

"BUNTER'S BIG BLUNDER!" Extra-Special School Yarn
of Harry Wharton & Co. **By FRANK RICHARDS.**

The Magnet ^{2^D}

*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper*



**WHAT
BILLY
BUNTER
SAW!**

Off We Go Again on Another Specially Conducted Tour with—

The GREYFRIARS GUIDE



A TOUR OF THE SCHOOL.

(1).

The Fifth Form fellows, as a rule,
Consider that they own the school;
The Sixth are but a set of duds,
Compared with Blundell and his

"bloods";
The prefects and their mighty forum—
Well, Fifth Form fellows just ignore
'em!



STARTING THE NEW YEAR WELL!

(1).

'Tis New Year's Day, and things are
strange!

For Maudy managed to arrange
To get up early for a change,
To start the New Year well!
(What helped him up, I understand,
Was Cherry, water-jug in hand;
For Maudy saw him coming, and
Got up at rising-bell!)

(2).

We haven't once heard Bunter say
His postal order's on the way;
He hasn't pinched our tuck to-day,
To start the New Year well!
He's not been late for class—it's true!
He hasn't made "wrong construe!"
(He's in the Sanny—down with 'flu!
It's worse than in a cell!)

(3).

And Skinner, with profound regrets,
Is burning all his cigarettes
And racing papers, full of bets,
To start the New Year well!
(For Quelch's threatened, so I've heard,
To search the study—and, my word,
If he should find them, it's the bird
For Skinner—and farewell!)

(4).

And Fishy has returned the dough
He made by moneylending; so
We really must admit, you know,
He starts the New Year well!
(He might have gone on swindling still,
Had we not helped him with a will
By soundly bumping him until
He paid up, with a yell!)

The Fifth Form Games-Room.

(2).

And in the games-room, at their ease,
They nurse their precious dignities,
No rags are here, or other larks;
But only dignified remarks.

See Coker laugh and turn his nose up
If any Sixth Form prefect shows up!

(3).

George Blundell sits beside the fire,
And nightly his remarks inspire
The Fifth with reverence and awe
As grandly he lays down the law;
And only Coker dares deride him—
The fatuous Coker—woe betide him!

(4).

For Coker likes to wag his jaw,
He's fond of laying down the law,
And TWO law-layers going strong
Can obviously not last long!
But Coker, as may be expected,
Goes on until he's been ejected!

THE GREYFRIARS ALPHABET

Peter Hazeldene,

the weak-willed scamp of the Remove.

H is for Peter HAZELDENE,
The sulkiest fellow ever seen;
He gambles, bets, and smokes, and plays
The giddy goat in other ways;
But hasn't either will or sense
To face the usual consequence;
So when he's landed in distress
He sends an urgent S O S



To anyone who's ass enough
To do the helping-others stuff,
But two redeeming features he
Possesses. One is Marjorie,
A ripping sister, we admit—
In fact, she's absolutely it!
And when he plays with "art and
sole"
He's really wonderful in goal!

ANSWER TO PUZZLE

The year 1691. The only other year
(1961) hasn't yet arrived



A WEEKLY BUDGET OF FACT AND FUN

By
THE GREYFRIARS
RHYMESTER

WELCOMING 1938

Mr. Prout welcomed the New Year
by firing his rifle at midnight. We bet
he didn't hit it!

Loder of the Sixth went out at mid-
night to watch the New Year in. He
had a splendid view of it from the
Three Fishers.

Hoskins, the musical genius of the
Shell, welcomed the New Year by
snoring in the key of A sharp, instead
of B flat minor, as usual.

We don't know if Greyfriars intends
to "turn over a new leaf" this year;
but, judging by Trotter's lazy habits, it
would be a bad scheme to start with a
"fresh page."

PUZZLE PAR

Talking of the New Year,
there's a stone tablet at Grey-
friars showing the year when the
East Wing was built. It con-
tains four figures (three of them
different), and if you were to
turn it upside down it would still
show the same year. What is it?

Answer at foot of column 2.

Mr. Quelch thinks it a good omen
that at midnight on December 31st, he
began Chapter 1,938 of the "History of
Greyfriars." We doubt if it'll ever be
finished, though, for by the time he's
on the last volume there will be
another fifty years of history to tackle.

Tubb of the Third started the New
Year by having a bath! The ice broke
while he was skating on the river.

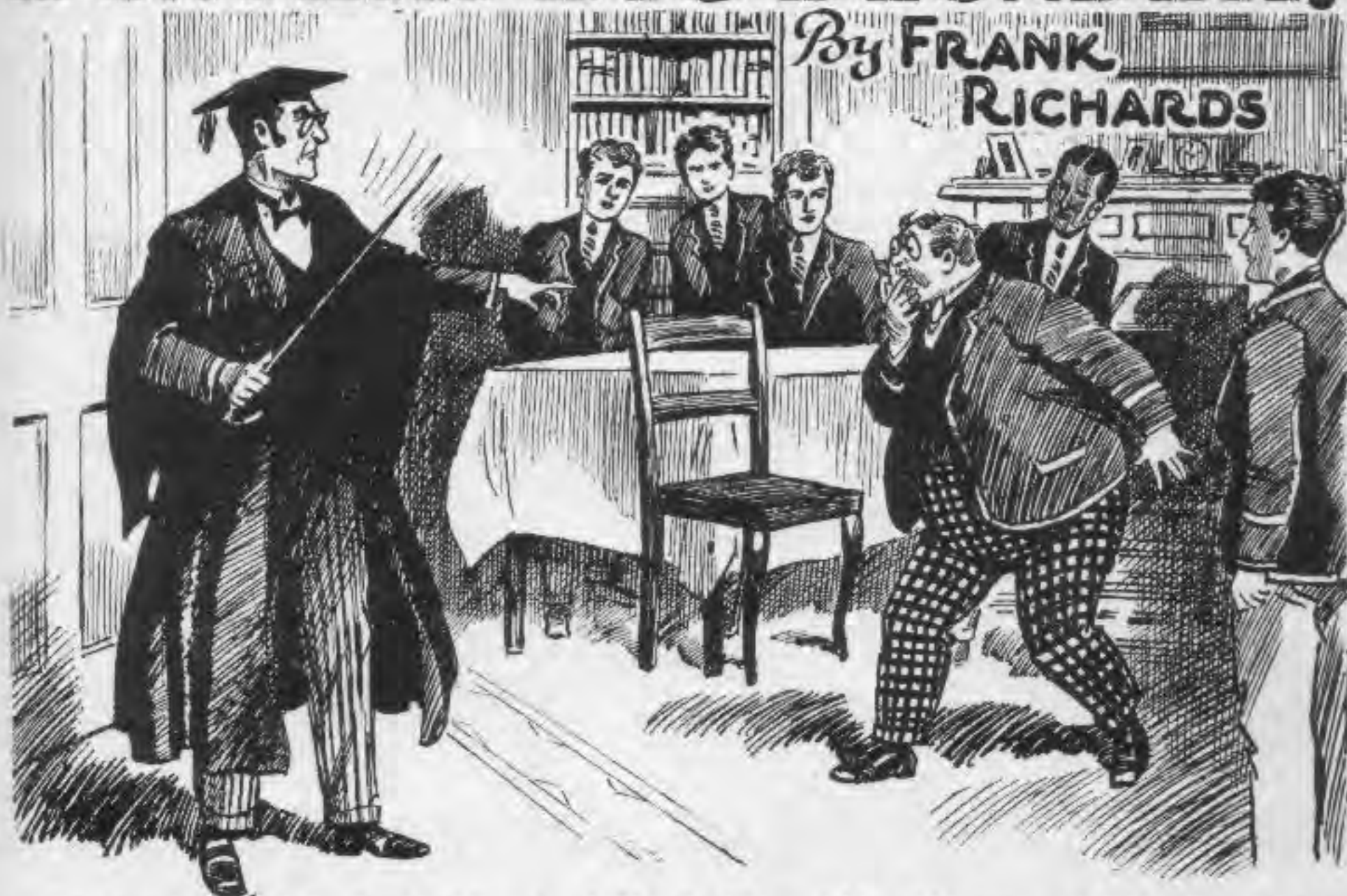
The difference between me and the
New Year is that the New Year broke
on January 1st, and I'm broke all the
rest of the calendar.

Gosling welcomed the New Year by
ringing the rising-bell—at least, it
seemed to us like midnight when it
started

Not only has Dr. Locke, the revered Head of Greyfriars, been snowballed, but his assailant actually wore the cap and gown of a Greyfriars master! The mystery that lies behind this amazing happening is solved in—

BUNTER'S BIG BLUNDER!

By FRANK RICHARDS



"Bend over that chair, Bunter!" ordered Mr. Quelch, swishing his cane. "Look here, sir!" gasped the fat junior. "I—I—I know who snowballed the Head!"

THE FIRST CHAPTER

No Room for Loder!

LODER began it. It was just like Loder of the Sixth, to make himself unpleasant on the first day of term.

But Mr. Hacker was in an uncommonly bad temper.

Otherwise, he would scarcely have acted as he did.

It was a cold, frosty, windy day. Snow was falling—incessant flakes whirling on a bitter wind. Mr. Hacker's toes were cold. His nose, like Marian's in the ballad, was red and raw. His temper was as raw as his nose—if not a little rawer.

A crowd of Greyfriars fellows swarmed at Lantham Junction. The train for Courtfield, which was the train for Greyfriars School, was crammed. There was always rather a rush for the first train—more so than ever on this occasion, for in such putrid weather nobody, of course, wanted to wait on a windswept platform for the next.

It was a case of first come, first served. Loder of the Sixth was not in the first flight. But he wanted to get into the train, all the same. Hence the trouble that arose.

The carriage into which Gerald Loder sought to barge was already crowded far beyond reasonable limits.

The Famous Five of the Remove were in it. Billy Bunter was in it,

loudly complaining that he was shoved and squeezed and pushed—as undoubtedly he was. Hobson, Stewart, and Hoskins of the Shell were in it. So were Temple, Dabney, and Fry of the Fourth Form. Really, there seemed hardly space for a fly to get in, with so many fellows sitting and standing. A dozen fellows filled that carriage to capacity, and a little over.

Hobson of the Shell was not quite in. He was shoving industriously to get a little more room, anxious not to be caught in the door, when a

master of the Shell gave him a most unpleasant look.

Heedless of unpleasant looks, Loder cut across to the carriage, and put his nose in. In the crowded state of the carriage, that was all that Loder could get inside.

"Here, make room!" snapped Loder.

Loder, being a Sixth Form prefect, his word was law to juniors—or ought to have been. But, prefect as Loder was, he was answered by a howl of protest.

"No room here!" called out Bob Cherry.

"Full up!" said Harry Wharton.

"Bit of a crush already, Loder," said Frank Nugent.

