life there more than at school. What?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Yes!"

"In that case you can tell your relation, Wharton, what you think of him, and old Wharton, too, if you like!" said Captain Stacey. "Our position will be a fairly assured one, and we shall have no further use for that old donkey!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"What did you say, Ralph?"

"I—I said good! Fine! Ripping!"

"I'm glad! Think it over and write to me in the next few days. I'll let your headmaster know that you will not be coming back next term, if you finally decide to share my luck, Ralph!"

"Yes, rather! I—I've decided already," gasped Bunter.

"They're cutting us off. Good-bye, Ralph!"

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"Good-bye!"

The captain rang off.

Billy Bunter replaced the receiver on the hooks.

He chuckled.

Stacey had kicked him along the Remove passage—for nothing, so far as Bunter could make out! Now he had put a spoke in Stacey's wheel!

Whether Stacey wanted to stay on at Greyfriars or to share his father's rather shiftless and uncertain fortunes, Bunter had not the faintest idea—but he considered the former more probable.

Captain Stacey, however, had certainly got the impression—over the telephone—that Ralph was eager to leave!

Whether the misunderstanding would be cleared up before Captain Stacey wrote to the headmaster Bunter could not tell, but he hoped not! He would be glad if Stacey went!

Anyhow, he had put a spoke in the beast's wheel! That was a matter for satisfaction to the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter's satisfaction lasted exactly ten minutes—that being the space of time that elapsed before Mr. Quelch arrived in the study.

Bunter was taking a rest in his Form-master's armchair, thinking, with a grinning face, of the trick he had played on the telephone, when the door opened and the Remove master came in.

The fat Owl bounded out of the chair. Mr. Quelch stared at him. Deep in examination papers, he had probably forgotten that he had told Bunter to wait in the study.

"Oh, Bunter!" he said.

"Ye-es, sir," stammered Bunter.

"You—you told me to wait for—I—I—I've w-waited a—a long time, sir! I—I've been here hours, sir!"

"It is only one hour since I sent you here, Bunter!"

"Oh! I—I mean—"

Mr. Quelch picked up his cane. But he laid it down again. Bunter eyed him hopefully. Perhaps the Remove master considered that an hour of dismal apprehension was sufficient punishment for Bunter's transgressions. Anyhow, he laid down the cane, much to the fat Owl's relief.

"I shall cane you severely, Bunter, if you trespass in the headmaster's garden again without leave," he said. "You may go! Find Wharton and tell him to come to my study at once!"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"One moment, Bunter! You do not know who squirted the ink over you in the headmaster's garden?"

"N-n-no, sir!"

"You saw nothing of him?"

"N-n-no, sir!"

"Very well! You may go! Send Wharton here at once!"

"Yes, sir!"

Bunter was glad to escape from the study. He was also glad to carry that message to Harry Wharton. Bunter had a strong suspicion that it was Wharton who had squirted the ink—in which case he hoped that Wharton would get a jolly good licking for playing tricks in the Head's garden. Billy Bunter went up to the Remove passage in quite a cheerful mood.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

On the Carpet!

"H OOK it!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

Slam!

The door of Study No. 1 closed almost on Bunter's fat little nose.

He gave a snort of wrath.

Harry Wharton did not seem to be in a good temper.

As a matter of fact, he was not! He was in his study, reading a letter from home, when Billy Bunter arrived there.

The letter was from Colonel Wharton. It was not the kind of letter to make a fellow either good-tempered or cheerful. It ran:

"Dear Harry,—I have considered the matter with the greatest care, but I have no alternative but to send you to another school next term.

"The headmaster desires that either you or Ralph should leave, and Ralph appears to be perfectly innocent of offence.

"Your Form-master's reports this term have given me great pain and distress, and I am aware that you have more than once narrowly escaped expulsion.

"How am I to believe that the offender was Ralph, and that a mistake of identity was made owing to the resemblance between you? Mr. Quelch is convinced that you are the offender, and your headmaster has only refrained from expelling you because he fears that there may be the faintest possible shadow of doubt.

"Your uncle,

"JAMES WHARTON."

There was deep, intense anger in Harry Wharton's face as he read that letter over again for the fifth or sixth time. He was not to come back to Greyfriars the following term, but Stacey was to come back. His enemy had beaten him all along the line.

He had clung to the belief that, somehow, the truth would come out; that it was impossible for trickery and treachery to succeed in the long run.

But it looked like it now! He was to go—and Ralph was to stay! And he was innocent of wrongdoing—and Stacey was the most thorough-going young rascal in the school! The term was near its end; and with the last days of the term the sands of life at Greyfriars were running out. He clenched his hands in helpless anger.

It was not against his uncle that he felt that bitter anger and resentment. Only too clearly he knew what a blow this was to the old colonel, driven to lose his faith in him. It was not even against Quelch. Stacey, with a cunning beyond his years, a cunning he had learned in his shiftless life with his scapegrace father, had fooled both of them—as easily as he had fooled most of the fellows in the Remove.

Was it possible that such rascality could prosper?

Wharton could not believe it. And yet—only a few days more, and he would be gone, not to return—leaving his enemy in triumph.

The door opened again.

"I say, Wharton—"

"Will you get out, you fat idiot?" roared Wharton.

"I say, don't be so jolly shirty, old chap! I haven't come here to lick you for squirting that ink over me!"

"What?" gasped Wharton.

"I fancy Quelch is going to lick you, and serve you jolly well right if he does!" said Bunter. "I say—"

"Get out, fathead!"

"But, I say—"

Wharton grasped the door and hurled it shut again.

There was a yelp in the passage. This time Billy Bunter's flat nose had not escaped.

"Wow-ow! Ow! Oh! Beast!"

The door did not open again.

Bunter yelled through the keyhole:

"Beast! Quelch wants you in his



Billy Bunter was masticating toffee when he heard a rustle in the thick wistaria behind him. Next moment, a hand came through with a squirt in it. Squillish! Something wet and clammy caught Bunter in the back of the neck. It was ink!

study! If you keep him waiting you'll get it hotter, and I jolly well hope you will! Yah!

Wharton jerked the door open.

"You fat idiot! Why couldn't you say so?" he hooted. "I'll jolly well—"

But Bunter was already scudding up the passage.

Harry Wharton crumpled his uncle's letter into his pocket and tramped away to the stairs. He passed Vernon-Smith coming up; and the Bounder gave him a curious look.

"What's up?" he asked.

"Quelch wants me—more trouble, I suppose!" growled Wharton. "Some more of Stacey's dirty tricks, I dare say."

"I wouldn't go to Quelch scowling like that, old chap!" said Smithy, with a grin. "Put on a smile!"

"Fathead!"

Wharton did not put on a smile. He tramped down the stairs with a black brow.

However, as he neared Mr. Quelch's study, he realised that the Bounder's advice was good, and he composed himself. His face was calm, if not cheerful, as he tapped at his Form-master's door and entered.

He fully expected to find Quelch looking grim and stern; and his expectations were realised. The Remove master was very grim indeed.

Wharton's lips set.

Of late, he had begun to hope that Quelch was beginning to see his mistake; his Form-master's manner had certainly become kinder. Now he could see at a glance that the Remove master was in his old mood again. Something had happened to revive his bitter prejudice. What it was Wharton had not the faintest idea; but he did not need telling that his enemy had been at work.

"Wharton! You were in the headmaster's garden this afternoon."

Harry stared at him.

He had expected something more serious than this. A fellow might get lines, or even a licking, for trespassing in the headmaster's private garden; but it was hardly a matter serious enough to call up that portentous frown to Quelch's brow.

"No!" snapped Wharton. "I suppose it's no good telling you that if I'm supposed to have been seen there, it was another fellow! You won't believe me."

He took it for granted that Stacey had been seen, and that it was the dismal business of mistaken identity over again. So Mr. Quelch's rejoinder came as a surprise to him.

"You were not seen there, Wharton."

"Certainly I was not, as I was never there," answered Harry. "But I supposed, from what you said, sir, that it was another mistake."

"You deny having been there?"

"Certainly I do!"

Mr. Quelch's lip curled contemptuously. Wharton's face set hard. He was not believed—as usual!

"You were aware, Wharton, that it has been my custom, recently, to sit in the arbour in the Head's garden, to do some work there?"

"I've heard of it, sir."

"You knew that I should be there this afternoon?"

"I never thought about it."

"When you came to this study to tell me that you could not find Stacey to take his telephone call, you saw me about to leave the study with a number of papers. Did you immediately proceed to the Head's garden and lie in wait for me there?"

"I did not."

"Did you conceal yourself behind the arbour—with a squirt of ink—"

"Oh, my hat—I mean, no, sir!"

"And did you, hearing someone inside the arbour, suppose that it was I, and squirt ink over the person there?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"And drench Bunter with ink—in mistake for me?" asked Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Which?

HARRY WHARTON stared blankly at his Form-master.

He had heard about Billy Bunter's misadventure, without giving it much heed. His own little troubles occupied his mind. But now he understood that the matter was more serious than the inking of Bunter.

Several fellows had surmised that the fat Owl had got what was intended for Quelch. Now Wharton realised at once that it was so.

And who was Quelch to suspect, but the worst boy in his Form—the boy to whom he had been severe and unjust all that term? Wharton was a dog with a bad name now—to be suspected of anything and everything!

Who had done it?

Some reckless ass—but who? In all the Remove only the Bounder was reckless enough to play such a trick on his Form-master. Was it Smithy?

Wharton could not even begin to guess. Only he knew, of course, that he himself had had no hand in it.

Mr. Quelch stood watching his face with a hard, cold, searching stare. It was clear that he did not doubt.

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"Had you succeeded in your intention, Wharton, you would have been taken before your headmaster and instantly expelled from Greyfriars!" said Mr. Quelch. "Fortunately for you, a foolish boy had preceded me there, and he was your victim instead of myself."

"Is it any use telling you that I never went there at all?" asked Harry bitterly.

"No—as I have proof!" said Mr. Quelch. "I am accustomed to your unscrupulous denials, Wharton, and I attach no importance whatever to them."

"Proof!" repeated Harry.

"You were not aware of that?" asked Mr. Quelch grimly.

"There cannot be any proof of what never happened, sir!" answered Harry as quietly as he could. "I was not there."

"You have missed your cap?"

"My cap?" repeated Wharton blankly. "No. I've been wearing a straw hat this afternoon. My cap! What has my cap to do with it?"

Mr. Quelch picked up a cap from a chair, and laid it on a table before him. Wharton stared at it. It was his cap, with his name in it.

"That cap was picked up behind the arbour, where you pushed through the creepers to squirt ink over the person inside, Wharton."

Wharton stared at the cap. Then he burst into a harsh, angry laugh.

The mystery was a mystery to him no longer. He knew who had squirted the ink. If his cap had been found on the spot, it had been deliberately placed there to be found, and it was the act of his enemy.

That cap proved to Mr. Quelch that the culprit was Wharton. To Wharton it proved that the culprit was Stacey.

Mr. Quelch stared at him angrily.

"Wharton! If you think this a laughing matter—" he began. "Silence! Have you anything further to say?"

"Only this, sir!" answered Harry. "I left my cap in the lobby after school, and any fellow who liked could have taken it away. I think you ought to be able to see that it was taken for the special purpose of leaving it where you found it."

Mr. Quelch started.

That, obvious enough to Wharton, had certainly not occurred to the Remove master for a moment.

"Wharton!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, put it down to me!" exclaimed Wharton, with savage bitterness. "I don't expect you to believe a word I say. Last term you would have taken my word."

"Last term I trusted you, Wharton."

"You would trust me now if Stacey had not come this term," said Harry bitterly. "That cur—"

"Wharton!"

"I tell you that cur has done this!" almost shouted Wharton. "He has worked the 'double' business for all it was worth all through the term. And now he's tried a new game. I dare say he thought the old game was getting a bit stale. This is a new trick. I tell you—"

"Do not raise your voice in my study, Wharton." Mr. Quelch spoke sharply, but not so sharply as might have been expected. The doubt was reviving in his mind.

Wharton calmed himself.

"I tell you, sir, I was not there at all. And as it happens, this time, I can prove it, if you will give me a chance."

"I should be only too glad, Wharton, if you could do so; and I shall certainly give you every opportunity," said Mr. Quelch.

"You've asked me where I was after class to-day, sir. Ask Stacey where he was."

"Stacey!"

"He couldn't be found when he was wanted on the telephone. He never knew that a phone call was coming, and never thought he would be looked for, and missed. But I looked for him everywhere, and asked a dozen fellows where he was, and nobody knew."

"I have no doubt that he was out of gates," said Mr. Quelch. "There was no reason why he should not be. I see no reason—"

"Let him say where he was, and with whom, then!" exclaimed Wharton, his eyes blazing. "I know he'll tell you he was out of gates; and he'll tell you that he was alone, too. He can't say any man was with him out of gates, because I jolly well know that he was in the Head's garden, playing this rotten trick to land me in another row."

"Wharton!"

"He's not satisfied with my uncle taking me away at the end of the term; he wants me sacked!" panted Wharton.

"He wants to dish me at home as he's dished me here. I can prove that I never was in the Head's garden to-day. You saw me yourself just before you went there, as you happened to ask me to look for Stacey."

"That is true; but you had time—"

"Oh, yes, I had time!" said Harry bitterly. "But as it happens, I knew that Bunter was there. Stacey never knew. He fancied it was you, when he heard somebody in the summer-house. But I knew."

"You knew!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Yes; and that fool Bunter thinks I inked him, because I knew that he was there!" snapped Wharton. "Bunter doesn't know that the ink was meant for you; but you know it, and I jolly well know it. Bunter thinks that I followed him there and did it."

Mr. Quelch caught his breath.

"Bunter must have been there by the merest chance," he said. "How did you know that he was there, Wharton—if you did know?"

"Because I followed him with my friends as far as the Head's gate," answered Harry. "We were chasing him, and he dodged into the Head's garden to get away."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"He scudded up that path leading to the arbour," went on Wharton. "And if I'd thought about the matter at all, I should have known that he was sitting there chewing his toffees. I knew that he was in the garden. And if you ask Cherry, or Nugent, or Inky, or Bull, they'll tell you so."

Mr. Quelch stood silent.

That the ink had been squirted over Bunter in the arbour in mistake for himself, he was absolutely certain. But if Wharton had known that Bunter was on the spot, Wharton could not have made that mistake.

The mistake had been made by some fellow who did not know that Bunter was in the garden at all. That was certain.

Was it possible that the whole affair was a trick—that a scheme had been laid, which would have succeeded without a hitch, but for the unlooked-for presence of Bunter in the arbour?

Who had crept behind the wistaria, and listened for a sound of someone within? Not Wharton, for he would have known that it was Bunter.

There was a long silence as Mr.

Quelch's study. Two or three times the Remove master opened his lips, and closed them again. He did not know what to say; he did not know what to think.

Wharton was cool again now.

It was borne in on his mind that his belief was justified—that trickery and treachery could not succeed in the long run.

The most cunningly laid scheme was at the mercy of chance. Stacey, it was probable, had not been able to see a single weak spot in this scheme.

Yet the unexpected telephone call from his father, which had delayed Mr. Quelch, and the happy chance that Bunter had dodged into the Head's garden during that delay, had knocked the scheme to pieces.

Certainly there was no proof that the delinquent was Stacey. But there was proof enough that it was not Wharton. There was proof that it was an enemy of Wharton, since his cap had been placed there to furnish evidence against him.

Mr. Quelch spoke at last.

"Wharton, I—I believe what you say. I regret that I came to a conclusion which now appears to be incorrect. You may go."

Wharton left the study.

A quarter of an hour later Mr. Quelch was speaking to his head boy. Stacey stood where Wharton had stood.

"Did you go out of gates after class this afternoon, Stacey?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir," answered Stacey.

"In company with your friends?"

"No, sir. I went for a walk alone."

Mr. Quelch felt a chill. Wharton had said that Stacey would have to say that he had gone out alone. And he had said it!

"Please tell me where you went, Stacey?" said Mr. Quelch, very quietly.

"I walked down to Pegg, sir."

"Did you meet anyone you knew?"

"Not that I remember, sir."

"Or speak to anyone at Pegg who may remember you?"

"No, sir. I walked along by the sea."

Mr. Quelch drew a deep breath. Stacey, it was plain, could not give any kind of evidence that he had been out of gates at all. That might mean nothing, or it might mean much.

"You did not enter the Head's garden this afternoon, Stacey?"

Stacey raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"The Head's garden, sir? That is out of bounds for juniors."

"Please answer my question!"

"No, sir."

"It is a matter of some importance, Stacey, for you to prove, if possible, where you were during the hour after class to-day. Can you not recall a single person who saw you during your walk, and might remember having seen you?"

"I am sorry, sir; I cannot, as it happens."

Mr. Quelch suppressed a sigh.

"Very well, Stacey; you may go."

Stacey's heart was beating rather fast as he went down the passage.

That fool, Bunter, had spoiled everything. He was doubted and suspected now; or if he was not suspected, it was something very near it. Mr. Quelch sat for a long time in troubled and painful thought after the head boy had left him.

Had he been deceived, deluded, hoodwinked, by a boy cunning beyond his years? Had he condemned his former head boy, not for having done wrong, but for having been the victim of a plotting and unscrupulous enemy? It

was borne in on him, more and more, that it was so.

One thing was certain—he had to know the truth. Before that term came to its end he had to know, beyond the shadow of a doubt, which of the doubles of his Form was the one that deserved to be kicked out of Greyfriars.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Fishy Is Put Wise!

“**S** EARCH me!” murmured Fisher T. Fish.

Fishy’s keen, sharp eyes gleamed. There was intense curiosity in Fishy’s lean face as he watched the fellow who was coming up the towing-path by the shining Sark.

It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars School, and Fisher T. Fish had been spending his leisure hours in a manner peculiarly grateful and comforting to his businesslike nature. That morning Fisher T. Fish had bought a clock from a hard-up fellow in the Shell for half-a-crown. In the afternoon he had walked down to Mr. Lazarus’ second-hand shop in Courtfield, and sold the clock for four-and-six!

Being two shillings to the good on the transaction, Fishy was almost tempted to spend fourpence on a bus fare, and save the walk back to the school.

But he resisted the temptation! Fourpence was not a large sum; but it was, after all, fourpence. It was a hot July afternoon, and Fishy was not particularly active; he would have preferred the bus. But, after all, he would recover from fatigue, but he never would recover from the loss of fourpence. So he walked.

He took that walk easy. He had lots and lots of time to get back before tea.

He could not, of course, tea out, like many fellows did, and cut the school tea. The school tea was paid for. Not to consume what was paid for would have seemed to Fishy an act savouring of lunacy. He was no such gink, geek, or bonehead!

But there was a long time before tea, and Fishy sauntered homeward by way of the river, taking frequent rests. The scenery by the river was lovely, and though Fishy did not care much for scenery in itself, it was something he got for nothing, so it was all to the good.

At the present moment Fishy was seated, resting his tired, bony limbs in the grateful shade of the high, thick hawthorns that grew along a fence. The fence enclosed the grounds of that disreputable resort, the Three Fishers’ inn.

There were fellows who sneaked into that disreputable place to play billiards on half-holidays, but Fishy was not one of them. Fishy was not, perhaps, blessed with very high principles, but he had a good allowance of what he called hoss-sense, and he did not “see” letting any of his cash slip into the greasy hands of Mr. Joe Banks.

Fishy, as he sat with his back to the fence in the shade, was not thinking of the Three Fishers or its attractions, near as he was to the place. He was turning over in his bony hands a pocket-knife of which one blade was broken.

He had given Russell of the Remove sixpence for it a few days ago, in the hope of selling it for twice as much later. So far he had found no purchaser, and he was beginning to feel a doubt whether he would, after all, make a profit on the transaction.

Such a doubt was very painful to Fishy’s business-like mind. It cast a shadow on the happiness he had derived from making two shillings profit on the Shell fellow’s clock!

But Fishy forgot even profit and loss, as he saw a Remove fellow coming up the river-bank.

At the distance he knew that it was either Wharton or Stacey; but even his keen, sharp eyes could not tell him which.

When the fellow came closer, he would know. At close range the doubles of the Remove could be distinguished from one another.

And Fishy was very curious.

For he had no doubt that the black sheep—whichever he was—was heading for the Three Fishers.

Every now and then the junior, as he came, stopped and glanced round, with an air of glancing at the river or the sky; but, in reality, to look behind him, and make sure that the coast was clear—as Fishy spotted at once. And Fishy, screened from view in the hawthorns, carefully kept himself out of view, so that the junior should not spot him.

That dubious question whether it was Wharton or his relative who was the black sheep of the Remove, caused much division of opinion in the Form. Harry Wharton’s own friends stood by him, but most of the Form took Stacey’s side, as Mr. Quelch did.

The Bounder was one of Wharton’s party—but the Bounder’s own reputation was a rather “juicy” one. Billy Bunter had declared that he had actually seen Stacey at the Three Fishers—but Billy Bunter’s word was not taken by anybody. It looked as if Fisher T. Fish was, by a lucky chance, in a position to resolve that dubious point—and he had no scruple whatever about watching a fellow and catching him napping.

So, carefully keeping in cover, Fishy sat and watched.

The junior came nearer and nearer. He stopped at last, at a short distance from the inn gate on the towpath, and stood looking about him.

Fishy grinned in the hawthorns.

The fellow was making sure that no one was about before he went in. Obviously he had no suspicion that a pair of sharp eyes were watching him from the bushes near the gate.

He was not ten feet from Fishy now, and the American junior was able to identify him beyond doubt. It was Stacey!

“Stacey!” breathed Fisher T. Fish. “I guess I’ve spotted that jay a few! Yep! I’ll say I’ve sure cinched that guy! And I guess I’m going to surprise him some!”

And Fishy grinned.

Satisfied at last that no one was about, the junior made a sudden dive at the inn gate, opened it, and passed in.

Up jumped Fisher T. Fish.

Stacey, hurrying up the path, was a dozen feet from the gate, when Fishy T. Fish’s bony face looked over it, grinning.

“Say!” called out Fishy.

Stacey started violently, and spun round. He stared blankly at the bony face grinning over the gate.

Fishy’s grin widened, extending from ear to ear. Never had he been so tickled to death, as he would have described it.

“Say, Stacey, you sure are meandering out of bounds!” chuckled Fisher T. Fish. “I’ll tell a man you are some scallawag! I guess this baby will put some of the fellows wise! Why, you even took me in. I’ll say I figured that it was Wharton who was playing the giddy goat! Yep!”

Stacey stared at him, his face almost pale with rage, his hands clenched. He was taken utterly aback by that sudden and unexpected discovery,

Fisher T. Fish waved a bony hand at him. He turned from the gate, and jerked away down the towpath.

He had news for the Remove fellows when he got back to the school. But he was not a dozen paces from the gate when he heard pattering footsteps behind him, and turned, grinning, to face the black sheep of the Remove.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Business First!

R ALPH STACEY came up, panting.

His hands were clenched, his eyes glittering. Fisher T. Fish watched him warily, prepared to dodge at an outbreak of hostilities.

Stacey, it was certain, would have liked nothing better than to have mopped up the towpath with Fishy’s bony person. But he restrained his rage. Thrashing Fishy would have been a satisfaction, but it would not have kept Fishy’s tongue quiet. It would have had the opposite effect.

That Fishy intended to pass on his discovery to all the Remove was clear. A thrashing might have induced him to pass it on to Mr. Quelch also!

“Hold on!” panted Stacey.

“Sure!” assented Fishy amiably. “Chuckin’ it up, and going back to school, like a good boy? Like to mosey along with me?” he chortled. “Say, I’ll mention that you’re a deep scallawag, Stacey! You’ve made all the guys believe it was Wharton—even me, and I guess I cut my eye-teeth early in Noo Yark! I’ll tell a man, you sure are pizen meat!”

“Keep this dark!” muttered Stacey.

Fisher T. Fish laughed derisively.

“Not in your lifetime!” he retorted. “I guess I ain’t got nothing agin Wharton! I guess I ain’t helping you to tell lies and pull the wool over everybody’s optics? Why should I?”

“I’ve seen Wharton kick you!” sneered Stacey. “Have you forgotten that?”

Fishy gave a reminiscent wriggle.

“Mebbe!” he assented. “And you sure banged my cabeza yourself in my study the other day! I ain’t forgot that, neither.”

“Will you keep this dark?”

“Nope!” answered Fisher T. Fish coolly. “I sure will not. Why should I?”

Stacey made a stride at him, his eyes blazing. Fisher T. Fish hopped quickly back. He waved the enraged scapegrace off with a bony hand.

“Pack it up!” advised Fishy. “I sure couldn’t handle you, Stacey—but Quelch could, old-timer! You lay a finger on me, bo, and I’ll put Quelch wise, as well as the guys in the Remove! Bank on that!”

“I’m not going to touch you!” breathed Stacey.

“You sure are wise!” agreed Fishy, with a grin. “Quelch would be glad to know which of you goes along to the Three Fishers.”

Stacey almost choked with rage.

Common prudence should have restrained him from breaking bounds and playing the blackguard, when he knew that Mr. Quelch had already begun to doubt him. The term, too, was so near its end! But the reckless urge of blackguardism in his nature was not to be denied.

He had long been sick of the restraints of a decent school. Carefully as he kept up appearances at Greyfriars, carefully as he cultivated the good opinion of the Remove fellows, he sometimes wondered

whether the game was worth the candle, and longed for the old, shiftless life with his spendthrift father.

Only the hope of cutting his rival out at home, of ousting Harry Wharton, and becoming the heir of Wharton Lodge, kept him up to the mark. But even that could not keep him straight.

He had had many narrow escapes. Now the game was up if Fisher T. Fish talked—as evidently he intended to do.

Fishy watched him with malicious amusement. He had the guy just where he wanted him.

It amused Fishy to know that Stacey longed to smash him right and left, and dared not lay a hand on him.

But Fisher T. Fish's expression gradually changed.

His acute transatlantic brain was working. It dawned on Fishy that this chance discovery might be worth more to him than the mere pleasure of chewing the rag.

He groped in his pocket for the broken-bladed pocket-knife. Fishy had long sought a purchaser for that bargain in vain. He guessed now that he had found one.

Business came first with Fishy. And he guessed, reckoned, and calculated that here was an opportunity of doing a stroke of business.

"Look at that!" he remarked casually.

Stacey stared at it.

"What do you mean, you fool?" he snarled.

"I'm selling that pocket-knife," explained Fisher T. Fish, in the same casual tone. "One blade's gone, but I guess a noo blade could be fitted, and it's sure worth it. Like to buy it?"

Stacey, quick-witted as he was, did not catch on for the moment.

"You dummy, I don't want to buy your rubbish!" he snapped.

"O.K.," said Fishy coolly. "I guess I'll be beating it, then, and I've sure got some surprising noos for the guys at the school. S'long!"

"Hold on!" gasped Stacey.

"Yep!" Fisher T. Fish turned back. "Changed your mind?"

Stacey's enraged eyes searched his mean, cunning, bony face. He had caught on now.

"I'll buy it!" he said.

"Good man!" said Fisher T. Fish approvingly. "I guess it's a good knife, and you'll sure be glad you gave five shillings for it."

"Five shillings!" repeated Stacey. He knew that the business man of the Remove had been hawking that damaged pocket-knife, in vain, at the price of one shilling!

"Jest that!" smiled Fisher T. Fish.

Stacey looked at him long and hard. Then, without another word, he placed two half-crowns in the American's bony hand.

He made no motion to take the pocket-knife, which he certainly did not want; but Fishy held it out to him.

"Yourn!" said Fishy cheerfully.

"I don't want it!" snarled Stacey.

"Take it, bo, as it's yours! You figure that I'm taking spondulics off you for nixes?" said Fisher T. Fish. "What are you getting at?"

Fisher T. Fish could hardly have had any doubt as to the real nature of that peculiar transaction. But he was not going to admit it, even to himself.

He guessed, reckoned, and calculated that he was selling Stacey a pocket-knife. If Stacey had particular reasons for giving a long price for it, that was the guy's own funeral, Fishy guessed, and no pesky concern of his.

Stacey slipped the knife into his pocket with a contemptuous sneer. The

two half-crowns disappeared into Fishy's pocket.

"You're keeping it dark?" breathed Stacey.

"I guess I ain't in any hurry to chew the rag," remarked Fisher T. Fish. "Tain't my funeral what you do on a half-holiday, big boy! Say, you come along to my study some time, and I guess I can show you a few things that will interest you a whole lot. I guess I'd like to clear some of them before the end of the term."

Stacey repressed his desire to plant a clenched fist in the bony, sharp face. He nodded.

"I'll look in!" he said.

"O.K.!" said Fisher T. Fish, cheerily, and he walked away with his jerky steps down the towpath.

Stacey stood looking after him with gleaming eyes.

He was under Fishy's bony thumb; and Fishy was not going to let him off lightly. But he was safe, at all events, from being shown up in his true colours at the school, and that was what he wanted.

Having watched Fish's bony figure jerk out of sight, he turned back towards the Three Fishers. But he did not enjoy his game of billiards with Mr. Joe Banks that afternoon.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

No Pie For Bunter!

"TODDY, old chap!"

"Shut up!" said Toddy old chap.

"I'm going down to supper."

"Good! Go!"

"But I want you to come, old fellow," said Billy Bunter affectionately. "I shouldn't care for supper without your company, old thing."

Peter Todd stared at his fat study-mate in astonishment. This affectionate desire for his company was rather new on Bunter's part.

Peter was sitting in Study No. 7 after prep, reading a letter from his cousin, Alonzo Todd. He had had that letter in his pocket all day, and after prep he found time to read it.

It needed time, for the good Alonzo was extremely long-winded, and his letter covered four closely written pages.

Peter was ploughing through it patiently when Bunter interrupted him.

He looked up from Alonzo's letter and stared at Bunter. Bunter, for his part, was looking at a little parcel on the study table. Even while speaking so affectionately to Toddy, Bunter's eyes and spectacles were glued on that parcel.

And Toddy, following his glance, understood. There was a steak-and-kidney pie in that parcel.

The school supper was, in the opinion of the school authorities, good and healthy and ample. There was bread and cheese and a slab of cake for every man who came. Plenty of fellows, however, preferred to vary that diet, good and healthy as it was, and they were allowed to take in extras to supper. On this occasion Peter was taking a pie.

Evidently Bunter had spotted the pie, which was why he was so affectionately anxious for Peter's company.

"You fat chump!" said Peter, and he returned to the letter.

"Oh, really, Peter—"

"Cheese it!"

"I say, chuck that letter away; you don't want to read Alonzo's silly gabble now!" urged Bunter. "You'll be late for supper."

"Give us a rest."

"Well, look here, shall I carry down that parcel for you?" asked Bunter. "I don't know what's in it. I never heard you tell Bob Cherry that you were going to have a steak-and-kidney pie for supper."

"Oh, my hat!" said Peter.

"I'll carry it down for you," said Bunter, and he reached out a fat hand to the parcel.

The next moment a fearful yell rang through Study No. 7, and the fat paw was snatched away. Peter, always prompt in action, had picked up a ruler and rapped.

"Owl!" roared Bunter. "Wow! Beast! Wow! I won't carry it down for you now! Yow-ow-ow!"

"You won't," agreed Peter. "Now shut up! I say, Alonzo mentions you in this letter. He hasn't forgotten you, Bunter. He says he hopes you have grown less greedy and untruthful—"

"Beast!"

"Sorry I can't give him any good news!" said Peter.

"Yah!"

Bunter rolled out of the study, rubbing his fat knuckles.

He was not interested in Alonzo Todd's inquiries after him. His designs on the pie had been frustrated, and he was anxious not to be late for supper.

Peter Todd put the letter into his pocket—to finish reading it at some other time. He often had lengthy epistles from Alonzo, and he generally read them on the instalment system.

He picked up his parcel and followed the Owl of the Remove downstairs.

At the supper table, Billy Bunter was negotiating bread and cheese, with a fat and gloomy brow.

He had no doubt that Peter would let him have a whack in that pie; but Peter was going to let other fellows have a whack in it also, and one whack was not enough for Bunter. The whole pie would have been hardly enough.

Unwrapped, the steak-and-kidney pie looked nice—very nice! Several fellows were interested in it as well as Bunter. Billy Bunter eyed it hungrily as Peter plunged a knife into the crust.

"I say, Peter!" gasped Bunter, as a brilliant idea shot into his fat brain. Bunter's podgy intellect did not usually work swiftly; but if anything could make it work it was the prospect of tuck. "I say, old chap, Quelch wants you!"

"Quelch!" repeated Toddy.

"Yes; he called to me as I came down, and said he wanted you in his study."

"Oh, blow!" grunted Peter.

He rose from his chair to leave Hall. As he did so, a sharp voice made Billy Bunter jump out of his seat, and almost out of his skin.

"Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, staring round in alarm. He had not had the faintest idea that Mr. Quelch had come into Hall.

But he had! There he was, only six feet from Bunter, glaring at him with gimlet eyes that seemed to bore into the fat Owl of the Remove.

Peter looked at him, and looked at Bunter. Then he understood, and sat down again, grinning.

"Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "What do you mean by making that utterly untruthful statement to Todd?"

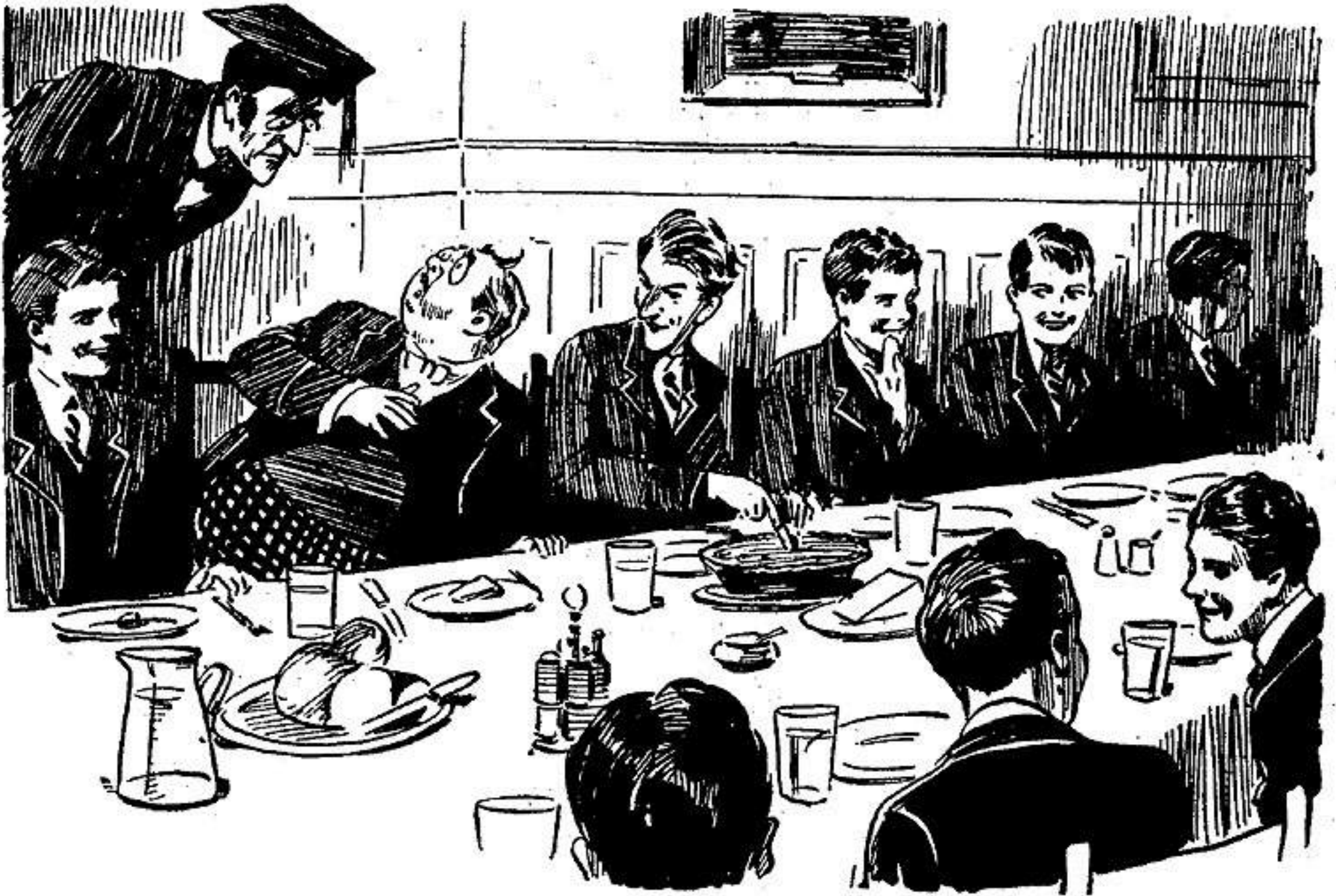
"I didn't, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"I—I mean it—it was only a jig-jig-joke, sir!" stammered Bunter. "I was only pip-pip-pip—"

"You were what?"