"The crushfulness is truly terrific!" gasped Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, who was painfully squeezed between Johnny Bull and Bob.

Loder frowned, or rather, scowled.

"I said make room!" he yapped.

"I say, you fellows, I'm being

squashed!" wailed Billy Bunter.

"Will you take your elbow out of my ribs, Bull, you beast?"

"Nowhere else to put it, old fat man," answered Johnny Bull, cheerfully. "You take your ribs out of my elbow."

"Some of you get out!" snapped Loder. "Here, Hobson, you jump out!"

Hobson, already annoyed by rain shoving, glared at him. Really, it was rather early for Loder to "come

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An Amazing Story of School-boy Adventure, featuring HARRY WHARTON & CO., of GREYFRIARS.

porter came along to slam it. Several voices were telling Hobby not to shove—without effect. Hobby shoved and shoved.

Billy Bunter, who required room for two, had rather less than enough for one, and squeaked in protest. Hobby, regardless, shoved.

It was then that Loder happened.

Coming across the platform at a run, he knocked against Mr. Hacker, who was pacing up and down in a vain effort to get his feet warm. The

the prefect" before the Greyfriars fellows had arrived at the school.

"I shall lose the train if I get out," grunted Hobson. "Look here, Loder, you go up the train. There's seats farther up."

"Are there?" said Loder. "Well, cut along and look for one, then—sharp!"

Hobson, probably, had lingering doubts whether there really were seats farther up. At any rate, he was not disposed to go and look for them. He held on.

"Will you get out?" hooted Loder.

Porters were shutting doors along the train now, and there was no time to lose.

Hobby did not answer. It was rather awkward to tell a Sixth Form prefect that he jolly well wouldn't. He hung on, hoping that the train would start. He was not going to lose that train, if he could help it.

Neither was Loder—if he could help it. And Loder thought he could. He reached it, and nipped Hobson's ear between finger and thumb.

"Out!" he said tersely.

"Owl!" yelled Hobson. "Owl! Leggo my ear! Owl!"

"Get out!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Loder pulled at Hobson's ear. Hobson held on to the doorway.

Pulling ears was, of course, a proceeding outside the powers and privileges of a Sixth Form prefect. Prefects could whop, on cause being given. They were not supposed to pull ears. The bully of the Sixth was exceeding the limit—as he very often did.

Nevertheless, he pulled, and pulled hard. It really looked as if he would keep Hobson's ear as a souvenir, if Hobby went in that train.

Hobson yelled. He yelled, not only because it was painful, but because he knew that his Form-master, Hacker, was pacing close at hand. Another "beak" was keeping Hacker's seat for him. He was pacing till the train was starting, in the delusive hope of getting his toes warm.

"Yow-ow-ow!" yelled Hobson. "Leggo my ear, Loder! Yow-ow-ow!"

Mr. Hacker glanced round, with his most acid expression on his face.

Seldom in a good temper, Hacker was in one of his worst now. He glared at Loder. Loder had shoved against him, cutting across the platform, and barged on without a word of apology. Now he was barging into a carriage overfull, and pulling the ear of one of Hacker's boys.

Mr. Hacker strode to the spot.

"Release Hobson at once, Loder!" he snapped.

Loder stared round at him.

"I've told him to get out!" he snapped back.

"You have no right to do anything of the kind," said Mr. Hacker. "If you are too late for a seat in the train, Loder, you must wait for the next."

There was a murmur of approval in the crowded carriage. Mr. Hacker was little liked in the Lower School; but on this occasion he had the full and complete approval of the juniors. Loder breathed hard.

He was a prefect—answerable only to the headmaster. Form-masters had no right to give him orders. And he was going in that train.

"Will you get out, Hobson?" he demanded.

"Not unless my Form-master tells me to," answered Hobson victoriously.

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The next moment he yelled, as Loder gave his ear a vicious twist.

Then it was that Mr. Hacker astonished the natives, so to speak. He reached out, and grasped Loder's ear.

Jerking at that ear, he jerked Gerald Loder back from the carriage door.

Hobby's suffering ear was released at last. It was Loder's ear that was now suffering.

"Come away from that carriage, Loder!" said Mr. Hacker grimly.

Loder spluttered with surprise and rage. He could hardly believe that his own ear was being pulled.

But it was—hard.

From the crowded carriage came a yell of merriment. This was the first time the juniors had seen a Sixth Form prefect having his ear pulled. They seemed to enjoy it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows— He, he, he!"

From other carriages dozens of fellows stared. Laughter echoed along the crowded train.

Loder's face was crimson. He clenched his hands, as if with the idea of punching Hacker. Fellows fairly gasped with delighted anticipation. But Loder stopped short of that.

"You—you—I—I—I—" stammered Loder.

The engine shrieked; doors slammed. Mr. Hacker released Loder's ear, and stepped into his carriage. The train moved.

Windows were crammed with fellows staring back—at Loder. He had lost that train, after all. The last view of Loder showed him standing on the platform, gasping with rage, and rubbing a burning ear.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Wet Paint!

"BUNTER, old bean!"

Skinner of the Remove seemed glad to see Bunter.

Billy Bunter, who did not expect Skinner to be glad to see him, blinked at Harold Skinner suspiciously through his big spectacles.

The snow had ceased to fall, but there was a thick white carpet of it in the old quadrangle of Greyfriars. It was the coldest first day of term that the oldest inhabitant remembered.

Billy Bunter would have preferred to frown over the fire in the study or in the Rag; but he had a special reason just then for roaming the open spaces. He was looking for Lord Mauleverer.

As he had not seen Mauly during the holidays, it was some weeks since he had borrowed anything from him. He was rather anxious to make up for lost time!

Thus it was that Skinner found him in the quad; and, contrary to Bunter's expectation, greeted him like a long-lost brother.

"Looking for you, old chap!" said Skinner, with great affability. "I say, I've had some decent tips in the hole. Coming to the tuckshop?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter promptly.

That was an invitation that William George Bunter never refused.

It was uncommon, certainly, for Skinner to blow his own cash for the delectation of other fellows. But if Skinner was starting new manners and customs with the new term, Bunter was the man to encourage him!

"Come on!" said Skinner briskly.

"What-ho!" chirruped Bunter.

Mauly could wait! A hand in hand was worth two in the bush!

The fat Owl of the Remove rolled cheerfully after Skinner to the school shop, where Mrs. Mimble was already doing a good business.

Fellows who went into the tuckshop entered with care. On the threshold was scrawled in chalk the legend:

WET PAINT!

During the holidays Mr. Mimble had repainted the door. It glowed a fresh white.

Mr. Mimble had intended to paint that door early in the holidays. But it was left from day to day, for various reasons—the chief one being, perhaps, that Mr. Mimble did not like work.

So, instead of being painted early in the hols, it was painted the last day before the school came back.

In hot weather it might have dried in time. In cold weather it naturally didn't.

So it was still wet and sticky, and its shining surface showed several spots where inadvertent elbows had jammed.

"Wet Paint!" in large letters on the floor was a sufficient warning—till the passage of many feet made the letters indistinct. They were still decipherable to most fellows—but not to the short-sighted Owl of the Remove.

Bunter rolled up, ignorant of wet paint and regardless of wet paint.

Skinner shouldered him in the doorway.

A lot of snow had been dropped from ingoing boots. The door was slippery.

Naturally, Bunter, being skiddered, slipped.

He landed against the door.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "You clumsy ass—shoving a fellow! Why—what—oh erikay! I'm all painty!"

Bunter jerked himself away from the door and glared down at his coat. It was smothered with white paint.

Mr. Mimble had laid it on thick. There was still plenty on the door; but there was quite a lot on Bunter.

"Why, you—you beast!" roared Bunter. "You did that on purpose!"

He realised now why Skinner had led him into the tuckshop. It was not to stand treat. It was to barge him into the wet paint!

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled Skinner.

Skinner grinned round—expecting his laugh to be echoed by the fellows in the tuckshop. Instead of which there came a sharp voice:

"Skinner!"

The practical joker of the Remove jumped. He stared in dismay at Mr. Quelch. He had never dreamed that his Form-master was in the tuckshop. Quelch was not, naturally, a regular patron of that establishment.

But on that bitter day he had stepped in for a cup of hot coffee. And there he was—with his gimlet eyes fixed on Skinner.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Skinner.

Barging a fat ass like Bunter into wet paint was, from Skinner's point of view, a merry jest. Evidently it did not strike Mr. Quelch in the same light.

He came across to the doorway, frowning.

"Skinner!" he rapped. "How dare you play such a trick?"

"Only a joke, sir!" stammered Skinner.

"Owl! I'm all painty—"

"Such an act is not a joke, Skinner! It is foolish and malicious!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "I shall take you to my study, Skinner, and—Ooooh!"

Mr. Quelch broke off with a gasping exclamation, as his foot slipped on the trampled snow inside the doorway.

He slipped—staggered—and banged on the door.

"Ooooh!" gasped the Remove master.

"Oh crikey!" breathed Skinner.

There were a score of fellows in the school shop. They all stared at Quelch. If any of them felt a desire to grin, they carefully suppressed that desire. The expression on Mr. Quelch's speaking countenance revealed that it was no time for grinning!

The Remove master jerked himself away from the door. He glanced down at his gown.

From the collar to the tail it was

for his trick on Bunter. But now that Quelch had shared the disaster, it was not a matter of lines. Quelch's cane was going to get some exercise, thus early in the term.

Skinner followed Mr. Quelch to his study with dismal anticipations—which were fully realised when he got there!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Pinched!

"HALT!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Stand and deliver!"

"Look here—"

"Stick 'em up!" continued Bob

pensive takes. Only wealthy fellows, with whole half-crowns to spare, could buy those cakes at the school shop—such fellows as Smithy of the Remove, or Coker of the Fifth. Three half-crowns were needed to pay for one of those cakes!

Billy Bunter having already that day made at least fifteen unsuccessful attempts to borrow one half-crown, it was highly improbable that he had three to spend on a cake.

"Stand and deliver, you bold, bad bandit!" said Bob Cherry.

"Look here, I'm rather in a hurry—get out of the way—"

"Whose cake?" asked Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Eh? Mine! I brought it back



Mr. Hacker grasped Loder's ear and dragged the prefect back. "Come away from that carriage!" he said grimly. Loder spluttered with surprise, while from the crowded carriage came a yell of merriment. "Ha, ha, ha!"

smothered with white paint. Mr. Mumble's taste in colour was on the light side—it would have caught the most casual eye at quite a distance.

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Quelch. He gazed at his gown—he glared at it! Then he glared at Skinner. "This is your fault, Skinner! Entirely your fault! Follow me to my study at once!"

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Skinner.

Really, he wished that he had not played that practical joke on Bunter. It was not the first time that Skinner had had reason to wish that he had not been quite so fearfully humorous.