"I was pip-pip-pulling Toddy's leg, sir!" stammered the hapless Owl. "I—I wasn't going to touch that pie while he was gone, sir!"



"I say, old chap," said Bunter, as Peter Todd plunged a knife into the pie-crust, "Quelch wants you in his study!" Before Peter could leave Hall, however, a sharp voice made Bunter jump almost out of his skin. "Bunter!" It was the voice of Mr. Quelch. "What do you mean by making that utterly untruthful statement to Todd?" "Oh crikey!" gasped the fat Removite.

"That pie!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. There was a chortle along the supper table.

"Yes, sir! I mean, no, sir! I—I never knew Toddy had a pie at all! Toddy will tell you so, sir! I offered to carry it down for him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter! You utterly untruthful and unscrupulous boy!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Is it possible that you intended to send Todd away from the supper-table in order to appropriate a comestible belonging to him?"

"Yes, sir—I mean, no, sir! Nothing of the sort! I—I don't like steak-and-kidney pies, sir! Besides, I didn't know it was a steak-and-kidney pie! I—I didn't see it at all, sir!"

"You will take fifty lines, Bunter! And leave Hall at once!"

"Oh crikey!"

"At once!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"I haven't had my supper, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"I have no doubt that you have had sufficient, Bunter; but, if not, you will lose your supper, as a punishment for your untruthfulness!"

"Oh lor'!"

"Go!"

"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter rolled dismally out of Hall.

Not only was he not going to get a whack in Toddy's pie, but even bread and cheese and cake were denied him. Grinning glances followed him as he went.

But Bunter did not grin. Bunter did not feel like grinning!

If Quelch had given him hundreds of lines, if he had whopped him, Bunter could have borne it! But missing a meal was too terrible a punishment! It was awful! It was fearful! There was no help for it—and Bunter went; groan-

ing as he went. Like Cain of old, he felt his punishment was greater than he could bear!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Done in the Dark!

RALPH STACEY sat up in bed. Midnight had chimed from the clock tower.

He sat, dim in the glimmer of the summer stars at the windows, and listened.

From the row of white beds along the Remove dormitory, came the deep, steady breathing of sound sleepers. Deeper came the snore of Billy Bunter.

That snore was not so continuous as usual, however. No doubt the fat Owl's slumber was a little disturbed by the fact that he had missed his supper, and that there was an aching cavity in his wide circumference.

Every now and then Bunter's snore died into a low, whirring rumble.

Stacey sat for two or three minutes, listening with keen, intent ears, before he stepped out of bed.

He slipped on trousers and slippers in the dark, and on tiptoe moved across to the door.

At the door he stopped, and stood listening again, while one long minute followed another. Stacey had not forgotten the night when he had gone out of bounds and Vernon-Smith had shut him out of the House.

That was not going to happen again; this night he was not going out of bounds. His business was within the House. But he wanted to be very sure that no fellow was awake—especially Harry Wharton or the wary Bounder.

Satisfied at last, he opened the door silently and crept out of the dormitory.

With silent steps he trod down the passage.

All was dark and silent below. The latest master had gone to bed at midnight. In all the great building of Greyfriars School no one was awake at that hour. Had anyone been up, he could not have seen the figure flitting in the deep darkness, or heard a sound of the lightly creeping feet.

More cautiously than ever, if possible, the midnight prowler crept along when he reached Masters' Passage.

He reached the door of Mr. Quelch's study, opened it softly, and passed into the room, closing the door after him without a sound.

The blackness in the room was intense. Stacey groped to the window and pulled back the blinds.

The glimmer of starlight from the open quad gave him light enough for his purpose. The glimmer, falling on his face, showed it white and set. It was the face of a hard, ruthless, desperate rascal.

Stacey was, in fact, desperate.

Hardly more than a week remained of the term. And after that term he and his rival would no longer be at the same school.

Hard as it would be for Wharton to leave his old school, his old friends, he would, at least, be safe from the machinations of his enemy when he was gone.

Stacey had not, perhaps, expected that outcome of his long trickery and treachery. But that was the outcome—it was, in one way, a victory, but in another a defeat.

For if he was to succeed in the plan he had marked out, if he was to oust his rival in the old colonel's favour, he had

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(Continued from page 13.)

not done enough yet, and when Wharton was gone he could do no more.

And at a new school Wharton would soon prove he was not the black sheep that he had been supposed to be at Greyfriars, and he would inevitably regain his uncle's good opinion.

Unless, in the last few days that remained, Stacey succeeded in striking a finishing blow, all that he had done would go for nothing!

That was why he had played the trick in the Head's garden. Had it gone according to plan, Harry Wharton would have been expelled for a revengeful attack on the Form-master who had been unjust to him. But it had failed.

Several days had elapsed since then, and the schemer's active brain had been busy. Stacey had a conscience of sorts; but he stifled it. The stake was too great for him to listen to the voice of conscience. He told himself savagely that he was not going to remain a poor relation, while the fellow he loathed had everything that he wanted!

During that term Wharton had been suspected, distrusted, treated with injustice. He had repaid it with sullenness, disrespect, sometimes insolence. Matters had gone from bad to worse—disrespect on one side, increasing severity on the other. It was likely enough that such a state of affairs might lead to a reckless act of vengeance. But it had to be clear, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that that act was Wharton's. It would have seemed clear enough had the affair in the Head's garden gone according to plan.

That had failed. This time Stacey was not going to fail!

This time the act would take place while the whole school slept, and only the schemer was wakeful!

Yet now that he stood in the Remove master's study, the plan cut and dried, the wretched schemer hesitated.

He stood in the glimmer of the stars motionless for long minutes. Hard and ruthless as he looked, he hesitated.

He was tempted to throw up the whole thing, to return quietly to the dormitory, and let matters take their own course!

If he had had any other resource—If his father could have done anything for him—

Billy Bunter little dreamed of the consequences of his trick on the telephone. Of that telephone call Stacey knew nothing. Bunter had no intention of telling him, and, in fact, had almost forgotten it before this.

That Captain Stacey had new prospects, that he need not continue the irksome life of a "poor relation" unless he chose, the schemer was quite unaware. He knew, from Mr. Quelch, that the captain had rung up, and promised to ring up again; but that the second call had come, nobody knew but Billy Bunter.

Had Stacey known it would have made a difference.

At the bottom of his heart he would

have been glad to steer clear of unscrupulous rascality. He disliked Wharton—he liked to score over him, to thwart him and defeat him; but he shrank from actual villainy.

Had he only known what Bunter could have told him, he would have gone back to bed, and his latest dastardly scheme would never have been carried out; and he would have been glad and relieved.

But he did not know!

The last he had heard from his father, the captain had been in difficulties, owing to his usual spendthrift recklessness. He had no hope from that quarter.

He had to depend on himself, and content himself with a poor relation's place, or oust his rival! And it was the latter that he determined on. His hesitation was long, but it left him at last determined, ruthless.

In the starry glimmer from the window he removed the cork from a large bottle of indelible ink he had brought with him.

That ink he proceeded to smear over all the papers and books on the study table.

Then he opened the drawers of the writing-table, and dripped ink into each of them in turn.

One of the drawers was locked. It was that in which Mr. Quelch kept the manuscripts of his celebrated "History of Greyfriars"—a lengthy literary work that had occupied Quelch's leisure hours for many years.

There was a sharp crack as the lock parted and the drawer was forced open.

The indelible ink streamed over the pile of manuscripts in the drawer.

Stacey's work was done.

Some ink yet remained in the bottle. He had a use for that. Quietly he left the Remove master's study.

In the morning, there would be a terrific uproar when the outrage in that study was discovered. Suspicion, it was fairly certain, would turn on the black sheep of the Remove—the fellow who had been on the bitterest terms with his Form-master.

There would be a rigorous search for the reckless ragger. And a stain of the indelible ink on a fellow's clothes would be considered an infallible clue. How could it fail to be?

Yet what could be easier?

All were asleep in the Remove dormitory—Wharton as fast asleep as the rest. A sprinkle of the ink on his trousers—folded on a chair beside his bed—a spot or two on his pyjamas, if it could be done without awakening him. Then the bottle could be tossed from the dormitory window!

What could be easier, simpler? Stacey had taken the greatest care to get none of the ink on himself.

This time, how could his cunning scheme fail? Unless, as was said of old, great is truth, and it must prevail! Unless it was true that every rascally scheme carried, within itself, the seeds of its own defeat! Unless it was true that a man leaving the path of honesty was like a locomotive leaving the metals—bound to run into disaster!

Stacey's own experience might have told him that that was so, if he had been wise enough to learn from it. But cunning was not wisdom!

Silently, he crept up the stairs.

On tiptoe he approached the door of the Remove dormitory, groping along in the dark, the bottle in his hand. And suddenly, in the dark, he felt the touch of an outstretched hand, and a shudder of horror and terror ran through him, and the bottle dropped with a crash—and broke.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Is Hungry!

BILLY BUNTER ceased to snore. Several times that snore had almost ceased, but had rumbled on! Now it ceased at last to rumble.

Bunter sat up in bed.

Bunter was hungry!

Missing supper might have seemed to Mr. Quelch quite a light punishment for the unvarnished Owl! It was not light to Bunter!

He had been slower than usual in going to sleep that night. He had got to sleep at last, but his slumber was troubled. There was an aching void in Bunter. He dreamed of steak-and-kidney pies, and awoke at last so fearfully hungry that further slumber was impossible! Missing supper, like Macbeth, had murdered sleep!

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter.

He blinked along the sleeping dormitory.

Everybody else was fast asleep, as was natural at a quarter past twelve. That one bed was unoccupied Bunter did not observe in the gloom. The beds were dim shapes in the shadows of night.

"I say, you fellows!" moaned Bunter.

No answer.

"I say, any of you fellows awake?"

Steady breathing was the only reply! Nobody but William George Bunter was awake in the Remove dormitory.

"Beasts!" groaned Bunter.

He settled down again. He laid his fat head on the pillow and closed his eyes.

But it was in vain that he wooed slumber! Slumber would not come. Instead of the rumble of Bunter's snore, there was a gurgling rumble of empty spaces inside Bunter.

He sat up again.

"I say, Toddy, old chap!"

Peter Todd slept soundly.

"I say, Wharton!"

No reply from Wharton.

Bunter breathed hard! It was exactly like all these selfish beasts to sleep when he was too hungry to sleep! Yet all the time, some of them might have had a packet of toffee, or a bag of bullseyes in a pocket that would have relieved the pangs of famine!

Consideration for others had never been a weakness of Billy Bunter's. If he could not sleep, he saw no reason why anybody else should.

"I say, Toddy!"

Receiving no reply, Bunter crawled out of bed. Peter Todd awoke, as a fat hand clawed over his slumbering face.

"Oh!" gasped Toddy. He awoke quite suddenly. "What—who—oh—ow—what—"

"I say, Toddy, old chap! Got any toffee?"

Peter Todd did not reply to that question. He sat up in bed with fury in his face and grasped his pillow.

Swipe!

Bump!

Billy Bunter sat down suddenly beside Toddy's bed. He gurgled as he sat.

"Ooogh! Beast! Wooogh!"

"Get up, you fat scoundrel!" said Peter in hissing tones. "I want to give you another! I'll teach you to wake me up in the middle of the night and talk about toffee! I'll jolly well burst you!"

"Urrrggh!"

Bunter scrambled out of reach of the pillow before he got up from the floor. One swipe was enough for Bunter.

"Owl! Beast!" he gasped. "Rotter! I'm hungry! You know that brute Quelch made me cut supper! I say, have you got any toffee?"

"Come a little nearer!" said Peter, glaring at him. "I can't reach you from there."

"Beast!"

Bunter did not come a little nearer! He got away a little farther.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a sleepy voice. "What's that shindy?"

"I say, Bob, old chap—"

"Is that Bunter?"

"Yes, old fellow! Got any toffee in your pockets? I'm fearfully hungry, old fellow—famishing! That brute Quelch—"

"Go and eat coke!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Beast!"

"Good gad!" came Lord Mauleverer's drowsy drawl. "Is that that idiot Bunter? Can't you let a fellow go to sleep, Bunter?"

"I say, Mauly, got anything to eat?"

"Oh, gad! No!"

"I say, Wharton—"

"You blithering, blethering, footling fathead!" came Harry Wharton's voice. "You frabjous, fatheaded freak—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Go to bed, and shut up!" came Johnny Bull's deep growl. "If I get up to you, I'll smash you!"

"Beast!"

"Bunter's hungry!" said Frank Nugent. Half the Remove were awake by this time. "Nothing else matters, of course. Somebody get up and kick him."

"The kickfulness is the proper caper."

"I say, you fellows—"

"I guess," said Fisher T. Fish, "that if you don't let a guy sleep, you fat clam, I'll sure get up and give you one sockdolager, and then some."

"I say—"

"Shut up!" howled Ogilvy.

"Beast!"

"I'll get up and kick him!" said Russell. "He won't shut up till he's kicked."

"I—I—I say don't get up, old chap!" said Bunter hurriedly. "I—I didn't mean to wake all you fellows up! I—I'm going down for some grub! I'm too fearfully hungry to sleep. I say, Smithy, is there anything in your study?"

"Yes," answered the Bounder, "and if I don't find it there to-morrow, I'll kick you the length of the Remove passage."

"If you think I want your mouldy tuck, Smithy, you're mistaken. I say, Wharton, is there anything in Study No. 1?"

"Go to bed, you fat owl!"

"I say, Cherry, old chap—"

"There's a cake in my study cupboard," said Bob.

"Oh, good! Can I have it, old chap?"

"Certainly. I think it may do you good. It's a cake of soap."

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where's those dashed matches?" came Ogilvy's voice. "I've got some matches somewhere. I'll get a light in a tick and then we'll turn out and scrag that fat villain bald-headed—"

"Good egg!"

"I—I say, you fellows, d-d-don't gerrup!" gasped Bunter. "I—I ain't saying any more—I'm going down."

Bunter groped for his trousers.

His fat voice was silent at last. He did not want to give the Remove

fellows the trouble of getting up and scragging him.

He half-dressed in the dark, while the Removites settled down to slumber again. Some of them were still awake, and some had fallen asleep by the time Bunter crept to the dormitory door.

The fat Owl did not relish going down in the dark. Dark passages and staircases were peopled with burglars to his podgy imagination. But he had to have something to eat, and it was certain that there was tuck to be found in some of the Remove studies.

Leaving the Remove to repose, the fat junior opened the door softly, crept out and closed it. Hungry as he was Bunter was cautious. The penalty of getting out of a dormitory at night was a caning, and Bunter had had enough of Quelch's cane to last him the rest of the term.

Blinking through his big spectacles, Billy Bunter groped down the dark

passage towards the stairs with outstretched hands, feeling his way.

He was half-way to the stairs when his outstretched hands came suddenly into contact with an unseen figure in the dark.

Bunter thrilled with terror at the contact.

Burglars! That was his instant terrified thought.

Crash!

A bottle fell and smashed. Bunter's bare feet tramped in something wet. Then his fat toes found broken glass, and he yelled.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Who?

STACEY stood in the dark passage shaking from head to foot.

With all his nerve that touch of unseen hand in the darkness startled and terrified him. The crash (Continued on next page.)



GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

Now that the South African cricketers are with us, our clever Greyfriars Rhymester thinks it a fitting moment to interview

PIET DELAREY,

the South African junior of the Remove.



(1)

From thickly wooded jungle slopes,
Where lions feed on antelopes.
From waterfalls and cannibals,
From kopje, kraal and veldt;
From Africa's dark continent,
Delarey came to Greyfriars, Kent,
With gun and pack and haversack,
And ammunition belt.

(3)

Abandoning his cartridge case,
He took up Virgil in its place;
And spent his powers in weary hours
With Aeneas' deathless drama.
And as he cons those thrilling lines,
He eyes his sporting gun, and pines
For forest wide and mountain side,
For kaffirboom and kaama.



(6)

"One morning, with my gun, I shot
A hefty leopard on the spot—"
Said I: "Old bean, which spot d'ye
mean?
A leopard has a million!"
The spot he meant, I understand,
Was somewhere in Basutoland.
(The leopard's skin is hanging in
the cricket club pavilion.)

(8)

He glared and cried: "You babbling
freak!
If you don't want to hear me speak,
The door you'll find is just behind:
Please shut it as you go!"
"Enough, my dear, hot-headed youth!
I know your stories are the truth.
But, none the less, I must confess
They're rather steep, you know!"

(2)

He found no lions at the school
(There are none, as a general rule).
He did not shoot a single brute
In all the countryside.
No savage beast he came across,
Not even a rhinoceros;
Though once at night he had a fright
When Bunter he espied.

(4)

I called on him the other night.
My visit filled him with delight.
"Come in," said he, "and have some
tea.
Don't mind old Mauly snoring!"
So in I went and took a seat.
Said I: "Now tell me while I eat,
A yarn or two (and mind they're true)
Of how you went exploring."

(5)

He told me hair-uplifting tales
Of savage beasts and jungle trails.
I filled my notes with anecdotes
The silly ass related.
His stories were extremely rich,
Concerning his great prowess—
which
It seemed to me was probably
A bit exaggerated.



(7)

Said I: "Your anecdotes are fine,
Now listen to a few of mine.
I'll tell you how I killed a cow,
And many a fearsome rabbit;
And once I shot a farmer's colt,
And shortly after shot my bolt.
I've killed a heap of savage
sheep.
In fact, it's quite a habit!"