Mr. Quelch rustled out of the school shop. In the glimmer of the January sunset, the white paint on the back of his gown showed up to great advantage.

There was a chuckle in the tickshop—when he was out of hearing. But Skinner did not chuckle.

Skinner followed his Form-master—in the lowest of spirits. He might have been let off with a hundred lines

Cherry, levelling a pencil at Billy Bunter's fat head. "And hand over the loot!"

Bob was evidently in playful spirits that day. Apparently he had a lot of exuberance left over from the Christmas holidays.

His comrades grinned.

Billy Bunter did not grin. He snorted with impatient wrath.

"Will you let a fellow pass?" he hooted.

Bunter was in a hurry.

The fact that Bunter was in a hurry was, in itself, a suspicious circumstance. Bunter was seldom or never in a hurry. Generally, he carried his usual weight slowly—quite slowly.

Now he was almost scudding!

From which, without being as bright as Sherlock Holmes, the Famous Five of the Remove were able to deduce that the cake in Bunter's fat hands did not belong to Bunter.

It was evidently a cake—in one of the nice cardboard boxes in which Mrs. Mumble packed her best and most ex-

with me," said Bunter. "Our chef at Bunter Court made it specially for me to bring back to school."

"He must have had a jolly long arm to reach one of Mrs. Mumble's boxes to pack it in!" remarked Bob Cherry.

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

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I mean I—"

"You mean to scoff that cake! Whose is it?" asked Frank Nugent. "Smithy was going to get one, for a spread in his study—"

"Tain't Smithy's! Tain't a Remove man's at all!" gasped Bunter. "Look here, you beasts, will you let a chap pass or not?"

"Not!" said Johnny Bull.

"The notfulness is terrible, my esteemed fat Bunter!" grinned Hurreo Jamses Ram Singh.

"We don't want Coker of the Fifth coming up to the Remove, raging after a cake, old fat man," said Harry Wharton. "Chuck it—see?"

"Tain't a Fifth Form man's, I say, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 2,563

you fellows, for goodness' sake, let a chap pass!" implored Bunter. "I say, if Loder spots me—"

"Loder!" yelled the Famous Five, with one voice.

"Tain't Loder's!" said Bunter hastily. "What I mean is—"

"You howling ass!" exclaimed Wharton. "You been grub-raiding in the Sixth—a prefect, too! Loder will skin you!"

"I don't think Loder's in his bonniest temper to-day, either!" grinned Bob Cherry. "I sort of believe that having his ear pulled made him a bit cross!"

"Take it back at once, fathead!" said Nugent. "Stick to the Remove for pinching tuck! We only boot you. Loder would give you six—and very likely take you to Quelch, as well."

"He doesn't know—I mean, it isn't his cake!" explained Bunter. "What I mean is, that he might think it was his cake, when it isn't, you know."

"Why should he think it is, if it isn't?"

"Well, he might," said Bunter. "You see, he laid it down on the seat outside the shop, when Walker called him, and he went to speak to Walker. When he finds it isn't there, he—he might think this was his cake, you know, if he saw it. Cakes are very much alike."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Besides, Loder's suspicious!" said Bunter. "He's jolly ill-tempered, too! I saw him looking at Hacker as if he'd like to bite him—just because Hacker pulled his ear at Lantham, I suppose. If he saw this cake he might think I nipped it up when he went to speak to Walker. He would make out that it was his cake. You know what a beastly bully he is!"

"You blithering bloater!" said Bob Cherry. "Take it back at once, and leave it where Loder left it."

"No fear! He may have missed it already. I mean to say, this isn't Loder's cake at all! I say, let me pass, you beasts, he may come along looking for it any minute!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, you fellows, I'll let you all have a whack in it! Serve that beast Loder right, for being such a beastly bully, you know. Not that it's Loder's cake, of course—it's mine! But if he sees me with a cake, just after he's missed one—"

"If he sees you with a cake, he will probably seize you with a paw, too!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up!" hissed Bunter. "Let a fellow pass, I tell you! Come up to the study and whack it out. I can't say fairer than that."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Here comes Loder!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"Hold on, Bunter! Stop and explain to Loder that it isn't his cake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter did not stop. He did not want to make that explanation to Loder of the Sixth. As the Famous Five barred his way to the House, he flew off in another direction.

Loder of the Sixth was coming along, with a scowl on his face. That scowl had hardly left his face for a moment, since the incident on the platform at Lantham Junction. Not only Bunter, but a good many other fellows, had seen him give Mr. Hacker looks which indicated a complete lack of affection.

Fifty fellows, at least, had seen Hacker take him by the ear—a Sixth Form prefect's ear! It was a frightful humiliation for Loder! He knew

that fellows were laughing over it—fellows who had seen the episode had related it to other fellows who hadn't, and all were entertained.

Loder was intensely annoyed and exasperated. In that mood, he was not likely to take the loss of his cake patiently. Any fellow who missed a seven-and-sixpenny cake, which had been intended to grace his study table at tea, might have been annoyed. Loder was fearfully annoyed.

"Have you cheeky young rotters been playing tricks?" he demanded, as he bore down on the Famous Five.

"Us what?" asked Harry Wharton mildly.

"Don't give me any lip! Some scoundrel has pinched a cake I laid down for a few minutes, while I went to speak to a chap!" growled Loder.

"The pinchfulness of our esteemed selves is not terrific!" said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Have you pinched that cake?" demanded Loder, scowling.

"Not guilty, my lord!" said Bob.

"Don't be an ass, Loder!" said Harry Wharton bluntly. "You know jolly well that no fellow here would pinch your cake!"

"Well, I dare say you know who did it, anyhow! Have you seen anybody pinching?" yapped Loder.

It was an awkward question for the Famous Five. They had not actually seen Bunter "pinch" that cake, but they could hardly have any doubt on the subject. On the other hand, they had no desire to hand the fat Owl over to Loder's present savage and vindictive temper. Moreover, no prefect had a right to ask juniors to give information against one another. So the Co. stood silent.

"I asked you a question!" said Loder, his eyes gleaming. "I want an answer."

"I saw somebody pinching to-day!" said Bob Cherry.

"Shut up, fathead!" muttered Johnny Bull.

"Well, Loder asked me!" said Bob.

"I did—and I want an answer!" said Loder. "Who was it, Cherry?"

"Must I give the name?" asked Bob meekly.

"I order you to!"

"Oh, if you order me to, that settles it," said Bob. "In that case, to hear is to obey. It was Hacker!"

"Hacker!" gasped Loder.

"Yes, Hacker; the Shell back!"

Bob Cherry's friends gazed at him in sheer amazement. What he was driving at was a mystery to them. Loder stared at him blankly. He would have been glad enough to hear anything against Mr. Hacker; but he could hardly believe that the master of the Shell had bagged his cake.

"Is that meant for a joke?" he growled.

"You asked me!" said Bob. "I had to give the name, when you ordered me, Loder. Don't we all have to jump to orders from big panjandrums like you?"

"Is that the truth, or not, Cherry?"

"The solid, frozen truth!"

"You saw Hacker pinching—"

"Yes!"

"Bob—" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Bob, old man—" murmured Nugent.

"My dear chaps, I'm bound to tell Loder, when he asks me," said Bob. "Didn't you hear him order me to give the name?"

Loder looked at him, nonplussed. He would have been glad to believe it, but he just couldn't! Really, it was unimaginable that a Form-master at

Greyfriars had annexed a cake that did not belong to him—even if Hacker wanted a cake, which was very doubtful. Mr. Hacker was long past the age when rich and fruity cakes had a strong appeal.

"Are you ready to repeat this in Mr. Hacker's presence, Cherry?" asked Loder, at last.

"Certainly!" answered Bob cheerfully.

"Did anyone else see him?"

"Yes; a whole crowd of fellows."

"Blessed if I can make it out!" said the puzzled bully of the Sixth. "If you're trying to pull my leg, Cherry, I'll—"

"Can't do more than tell the truth," said Bob. "I saw Hacker pinching—and so did a lot of other fellows. That's all."

"You actually saw Hacker pinching my cake?"

"Oh, no; your ear!" said Bob affably.

"Wha-a-t?"

"Your ear! At Lantham!" added Bob, by way of explanation. "Did you think I meant the cake, Loder? Not at all! You asked me if I'd seen anybody pinching. I saw Hacker pinching your ear—"

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

The look on Loder's face was too much for them. Bob's statement was perfectly correct. A crowd of fellows had seen Hacker pinching—Loder's ear. Improbable as it was that he would have "pinched" Loder's cake, there was no doubt that he had pinched Loder's ear.

Loder gave a gasp.

"You—you—"

He made a jump at the cheeky Bob, smacking out left and right.

Bob caught two before he was out of reach.

Then he scudded; and his comrades, chuckling, scudded with him.

"Stop!" roared Loder.

The Famous Five disappeared into the dusk that was falling on the quadrangle. And Loder—in a worse temper than ever—went on hunting for the person or persons unknown who had annexed his cake!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Painful Parting!

"Oll lor!" murmured Billy Bunter.

Cut off from retreat into the House with his plunder, the fat grub-raider of the Remove had dodged away, seeking seclusion.

It was not yet dark; but the House was lighted, and from a score of windows, and from the great doorway, light streamed out into the January dusk.

Twice Bunter had approached the door—but each time he saw Walker of the Sixth standing there, looking odd.

Walker was Loder's pal; and Bunter had no doubt that Loder had asked his pal to keep an eye open for any fellow going in with a cake. Walker was obviously on the watch.

While he watched, no doubt Loder was rooting up and down, and roving about, for the cake-annexer.

Billy Bunter almost wished that he had not annexed that cake. His abode made up his mind to abandon his plunder.

But only almost—not quite. A rich, fruity, seven-and-sixpenny cake had an irresistible attraction for Billy Bunter.

But he realised that he had to be wary. Even a good-tempered prefect would have given him "six" for pin-

bag a cake; and Loder was a very bad-tempered prefect! Loder was capable, too, of walking Bunter in to his Form-master, and accusing him of pilfering. And Quelch was quite likely to regard Bunter's action as pilfering.

That it actually was pilfering, did not occur to Bunter. His fat brain had its own wonderful way of considering such things.

If any fellow had bagged a cake belonging to Bunter, it would have been pilfering, if not actual burglary. But if Bunter bagged a cake belonging to another fellow, it was quite a different thing. Bunter never saw a cake without wanting it; and it somehow seemed to him that he ought to have it if he could get hold of it.

The dusk was deepening. The bell would be ringing soon for call-over. It was fearfully cold and windy in the quad, and Bunter, naturally, wanted to sit over a fire while he scoffed that cake. But he realised that it was rather too dangerous to attempt to convey it into the House.

He had only one resource—to gobble it on the spot, regardless of cold and wind. And he had made up his fat mind to do so when he glimpsed a figure in the dusk.