(9)

"And in a week or two, no doubt,
I'll have an interview with Prout,
And even if he bores me stiff
With tales of slaughtered bears,
I'll have to stick it, so you see
Your yarns are not much good to me—"
But here the gump went off his
chump
And rolled me down the stairs!

of the breaking bottle seemed like the sound of thunder to his startled ears. Who—what—

The next moment the yell of Billy Bunter enlightened him.

"Ow! Ooogh! I say, you fellows, help! Burglars! Ooogh!" howled Bunter. "I say, I'm all wet—I say, I've trodden on something—I say—Ooh! Wow!"

Stacey gritted his teeth.

His terror passed in a flash—leaving him almost mad with rage! Bunter—that fat and fatuous fool—what was he doing out of the dormitory at nearly half-past midnight? Who could have foreseen such a thing?

His plan had been knocked sky-high. The ink that was to have been daubed on Wharton's clothes was streaming on the passage floor from the broken bottle. Bunter was trampling in it.

That was not the worst!

The fat fool's howling would awaken the dormitory—he might be seen, spotted, as he got back. He did not know that half the dormitory was already awake.

For one terrible instant Stacey stood, then he acted swiftly. To get back to bed—to keep it secret that he had been out of the dormitory at all—that was all that was left to him.

He struck out in the dark, sending the yelping Owl spinning. Bunter, with another howl, rolled on the floor.

Stacey bounded past him. He knew that the chances were that his slippers had dabbled in the spilt ink. He was carrying back with him the clue that was to have been planted on Wharton.

He reached the dormitory door and tore off his slippers. Barefooted, he opened the door and whipped in.

Bunter was spluttering and gurgling in the passage. But it had all happened in seconds—he had time! In fact, he would have had ample time had all the Remove dormitory been asleep, as he supposed. But he knew nothing of what had occurred there during his absence downstairs.

As he whipped in at the door he learned that the Remove, so far from being all asleep, were many of them very wide awake. There was a general buzz of voices.

"That fat idiot—"

"He'll wake the House—"

"What the thump—"

"The frabjous freak—"

"Can't be burglars—"

"Better go and see what's up—"

"Who's going—"

"I'll go!" came Harry Wharton's voice. "The blithering fat idiot may break his neck in the dark."

"I'll come, too!" said Bob Cherry.

"Anybody got a match?"

"I've got a matchbox here, somewhere!" came Ogilvy's voice.

Stacey's heart almost ceased to beat.

It was dark—fortunately for him, it was very dark! But the moment a match was struck—

Two or three fellows were out of bed. Others were sitting up—a dozen were speaking all at once.

Taking chances in the dark, for there was not a second to waste if he was not to be discovered, Stacey ran for his bed, the slippers dangling in his hand. Bump!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What the thump—" came a surprised ejaculation from Bob Cherry, as the running junior bumped into him in the dark.

Stacey leaped away.

"Who the dickens—" gasped Bob. "Who's barging about in the dark? Buck up with a match, somebody!"

Stacey reached his bed. He slung the slippers underneath it. Later, when all

was quiet, he would have time to examine them, to ascertain whether they were stained, and if so, get rid of them. Now he had not a split second to waste. Ogilvy, in the next bed, was fumbling for the matchbox. The merest gleam of light would betray him.

He had no time to slip off his clothes. He plunged into bed, just as he was, only thankful that he had been able to reach it before there was a light.

He drew the blankets over him, as the match scratched, and a flickering flame glimmered in the gloom.

Panting, Stacey lay under the bed-clothes which concealed the fact that he was partly dressed.

Ogilvy, sitting up, held the match.

Peter Todd was out of bed. He sorted out a candle-end and lighted it at Oggy's match.

"Come on!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "That howling ass will wake the House at this rate."

Bob Cherry stared round in the candle-light.

"Somebody barged into me!" he exclaimed.

"Not Bunter—he hasn't come in. Come on!"

Harry Wharton hurried to the door. It stood wide open as Stacey had left it when he whipped in.

Billy Bunter's voice was audible—very audible—from the passage.

"I say, you fellows! Help! I say—"

"Shut up, idiot!"

"I say, I've cut my toe—there's broken glass!" squeaked Bunter. "I say, somebody crashed into me—I say, is it burglars—"

"Look out!" Peter Todd held up the candle, as three or four juniors came out of the dormitory doorway. "My hat! What on earth's happened?"

With bare feet the juniors stepped out cautiously, on the news that there was broken glass about.

Toddy's candle revealed a startling sight. Billy Bunter in his amazement and terror, was almost gibbering. His feet were smothered with purple ink, and from one toe, cut by the glass, crimson oozed.

In the middle of the passage lay the fragments of the broken bottle in a pool of spilt ink.

"What the dickens—" gasped Wharton.

"Ow! I say, you fellows—"

"It's marking-ink!" stuttered Bob Cherry. "What the thump was the silly owl doing with a bottle of ink?"

"I didn't—I wasn't—I never—" gasped Bunter.

"You fat ass, there it is where you've dropped it!" snapped Toddy.

"I didn't!" howled Bunter. "The beast who ran into me dropped it, and I've cut my toe—"

"Who ran into you?" exclaimed Wharton.

"I don't know—somebody coming along in the dark—" gasped Bunter. "I—I thought it was a burglar— Oh dear!"

"What utter rot!" said Peter.

"I tell you—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look here, though!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Show the light here, Toddy!"

He pointed to daubs of ink on the floor, leading away from the spot where Bunter stood to the dormitory door.

Someone, with inky shoes, had passed Bunter, and left those traces; that was evident.

The juniors gazed at the trail in amazement.

"Somebody's been out of the dorm—somebody beside Bunter!" exclaimed Bob. "The sportsman who barged into

me in the dark—somebody did! Who the dickens, and why—"

"Goodness knows!" said Harry Wharton, in blank astonishment.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Beast!"

"Follow the jolly old trail!" said Bob. "Keep behind, Bunter, you're leaving ink all over the shop!"

Toddy showed the light, and the inky "sign" was followed to the door of the Remove dormitory.

There it ceased! It was evident that the fellow with inky shoes had gone in; but that he had removed his footgear before entering. Otherwise the inky trail would have led direct to him or to his bed.

"Well, my hat!" said Harry Wharton. "Who the deuce was it? Whoever it was, he dodged in after Bunter started to howl and before Oggy struck a light—"

"Hardly a minute!" said Bob. "Quick work! But who—"

"And why?" said Peter.

"Somebody's been playing tricks with a bottle of marking-ink, that's plain," said Harry. "Goodness knows who—but a fellow from this dorm—that's a cert!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Quiet, you fat ass! Get into the dorm—you'll have Quelch after you at this rate."

Bunter rolled in, and the door was shut. The fat junior left an inky trail—much more distinctly marked than the other, for his feet were wet and clammy with ink.

He sat on the edge of his bed, spluttering.

"I say, you fellows, I've cut my toe! Ow! I say, I'm fearfully injured! I say, I'm smothered with filthy ink! Look at my feet! All inky— Ow!"

Bunter had gone out with bare feet. They were smothered with purple ink and there were stains of ink on his trousers and his fat paws. Peter Todd brought him a basin of water to wash off the ink and a handkerchief to tie round his cut toe.

Luckily the cut was very slight, though to judge by the fuss Bunter made it might have been as deep as a well and as wide as a church door!

Half the Remove were out of bed, the rest sitting up—with one exception. Stacey dared not sit up, lest it should be revealed that he was partly dressed.

So far no one seemed to have a suspicion that he had been out of the dormitory. If only he kept that dark!

His plot had failed! But he was hardly thinking of that now—he was only thinking of escaping detection.

Downstairs Mr. Quelch's study was in a fearful state—someone was going to be expelled for that, if discovered! Certainly it would not be Harry Wharton now! It would be Stacey, if anybody! In all his rascally career at Greyfriars he had seldom been in such danger.

He would have affected to be asleep, but that was hardly possible with such an excited buzz going on. But he dared not sit up. He lifted his head from the pillow and looked round, with a yawn.

"What's up, Ogilvy?" he asked. His voice was cool and calm. He had pulled himself together by this time.

"Blessed if I know!" answered Ogilvy. "Somebody seems to have been walking about in the dark with a bottle of ink, and Bunter barged into him."

"The fat idiot!"

"Beast!" yapped Bunter.

"It was a Remove man, that's a cert!" said Bob Cherry. "Who's been out of the dorm beside Bunter?"

There was no answer to that question.



Peter Todd sat up in bed, with fury in his face, and grasped his pillow. Swipe! Bump! The pillow caught Bunter well and truly, and the fat junior sat down suddenly and gurgled: "Oooogh! Beast! Woogh!" "Get up, you fat scoundrel!" said Todd, in hissing tones. "I'll teach you to wake me up in the middle of the night and talk about toffee!"

"You been out, Smithy?" asked Skinner.

"No, fathead!" snapped the Bounder. "Somebody's been up to something!" said Peter Todd. "Goodness knows what! I'm going back to bed."

"I say, Peter, gimme a towel! I say, will you cut down to the studies and get me some grub? I can't go with this injured foot."

"Still thinking of grub?" asked Peter. "Not satisfied with waking us all up in the middle of the night! Want another pillow?"

"Beast!"

The juniors went back to bed. What had happened was a mystery; but it had to remain a mystery. Even Billy Bunter, hungry as he was, was not disposed to make another venture in search of provender.

With the selfishness to which Bunter was sadly accustomed, the other fellows turned in, indifferent to the aching void inside William George Bunter. And Bunter at last turned in also, and forgot his woes in sleep.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not Bunter!

QUELCH!" "Oh!" The rising-bell had clanged in the sunny July morning, and the Remove fellows had turned out of bed—with the exception of Billy Bunter! That fat youth, as usual, was snatching a minute more.

The door opened, and Mr. Quelch stepped in.

Every fellow glanced round at him, wondering why he had come, and every face became grave on the spot.

The look on Quelch's countenance was alarming.

His face was almost white, and his eyes gleamed and glinted. He was

calm, but it was the calmness of intense anger. All the Remove knew, after one glance, that something very serious had happened.

They noted, too, that his gimlet eyes sought out Wharton first of all. Wharton did not fail to note it, and he smiled a bitter smile. Something had happened—and he, of course, was going to be suspected.

"Some boy left this dormitory last night!" said Mr. Quelch in a low, quiet, distinct voice. "I am here to ascertain who it was."

No answer.

"Some boy went down to my study!" said Mr. Quelch. "A dastardly outrage has been perpetrated! My papers—many of them valuable and important papers—have been drenched with purple marking-ink!"

There was a gasp from the Remove. "I am sure," went on Mr. Quelch, "that there are few, very few, boys in my Form capable of such an act. Almost all my Form I hold guiltless. But the guilty one is here."

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Bob Cherry. He exchanged a startled look with his comrades.

It was clear now what had happened in the night and what had been done by the unknown fellow with the bottle of marking-ink. Many of the juniors looked at Wharton.

The act was, as Quelch stated, a dastardly outrage: It was no jape—no foolish practical joke—it was a rascally action, and unless it was dictated by revenge it was difficult to imagine a motive. Some fellow who was bitterly incensed against Quelch—

Wharton drew a deep breath. "Mr. Quelch and some of the juniors plainly suspected him. If he had done it it was the sack. But he felt no alarm! It was easy to clear himself."

"Wharton?" "Sir!"

"Did you go downstairs during the night?"

"No, sir!"

"I have found," said Mr. Quelch, "a pool of ink, and the fragments of a bottle, in the passage at a short distance from this door. There are stains on the floor leading to this dormitory. That places it beyond doubt that the perpetrator of this outrage belongs to the Remove."

Nobody in the Form doubted that! They knew that much already, better than Mr. Quelch did!

"I don't see why you should question me especially, sir," said Harry Wharton quietly. "I don't think I have ever done anything so mean and rotten as what you've described, sir."

The gimlet eyes searched his face.

"I trust not, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch. "I desire to be just—I intend to be just! The boy who has done this will be taken before Dr. Locke and expelled from the school this morning. He will leave Greyfriars at once. That boy belongs to my Form!"

Dead silence.

"I have no doubt," continued Mr. Quelch, "that as the boy in question seems to have dropped and broken the bottle on his return here after committing the outrage in my study he will have some traces of the ink about him. I shall investigate—"

Mr. Quelch broke off. His gimlet eyes picked up dried inky stains on the floor leading from the door to Bunter's bed.

He started, stared, and whisked towards the bed, still occupied by the fat Owl! Bunter, not yet aware that his Form-master was in the room, was snatching his extra minute and snoring!

"Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. Bunter's eyes opened.

"Oh!" he gasped, at the sight of the tall, angular figure at his bedside. "Oh THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,433.

crikey! I—I wasn't asleep, sir! I—I was just going to get up!"

"Get out of bed, Bunter!"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

The Owl of the Remove rolled out of bed.

Quelch's eyes seemed almost to penetrate him. Instantly, the Remove master detected inky stains on Bunter's feet, Bunter's wash, like most of his washes, had not been very thorough. There were stains on his pyjamas also, a few spots on his sleeves, and one or two on his fat face.

If inky stains were a clue to the culprit, Mr. Quelch did not need to look any further.

"You!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Eh?"

"You left this dormitory last night, Bunter?"

"Oh, no, sir! I never got out of bed at all!" said Bunter in alarm. "It wasn't me that chap ran into, sir, I—"

"You went down to my study, Bunter!"

"Eh! Oh! No!" gasped Bunter. "I was going to a Remove study, sir—there ain't any grub in your study, sir! Besides, I never went at all."

"Dress yourself at once, Bunter, and follow me!" said Mr. Quelch. "You will be expelled from the school for what you have done."

Bunter blinked at him wildly.

"But—but I haven't done anything, sir!" he stuttered. "I—I never went down for the grub after all, sir—ask any of these fellows—they know—"

"You committed the outrage in my study, Bunter!"

"I—I didn't!" gasped the bewildered Owl. "I never—"

"You are stained with the same ink that was used to drench the papers in my study, Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Say no more! I shall take you to Dr. Locke! You will be dealt with immediately! Dress yourself quickly."

"Oh lor'!"

Instead of obeying that command, the fat Owl collapsed on the bed, and sat there, blinking wildly at his Form-master.

The Remove fellows exchanged glances.

On the evidence, Mr. Quelch had found Bunter guilty on the spot! But all the Remove knew that Bunter was not guilty. They knew where, and how, he had collected those tell-tale stains.

"Bunter—"

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked the terrified Owl. "I say, you tell him I didn't—I wasn't—I never—oh lor'!"

Wharton looked at Stacey! It was for the head boy of the Remove to speak. But Stacey, evidently, did not intend to speak, so Wharton took the matter in hand himself.

"It was not Bunter, sir!" said Harry, quietly.

Mr. Quelch spun round at him.

"What! And how do you know, Wharton? If you were guilty of this outrage—"

"I'm bound to tell you what we all know, sir!" answered Harry. "I don't know who did it, but I know that it was not Bunter! He went out of the dorm last night—"

"Beast!" yelled Bunter. "I didn't!"

"Shut up, you ass!" breathed Peter Todd.

"I never—I wasn't—" howled Bunter.

"Be quiet, Bunter!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "If you know anything of this matter, Wharton, tell me at once."

"I only know what every fellow here knows, sir!" answered Harry. "Bunter woke us all up soon after midnight, and he went out of the dorm, to go down to get some food—he was hungry!"

"Nonsense!"

"Oh, you beast, giving a fellow away!" wailed Bunter.

"You fat chump!" roared Wharton. "Can't you see I'm saving your bacon, you blithering idiot?"

"Beast!"

"Silence!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "Now, Wharton—"

"Bunter went along the passage, sir, and ran into somebody in the dark," said Harry. "Whoever it was, dropped that bottle of ink and broke it, and Bunter trod in the ink. Some of us went out and fetched him in. He never

got more than half-way to the stairs—and he certainly never went down to your study, sir. After what happened he went back to bed."

"I never went out at all!" wailed Bunter. "And I never had any ink—the fellow I ran into had it, and I cut my toe on the broken glass—ow!"

"Most of us were awake when Bunter left the dorm, sir," said Harry. "He woke us up. He wouldn't have done that if he'd been going down to rag in your study. He ran into the fellow who did the ragging. Every fellow here knows it."

"The knowfulness is terrific."

Mr. Quelch stood silent for a moment or two.

"Then some other boy was out of the room," he said. "The traces of the ink make it perfectly plain that the perpetrator of the outrage came back to this dormitory. Who was it?"

No reply.

"Was it you, Wharton?"

Wharton's lip curled.

"It was not I, any more than it was I who squirted the ink in the Head's garden the other day, sir!" he answered very distinctly.

Mr. Quelch gave a violent start.

For a second his glance shot at Stacey! But it returned to Wharton the next moment.

"I can prove that it was not I, sir!" said Wharton disdainfully. "It might have been put down to me, if Bunter hadn't been playing the fool last night—I daresay it would have been. But—"

"It wasn't Wharton, sir!" exclaimed Bob Cherry hotly. "He was here, in bed, all the time. A lot of us were awake—Bunter woke up half the dorm. Wharton was speaking to him just before he went out."

"Bunter may remember my calling him a blithering fathead, just before he started!" said Harry dryly.

"Beast!"

"Someone was out of the dormitory!" barked Mr. Quelch. "One bed must have been empty at the time."

"Nobody noticed it in the dark," said Wharton. "Whoever the fellow was, he got back, before there was a light. Nobody would have known a fellow had been out, but for Bunter running into him in the passage. But it was not Bunter who went down to your study—we all know how he got the ink on him."

Mr. Quelch stood silent again.

He was satisfied now that the culprit was not Bunter. He could hardly help being satisfied that it was not Wharton! But who was it?

His first angry suspicion had been that the culprit was the Remove fellow who was in disgrace—that it was a reckless act of revenge! Then the inky clue had led him to Bunter! And it was neither of them!

It was some utterly unknown fellow who had been out of the dormitory before Bunter had started on his expedition. But who?

"I shall investigate!" said Mr. Quelch at last.

He proceeded to investigate.