He scuttled!

Loder had very nearly spotted him!

There was little doubt that, if Gerald Loder caught Bunter lurking about, with a cake so remarkably like the one he had missed, he would jump to the conclusion that it was his cake!

Bunter scuttled—and did not stop running till he biffed into a gate! Then he stopped, with a squeak!

"Wow!"

It was the gate of the Head's private garden. Bunter leaned on it, gasping for breath. Really, it seemed that there was going to be no rest for the wicked; for he had hardly recovered his breath when a figure in livery and coat loomed up, coming direct to the gate from the quad.

For one dreadful moment Bunter thought it was Loder. Then, as a pair of sharp eyes peered at him in the dusk, and an acid voice addressed him, he gasped with relief. It was Mr. Hacker. It did not matter if Hacker saw the cake!

"Who is that?" snapped Mr. Hacker. He was startled. "What are you doing here? Stand away from that gate!"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Bunter.

Hacker, evidently, was going to the Head's house by way of the garden path.

Billy Bunter opened the gate for him; and the master of the Shell gave a grunt, which might have been meant to express thanks, walked through, and disappeared in the gloom.

"Beast!" breathed Bunter, when he was gone.

Clang, clang, clang!

It was the bell.

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter.

From various directions there was a sound of scuffling feet. Fellows who were still out of the House cut in at the clang of the bell.

Bunter had to cut in also.

But to cut in with Loder's cake under his arm was simply asking for it—with James Walker keeping watch in the doorway, and Loder prowling round.

Staying out meant fines from Quelch. Worse than that, it meant drawing special attention to him; and Bunter did not want special attention drawn to him, especially Loder's, in the circumstances.

There was only one thing to be done—

to park that cake somewhere, and come back for it when the coast was clear.

That was easy enough. An ancient elm grew beside the Head's gate. Between the trunk and the gatepost, was a dark space admirably suited for Bunter's purpose.

He crammed the cardboard box, with the cake in it, into that space. It was a painful parting; but it had to be. Then the fat Owl rolled away towards the House.

"Here, stop!" came a voice, as he appeared in the light from within.

It was Loder's voice.

Evidently Loder was still on the prowl, watching fellows as they went in. Billy Bunter felt a deep thankfulness that the cake was no longer under his fat arm.

He blinked round through his big spectacles.

"Yes, Loder!" he squeaked.

Loder gave him a suspicious glare. He had not really suspected the Famous Five; but he did suspect Bunter. Fellows did, somehow, suspect Bunter when tuck was missing.

"Did you pinch a cake I left on the bench by the tuckshop half an hour ago?" demanded Loder.

"Oh, really, Loder—"

"I believe I saw you hanging about," growled Loder.

"I haven't been near the tuckshop, Loder!" gasped Bunter. "There's wet paint there, and—"

Loder gave an angry grunt and turned away. Bunter was a suspicious character where tuck was concerned; still, it was clear that the cake was not in his possession.

The fat Owl grinned as he rolled in.

"Here, stop!" It was Walker's voice. "Stop, Bunter!"

"Yes, Walker!"

Bunter blinked at him as innocently as he could.

James Walker gave him a searching stare. But there was obviously, no cake about Bunter; and the prefect gave him a nod.

"You can eat!" he said.

Bunter, like the deep and dark blue ocean in the poem, rolled on.

There was a cheery grin on his fat face when he turned up for calling-over. Loder could not keep on the prowl much longer; and the cake was safe, anyhow.

After roll, Billy Bunter followed the Famous Five into the Rag. It was lock-up now; and no fellow could go out of the House without special leave—unless he dropped unseen from a back window.

Bunter was not likely to ask for special leave to go out and field a pinched cake; and he was not keen on window-climbing stunts. Bunter's idea, like that of the monkey in the story, was to get a catpaw to pull his chestnuts out of the fire!

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, with a very serious blink at the Famous Five, "which of you fellows will cut out of the House for me?"

"The whichfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh.

"You see, I had to park that cake, with those Sixth Form cads watching a fellow like cats watching a mouse," explained Bunter. "It's all your fault, as you know. I'll whack it out with the fellow who goes. You go, Bob?"

"Not this evening!" grinned Bob.

"What about you, Nugent?"

"Nothing about me, fathead!"

"Now, look here, you fellows, it's all your fault that I had to leave Loder's cake—I mean, my cake—out of the

House!" said Bunter warmly. "It's up to you fellows to do something. Now—"

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said the captain of the Remove, "we'll lunge you for pinching Loder's cake!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Collar him!"

Billy Bunter did not wait to be bumped. He snorted and rolled away—to a group of juniors by the fire: Smithy, Skinner, Snoop, and Hazel-dene.

"I've simply got to phone!" Vernon-Smith was saying. "I heard Quelch tell Capper he was going down to the station to see about some luggage that hasn't turned up. I wonder if he's going—"

"I say, Smithy—"

"Roll away, barrel!" said the Bounder.

"But, I say, old chap: you've got more pluck than Wharton and his gang," said Bunter. "You ain't afraid to cut out of the House after lock-up, Smithy."

Smithy stared at him.

"What are you driving at, you fat ass?" he asked.

"I—I left a cake out in the quad, parked near the Head's gate!" breathed Bunter. "I—I had a rather special reason for not bringing it in with me—nothing to do with Loder of the Sixth, of course—"

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

"What are you cackling at, you fat-head?" demanded Bunter.

"Loder's asked half Greyfriars about that cake. So it was you!"

"Oh, no; I don't know anything about Loder's cake!" said Bunter hastily. "I never saw him lay it on the bench, and I certainly never nipped it up when he went to speak to Walker. So far as I know, he never went to speak to Walker at all. I haven't seen Walker since we came back—or Loder, either, for that matter. I'm speaking of quite another cake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stop cackling!" hooted Bunter. "A fellow can't open his mouth without a lot of silly asses cackling. Look here, Smithy, you're not afraid to drop out of the passage window after lock-up—"

"Not at all!" grinned the Bounder.

"You've done it before," said Bunter. "Well, old chap, you go and get that cake for me, and I'll stand you half. What about that?"

"Fathead!"

"If you're funky, Smithy, I can jolly well say—Whoa-hooooo! Leave off kicking me, you beast! You kick me again, Smithy, and I'll—Yaaaaaooop!"

Bunter departed in haste.

Catspaws seemed hard to find in the Remove. It really looked as if Billy Bunter would have to get out for that cake himself, if anybody got out for it.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Trail of Vengeance!

JAMES WALKER grinned.

The grin vanished from his face, however, as Gerald Loder's glittering eye turned on him.

Loder, it was clear, was in no temper to be grinned at.

Loder was standing at his study window, looking out into the frosty quad, when his pal came in. It was frosty and a little misty, but there was a pale gleam of wintry stars, and in that gleam Loder's eyes followed a

thickly coated figure that had left the House.

It was that of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove. Quelch, evidently, was going out now that the stress of first day of term was over. Loder scowled after him, not because Quelch had given him any offence, but because he was in a scowling temper.

But he turned from the window as Walker came in, his hand going unconsciously up to his ear to rub it. Hours and hours had elapsed since Mr. Hacker had pulled that ear at Lantham Junction, but Loder still felt a twinge in it. He was quite unaccustomed to ear-pulling.

Hence Walker's grin. Walker saw something funny in the episode which Loder could not see.

Plenty of fellows, indeed, saw something funny in it. Not only juniors, but seniors had grinned over it. It seemed to the exasperated Loder that all the school was grinning over it. Every time he caught a smile on a face he attributed it to that ear-pulling incident at Lantham. Plenty of fellows smiled, or laughed or chuckled about other things, but to Loder's sensitive and suspicious mind every spot of merriment that day was connected with himself.

He gave Walker a black look.

"Funny, isn't it?" he snarled.

Walker realised that his grin had not vanished fast enough.

"Oh, no; not at all, old chap!" said Walker amicably. "Frightful cheek of Hacker, if you ask me! Pulling a prefect's ear, by gad! What is Greyfriars coming to, I wonder?"

"I'll make him sit up for it, somehow!" snarled Loder.

Walker shut the door, opened the table drawer, and helped himself to one of Loder's cigarettes. That, probably, was why he had dropped in—not wholly for the pleasure of Loder's company. Gerald Loder was not very pleasant company that day.

"Did you get that cake back, old chap?" asked Walker, by way of judiciously changing the subject.

"Hang the cake!" grunted Loder.

"Well, we were going to have it at supper."

"Hang supper!"

"Hang everything and everybody, if you like!" said Walker cheerfully. "Put on a smoke, old man, and forget all about it."

Loder put on a smoke, but it was clear that he was not going to forget all about it.

"The cheeky rotter!" he said. "They call him the Acid Drop in his Form. But if he thinks he's going to treat me like a fag in the Shell—"

"It was thick!" agreed Walker. "Hacker's generally a bit ratty, but it was dooid thick, and no mistake! I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw him pulling your ear. Ha, ha!"

"Oh, laugh!" said Loder savagely.

"I didn't mean to, really, old chap. Still, it was funny in a way. The look on your face, you know, when Hacker had a grip on your ear!"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Well, I agree it was thick," said Walker. "I'd go to the Head. A beak is a beak, but he can't lay hands on a Sixth Form man. I can tell you, Dr. Locke would call him to order pretty quick, if he knew."

"What's the good of that?" snarled Loder. "I was pulling Hobson's ear at the time. Think the Head would stand for pulling a junior's ears? One of Hacker's boys, too. And he told me to let go, and I didn't. Hacker's got too

good a case for me to take it to the Head!"

Walker nodded.

"Well, between ourselves, Gerald, old man, you did rather cheek Hacker," he said. "I was in the next carriage. After all, a beak's a beak. He's an acid drop, but he's a beak."

"If he wasn't a beak I'd have smashed him!" said Loder, between his teeth. "I came jolly near knocking him down, as it was."

Walker winked at the smoke curling from his cigarette. He knew exactly how near Loder had been to knocking down a member of Dr. Locke's staff.

"Only it would be the sack," said Loder. "I remembered that in time."

"Well, the Head couldn't let even his prefects punch his staff, could he?" said Walker. "Hardly the thing."

"I'm not taking it lying down," said Loder. "I'm going to get back on him. I thought of pelting the cheeky fool with snowballs from behind a tree—"

"For goodness' sake don't be an ass, old man!" exclaimed Walker. "You'd have been spotted, tree or no tree."

"That's why I didn't."

"Much wiser not," agreed Walker. "Coming into Hall?"

"No; I've been thinking this out," said Loder, in a low, savage tone. "It's fixed that that cad Hacker isn't getting by with it—not without my getting back at him. I'm going to make him sorry for himself. He's gone to the Head's house for tea and a jaw," he added.

"Has he?" yawned Walker.

"I saw him go."

Walker gave his pal a quick and uneasy look. Gerald Loder was not the fellow, as a rule, to take a lot of risk; but in this sullen, savage, sulky temper, he made Walker feel a little uneasy.

"He went by the gate on the quad—at least, I saw him walking in that direction when I was hunting for the young sweep who bagged my cake," said Loder. "He will come back the same way, of course."

"Well, what about it?" asked Walker restively. "Look here, Gerald, if you're thinking of doing anything mad, leave me out of it. I'd rather not know anything about it."

Loder shrugged his shoulders.

"Suppose a fellow dropped from a study window, and waited for him by the Head's gate?" he said, in a low voice. "A few snowballs aimed at the cheeky old ass—lots of snow about—"

"And the sack to follow!" said Walker. "Don't be mad!"

"It's pretty dark and shadowy there—"

"Not dark enough for me, if I were you," said Walker. "Why, Hacker would know at once who it was. Think he's forgotten pulling your ear?"

"I'd like him to know; but, of course, it wouldn't do!" snarled Loder. "It would be the sack if a fellow was spotted, but—"

"Wash it out, for goodness' sake!"

"A fellow might fix himself up so that he wouldn't be known, even if he were seen," said Loder.

Walker grinned.

"Going to borrow theatrical gadgets from young Wibley in the Remove?" he asked. "False beard—what? Ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be a fool! Quelch has gone out—"

"What the dickens—"

"Suppose a chap nipped into his study and borrowed his cap and gown—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Then, if Hacker spotted who bunged the snowballs at him, all he would know was that it was some fellow who had

borrowed a master's outfit. He could never recognise a face in the dark. Might even think it was a beak. They all loathe Hacker."

"He would guess it was you at once, you ass!" howled Walker. "He would come straight to this study—"

"I should get in before he did!"

"What difference would that make?"

"He would find me here, going over Latin with a friend—"

"Eh?"

"Who would be prepared to swear that I hadn't been out of the House?"

"Oh erms!"

"That's the big idea!" said Loder.

Walker turned to the door.

"Leave me out of it," he said. "Bit too risky for my taste."

"Don't go," said Loder quietly. "Sit down, Jimmy, old man. I've done you some good turns, and now you've got to do me one. You can't turn a pal down."

James Walker hesitated. He was a weak-willed fellow, generally under Loder's influence. His unwillingness to take a share in this scheme of vengeance was plain enough. But that had no effect on Gerald Loder. Loder at the moment was just one lump of vengeful vindictiveness.

"Look here," said Walker feebly. "It's rot! It's just mad! You'll be sacked like a shot if they cop you!"

"Better not let them cop me, then. If I'm sacked through you letting me down, Jimmy, I might mention to the Head a few things from last term, and then I should go in company!" sneered Loder.

"Oh, don't be a cad!" snapped Walker. "I'll stand by you. But I think—"

"Sit down, and help yourself to the cigarettes, old man. Wait for me while I get through."

James Walker sat down, but he did not help himself to the cigarettes. Smokes seemed to have lost their flavour. He sat and waited, in an extremely unquiet frame of mind, while Gerald Loder was absent from the study. Loder on the trail of vengeance had a rather alarming effect on his pal.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Quite a Mystery!

HERBERT VERNON SMITH caught his breath.

Smithy was standing at Mr. Quelch's telephone, in his Form-master's study, when the door-handle turned.

Having ascertained that Mr. Quelch had gone out, Smithy had strolled quietly along to that study to borrow the telephone. Even on the first day of the term, the black sheep of the Remove was anxious to get in touch with Bill Lodgey at the Three Fishers. He had put through his call, and was replacing the receiver when the door-handle turned, giving the Bounder quite a startling shock.

There was no light in the study except a dim glimmer from the fireplace. Smithy had not, of course, ventured to turn on the light in Quelch's study. It was only that circumstance that saved him from discovery.

There had been no sound of footsteps in the passage to warn him. The turning of the door-handle was his first intimation that somebody was coming into the room.

The Bounder was taken quite by surprise.

He knew that Quelch had gone out, and could not possibly be returning yet.

Anyone coming to the study to see him would naturally have knocked at the door—and there had been no knock. So the Bounder would have been fairly caught had he been visible.

Had the newcomer switched on the light, it would have revealed him standing there at the telephone.

But the quick-witted Bounder needed only a moment.

The door was hardly open when Vernon-Smith had backed behind the table on which the telephone stood and ducked down.

He hardly breathed as he crouched there.

He expected, of course, that the light would go on. But as he knew that the newcomer could not be Quelch, it was probable that, whoever he was, he would not linger—in which case Smithy hoped to escape detection.

Borrowing a master's phone without leave meant fines, but that did not worry the Bounder very much. A possible inquiry into the call he had just made worried him a great deal. Smithy was a reckless fellow, but he shivered at the bare idea of his headmaster learn-

ing that he had called up the Three Fishers on his Form-master's telephone.

But the light did not go on.

Someone entered the study quickly and shut the door quietly. Vernon-Smith heard a sound of hurried breathing—and carefully suppressed his own.

Then he heard the newcomer moving in the room in the dark.

His alarm gave way to surprise.

The passage outside was lighted, though the study was not, and he had had a second's glimpse of the figure that entered. He knew that it was not a
(Continued on next page.)

LEARN TO PLAY FOOTBALL!

OUR INTERNATIONAL COACH

POSITIONAL PLAY

PUT on your thinking cap, chum, wrap your head up in a cold-water bandage, and retire to a quiet room where you can get down to this lesson without being disturbed. Although this is football, and not algebra or history, to-day's lesson may be the sort which will make your head go round in circles. It is really advanced stuff, but, at the same time, you can't get a proper idea about this game of football until you have grasped it. It will be some time before you can put this lesson into practice, but an understanding of it will make you better footballer—right away. So please do your best to follow me.

Last week we talked for a pretty long time about tackling—the right and wrong ways, when to tackle, and when not to tackle. This next step which I am going to deal with now leads on from there. I explained last week why the fellow who is marking the player with the ball must go in to tackle him, rather than hang back waiting for him to pass. Now let's look at the tackle from the point of view of the fellow who is to be tackled. He has a choice of two things—he can pass to a colleague, or he can hang on to the ball and try to avoid his opponent's tackle.

Suppose he decides to pass? Unless there is something radically wrong with the other side, all the colleagues of the player in possession of the ball will have an opponent marking them. I am not going to say that this fact completely cuts out the possibility of passing when you are tackled. A bit of clever positioning by a colleague, and a well-directed and "subtle" pass, may find the mark. But I will leave that for the moment, because you will get confused. For the immediate purpose, let us suppose that every player is marked by an opponent who will probably take the ball if it is passed.

And here we arrive at a tactical point which has a great deal to do with a football team's success or failure. If a player, when he is tackled, can hold on to the ball and avoid the tackle, he is, in that one action, giving an "exhibition" of the greatest secrets of success in football. Let me explain.

The secret of success in football is to keep the ball at your feet until you have drawn your opponents out of position . . . then pass it to a colleague who is unmarked.

DRAWING THE DEFENCE!

WHEN the player in possession avoids a tackle, and carries on unmolested with the ball at his feet, he has left the opponent who tackled him, well behind, probably on the ground. That opponent, unless he is exceptionally quick to recover, is temporarily out of the way. What happens? A colleague of the beaten opponent, seeing what has taken place, must leave the player he is marking to go over and tackle the player with the ball. The fellow in possession, you see, cannot be allowed to go on where he likes, without being tackled, and as the player who was marking him is on the ground yards behind, someone must come across to do his job for him.

Can you see the position now? The player with the ball, through beating his opponent, has drawn another opponent out of position. Somewhere there is a colleague who has been left unmarked, and he is free to take a pass. If the player with the ball can "hang on" again, and beat a second opponent, all well and good. There will then be two of his colleagues unmarked.

That, then, is the theory of all good football. There must be, in a football side, players who can beat an opponent by a trick or dodge, so that they can go on to draw other opponents out of position before they make the pass. I suppose you have all heard of Alex James, the ex-Arsenal forward, whom many people consider the cleverest footballer of all time. There can be no doubting that James had a great deal to do with Arsenal's period of success from 1930 to 1935. Do you know why James was such a great asset to his side? I'll tell you.

BALL CONTROL

JAMES gained a reputation as a master at the long pass to a colleague which would get defenders running about, and make goal-scoring easy. Such was his reputation in this respect that every time he got the ball two or three opponents would make a dive to tackle him, and try to take it from him. But Alex was football's greatest juggler. He always had a trick to beat these opponents who came crowding round. He would leave most of them sprawling on the ground, come out of the melee with the ball at his feet, and the rest was easy. Those players who had gone to tackle him had left their own particular opponents standing unmarked in front of goal. Alex James had only to pass the ball to one of them, and then into the goal it would go. He drew opponents to him, and then beat them. That is the way football should be played.

Think about that story of Alex James for a little while. Has it occurred to you that the whole system would have broken down, but for James' ability to beat those players who crowded round him? And why was he able to beat them? Simply because he had complete control over the ball. Without that control the various tricks he performed would have been impossible—he could never have beaten one opponent, let alone two or three. Thus the two most important things in football are directly combined; you must have ball control to enable you to beat opponents and draw attention from your colleagues. The successful side in football is the side which has players—inside forwards and wing half-backs particularly—who can hold the ball, take it through, and then give accurate passes.

We have rather forgotten that game we were playing, haven't we? Never mind! Think about what I have told you. Make drawings of a football field, with the twenty-two players all marking one another, and work out what happens when the player in possession beats his immediate opponent. Then, perhaps, next week we shall be able to work this into our game.

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junior, or he might have supposed that some fellow had dropped in, like himself, to borrow Quelch's phone. He knew that it was a senior, and he had an impression that it was Loder of the Sixth.

What a Sixth Form man could want in Quelch's study, especially in the dark, was a puzzle.

Smithy was almost certain that it was Loder. That made him all the more cautious.

Loder was a good deal of a black sheep himself, but that was not likely to make him considerate towards a black sheep in a junior Form—probably the reverse. Moreover, all the school knew that Loder was in the worst temper ever that day, owing to the ear-pulling episode at Lantham. Puzzled, but wary and cautious, the Bouncer kept carefully in cover.

That the half-seen fellow was "up" to something was plain enough, as he did not turn on the light.

Peering from under the table where he crouched, Smithy had a view of a pair of legs moving in the glimmer from the fireplace. They told him nothing except that the mysterious visitor to the study was undoubtedly a senior.

He heard a rustling sound, and was more and more puzzled as he realised that the fellow was taking down a gown that hung on a hook on the inside of the door.

What he could want with Quelch's scholastic gown was a deep mystery.

The Bouncer was hardly able to suppress a gasp of astonishment when he saw that the senior had put on the gown.