It was probable that the ragger in the study had taken care not to get the purple ink on himself. Still, he might have done so, by accident. And as he had evidently dropped and broken the bottle on his way back to the dormitory, it seemed almost certain that he must have picked up some stains—that he had trodden in the spilt ink, as Bunter had done.

But Mr. Quelch's investigation, keen as it was, revealed nothing.

Long after the Remove had fallen asleep again, in the night, Stacey had crept from his bed and taken the stained

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slippers out of the dormitory and hidden them in a safe place. That evidence, which would have convicted him beyond the shadow of a doubt, was never to come to light.

Nothing was revealed, except that no fellow in the dormitory save Bunter, had any stain of purple marking-ink on him, or on his clothes.

Mr. Quelch left the dormitory at last—baffled, for the moment, but in a state of grim anger, determined to track down the culprit. The Remove, in a buzz of excitement, were rather late down that morning.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise For Quelch!

HOLD on a minute—"Stacey—" "I'm Wharton, fathead!" "Then you can sheer off, and be blowed!"

Mr. Quelch smiled faintly.

It was after class that day; a day of stress and worry to Henry Samuel Quelch and to his Form.

Nothing had been discovered of the ragger over night. Mr. Quelch was after that ragger, as Skinner described it, like a dog after a bone! But he had not got his teeth into the bone yet.

It began to look as if he never would! But Quelch was determined to leave no stone unturned. The unscrupulous young rascal who had damaged his precious papers had to be found. At the present moment, Mr. Quelch was sitting on one of the old oaken benches under the shady elms, thinking it out. He concentrated his brain on the problem—but he could see no light. There was no clue.

But at the back of his mind was a dark suspicion. He had suspected Wharton—and it had been proved that Wharton had nothing to do with it.

Had he been intended to suspect Wharton, as in the affair in the Head's garden? Was this another detestable trick of the same kind, intended to throw suspicion on the "black sheep" of the Form? Was it one of a series of such trickeries, by which he had been deluded all through the term?

As it had turned out, it looked terribly like it.

That was the thought in the Remove master's mind as he sat under the dusky branches, thinking. The voices of the juniors, coming to his ears through the trees, interrupted his meditations. He knew Ogilvy's voice; and the other speaker was Harry Wharton. Evidently, in the dusky shade under the thick elms, even Oggy, who knew Stacey so well, had taken Wharton for him, for a moment.

"Hook it!" went on Ogilvy's voice. "I thought you were Stacey, for a minute! Rotten luck for the chap to be so like you."

"Rotten luck for me, I think."

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here, Oggy—"

"Oh, chuck it!" snapped Ogilvy. "I'm Stacey's pal, and you know it, and I don't want anything from you. You haven't spoken to me for weeks, and you needn't begin now."

"Same from me!" came Dick Russell's voice. "Buzz off, Wharton!"

Mr. Quelch had no desire to hear what was not intended for his ears. But neither had he any intention of leaving his seat on the bench, and walking away because juniors came along talking.

"Oh, shut up a minute!" came Wharton's impatient voice. "Look here, you fellows have the beds on either side of Stacey's, in our dorm. I want

to know whether you saw him get back to bed last night."

"He wasn't out of bed," snapped Russell.

"Well, I believe he was."

"You silly ass!" said Ogilvy, in measured tones. "Are you going to make out that Stacey played that vile trick in Quelch's study, simply because you dislike the chap?"

"Not because of that, certainly," said Harry quietly. "But no fellow in the Form had any motive for doing such a foul thing, except Stacey."

"And why should Stacey, you silly fathead?" exclaimed Russell, in scornful astonishment. "He's Quelch's head boy, and Quelch treats him well enough."

"That wouldn't make any difference to him, if he had a turn to serve," answered Wharton bitterly. "The other day he played a foul trick in the Head's garden, and I should have got landed with it, only it happened that Bunter got squirted in mistake."

"Stacey never did that—"

"Well, I believe he did, and left my cap there, for Quelch to find. And now I've thought it over I believe that he ragged Quelch's study last night, and did it for the same reason—to put it on me. And if that idiot, Bunter, hadn't been barging about in the dark he would have got away with it, too!"

"What utter rot!"

"What was the fellow, whoever he was, bringing the ink-bottle back with him to the dorm for?" demanded Wharton. "He mopped the stuff all over Quelch's papers. He was done with it then. He could have left it there, or thrown it away. But he was bringing it back with him, with some ink still in it. Why?"

"Blessed if I know—or care."

"Well, I'll tell you," said Wharton savagely. "He was going to put a daub of ink on something belonging to me. That's why he wanted it in the dorm. I've been thinking it over all day, and I'm sure of it. And if that ass, Bunter, hadn't turned out in the night Quelch would have found purple ink stains on some of my things, instead of on Bunter."

Mr. Quelch, in full hearing of every word, sat as if petrified.

"And you'd have believed it, like Quelch and the rest, if the rotter had got by with it," went on Wharton.

"And now I want to know about Stacey! I'm not going to be sacked from the school to please that plotting rascal. I'm going to spot him."

"Rot!"

"Rubbish!"

"You fellows were next to him, and he had hardly a moment or two to get back into bed before a light was on. If you saw him—"

"Well, we didn't!" snapped Ogilvy. "Stacey was in bed when I struck the match—and fast asleep, too."

"I noticed that his eyes were closed," said Russell. "He woke up afterwards."

"I remember that he never sat up," said Harry. "He must have put some clothes on to go down, and if he had sat up—"

"Oh, rats! Chuck it!"

"Come on, Oggy. I've had enough of this!" said Russell.

Mr. Quelch heard the two juniors walking away. He was silent. What he had heard coincided strangely with the vague, half-formed suspicion that had lurked at the back of his own mind.

"Say, bo!"

It was the sharp, nasal voice of Fisher T. Fish. The American junior joined Wharton as he stood where Ogilvy and Russell had left him.

"Say, I guess I want to speak to you," went on Fisher T. Fish. "I've sure waited for them guys to clear off first."

"What do you mean?" snapped Wharton.

"Aw, I guess you don't want Ogilvy and Russell to hear all about it," chuckled Fisher T. Fish. "Look hyer, don't go off on your ear, Stacey, old bean. I ain't said a word yet, have I?"

"Idiot!" snapped Wharton.

Evidently Fisher T. Fish was making a mistake of identity, deceived by the dusky shade under the trees and by the fact that Wharton had been in conversation with Russell and Ogilvy—Stacey's pals, to whom Wharton never spoke now. Coming on him in Stacey's usual company, Fishy rather naturally took him for his double.

"Aw, don't you get stuffy!" said Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I've asked you to drop in at my study. I got a cricket bat you'd sure be interested in. I'm selling it for a guinea."

"Is it the one you bought from Hazeldene for seven-and-six?" asked Wharton sarcastically.

"S'pose I did?" said Fisher T. Fish, with a threatening tone in his voice. "I guess it would pay you to buy it for a guinea, all the same."

"What the thump do you mean?"

"I guess I mean business," retorted Fisher T. Fish. "I ain't told a single guy about seeing you at the Three Fishers on Wednesday afternoon. I ain't going to, neither. You can pull Quelch's leg as much as you like. The old piecan fairly asks to have his leg pulled, I allow. But I'll mention that it will pay you to buy that bat for a guinea."

Mr. Quelch sat very still.

Harry Wharton, on the other side of the big elm behind the bench, stared at Fisher T. Fish in dumb amazement for a moment or two. Then he understood.

"You unspeakable rotter!" he gasped. "You saw Stacey out of bounds, and you're trading on it to make him buy your rubbish at double prices—you rotten rascal!"

Fisher T. Fish jumped.

"Say, what are you getting at? Oh, Jerusalem crickets, I figured you was Stacey! Seeing you talking with Oggy and Russell— Oh, jumping Jehoshaphat!"

"You rotter!" roared Wharton.

"Aw, can it!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "No harm done, old bean! Say, don't you jaw about it! Don't you get chewing the rag! I guess I was only joking! And you needn't mind about Stacey, neither. He sure has done you in the eye all this term. Hasn't he made Quelch believe it's you that goes blagging out of bounds? Ain't you nearly got sacked for it? I guess you needn't worry what comes to Stacey! I'll say—yarrroop! Leggo my neck, you piecan! Aw, wake snakes!"

Bang, bang, bang!

On any other occasion Mr. Quelch certainly would have intervened had he found one member of his Form banging another's head on a tree-trunk.

On this occasion he did not intervene.

Bang, bang!

"Aw, let up!" shrieked Fisher T. Fish. "Let up, you galoot! Aw, I'll say, you're cracking my cabaza! I'll sure make potato scrapings of you, you all-fired piecan! Yarbooh!"

Bang!

"Yooo—whooooop!"

"There!" gasped Wharton. "I dare say Stacey would like to give you that, only he doesn't dare."

"Yow-ow-woop!"

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There was a crash as Wharton pitched Fisher T. Fish sprawling on the ground. He walked away, leaving the businessman of the Remove yelling frantically. And on the other side of the big elm Mr. Quelch sat, hearing those frantic yells, with quite an extraordinary expression on his face.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Something on!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
"Run for it!" said Bob Cherry.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"The runfulness is the proper caper!"

"I say, hold on!" howled Bunter. "I ain't going to speak about the holidays, you beasts!"

The Famous Five chuckled.

Billy Bunter's company was never sought after to any great extent in the Form which he honoured by belonging to it. But towards the end of the term it was less sought after than ever.

Bunter had only to come up to a group and begin, "I say, you fellows, about the hols—" for that group to scatter.

"Sure it isn't about the hols?" asked Frank Nugent, laughing.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Well, if it isn't, you can run on!" said Harry Wharton. "What's the latest keyhole news?"

"The fact is, I shouldn't care to come to your place for the hols, Wharton!" said Bunter disdainfully. "That fellow Stacey will be there, and I can tell you, I'm not standing Stacey in the hols as well as at school. Your uncle must have been a silly ass to take him up and send him here. But he was always rather an old-donkey, wasn't he?"

"Where will you have it?" inquired Wharton.

Bunter jumped back.

"Here, no larks!" he exclaimed. "I say, you fellows, there's something up! I say, do you think old Quelch is spotting that cad Stacey at last?"

"Time he did!" said Johnny Bull.

"The timefulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, it looks like it," said Bunter. "Quelch came in from the quad—and passed Stacey, who was going out. He glared at him."

"He generally gives him the smiling eye," said Bob. "Sure he glared, fatty? Quelch's natural expression might be easily mistaken for a glare."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Looked absolutely fierce!" said Bunter impressively. "Stacey put on his usual hypocritical grin—and I can tell you, all the wind was taken out of his sails when Quelch glared at him. I saw it all—so did some other fellows! I say, do you think Quelch suspects that it was Stacey ragged his study last night?"

Harry Wharton whistled.

"I say, Stacey went up to speak to him," continued Bunter, "and Quelch turned his back on him."

"Rot!" said Bob.

"He jolly well did!" howled Bunter. "And I can tell you, Stacey looked absolutely flummoxed. I say, you fellows, do you believe that it was Stacey last night, and Quelch has found him out?"

"I believe it was Stacey last night," said Harry Wharton quietly. "But I don't see how Quelch could have found him out all of a sudden. He was all right with Stacey in class to-day."

"Well, he's got his back fearfully up with him," said Bunter. "Stacey looked quite sick. Something's up, and it's got something to do with you, Wharton."

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"With me?" said Harry.

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter. "Quelch went to his study. I was jolly curious to know what was the matter with the old bean—I mean, I happened to look in at his study window by the merest chance—and he was telephoning—"

"Why shouldn't he, ass?"

"To your uncle—"

"To my uncle?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes, rather! I distinctly heard him say 'Colonel Wharton' on the phone! Of course, I wasn't listening under his window—"

"You hear things without listening?" asked Bob.

"Yes—I mean, no—you silly ass! I mean I happened to stop under his window by sheer chance, to tie my bootlace. I happened to be quite close under the sill, you know, and so I happened to hear—"

"Queer how these things happen to Bunter and to nobody else!" remarked Nugent.

"Well, I thought you'd like to know," said the fat Owl. "Stopping under Quelch's window to pick up my handkerchief—I mean to tie my bootlace—I heard what he said on the phone, the window being wide open, you know. He's asked the old fossil—"

"The what?" snapped Wharton.

"I mean your uncle—"

"If you mean my uncle, you'd better say my uncle, if you don't want to be kicked across the quad."

"Oh, really, Wharton! I say, he's asked the old—I mean, your uncle—to come down to the school at once. And he's jolly well coming, because I heard Quelch say very well he'd expect him."

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry.

"Something must have happened," said Harry, puzzled. "Blessed if I know what! It can't be the rag last night. If Quelch found the fellow out, it would be all over the school, and the fellow up for the sack."

Vernon-Smith came across and joined the Famous Five.

"Heard about Stacey?" he asked.

"Just heard from Bunter," said Harry. "Did you see?"

"A good many fellows did," answered the Bouncer, with a grin. "Quelch fairly cut him in quad! Something's happened since class. Looks to me as if he's spotted the spoofer at last! You fellows know anything?"

"Not a thing!" answered Bob. "Perhaps some of his pals at the Three Fishers have given him away."

"Oh!" exclaimed Wharton. "Perhaps Fishy—"

"Fishy?" repeated Bob.

"Fishy seems to have spotted him out of bounds on Wednesday," said Harry. "He's been trading on it. He tried to sell me Hazel's old hat half an hour ago, taking me for Stacey. I banged his head on a tree."

"But Fishy wouldn't give him away to a beak," said Smithy, shaking his head. "He would make money out of him; but even Fishy's got his limit."

"I say, you fellows, Quelch has found out something!" declared Billy Bunter. "I say, if he's spotted Stacey, Wharton, you mayn't have to leave at the end of the term, after all. I should have missed you, old chap! We've always been pals, haven't we, old fellow? Now, about the holidays—"

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you!" bawled Bunter. "I say—Beasts!"

The juniors did not seem to want to hear anything from Billy Bunter on the subject of the holidays. They walked away, leaving the Owl of the Remove to waste his sweetness on the desert air.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! The old bean

wants you, Wharton!" whispered Bob, as he spotted Mr. Quelch at his study window.

Quelch was beckoning to Wharton.

The juniors eyed their Form-master very curiously. From what they had heard it seemed that Stacey was in his black books. If that was the case, it should have followed that Wharton was restored to favour, for if he had found Stacey out, it could hardly be doubted that he would know now how the matter really lay.

They noted that, although Quelch's countenance wore a rather grim expression, his manner was very kind as Wharton went up to the study window.

More than once of late Mr. Quelch had shown a relaxation of severity towards the "worst boy in his Form." It had been caused by the doubts that had crept into his mind regarding Stacey.

Now he seemed to have taken the plunge, as it were. His manner was absolutely gracious, quite his old way of treating his former head boy. It was clear that something must have happened!

"Your uncle, Colonel Wharton, will be here about half-past six," said Mr. Quelch. "I desire you to be present, my boy."

"Certainly, sir!"

"There have been many difficulties this term," said Mr. Quelch. "But I am in hopes that the whole matter will be cleared up, Wharton. Please tell your relative, Stacey, that he will be required at the same time."

"Yes, sir!"

And Wharton, wondering what was "on," went to look for Stacey to tell him. He found his "double" in the Rag, reading a letter with a puzzled expression on his face. He looked up from it to give Wharton a black look.

"Message from Quelch," said Wharton briefly. "You're wanted in his study at half-past six; my uncle will be there."

He turned away.

"Hold on a minute!" said Stacey. "What's the matter with the old fool to-day?"

Wharton turned back and looked at him fixedly.

"Are you speaking of Quelch?" he asked icily.

"You know I am!"

"Well, don't speak of him like that to me!"

"Oh, don't be a goat!" snarled Stacey irritably. "The old ass glared at me like a tiger and turned his back on me in the quad—a dozen fellows saw him. Have you been up to some trick?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Not in my line," he answered. "We're alike in looks, but not in trickery, Stacey. Perhaps he's found you out. I hope so."

"Why is Colonel Wharton coming?"

"I don't know."

"To take you away before the end of the term?"

"I fancy not!" said Harry. "I rather fancy that I may not be taken away after all, Stacey—it begins to look as if things are coming out! I never could quite believe that you would get away in the long run with your rotten treachery. You may be the fellow to go."

Stacey shrugged his shoulders.

"Little enough I care!" he retorted. He tapped the letter on his knee. "This is from my father! I've got some new prospects! I'm not at all sure I want to come back to this show after the hols. But I dare say you know as much about it as I do."

"How should I know anything about your affairs?" asked Harry, in angry surprise.



"I guess I mean business!" said Fisher T. Fish, mistaking Wharton for Stacey. "I ain't told a single guy about seeing you at the Three Fishers. I ain't going to, neither. You can pull Quelch's leg as much as you like. But I'll mention that it will pay you to buy the bat I'm offering for sale." Mr. Quelch, on the other side of the big elm, heard every word.

"My father mentions phoning me the other day. I never got the call! Somebody did, and pretended to be me on the phone, to spy out my affairs, I suppose. Was it you?"

Wharton reddened with anger. "You rotter! You dare to suggest that—" He clenched his hands.

But he restrained himself, and turned his back on Stacey and walked out of the Rag.

Stacey, with another shrug of the shoulders, resumed reading the letter from Captain Stacey, and wrinkled his brow thoughtfully over it.

As he had said, he was not sure that he wanted to come back to Greyfriars next term, in view of the captain's new prospects. He was not yet aware that he was going to have no choice in the matter.

be a pleasant one. Only a very strong sense of duty could have urged him to face it.

But he had to face it. If injustice had been done, it had to be undone so far as possible; the truth had to be established.

"I can only say, sir, that I have been deluded, I greatly fear, by a boy cunning and astute beyond his years," he said. "The resemblance between Wharton and Stacey was the cause. Of this, I was led to believe that your nephew took unscrupulous advantage. I have now reason to believe that it was, in point of fact, Stacey who was the delinquent, and who took advantage of that most unfortunate resemblance."

"It is rather late in the day—"

"I acknowledge it, sir! But I desire you, as being responsible for both the boys, to judge! One of them must leave Greyfriars—and if your nephew has had injustice, sir, you would not desire further injustice to be added."

"I should say not!" growled the old colonel. "I should certainly say not, sir! But I must say that I have had a high opinion of Ralph—"

"As I have had also," said Mr. Quelch, with a sigh. "I fear that he has deceived us both—"

"You, an experienced schoolmaster!"

"You must remember, sir, that the boy came here recommended and answered for by yourself!" said Mr. Quelch, with some tartness. "I naturally supposed, from that circumstance, that he was a fit boy to be placed in this school and to be trusted. If he has deceived me, as I fear, he could not possibly have done so had he not deceived you in the first place."

Colonel Wharton's brow darkened.

"Really, Mr. Quelch!"

"Really, Colonel Wharton!"

"After all, it is useless to discuss questions of blame," said the old

colonel. "We both desire to arrive at the facts."

"Quite so!" assented Mr. Quelch. "And my intention is to send for both the boys and question them in your presence."

"Very well!"

Mr. Quelch touched the bell, and Trotter was sent to summon Wharton and Stacey to the study.

The two juniors arrived together.

Colonel Wharton scanned the two "doubles" in silence, with a grim brow. He gave a greeting to neither. He was intensely angry with one of them—but he did not yet know which. It was rather a perplexing position for any old gentleman to be in.

They stood silent, Wharton quiet and respectful, with a hope in his heart that the long trouble and misunderstanding was coming to an end; Stacey with an expression on his face that was hard to read.

To Stacey, as well as to his relative and rival, it seemed that something must be known—that a blow was about to fall! But, with his father's letter in his pocket, he was not going to be crushed by the blow. Now that he knew that he had other resources, now that he knew he could, if he liked, throw over Greyfriars and his benefactor, too, he was prepared to face any exposure with cynical indifference.

"Wharton, Stacey, I have to question you in the presence of your guardian," said Mr. Quelch quietly. "You, Wharton, have already denied that you were the boy seen, on many occasions, out of bounds, in disreputable resorts. You adhere to that denial?"

"Certainly, sir."

"And you, Stacey?"

"Certainly, sir!" said Stacey calmly.

"One of you," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "entered that disreputable place called the Three Fishers last

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Righted at Last!

COLONEL WHARTON sat in Mr. Quelch's study with a grim expression on his old bronzed face, and listened to what the Remove master had to say.

His look grew grimmer and grimmer as he listened. He did not speak till Mr. Quelch paused, and when he did, his voice was deep.

"Really, Mr. Quelch! I must say I—" He checked himself. "All through this term I have received from you the very worst reports of my nephew. In spite of my affection for him, my faith and trust in him, I have been driven to believe that he has acted badly, very badly; that he has not only done wrong, but has sought to place the burden on innocent shoulders! And now you tell me that there is a doubt—a strong doubt—in the matter! Really, sir—"

Mr. Quelch coloured.

He did not expect this interview to

questions of blame," said the old

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Wednesday, a place strictly out of bounds. You did not, Wharton?"

"No, sir."

"And you, Stacey?"

"No, sir."

"Is it certain that one of them did, Mr. Quelch?" rapped the colonel.

"Quite!"

"Then one of them is lying!" growled the colonel.

"Undoubtedly so, sir, and the one who is lying now, is, I judge, the one who has been lying all through this term!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Naturally! But which—"

Mr. Quelch touched the bell again for Trotter.

"Fetch Master Fish here, Trotter!" he said, when the page appeared.

"Yessir."

Harry Wharton caught his breath, and Stacey gave a violent start. There was a dead silence till Fisher T. Fish arrived.

Fishy wriggled uneasily into the study.

He had no idea why he had been sent for; but he dreaded to hear that his Form-master had got wind of certain money-lending transactions in the lower Forms. Fishy's conscience was not clear. He blinked in surprise at Wharton and Stacey and the old colonel.

"You sent for me, sir?" asked Fish.

"I did, Fish! Which of these two boys did you see breaking bounds at the Three Fishers on Wednesday afternoon?"

Fisher T. Fish almost fell down in his surprise.

"Waal, I swow!" he ejaculated. "I—I—I guess—"

"You will answer that question directly and truthfully, Fish!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "I warn you to tell the exact truth. I understand that the boy you saw has purchased certain articles from you at an enhanced price, as an inducement to you to keep his secret. These articles can, and will, be traced to his possession."

"Aw, wake snakes!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "I—I—I guess Stacey needn't have done business with me if he hadn't wanted, sir! I guess—"

"Stacey!" roared the old colonel.

"I—I—I guess—"

"Answer!" thundered the colonel.

Fisher T. Fish gasped helplessly.

How Quelch knew he could not begin to guess. But it was clear that he knew.

Fishy had to answer—and he had to answer truthfully, lest worse should befall him. Since that afternoon at the

Three Fishers he had sold Stacey half a dozen things—and only an hour ago he had sold him Hazel's old bat! Not for the first time Fisher T. Fish had reason to regret that he was such an extremely businesslike youth.

"I am waiting for your answer, Fish!" said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice. "I am already aware that it was Stacey you saw out of bounds; but I desire you to give your own evidence."

"I guess I never knew you was wise to it, sir!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "It was Stacey, sir."

"And since that day you have obtained money from Stacey!" said Mr. Quelch, in terrifying tones.

"I've sure sold him a few things, sir—I guess he got his money's worth!" mumbled Fisher T. Fish.

"You young rascal!" thundered Colonel Wharton.

"I—I—I—I guess—"

"You will return to Stacey whatever he may have given you, Fish," said Mr. Quelch, "and you will come to this study after preparation this evening, and I shall cane you with the utmost severity! Now go!"

Fisher T. Fish almost crawled from the study.

Mr. Quelch looked at Colonel Wharton when the door had closed.

"The facts have now been placed before you, sir!" he said. "You are in a position to judge between these two boys."

"I am!" said the colonel grimly.

Harry Wharton's face was bright.

He realised very clearly all that this meant to him. He was cleared—his enemy's cunning had over-reached itself, and Stacey's game was up. The clouds had rolled by at last—and he was not to leave Greyfriars under a cloud—he was not to leave Greyfriars at all! Next term things would be as of old—he would no longer have a "double" in the Remove! He had been right in believing that rascality could not prosper in the long run.

"I'm sorry, Harry!" said the old colonel. "I've been misled—your Form-master has been misled—"

"I admit it!" said Mr. Quelch. "If I have been unjust, Wharton, it was unintentionally, and you must try to forget it."

"I shall only remember, sir, that it is you who have set matters right," said Harry.

"And you, Ralph—" rumbled the colonel.

Stacey shrugged his shoulders.

Wharton wondered how he would take it—but certainly he did not

expect him to take it like this! The young rascal was perfectly cool.

"Cut out the pi-jaw, please!" said Stacey, with icy calmness.

"What?"

Colonel Wharton fairly gasped.

"The game's up here, I can see that!" said Stacey. "I'm not sorry—I was fed-up to the back teeth! I'm sick of Greyfriars, and I shall be glad to go!"

The old colonel gazed at him dumbfounded.

"You will certainly go, Stacey!" said Mr. Quelch. "I shall speak to the headmaster immediately, and you will leave to-day. You will be able to make immediate arrangements, Colonel Wharton, for this boy—"

"He shall not enter my house again!" gasped the colonel. "I shall provide for him, but he shall never sleep under my roof again. I would rather welcome a snake-in-the-grass, by gad!"

"You need not trouble to provide for me, thanks!" said Stacey, with a cool sneer. "Neither need you worry about my coming to Wharton Lodge! My father's able to provide for me now, and I'm sick of being a poor relation. Even if this hadn't happened, I think I should have thrown it up—now I've no choice, and I'm glad of it. I'm going to my father. And I'm glad to go!"

He walked to the door and walked out of the study.

He left a dumbfounded silence behind him.

But a moment later Ralph Stacey stepped back into the room.

He came towards Harry Wharton, who looked at him in silence, and held out his hand.

"I'm going!" he said. "It's all over now, and I've been rather a rotten brute to you; and I'm more or less sorry! You'll never see me again—give me your fist before I go!"

For a moment Wharton hesitated. Then he took Stacey's hand.

"Good luck!" he said.

"Thanks!"

Stacey shook hands with him, for the first, and the last time, and, taking no notice of the grim stares of the colonel and Mr. Quelch, walked out of the study again. An hour later he was gone from Greyfriars.

It was quite a sensation to wind up the term.

Everybody knew, and everybody buzzed with the news. Stacey was gone—and Stacey had owned up before he went. That long-disputed question which of the "doubles" of Greyfriars was the black sheep, was set at rest at long last.

"Sorry, old man!" said Ogilvy and Russell together the next time they saw Harry Wharton.

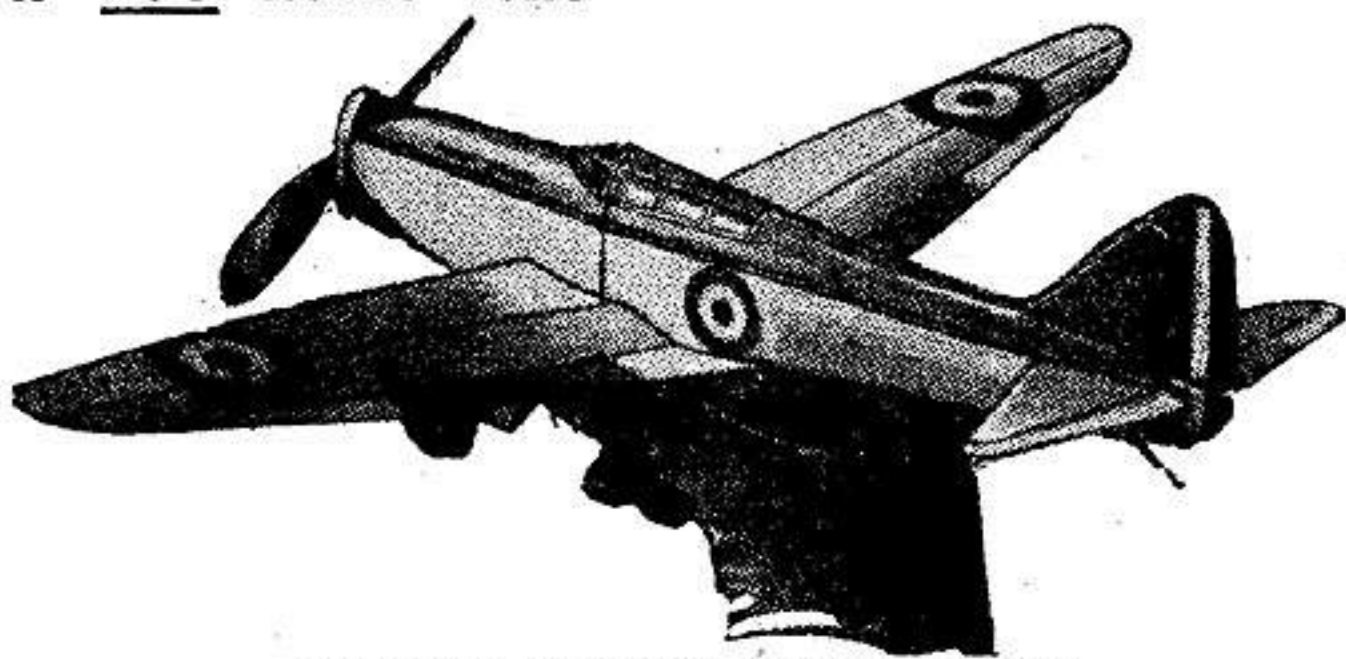
"All serene!" said Harry.

There were plenty of other fellows who said the same. Quelch's opinion was made clear by the announcement that H. Wharton was head boy of the Remove again.

And Billy Bunter told Wharton that, as that beast Stacey was not to be there after all, he would come to Wharton Lodge for the holidays. To which Wharton's ungrateful reply was "Rats!" THE END.

(A grand wind-up to a popular series—what? Next week Harry Wharton & Co. break up for the summer vac, and, believe me, they're in for an exciting time. Be sure you join up with them in: "FISH'S HOLIDAY STUNT!" the opening yarn in this grand new series.—ED.)

IF YOU WANT THIS

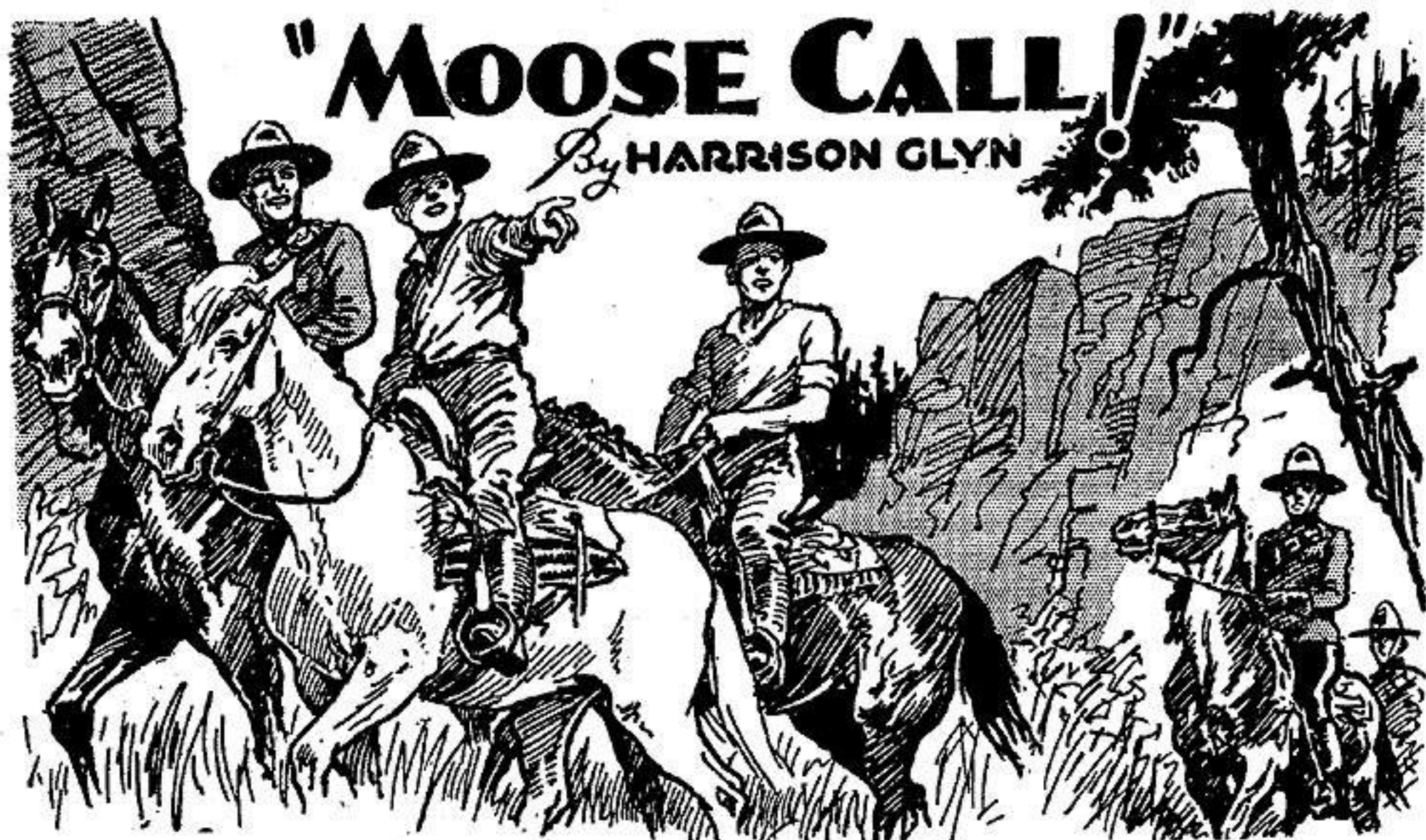


"COMET JUNIOR" MODEL PLANE
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MODERN BOY On Sale Friday, August 2nd

"MOOSE CALL!"

By HARRISON GLYN



WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

Selwyn Gore and his brother, Colin, set out for Moose Call to avenge the murder of their Uncle Amyas, a gold prospector. En route, they meet Mountain Lion, a Sioux Indian and friend of Amyas Gore, who leads them to a great natural amphitheatre in the Sunrise Mountains where they learn that a gang of toughs led by Majoe and Musty have already registered the claim. The two Britishers succeed in trapping the gang in the amphitheatre, and then, leaving Mountain Lion and his Sioux braves on guard, ride into Tomahawk to enlist the services of Sergeant Threfall and his Mounties. On the way back to Moose Call, they meet a lone rider who informs them that Isaac Snugger, a solicitor whom they thought to have been murdered by the gang, has arrived at his ranch and is now in bed half delirious.

(Now read on.)

A Tip Worth Taking!

ON the way to the ranch, Selwyn asked Jake Magloon how it was Isaac Snugger got to the Bull Elk ranch.

"Kem on a painted Injun pony," answered the bearded rancher. "It was night with a moon up, and the spring having broke at last, the fam'ly was sittin' up, playin' a game of rummy. All of a sudden we heard hoofbeats comin' up to the ranch, an' then came a rattlin' of the door latch. The missus looked out of the window and caught sight of a pinto pony. My neighbour, Ben Freeland, ain't got a pinto on his ranch. So I got me a gun and opened the door like, and there was the Injun pony up on the stoop. He'd bin rattlin' the latch with his nose, clever like. And hangin' over his neck, all crumpled up, was Isaac Snugger. He was unconscious, and for the next two days we thought he would die; but the nursin' did it."

"Bullets were never made to kill that hoary old eagle!" chuckled the delighted sergeant. "We'll have him

buttin' around and worrying us at Tomahawk again before we know where we are!"

He sang as he rode, and the Mounties did nothing else but chant Snugger's praises throughout the ride. Then up rose the ranch and its adjoining buildings and barn on the horizon in front of them. Some more riding, and they reached their destination.

"Don't clump!" said Jake Magloon, as he led them to the room in which Isaac Snugger lay.

The rancher quietly opened the door, stuck his bearded face in, half-expecting a warning from his wife, who was attending the patient. Instead, came a bull-like roar in Snugger's rasping voice:

"Hey! That you, Jake? Where you bin? I've felt powerful lonesome without you. Wanted to smoke a pipe of bacca, but the missus says no."