There was only a faint, dim glimmer from a few embers in the grate, but it revealed the figure now in a master's gown; and had he not been aware of how the matter stood, Smithy would

have supposed that it was a master standing there.

Dumbfounded, the Bouncer peered.

Why a fellow should come into a master's study and don a master's gown in the dark was beyond his powers of guessing. Certainly he could not intend to leave the study in it and walk down a lighted passage in Quelch's gown.

There was a sound of groping. Then a muttering voice:

"Where the dickens—"

Smithy guessed that he was looking for the mortar-board that went with the gown, though he could not guess why.

But that muttering voice was familiar. It was Gerald Loder of the Sixth Form who was arrayed in Quelch's gown and groping about in the gloom for Quelch's mortar-board.

A match scratched.

Vernon-Smith lagged cover as the light flickered. But he was in little danger. The flicker of the match did not reach so far as the table behind which he crouched. And it was quite clear that Loder had not the faintest suspicion that anyone but himself was in the study.

"Oh, here—" the voice muttered again.

The match went out.

Loder had found what he sought lying on the writing-table. Smithy could not see him, but he knew that Loder was adjusting the mortar-board on his head.

In breathless amazement, he waited for what was going to happen next. He heard a rustle as Loder crossed to the window.

The prefect was now quite near him; only the little table on which the telephone stood was between. The Bouncer hardly breathed.

He heard the lower sash pushed up. There was a chill draught of winter

air in the study. The evening was fine, but frosty and cold, with here and there the gleam of a star from a frosty sky. For a long minute Loder of the Sixth stood looking out.

Then he clambered quietly through the window.

He was going out—got up in a master's gown and cap! The Bouncer almost wondered whether he was dreaming this. In such a guise Loder could not, of course, be intending to go out of gates. Neither could he be thinking of showing up in the House. But why he wanted to go out into the quad in cap and gown had the Bouncer guessing.

Obviously, it was intended as a disguise; anyone seeing Loder in the dusky quad would have taken him for a master. But why? What on earth could Loder be up to that required disguise and such secrecy?

Smithy was not, as a rule, inquisitive, but he would have given a good deal to know. He was utterly puzzled and perplexed.

Loder slipped from the window-sill outside.

The sash was left up—clearly for his return the same way. That much was clear, but the rest was deep mystery.

Quietly Vernon-Smith rose from his cover behind the table; he looked from the window.

A figure in cap and gown, which he would certainly have taken for a master's had he not known that it was Loder's, was disappearing in the gloom. In a moment more it was gone.

"Well, my only hat!" murmured the Bouncer. "That beats it! That beats it hollow!"

He stood for a few moments staring out, then he turned and crossed to the door. How long Loder intended to play that peculiar game he could not know—and he certainly did not want the bully of the Sixth to catch him there when he came back.

Smithy opened the door and peered into the passage.

Mr. Prout and Monsieur Charpentier were visible at a distance.

Smithy had to wait till they cleared—at the risk of Loder coming back.

But Loder did not come back, and in a few minutes more the coast was clear, and Vernon-Smith slipped out of the study and walked away.

The Bouncer was not a fellow to tattle about what did not concern him, and he said nothing of that peculiar episode in Quelch's study, but as he joined the crowd of fellows in Hall he could not help wondering what Gerald Loder was "up" to out in the dusky quad.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Snowballs for Somebody!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Scat!"

"But, I say—"

"Bunk!"

"Beasts!" hissed Billy Bunter—and he scatted and bunked.

There was hardly a fellow in the Remove by this time whom Bunter had not asked to play the useful part of a catpaw, but on every side he found that catpaws were at a discount in the Lower Fourth.

Not a man in that Form seemed keen to take the risk of breaking House bounds after lock-up in order to retrieve Bunter's plunder for him.

He came back to the Famous Five as last; but they only told him to scat and bunk, which he unwillingly did.

Loder's cake was still jammed

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between the tree and the gatepost by the Head's garden gate. Evidently it had to remain there till the morning unless Bunter retrieved it himself.

Leaving it till the morning was scarcely possible. Bunter was in his usual state—hungry. The mere thought of that cake made him hungrier.

Bunter did not like taking risks, but if there was one thing in the wide universe that could induce Bunter to take risks it was tuck; and, after all, there was one great advantage in retrieving that cake personally—he would have it all to himself, instead of having to whack it out.

So the fat Owl made up his fat mind at last.

He rolled away from Hall and sought a certain secluded back passage where there was a negotiable window. His manner as he went was so excessively casual and careless that he would certainly have become the object of suspicion had anyone noticed him.

In the little back passage he blinked to and fro cautiously through his big spectacles; then he switched off the passage light, opened the little back window, and dropped out—slipping in the snow outside and sitting down with a bump and a grunt.

He picked himself up and scuttled away.

All was dark and silent, the snowy carpet on the earth glimmering from the dark, catching here and there a ray from a star.

Bunter lost no time.

In five minutes he was groping along the garden wall to the gate. He was fearfully cautious as he approached it.

He remembered that Mr. Hacker had gone in before call-over. If Hacker had gone to tea with the Head—as doubtless he had—he might have left already, or he might emerge at any moment.

Hacker was not Bunter's Form-master; but if he saw a Remove man out of the House after lock-up he was sure to report the same to Quelch, which would mean "six" for Bunter—as well as the probable loss of Loder's cake.

Bunter groped along, tramping silently through the snow. He reached at last the gate of the Head's garden and peered uneasily round through his big spectacles.

The gate creaked, and his fat heart almost jumped into his mouth. He suppressed a squeak of alarm and crouched down in the narrow space between the elm and the gatepost.

In that narrow space there was plenty of room for the box containing the cake, but there was not a lot of room for Bunter; it was a tight squeeze.

But it was the only available hiding-place; for, dark as it was, any figure would have shown up on the glimmering carpet of snow, and he dared not remain in the open.

The gate creaked again.

Bunter had no doubt that it was Hacker coming out.

His fat heart thumped as he waited for the master of the Shell to get clear.

Creak, creak!

The gate went on creaking, but it did not open.

It dawned on the fat junior at last that the gate was only creaking in the wind. Hacker was not coming—nobody was coming.

Reassured, the fat junior groped for the box containing the cake. There it was, just where he had parked it.

Creak, creak, creak! went the gate.

The fat Owl blinked out from behind the thick trunk of the elm to make sure

that the coast was clear; that creaking from the gate made him very nervous.

The next moment he was glad that he had been so cautious.

His little round eyes almost popped through his big round spectacles at the sight of a master's cap and gown.

His fat heart almost died within him.

It was a beak—coming directly towards the spot.

For a moment the fat Owl fancied that he was discovered. Then it flashed into his mind that very likely it was only some master going up to the Head's house by the garden path, as Hacker had done an hour ago.

Palpitating, he waited.

The gate creaked and creaked. Whether it was the wind, or whether the gate had opened and shut, Bunter did not know; but he knew, at all events, that he was not discovered. The figure did not approach the spot where he was squeezed between the elm and the gatepost.

He ventured to peer out after several long minutes of anguish. By that time surely the beast was gone.

The beast, however, was not gone.

He stood within ten feet of the Owl's spectacles, quite still—which was so surprising that Bunter doubted for a moment the evidence of his spectacles.

It was really extraordinary for a master to come out into the cold, wintry quad and stand there like a stone statue in the keen wind.

But there he was.

Bunter could not see his face in the deep dusk, under the mortar-board, but he made out the mortar-board and the gown.

And as he fixed his eyes on it in the glimmer of the starlight he made out something else—the glimmer of white paint on that gown.

Even in the dimness of the stars that glaring white paint that daubed the master's gown caught Bunter's eyes.

The fat junior hardly breathed.

In the gloom he could not have told one master from another, but there was no mistaking that paint-smothered gown; it was Quelch's gown. It was, therefore, Quelch—his own Form-master!

If Bunter had been scared before, he was doubly scared now. Out of the House after lock-up, with a cake in his possession for which a Sixth Form prefect had been inquiring up and down the school! The bare idea of Quelch's gimlet-eyes fixing on him and the cake made Bunter feel quite faint.

But the beak was not even looking in his direction. Amazing as his actions were, he was standing there, staring towards the gate and listening with bent head.

After a few moments, realising that he was safe from observation if he made no sound, curiosity became as strong as terror in Bunter's podgy breast. What on earth was Quelch's game?

But if Bunter was surprised already, he was still more surprised at what followed.

The figure stooped and began to gather snow; quickly he kneaded snowball after snowball.

This was the climax of astonishment.

It was weird enough for a master to come out and stand there in the dark by the Head's gate, but for that master to gather snowballs was the limit; it was really too amazing.

Quelch could hardly be going to snowball anybody. Besides, there was nobody there, except Bunter—unseen. Quelch did not know that he was there; but even had he known, it was unimaginable that the Remove master was

going to buzz snowballs at a member of his Form.

But there it was—he was kneading snowballs—big, round, hard ones, with care. He packed three or four under his left arm, ready for use—and gripped one in his right hand, ready to hurl.

Bunter blinked dizzily. His only possible conclusion was that Henry Samuel Quelch had gone mad.

Having prepared his ammunition, the figure in cap and gown backed a little, under the tree behind which Bunter was parked with the cake. There was no danger of his seeing Bunter, as he had, of course, no eyes in the back of his head. But he was dangerously close, and the fat Owl blinked in terror at his back—getting an expansive view of the white paint from Mr. Mumble's door.

Amazing as it was, astounding as it was, unbelievable as it was, that "beak" was ambushed by the Head's gate, waiting to snowball somebody.

Whom was he going to snowball? Hacker, perhaps, if Hacker hadn't gone already. Or the Head! The idea of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, snowballing either a colleague on the staff or his venerable chief, made Bunter feel quite dazed.

But there could be no mistake about it. Quelch must be as mad as a hatter. That was what he was going to do.

Minutes passed—long minutes; the figure waited—Bunter blinked at it's paint-daubed back. The gate creaked and creaked in the wind. Then, at last, came another sound. It was a frudging footstep on the snowy path in the Head's garden.

Bunter caught the sound of a sudden breath from the hitherto silent figure only a few feet from him. The right arm was raised. There could not be a vestige of doubt now. Quelch was going to snowball whomsoever it was coming out of the Head's garden.

The fat Owl changed the direction of his blink—blinking over the gate. From the dark path within the garden, a shadow loomed—impossible to make out clearly in the gloom, thickened by the branches of the elm. But the sound of an opening gate came clearly.

Whiz! Smash!

"Oooooogh!" came a startled gasp.

Whiz! Smash! Squash!

"Urrrgh!"

Bump!

There was a heavy fall on the garden path. Wild gasping and gurgling came from the fallen one.

Whiz, whiz, whiz! Smash! Squash! Smash!

Three more snowballs, buzzing swiftly and with deadly aim across the gate, crashed and smashed on the sprawling figure within the garden.