"And what the missus says goes at the Bull Elk!" retorted Jake, squaring his broad shoulders as he strode boldly into the room. "Isaac, here's some boys to see you—"

Sergeant Threfall, hat in hand, clanked into the room on Jake's heels, and after him came Selwyn and Colin.

Isaac Snugger lay propped up in a bed which had been moved close to the curtained window to catch the sunshine. His face was tanned and in no way changed.

As he caught sight of the sergeant of the Mounties he smiled. Then, as he saw Selwyn and Colin approaching the bed, he stuck his chin right out so that it nearly met his long nose, his keen eyes blinking incredulously.

"Lands sakes, the boys!" he bellowed, and would have slipped out of bed had not Mrs. Magloon, a hefty, healthy, capable-looking woman, not forcibly held him down.

Selwyn and Colin bent over Snugger, and Mrs. Magloon, with a nod and a smile, stepped aside to make room.

"The boys—" laughed Snugger. Then his face screwed in pain.

"Serves you right," said the rancher's wife. "Them wounds will never heal if you don't lie quiet."

Wanted to go out ridin' yesterday, he did," she added, turning in disgust to Selwyn. "And him as weak as a babel!"

Thus scolded, Isaac took it more quietly.

"Never thought to see you again, boys," he said, shaking his head. "That was why I sent Jake Magloon ridin' to put the Mounties on the track of the murderers. Last I knew, you were all tied up and rid off by Majoe and his gang of killers. What happened? Where are they? How did you get away?"

"You keep quiet, and I'll tell you," answered Selwyn, and thereupon he told Snugger all that had happened.

As he listened, the old Tomahawk solicitor's rugged face smoothed out in an expression of deep content.

"You did wonders, boys," he said. "Might have knowed it, seein' you're nevvies of Amyas Gore. Mountain Lion in it, too? So you were forced to show Majoe and Musty the claim? But, crikey, that was smart work at the slide-hole. Got one of the gang killed, too, eh? And Red Bull ringin' in the rest. That's news to make me fit to ride inside a week. And sure now I may smoke a pipe, Mrs. Magloon?"

"Oh, smoke if you like, though I hate the sight and smell of pipes," answered Mrs. Magloon. "And I hope it kills yer!"

Isaac Snugger was very soon smoking a borrowed pipe, and, as he puffed at the fragrant tobacco and sent dense clouds of smoke curling to the low ceiling, he smiled contentedly.

The next morning when, after an early breakfast, the Mounties, together with Selwyn and Colin, started on the last stage of their ride, they left Snugger eating a huge gammon rasher and eggs, washed down with strong camp coffee, and singing in a cracked voice a snatch of a tune between the bites.

"Hey, Sel," he bellowed, just after the boys had left the bed-room. "Got any dynamite?"

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"No," Selwyn answered. "Majoe and his gang took the sticks we had when they shared out our baggage."

"Then get some!" shouted Snugger. "Jake Magloon's sure to have some."

"What for?" asked Colin, halting out in the passage.

"To blow them snakes out of Amyas Gore's claim. Maybe you won't be able to do it any other way."

Well Done, Selwyn!

IT was, at any rate, an idea, and sure enough Jake Magloon had in his miscellaneous store some sticks of dynamite fitted with fuse. The party took some of the dynamite with them.

Sergeant Paul Threfall knew every inch of the ground in and around Moose Call, and without hesitation led them up the way Majoe and Musty had taken Selwyn and Colin when they climbed the foothills and the mountains with the murder gang.

Soon they came to the Sioux camp, where they surrendered their borrowed ponies.

The Mounties left their own hard-working beasts at the camp in charge of two of the men, and, taking provisions with them, began at once to climb the mountains.

They slept that night on the ridge where Amyas Gore had been murdered, and in the morning started to climb again.

High up near the Great Chief's Head the Indians soon picked up the scarlet coats of the advancing troopers, and Selwyn saw one plumed head after another rise from behind a rock or boulder, until the cliffs were fairly lined with Indians.

Soon Mountain Lion came running forward to meet them, springing from rock to rock, racing down the narrow, dangerous trail, his copper body shining in the sun, his face hideous with war-paint, his eagle's feathers shaking in the breeze.

He stopped in front of the boys, and saluted the sergeant.

"Ugh! Good!" he said, as he eyed the red-coated Mounties.

"We've come to get that gang, Mountain Lion," said Sergeant Paul. "Still got 'em hemmed in up there, eh?"

The Sioux nodded and gave a grunt.

"Bad white men still there," he said.

"Not once have they tried to come down the waterfall. Too busy digging and finding gold."

The sergeant nodded.

"The yellow dust makes most men mad when they find it," he said. "What say if you show us the slide-hole I've heard so much about, Injun, and we'll all go sliding through it. One of the gang cashed in chasin' the boys down the waterfall, so there are only seven of 'em left. There are twenty of us. Mighty big odds on our side if it comes to a show-down."

"Bad men post guard. Shoot soldiers as they go down slide-hole," said Mountain Lion.

"I think that, too," said Selwyn eagerly. "If a gunman stood guarding the hole he could pick off a dozen men as they came through before he need reload. The others would rally at the first shot, and we'd lose a lot of lives."

"Nothing doing that way, then," said the sergeant, "for the only lives we're

gonna lose over this battle are those of Majoe, Musty, and his gang. Injun, do you mean to say the gang haven't made a sign all the while you've been here on the mountain?"

"Nobody come by the waterfall," replied the Sioux. "Bad men don't know the way."

"But if it's the only way out of the claim, as you say, they're bound to make a move sooner or later," the sergeant said. "You take us round there, Sioux, and let's have a look at the climb. Can we get in that way?"

"Much easier by the slide-hole," said the Indian. "Bad men see soldiers come, soon kill if they climb the fall."

"It's a hard climb up, but an easy one down," said Selwyn. "But I tell you what—we could dynamite the slide-hole, blow the rock to smithereens, and clear the way. If Majoe and the gang tried to fight their way out this side we could quickly shoot them down or take them prisoners. If they got scared and tried to get away by the fall, we or the Indians could easily take them there."

"Let's blow up the hole," said the sergeant. "We don't want to sit down on this job for a month."

Selwyn and Mountain Lion led the way up to the rocky cliff through which the slide-hole was bored. Some Mounties and Colin followed at their heels.

The party climbed up to the narrow ledge or foothold and edged their way along it until they passed the hole. Sergeant Paul following in the rear. The burly, red-coated figure clung to the rock face like a fly. When they stopped, he stopped, staring incredulously down into the slide-hole.

"Crumbs! You must have had a nerve, Injun, to shoot through there first time, not knowing what was waiting for you on the other side."

"Mountain Lion running for his life," explained the Sioux. "Get no worse than killed if go through, so—"

"So you went through? O.K." Threfall thought for a moment. "Boys, I'm for dynamiting that hole. Why, the explosion ought to blow off the whole top of the rock, leaving an easy way in. You'll need it if, later on, you want to properly work the gold that's over there."

"All right; get under cover, all of you, and I'll set and light the stick," said Selwyn. "We'll scare Majoe and his bullies, at any rate."

Sergeant Paul hated going back, but he did it.

Selwyn waited until they gained the plateau below.

"Take cover, all of you!" he shouted. "Half the mountain may come tumbling down when the dynamite explodes. Mountain Lion, warn the Sioux. I'm going to fix the dynamite."

Stooping and thrusting most of his length down the slide-hole, Selwyn fixed the dynamite stick in a fissure in the wall, jamming it in until he was sure it would not fall out. Then he hung, listening to a drumming echo which came from the amphitheatre he knew as Amyas Gore's claim.

He thought he heard voices, shouting, quarrelling, but was not quite sure. At all events, it seemed as if the rascals were still there.

He struck a match, shielded the flame, and then held it to the fuse paper.

There was a splutter, and a moving rim of golden sparks ate the blue paper greedily.

Selwyn edged back out of the hole, waited a second to make sure that the fuse would not blow out, then, clinging with toes and nails to the cliff, he edged back along the ledge and scrambled as fast as he could down to the plateau.

"Light it, kid?" Sergeant Paul asked hoarsely, from where he lay flat behind a solid wall of rock.

"O.K.!"

"Then drop down, for Pete's sake!"

Selwyn hurried, bent double, past the place where the sergeant lay sprawled. He saw Colin safely curled behind a huge boulder, and Mountain Lion peering cautiously out from behind a rocky spur. Here and there an eagle's feather showed. The Sioux seemed to be all safely housed.

Selwyn gained a place where a solid wall of rock stood between him and the cliff, where the slide-hole ran through to the claim. He waited there, watching.

A thin coil of blue smoke was curling upward, till, caught by the wind, it dissolved into nothing.

Selwyn felt the same thrill that used to delight him when, on the Fifth of November, he, as a boy, had lit up a few fireworks in the little back garden at home, and his only regret was that he could not stand by and watch this big banger go off.

The last time they had used a stick of dynamite, Majoe's cabin had known all about it. But what would happen here? Perhaps the explosion would only scar and deepen the slide-hole, leaving it all rough. But if it didn't—why, then—

B-r-a-a-a-n-g!

A blinding flash streaked outwards, and a deafening roar rolled with deepening booms across the mountains. Smoke spread outwards and upwards, and with it went mighty rocks and flying boulders, hurtling high into the air till they seemed no larger than cricket-balls. At the same time, striking downward, the explosion blew half the cliff away and sent thousands of tons of split and loosened rock hurtling down to the plateau on which the Mounties and the Sioux Indians had lately stood.

Giant cartloads of loosened rubble and shale followed, and the air was darkened with a fog of flying debris.

The force of the explosion hurled Selwyn down flat, and he lay gasping, wondering whether he would be buried by the flying debris.

And as he lay, stunned and breathless, he saw the slide of loosened rock go crashing down the steep trail, bounding and leaping and rolling, to finally disappear from view.

Then those mighty rocks which had been sent skywards, hurtled downwards, landing with a thundering crash and breaking away other points and pieces of the rocky cliff as they struck home.

"Gosh!" gasped Selwyn.

As his stunned ears began to function again, he heard the roar die in diminishing booms among the towering peaks of the Sunrise Mountains.

When at last he had blinked the grit and dust out of his eyes, and dared look up again, Selwyn lay amazed at what he saw.

The slide-hole had vanished, and with it the whole mighty mass of rock through which it had been bored. A great space, curved like the underpart of an orange, had been scooped out of the cliff on the level of the ridge, extending for a space of thirty yards or more.

There was nothing above it but the clear blue sky. Tons of rock had been

tore away by the exploding dynamite, and the way into the amphitheatre had been left clear.

It was a full two or three minutes before a figure wearing a scarlet jacket with three yellow chevrons on each arm emerged from behind a boulder. Sergeant Threfall took off his hat and ran his fingers through his tumbled, curly hair.

"Suffering snakes!" he roared. "Is that the best you can do, kid? I thought the whole mountain was comin' down. Now let's go and look for casualties."

One by one the red-coated Mounties put in an appearance, and the roll-call showed none missing.

Mountain Lion emerged from his hole, and, with a shrilling war-whoop, rallied the Sioux.

Again the roll was called, and once again was found correct.

The Sioux and the Mounties were all bunched up among the rocks, staring up at the gap the dynamite had made.

"The explosion has sure left an easy way in," said Selwyn.

"Yeah!" growled the sergeant of the Mounties. "But an easy way in also makes an easy way out. How long are we going to wait before we storm the position?"

Selwyn was about to answer when the sharp crack of a rifle up above was answered by a ringing report below.

Selwyn had seen Mountain Lion dart away on silent moccasins a moment ago and disappear. He had thought nothing of it. But the Sioux's eagle eyes had seen what none other had noted, and he had gone to fetch his Winchester.

It was just as well, too, for as Sergeant Threfall's hat was blown clean off his head and carried into space by a bullet which bored clean through its crown, Mountain Lion replied with a slug of lead which hit the rifleman who was half-hidden on the rocky place above.

The man reeled into view, his arms outspread. Then, from his relaxing right hand, a gun dropped and came rattling down, quickly followed by the crumpled diving form of the man himself, who had aimed to get the sergeant.

"Gosh!" said Paul Threfall, gaping after his vanishing hat.

"That's another gunman gone," said Selwyn, as the crumpled figure thudded on the rocks, bounced off, and then plunged deep into the abyss below.

Mountain Lion's Bluff!

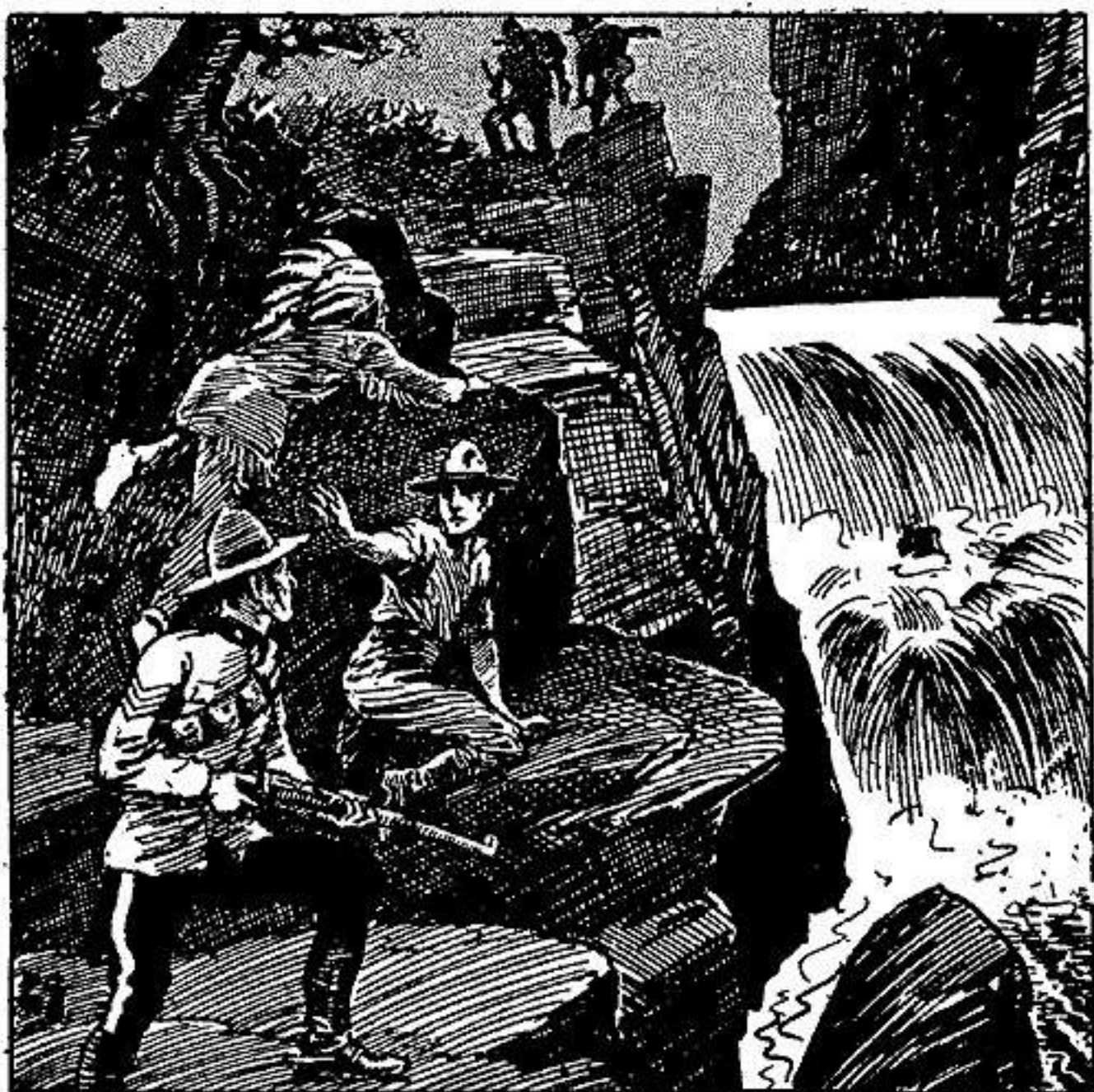
THE shooting warned the ambushing Sioux and Mounties to be careful about storming that ledge. It was plain that the dynamite which had blown an easy way in had also done much damage on the amphitheatre side. Masses of rock had hurtled down into the arena below and was lying in heaped-up masses, affording an easy climb up. Before, the slide hole had been unclimbable, now a gunman could get to the ledge the explosion had made almost as soon as the dislodged rock had settled.

Mountain Lion watched the place above like an eagle.

"Ugh!" he said. "Bad white men may be there. Mountain Lion go and see."

"If you're going scouting, don't get lead-drilled, Sioux," said Sergeant Threfall, who was peering out cautiously from behind a rock.

The day was drawing in, and as Selwyn watched Mountain Lion flit from cover to cover and finally disappear, he marvelled at the skill with which the



"Quiet!" said Mountain Lion. "There's someone coming!" The next moment, the black shadows of two men with packs on their backs and carrying guns showed against the star-spangled sky.

Indian hid himself and the silence with which he moved.

The whole mountain was steeped in silence now. The sun sank down, a ball of blazing red, and blue shadows deepened everywhere.

Selwyn kept his eyes upon the eagle's plumes, which poked up here and there as far as he could see, showing where Red Bull's braves were hiding. It was as much as he could do to stay still.

"Colin," he whispered, "we all ought to go climbing up there. They'd hardly see us in the dark. We would be on them before they knew it, and there are only six of them."

From the shadows near by, the deep voice of Sergeant Paul came booming.

"Better wait till the Sioux reports. If I lost a hat we'd soon lose a few lives if we started climbing blind. Besides, them guys know they're cornered. Think of it, all the gold in the world at their feet, and maybe already cached, and hemmed in on all sides by an enemy. That gang'll fight. It wouldn't be clever of me to lose you, Selwyn, and your brother, and half a dozen good men."

It was certainly good advice, but it was galling to Selwyn to have to wait there in the dark.

The blue turned to black, and the party could scarcely see around them. Stars hung like great illuminated diamonds overhead, intensifying the gloom. Then the moon rose up, gaining power, until the mountainside took shape again.

Presently Selwyn espied a moving figure upon the silvered rocks. He gripped his gun and stood ready. But a waving headdress of eagle's feathers reassured him.