Then Bunter heard a sound of running feet.

He blinked round.

The paint-spattered gown was vanishing in the gloom. It was gone in a moment.

Bunter remained petrified—horrible gasps and gurgles from the snowballed one coming to his ears.

Who it was, he did not know—either the Head or Hacker. Neither did the fat Owl stop to learn. Quelch was gone—and in one moment more, Bunter was gone—fleeing with Loder's cake under his arm.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Not Hacker!

GERALD LODER stepped swiftly into his study, and closed the door after him.

He stood breathing fast.

James Walker stared at him.

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Loder had been absent nearly half an hour. Walker had seldom spent a more anxious and uncomfortable half-hour.

"Well!" he breathed.

Loder was a little breathless. He had run hard, after getting his man, clambered in at Quelch's window, left cap and gown where he had found them, and walked along to his own study. There was going to be some excitement soon, he had no doubt; but there was no sound of excitement yet. Nobody in the House, so far, knew that a master had been knocked over by snowballs at the Head's garden gate. Loder was well away in time.

"All serene!" he said. "I got him!"

"Oh, you fathead!" muttered Walker. "You actually got Hacker?"

"Got him as he came back by the gate. I let him have half a dozen—smashing all over him. Knocked the brute right off his feet!"

"By gum—a master!"

"He shouldn't be so handy at pinching a fellow's ear!" sneered Loder. "I only wish I could let him know I knocked him over!"

"You can bank on it that he will guess!"

"All the better—so long as he can't prove it!" said Loder coolly. "I'd like him to know I've got my own back. So long as he's got nothing on me, all right."

"Did he see you?"

"I think not—I hardly saw him; it was pretty dark there. If he did, he only saw a mortar-board and a gown!" Loder grinned. "If he suspects, he can't prove anything! I've been with you the last hour—you can prove it!"

"Bet you he will come here—"

"Let him!" Loder shrugged his shoulders. "Don't smoke—he would sniff it, and jump at a chance! Get out some books! You came in here to help me unpack some books—and we got interested in Cicero!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Good enough for Hacker! He can't prove anything else!"

Loder sorted out books and opened a Ciceronian volume on the study table. That was all ready to meet a suspicious eye. Then he took a brush, and carefully brushed his boots clean. There was nothing about Loder now to indicate that he had been out of doors since lock-up.

He had, he was sure, covered all his tracks, and was safe. Had he only known it, one junior had seen him putting on Quelch's cap and gown in Quelch's study—another had witnessed the snowballing at the Head's gate.

Unaware of that, Loder was quite easy in his mind.

Walker was far from easy. He waited in trepidation for footsteps to come along the passage. He was assured that Hacker would suspect Loder at once, and come to his study, to inquire or to denounce.

He was surprised, but no less uneasy, when minute followed minute, and no footsteps came. Neither was there any sound to be heard of any unusual perturbation in the House.

That was a surprise to Loder, too.

He had pictured Hacker tottering into the House, spluttering with rage, drawing everybody's attention to what had happened. He had expected to get in only a few minutes before Hacker.

But nothing unusual was to be heard, and he was puzzled.

He did not care to go out and investigate. In the circumstances, it was not judicious to show a sign that he had expected anything to happen!

But he would have been very glad to know what was going on. Surely an

acid drop like Hacker was not taking such an assault quietly?

"Sure you got him?" asked Walker, at last.

"Fathead! I tell you he went down bump, and I smashed the snowballs on him right and left!" snapped Loder.

"Well, he's the man to kick up a row about it. Nothing seems to have happened."

"He may have gone back to the Head's house, instead of coming on—"

"Why should he?"

"Well, to put it up to the Big Beak first thing—"

"Well, there would be a row all the same. There hasn't been a row. Look here, I suppose you did get Hacker—not somebody else? If old Gosling was rooting about—"

Loder started.

"Oh, rot!" he snapped. "What would the school porter be doing in the Head's garden after dark? It was Hacker all right."

"Well, if it was, it's jolly queer he hasn't raised Cain about it yet. I fancy—"

Walker broke off, as there was a step outside and a tap at the door.

"Come in!" called out Loder. He bent his head over Cicero, and, as the door opened, went on, without looking up: "That you, Wingate? I'm rather busy now—taking a dig into this with Jimmy—"

"It is me, Loder!" said an acid voice. Loder looked up, and rose to his feet.

Mr. Hacker stood in the study doorway. Both the seniors looked at him—Loder cool and collected, Walker suppressing his uneasiness.

Both of them were surprised to see that Hacker was cold and calm as usual, with no sign of excitement about him, and no trace of having been through a boisterous experience with whizzing snowballs.

"Oh, you, sir!" said Loder easily. "What is it?"

"All the prefects are required in the Head's study!" said Mr. Hacker. "Dr. Locke has asked me to call them."

"Oh! Has anything happened, sir?"

"Yes, Loder; a very serious occurrence," said Mr. Hacker. "A most extraordinary thing, which will probably lead to an expulsion from the school!"

"Indeed! That's rather startling, sir!" said Loder. "May I ask what it is, sir?"

"Nothing less than an attack on the headmaster!" said Mr. Hacker.

"Wha-a-t?"

"The—the Head?" gasped Walker.

"Not—not the Head?" said Loder faintly.

"Yes! It is really amazing," said Mr. Hacker. "Some boy must have been out of the House after lock-up. No doubt a junior. It is scarcely credible that any Greyfriars boy could have the nerve, the impudence, the audacity, to hurl snowballs at his headmaster; but that appears to be actually what has happened."

"Oh!" gasped Loder. He felt as if his head was turning round. "When—when—when did it—it happen, sir?"

"About half an hour ago, I gather," said Mr. Hacker. "It must have been soon after I left Dr. Locke—he mentioned to me that he intended to take a walk in the quadrangle before dinner."

"Oh!" gasped Loder.

"The Head!" murmured Walker.

"Oh!"

"Some boy, it seems, was out of the House—indeed, it would almost seem that he was actually lying in wait for the Head," said Mr. Hacker. "That, however, cannot be possible, as he cannot have known that Dr. Locke intended

to take a walk. But it's certain that the boy was near the Head's gate, and hurled snowballs at him as he was opening the gate—"

"Oh!" gasped Loder again.

"I understand that it was some time before Dr. Locke felt sufficiently recovered to walk back to his house," said Mr. Hacker. "I fear that the reckless young scoundrel has had plenty of time to make his escape. Please go to the Head's study at once—all the prefects are required to begin an investigation immediately."

Mr. Hacker walked on—to call more prefects.

Walker looked at Loder.

Loder's face was ghastly.

"You fool!" breathed Walker.

"Oh gad!"

"You idiot!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"You mad ass!"

"Oh, shut up! How was I to know? That old ass must have come back by the Head's private door into the House—instead of by the quad. How could I know?"

"You potty fathead!"

"The—the Head. Oh crikey! The Head!" Loder seemed hardly able to realise it yet. "The Head! What rotten luck!"

"You blithering cuckoo!"

"How was I to know? One old ass comes back by the private door instead of the way he went—and the other old ass goes for a silly walk—"

"You priceless idiot!"

"Shut up, blow you! Come on—we've got to lend a hand in investigating this!" gasped Loder. "Oh crikey! What a job for me! If you breathe a single syllable—"

"You unspeakable chump!"

"Shut up, you fool, and come on!"

And Loder and Walker joined the army of prefects marching to the Head's study to take their part in a searching investigation into that extraordinary and unprecedented attack on the headmaster of Greyfriars—though certainly without the remotest intention of discovering the culprit.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for the School!

"HEARD!" yelled Skinner.

"What?"

"The Head—"

"What about the Head?"

"Snowballed!"

"Rot!"

"Knocked off his venerable pins!"

"Gammon!"

"Somebody's going to be sacked for this!" said Skinner. "Who's been out of the House since lock-up? You, Smithy?"

"Not guilty?" grinned the Bounder.

"You, Cherry?"

"Fathead!"

"But it's not true, of course?" said Harry Wharton, staring at Skinner. "I can't imagine any chap having the nerve to snowball the Head!"

"Hardly!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"My dear man, it's all over the House!" said Skinner. "All the prefects have been called up—all the beaks in a buzz! Prout's turned quite purple! I heard him tell Capper that it was an unprecedented and unparalleled—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five were in Study No. 1 discussing baked chestnuts and football prospects for the term, when Skinner brought the startling news up to the Remove. Other fellows were in the



"Ooooooooooogh!" gasped Mr. Quelch, as his foot slipped on the trampled snow and he staggered against the newly painted door of the tuckshop. "Upon my word!" From the collar to the tail, his gown was smothered with white paint.

studies—others in the passage. There was no prep on the first night of term; and the Removs were scattered, some in the studies, some in the Rag, and some in Hall. But a dozen Remove men gathered round, as Skinner yelled the news.

"Snowballed the Head!" said the Bounder. "Some nerve!"

"The nervefulness must have been terrific!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh, with a doubtful look at Skinner.

The news was so startling that it was not easy to believe. It would have been startling enough to learn that any master had been knocked over by a wild and reckless snowballer. But the Head! That was almost unimaginable!

"They're all jawing about it downstairs!" said Skinner. "We're starting this jolly old term with a sensation, my beloved 'easers! Who'd have thought it?"

Hazeldene came running up the Remove staircase, his face full of excitement.

"You fellows heard?" he gasped. "The Head—"

"Then it's true!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Bashed over by snowballs?" gasped Hazel. "From what I hear, somebody got him in the quad, or in his garden—knocked him spinning—"

"What howling as—" exclaimed Peter Todd.

"Goodness knows! It's the sack for him! Must have been mad, I think!" said Hazel. "Dirty trick, too! Quelch, if you like, or Hacker—but the Head—that's altogether too thick!"

"But who could have been potty enough?" exclaimed the captain of the Removes. "Not one of us, anyhow! Not even Smithy would be such a fool!"

"Thanks!" grinned the Bounder.

"Smithy hasn't been out of the House," said Tom Redwing hastily.

"Glad I haven't, too, in the giddy cires!" grinned Smithy. "I was thinkin' of cuttin' out to see a man, but I got him on the phone instead. By gum! They'll be after any man who's been out since lock-up!"

The Removites, in great excitement, crowded down the stairs to hear the latest news.

Only one fellow remained up in the studies.

That one was William George Bunter. Bunter, in Study No. 7, was travelling through a large cake. It was such an extensive cake that even Bunter had not quite finished it yet.

Until it was finished Bunter was not likely to heed other matters. Any amount of excitement would not have drawn him from his lair till he had finished Loder's cake. While all Greyfriars buzzed with the startling news, Billy Bunter travelled on steadily through the cake, to the last crumb and the last plum.

Everybody else was in a buzz.

Now that the news was out, it spread like wildfire.