"Mountain Lion's coming!" he said to Colin.

"Yeah!" growled Sergeant Paul's deep voice from close by. "It's the Injun!"

The Sioux came down like a cat, mostly bent double, never rising until he had to. But just below the place where the slide hole had been, he had to stand erect. As he reared himself up, a spit of fire seamed the darkness.

Braang!
Mountain Lion crumpled, fell, seeming to go down head-foremost.

"They've got him! He's killed!" said Selwyn, rising to his feet and taking aim with his gun at the spot where the flash was seen.

Braang!
He sent a bullet crashing there, but knew only too well that he had missed.

Then he smiled as he saw a bounding figure leaping from boulder to spur and tearing down the trail with giant springs and leaps. The figure was that of Mountain Lion.

Selwyn grabbed at the Sioux Indian as he came panting up.

"Did they get you, Lion?" he asked anxiously.

The Indian grinned from ear to ear. "No," he answered, "the bullet missed by a yard. But I shammed hit. I could see the way. The man did not fire again."

"Well, how are things up there?" asked the sergeant.

"Ugh!" replied the Sioux. "Bad!" "Bad?" roared the sergeant impatiently. "What do you mean by bad?"

"It is easy climbing and easy way down this side since the explosion," said the Sioux. "But over on the other side there is only a narrow way up, and the bad white men are guarding it. They have set a sniper at the top, and another man is watching from below."

"We might storm the position!" growled Threfall.

"They would all come to shoot if the watchers gave the alarm. They kill as we climb. Lose many braves, many

Mounties, perhaps. Bad white men scared. They make big battle."

"I don't like sittin' around like dumb sheep," said Threfall. "Upsets the nerves."

"We've got the brutes ringed in," said Selwyn. "They can't get away, can they, Lion?"

"Bad white men can't get away," agreed the Sioux. "We shoot them as they come."

Threfall frowned at Selwyn.

"Kid," he said, "supposin' we go round to the waterfall and work a way up there, the Injun showing us the way? Once we are in position we could shoot as a signal to the Injuns over there and make a double drive. Then over goes Black John Majoe's applecart. Don't want to waste more time than I can help around here. My place is back in Tomahawk."

It was agreed that this should be tried, and soon after Mountain Lion led them by moonlight to the fall. They began to climb steadily and stealthily up it, though the job was far harder than Sergeant Paul had anticipated.

In two hours they were nowhere near the top. In four hours, after more than one dangerous slip, they were nearly at the top.

The Indian pointed to a place where the water came purling smoothly over the ledge.

"Look!" said Selwyn, addressing Sergeant Paul, who came just behind him. "We're there!"

It was then that the Sioux, with a warning hiss, motioned to them to be silent.

"There's someone coming down," he said.

The next moment the black shadows of two men with packs on their backs, and carrying guns, showed against the deep blue of the star-spangled sky.

When Thieves Fall Out!

THE shadows of the two men at the head of the fall assumed giant size in the veiled moonlight, black and evil looking in silhouette.

Threfall touched Selwyn's arm.

"What a target," he whispered. "You could never miss from down here. Plug 'em plumb centre and bring 'em down like shot rabbits!"

Remembering all that Black John Majoe and Musty and the gang had done, the Mountie's finger itched to

pull the trigger. But he did not pull it.

"They're two of the gang, all right," he added, "and they deserve it. But I can't let loose in cold blood."

Selwyn felt just the same about it. Even remembering Snuggles he could not kill the crooks.

Mountain Lion eyed them questioningly.

"Ugh!" he grunted. "You up there; them down here, they shoot. They kill. Let Mountain Lion use Winchester."

"No, Lion," said Selwyn, "not unless it comes to a fight. There are only two of them against the lot of us. We must give them a chance."

The Sioux grounded his rifle and scowled.

White man's fair play and sportsmanship was to be admired when both sides observed it, but in the case of a poison rat one killed it; and these white men, thieves and murderers, were human poison rats. There seemed no sense in it.

For a long tense two minutes the shadows crouched at the top of the path leading downwards.

The men were watching, looking back the way they had come, and seemed scared. One of them suddenly dropped behind a boulder. They heard him cry out hoarsely and the other joined him. But nothing happened. After a long strained pause, they rose again and, turning, began to descend the path.

Only the head and shoulders of one man could be seen now. The other kept close behind him.

Suddenly a rifle cracked, the shot echoing in peals across the mountain-side, and the man behind, throwing up his arms, pitched forward and came slithering down the fall, to land at Sergeant Threfall's feet.

"Gosh!" ejaculated the sergeant.

He bent over the crumpled figure, set his arms under it and lifted it up. Then he grunted as he saw the head drop loosely on the shoulder and the arms and legs sag.

"He's dead!" growled the sergeant of the Mounties. "Pretty good shot that got him, too. He was dead before he fell."

Selwyn and Colin stared at the man in horror. But Mountain Lion showed only a stoical interest.

"Know him, Sioux?" asked the sergeant.

The Red Indian shook his head and grunted.

"Well, I do," said the sergeant of the Mounties. "They called him Billy the Sneak when he kem to Tomahawk in the fall. We had him in the calaboose once for knifing a man in a drunken brawl, but they were both to blame and he only stayed a month. Used to sneak around the saloons, Billy did, and did a bit of stealing on the sly. A bad egg. He's no loss!"

The sergeant then looked upward again, for sharp cracking shots rang out loudly in the night. Spits of fire could be seen darting from the cover of the rocks up there where Billy the Sneak had hidden with his mate, and answering shots could be heard ringing out from a little distance away.

A battle was going on, one man fighting against three or four.

Selwyn tried to count, but the shots came at irregular intervals and he could not be sure. There were three men at least shooting at one.

After a while, the firing ceased, but the man hiding up at the top of the fall stayed in ambush. The party watched to see him move, but he was lying flat behind the rock and they could not see him.

After some minutes, a flash lit the darkness, and the man at the top began to fire again, and this time they could see his bent figure moving slowly round behind the boulder screen.

He was aiming in a different direction and loosed two or three shots in swift succession as if he were rattled.

His assailants were working round him, drawing closer, and soon they would attack him from two sides. He did not attempt to come down the rock strewn trail, Selwyn supposed, because of the danger of moving fast in the dark. The moon showed the tumbling waters, but hid the dangers in the shadowy depths. There, one false step would mean a dive to certain death.

The two men had made for the fall, trying to escape that way, and had been followed. That was the explanation. They had started the fight because they had to, and the survivor was battling on because it was his only chance.

(Hemmed in on both sides, the survivor doesn't stand much chance of getting away with his ill-gotten gains, does he? Don't miss next week's chapters of this thrilling adventure yarn, boys!)

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EXTRA
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No. 148 (New Series).

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

August 3rd, 1935.

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FOR THE SAKE OF THEIR PAL!

By Dicky Nugent

with gleaming eyes. There was something in the youngster's words that suddenly made him feel all keyed up. He bolted the rest of his chookit and locked his hands together. When he spoke, there was a catch in his voice. "Is it possible," he cried, "that we've done old Bright an injustice over this bizziness? I didn't think there was any room for a mistake, and yet—"

"There was!" piped Bright minor. "You see, the fact is, my major only went to meet Snarler & Co. for one purpuss—to reskew me from their klutches!"

"My hat!"

"I mannigged to get away," eggspained Bright minor, breathlessly. "Then the Head turned up and Snarler & Co. turned round and turned on my major and the Head turned down the defence my major turned in and turned on the viles of his wrath. I hope you follow my meaning?"

"Every turn of it!" said Jack Jolly, rising grimly to his feet. "Merry, old chap, it looks as if we've been in the wrong all along! Fancy sending poor old Bright to Coventry when he was only looking after his yung brother's morrals! It's a bit thick, when you come to think of it!"



But Jack Jolly shook his head.

"No," he said. "Before we do that, we must make amends by clearing his name—by proving to Dr. Birch- emall and to St. Sam's that Bill Bright was innersent."

"How are we going to do that, though?"

"There's only one way that it can be done!" said Jack Jolly. "We've got to make Snarler & Co. go to the Head and tell the truth!"

But that was more easily said than done, as the kaptin of the Fourth soon found out. When Jolly and Merry arrived at Snarler & Co.'s study, it was only to find that

Snarler & Co. didn't intend to tell the Head the truth under any circumstances. The meer suggestion of such a thing made them farly bust themselves larking!

Jolly and Merry tried all the arggements they could think of. They tried punching and head-banging and arm-twisting. But it was all to no avale. In the end they had to konfess themselves beaten.

"It's going to be no light task," said Merry darkly, as they quitted the cadd's study. "Dr. Birchemall will never beleve Bright minor unless someone supports his story—and how to make Snarler support it is a puzzle. He's a hard nut!"

Jack Jolly looked thought- ful.

"True," he said. "But there may be a way of softening him. I beleve there's a spot of hewman kindness in him, if only we

Answers to Correspondents

"DISGUSTED" (Remove).—"Do you know the Upper Fourth drink their ginger-pop out of bottles?"

We can go better. Lately, we've been drinking ours out of doors!

"INQUISITIVE" (Fifth).—"How did you learn that Prout has a set of false teeth?" It came out while he was talking to us one day, old sport!

"PETER'S PAL" (Remove).—"Lonzy and Peter have both been awfully sad since they found that their new navy serge suits don't fit them."

They must be suffering from a bad fit of the blues!

can find it. For instance, if he had cawse to feel tremen- jously grateful to Bright—"

Merry stared at his leader. "Why the cackens should he feel grateful to Bright?"

"If he had cawse to feel grateful," went on Jolly, unheeding, "then I beleve he'd do the right thing even though he is the biggest cadd in the skool. The problem is, to make him grateful to Bright for something or other."

"It sounds impossibil."

"All the same I think it can be done," said the kaptin of the Fourth, beginning to grin. "I've got an idea. You know that Bright always takes a stroll y the river every midday? Well, lissen."

He sank his voice to a wisper. Merry lissened—and when his leader had eggspained the idea, he laried aloud.

"My hat! It's the idea of the term!" he cried. "That is, if it we—"

"It will have to work!" grinned Jack Jolly. "Let's get bizz!"

Jolly and Merry got bizzzy at once. The result was that five minnits later Snarler of the Fourth received a criptic note saying: "Meet me on the bridge over the River Ripple at once, or you'll regret it." This criptic note was signed "Bill Betts." It made Snarler dish off at once, for Bill Betts was the name of the local bookmaker to whom he owed munny and he didn't want such a notorious car- ricker as Betts turning up at St. Sam's, whatever hap- pened.

When Snarler arrived at the bridge, however, there was no sign of Bill Betts. The only people in site were Bright of the Fourth, who was making his usual midday stroll on the river bank, and

two undersized jentlemen wearing mistoshes and glasses who were standing talking half-way across the bridge.

Snarler leaned over the bridge and gazed reflectively into the rippling waters of the River Ripple.

Half-a-minnit later, he had the shock of his natcheral. The two jentlemen who had been talking together, stopped talking and walked past him—and as they did so one of them stumbled against him and nocked him right off the bridge into the water!

Splash!

Snarler dropped into the water, with a feendish yell. An instant later, there was another splash. Bright of

the Fourth had dived off the bank to the reskew! Bright, like the hero he was, had decided to sink his differences with Snarler and plunge into the broiling waters to the aid of his enemy.

As soon as the two jentle- men saw that Snarler was being towed to the shore, they dodged behind a hedge and discarded their mistoshes and glasses and coats. Then they emerged again in the familiar guys of Jolly and Merry! Grinning all over their dials, they rushed to the river bank and helped reskewer and reskewed on to terra ferma.

"Gratters, Bright, old chap!" cried Jolly. "It was a brave deed, and no mis- take!"

"Oh, it was nothing!" said Bright, with tipptical modesty. "I only did what any other hero would have done in my place. Are you all right, Snarler?"

Snarler, who was stream- ing with water, nodded; and Jack Jolly's keen eyes saw that there was a different eggspression in his face now. The sneering, leering look had vanished, to be replaced by an eggspression of grati- tude and hewman simperthy. "Yes, Bright," he said. "Thanks to you, I'm all right now. Shake!"

Bright shook some of the water off himself, then grasped the eggstended hand.

"We haven't been very pally in the past, Snarler," he said, with a faint smile.

"I know," said Snarler. "But I hoap we shall be in future—and I'm going to do something now that may help. I'm going to tell Dr. Birch- emall the truth about that game of nap—and bust the conseqwences!"

"Hooray!" yelled Jolly and Merry, and, unseen by Snarler and Bright, they exchanged knowing winks. They were simply delighted to know that their skeem had turned out so successfull.

Snarler was as good as his word. He seemed a changed man, and, without trubbling to change his wet clothes, he went straight to the Head and told him everything.

By the time the dinner-bell went, all Bright's troubles were over. The Head had apollogised, Bright's old pals had made it up with him, and Bright was the hero of the skool!

It was the happiest ending possibul. But nobody ever knew how it had really come about. Jolly and Merry de- cided it would be best to keep their secret to themselves; so not even Bright himself ever lerned what they had done For the Sake of Their Pal!

HEARD IN THE QUAD.

HAZEL: Lend me a chopper. Bunter's run off with the cake my sister made for me.

BROWN: Steady, old bean! You're not thinking of chop- ping the fat thief's head off, are you?

HAZEL: Oh, no; I was only thinking of lending him some- thing to cut the cake with!

HIS KNOTTY PROBLEM!

Coker has claimed so many different speeds for his new motor-boat that he now finds himself quite tied up in "knots" about it!

WILLIAM GREENE on— HOW TO TAKE HOLIDAY SNAPS

Any chap can take a snap. But it's not every chap that can take a dyed-in-the-wool Holiday Snap of the kind your friends show you after they've been to the seaside. Here are a few tips that may help:

When taking a distant view, focus the camera for taking near-view portraits. This creates that artistic "fogginess" that is so highly esteemed in holiday snaps.

When taking a close-up, focus for long distance. Same reason as above.

Always hold the camera slightly on the slant, so as to give the finished picture the effect of being taken from the deck of a ship in the middle of a bad roll.

Tilt the camera slightly skywards, so as to get in a few clouds and tree tops.

Don't change the film for every fresh snap. Two exposures on each film will save you money and often create some delightfully unexpected pictures.

When taking snaps of fellows reclining on the grass, or the beach, be sure to get the feet in. So long as the feet come out nice and large, the rest of the picture doesn't matter.

Finally, when you get the finished snaps, spend all your spare time showing them to other fellows—and be sure nobody gets away without saying "Jolly good!" to each and every snap!

I ought to say in conclusion that I'm not an expert photographer myself. But Coker claims to be one, so I've based these hints on what he does!

Hurrah for the Holidays!



Messages to our readers from leading—and lesser—lights at Greyfriars on Break- ing-up Day.

HARRY WHARTON. — May you all have as good a holiday as we're going to have!

H. S. QUELCH, Esq., M.A. — My best wishes for a quiet, restful holiday preparing your- selves bodily and mentally for the work which I presume awaits you all on your return.

WILLIAM GOSLING. — Wot I says is this ere: May all young ribs everywhere enjoy themselves to their 'eart's

content—so long as they don't interfere with me!

HURREE SINGH. — Here is hope- fulness that the gleefulness of the holidays of all our esteemed and ludicrous readers may be terrific!

HORACE J. COKER. — Have a good time, all you kids—and if the young sweeps who run this paper say anything libellous about me, write and tick them off about it!

LORD MAULEVERER. — I sincerely trust that all you sportsmen (ladies included, begad!) will have a jolly good snooze—that is to say, of course, holiday!

FISHER T. FISHER. — Guess I'm real glad to have all you bozos know I wish you one grand sweet song of a vocation and then some. Attaboy!

Whoopee!

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!



Dick Russell is very fond of pets. He found a raven with an injured wing, cared for it, and now keeps it as a pet. It alights on his shoulder and understands his commands. Mr. Quelch congratulated Russell the other morning on training the raven, but pointed out that he must train it not to follow its master into the Form-room!

Coming unexpectedly on an adder under the hedge in Friar- dale Lane, Billy Bunter gave a squeal and ran for his life. Bob Cherry, however, seized a rain- coat and smothered it, handing over his capture to P.-c. Tozer and a snake expert. The Head complimented and also cautioned Bob for his prompt, but risky, action!

Rake, Morgan, Wibley and Desmond formed themselves into a harmony quartette, with dreams of stage, film, and B.B.C. en- gagements. Their vocal efforts during the prep. hour, however, so disturbed their neighbours that a crowd of wrathful Re- movites descended upon them. The harmony quartette was broken up amid great disharmony!

Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form, has a large hand, and he can hold seven cricket balls in it at once, with his fingers spread out. Coker is quite dangerous enough, however, bowling with one ball only. The other day he "caught out" the umpire, who stopped Coker's delivery with his chin! Coker's bowling didn't "appeal."

Mr. Prout's dearest ambition is to win an open golf tournament, and to that end he practises in all kinds of weather. Mr. Prout's style of play, however, is "open" to criticism—though the Fifth Form master labours under the impression that he is a future open champion. All he "opens" is the turf!

Shooting at a "landscape" target on the school shooting range, Harry Wharton proved himself the best Remove marks- man, with a score of 495 out of a possible 500. Vernon-Smith, with 490, and Bob Cherry with 487 came next. Bunter com- pletely missed the target with all his shots—they went into the real landscape beyond it!

HAROLD SKINNER asks— What's Wrong With My Health!

I can't make out what has happened to me in the last few days. I've got the most alarming symptoms.

In the first place, I've got an extraordinary feeling about the eyes. It's a sort of ache, combined with a feeling that they want to keep on closing.

Secondly, there's a kind of numbness in my limbs. My legs drag me along reluctantly; there's none of that spring in them that there should be.

Thirdly, at frequent intervals, my mouth gapes open and a sort of sigh comes out of it—what is commonly known as a yawn, I believe.

Fourthly, I've got a splitting headache that nothing seems to shift.

The most alarming feature about this illness is that I haven't the faintest idea what's brought it about.

Apart from the fact that I broke bounds every night for a week, there's no explanation whatever.

The whole thing's a mystery. I shall be jolly glad when I feel better again, I can tell you. But how to get better, I don't know.

(No prizes offered for suggestions!—Ed.)