Form-masters showed unwonted signs of excitement. Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was booming, with a deep, continuous boom, like that of the stormy ocean. Capper and Wiggins were quite excited—Hacker sardonic, as usual—Monsieur Charpentier gesticulating frantically. Mr. Quelch, coming in, in the midst of the excitement, and leaving what was toward, seemed hardly able to believe his ears.

Prefects were already actively on the prowl. The whole body of prefects had been summoned to the Head's study to hear what had happened from a very agitated headmaster.

They were all keen and on the alert.

Loder especially was questioning juniors right and left with great zeal. Several times Loder was heard to remark that the offender must, of course, have been a junior—the only question was which, out of so many.

It was not much use to question fellows, however. As there was not the slightest doubt that the offender would be expelled as soon as discovered, it was fairly certain that he would keep his own counsel, if he could. Loder, least of all, expected any junior to own up.

A buzzing crowd in Hall discussed the matter breathlessly, and compared notes, and pieced the story together. The Head, it seemed, had had tea in his own house, with Mr. Hacker there. Hacker had stayed for some little time after tea, and then returned to the School House by way of the Head's private passage and door; the bitter weather not tempting him out of doors a second time.

The Head had then gone out, to take a little walk in the quad, by way of his garden path. At the gate on the quad, someone—unknown—had suddenly pelted him with snowballs in the dark, knocking him over on his venerable and majestic back, and pelting him farther while he thus sprawled.

It seemed that the venerable gentleman had been some little time in collecting himself after that outrageous and amazing attack, before he was able to totter back to his house.

After which he sent word for the prefects to attend him in his study; and Hacker went round to call them.

Obviously, sufficient time had elapsed for the snowballer to make his escape a dozen times over.

More than half an hour had elapsed between the snowballing of the head

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LITERARY—No. 1,560.

DOCTOR BIRCHEMALL AND THE BEAR!

A Laughable Story of Jack Jolly & Co.,
the Mirth-Makers of St. Sam's.

By DICKY NUGENT



The GREYFRIARS

No. 274.

EDITED BY HAZEL

I.

The Christmas holidays were over and the time had come for the boys of St. Sam's to return to skool. And Jack Jolly and Merry and Bright were looking not so jolly and merry and bright as usual as they gazed across the frosty lawns from the winders of the library at Jolly Lodge.

"I wish the holidays lasted a little longer," sighed Merry. "Fancy having to go back on the very day when the circus opens in the village!"

"It's rotten, and no mistake!" said Bright, with a sad shake of his head. "It would have made a good finish to the week if we'd been able to see that circus to-night."

"Of course, we might have managed to miss the train if only Doctor Birchmall hadn't been staying here," remarked Jolly. "But as it is, I'm afraid he'll expect us to catch the same train as he does, and in that case—"

"I say, you chaps! Heard the news?"

Frank Fearless burst into the library in a state of grate eggstement before Jolly could finish his sentence. The three at the winders turned round in surprize.

"No. What is it, old chap?" they demanded.

"There's a feroshus bear escaped from the circus in the village!" was Frank's reply. "It's wandering over the countryside and the police and other helpers are scouring the fields to find it!"

"Few!"

"I wonder if it's likely to wander in this direction?" asked Bright. "It would be a stroke of luck for us if it turned up just when we were setting out for the station. We'd miss our train and spend another night here, then; and we could see the circus!"

Jack Jolly gave a wissle.

"My hat! I've got a branewave, you fellows! Let's arrange for a bear to appear in the grounds just before it's time to go!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Not the real one, of course," grinned the captain of the Fourth. "I mean just a bogus one for the Head's bennyfit."

Say Fearless, for instance, with this bearskin we're standing on wrapped round him!"

"Grate pip!"

"You'd only have to show yourself once while the Head was looking out," chuckled Jolly. "Once would be enuff, I fancy! You wouldn't catch him venchering out of doors for a fortune till the bear was under lock and key again!"

"Ha, ha! Not likely!"

"What do you think of the wheeze, then, you fellows?" asked Jolly.

For answer, Merry and Bright and Fearless surrounded their leader and thumped him on the back with real enthwainism.

"Topping, by Jove!" said Bright.

"Spiffing!" grinned Merry.

"You can rely on me to play the part of the bear all right, old chap," grinned Fearless. "I've had previous eggstperience to guide me, you know—once at a party I took the part of the elephant's hind legs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Jolly glanced at his watch.

"Well, we haven't much time to spare. I suggest that we slip up to my room with this bearskin right now. Give me a hand, you chaps!"

"Yes, rather!"

And Merry and Bright and Fearless willingly helped their leader to roll up the bearskin which adorned the floor of the library and carry it up to Jolly's bedroom.

They were grinning all over their faces as they quitted the library.

But had they been there a few seconds later they might not have felt so cheerful about Jack Jolly's branewave. For, no sooner had they closed the door behind them than a bearded figger arose from out of the depths of a luxurious armchair by the fire.

It was Doctor Alfred Birchmall—and he had heard every word they had uttered!

A sinneral smile played about the Head's lips as he rose to his feet. He laughed gloatingly.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho! So that's the little game, is it?" he muttered to himself.

"But even disguising Fearless as a feroshus animal will not stop me taking them back to skool to-day. I'm afraid they'll simply have to grin and 'bear' it! Ha, ha, ha!"

Chuckling merrily over his little joke, Doctor Birchmall hopped out of the library. He pawed in the hall to tie a woollen skarf round his



neck and put on a topper. Then he went out into the grounds of Jolly Lodge.

From one of the bedroom winders Jolly and Merry and Bright watched him and grinned in antissipation.

"He's taking a last trot round the grounds before it's time to go down to the station!" Jolly called out to Fearless, who was just putting the final touches to his disguise in front of a mirror. "It's just as though he's playing right into our hands!"

"Well, if I do scare him, it will be no small feat!" grinned Fearless; then his tone changed slightly, as he joined his pals at the window. "Oh, crums! Your pater has joined him now, Jolly!"

"So he has. Never mind, old chap, it won't make any difference," said Jolly, cheerfully. "Even if the pater duzzent feel funky at the sight of a bear, the Head will!"

But at that moment Jolly's cheerfulness left him. Something he had suddenly spotted out of the window had given him the shock of his natural. His jaw dropped and his fourfinger trembled, as he pointed down the drive of Jolly Lodge.

"Look!" he cried, hoarsely.

The rest of the Co. looked. Then it was their turn to get the shock.

Waddling up the drive towards the clump of trees where Doctor Birchmall and General Jolly were jawing was the ungainly figger of a real bear—the feroshus bear which had escaped from the circus!

II.

"There's a bear escaped from the circus, Birchmall!" were General Jolly's first words, when he joined the Head under the trees. "Heard about it?"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Doctor Birchmall.

General Jolly looked scrpeized. He had always been under the impression that the Head was a bit of a cowlherd. Yet here he was, grinning all over his face at the news that a wild animal was at large.

"Gad, sir! It's hardly a matter for harfter!" he said. "Of course, it's hardly likely; but it's just possible that this dangerous animal will find its way into these grounds."

"Puh! I shouldn't worry if I were you, general!" said the Head, with an unconcerned shrug. "Be like me—brave as a lion!"

"Oh, gad!" gasped General Jolly. "I always thought you were as nervuss as a rabbit!"

Doctor Birchmall chuckled.

"Really, general, I can't think where you could have got such a weord idea as that! Why, if that escaped bear came along now, do

you know what I would do?"

"Yell blue merder and run for your life?" suggested General Jolly.

"Nothing of the kind, I assure you!" said the Head with a sniff. "I would march up to it with my usual indomitable curridge and seeze it by the scruff of the neck and shake it as a terrier shakes a ratt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, general, I fail to see anything whatever to harf at—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Turn round and see what's coming, then!" roared General Jolly.

As he spoke, the general pointed down the drive and prepared to do a bunk. Brave old soldier as he was, he did not intend to stay and try concloosions with the feroshus-looking wild beast which had just appeared through the trees; and he quite eggpected that the Head's boastful promises would be instantly forgotten when he spotted the newcomer.

Of course, he had no idea that the Head was eggexpecting Fearless to disguise himself as a bear; and even had he known this he would never have guessed that the Head would have made any mistake about the grate hulking broot which was lumbering towards them now.

But Doctor Birchmall, who was in many ways a prize idjut, had not the slightest doubt that it was only Fearless; so, instead of running away, he simply staggered General Jolly by calmly walking forward to meet the bear!

"Don't get the wind up, my dear general!" he grinned. "If I'm anything of a profit, this animal is going to find that the trouble that is 'bruin' will be more than he can 'bear'! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grate gad!" gasped the general.

He pawed and looked back—his eyes almost bulging from their sockets. Surely the Head did not seriously mean to tackle this grate beast?

But apparently Doctor

Birchmall still

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ARE YOU THE AVERAGE SCHOOLBOY?

Asks BOB CHERRY

Some johnny wrote a brainy article in a newspaper last week saying that the future of civilisation depended on reliable statistics. He also said that everybody ought to help to compile statistics so that scientists would have plenty of material.

So I have been collecting statistics all through the hole to do my bit in this great cause.

My statistics aim at finding out what sort of a chap the average schoolboy is. I have obtained them from a most reliable source—namely, from Wharton, Nugent, Johnny Bull and Icky. This is what I have arrived at:

IN ONE YEAR THE AVERAGE SCHOOLBOY—

Eats 525 1/5th currant buns.
Writes 6,826 2/5ths lines as impots.
Scores 18 3/5ths goals.
Hits 893 4/5ths runs.
Says "My hat!" 5,324 1/5th times.
Takes 38 3/5ths wickets.
"Bends over" 29 1/5th times.
Drinks 218 bottles of ginger-pop.
Raises his cap on 2,854 2/5ths occasions.
Receives 2 1/5th black eyes.

My statistics are guaranteed to be absolutely correct and scientific. So if you want to know whether or not you are an average schoolboy yourself, just dot down in your diary every time one of these events occurs. At the end of 1938 you'll know!

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

"WOULD-BE ATHLETE."—"Whenever I go running I get pins-and-needles and the stitch."
Is that "sew" ?
"CURIOUS."—"Is it true that a man-eating tiger once roamed round Greyfriars ?"
No; and the yarn that it happens every day in the Remove Form Room is a libel on Mr. Quelch.

He was
anyway
konfident
ex.
me, general,"

moment he
bear and
at its neck.
after that
greatest shock

The bear
with a
bellow and
him with
—and the
only woke up
that it was
Fearless after
bear!

to say, the
soon van-
the Head's
made that
His jaw
his nose
ber, and the
opnot stood
ly that his
right off his

ed shriek of
Birchemall
avoid the
then turned
his life.

Help!
"Gee!" he
galloped
the trees.
hunched
growing

ly, after a
hesitation,
follow, and,
off in pur-
and Merry
stream-
house and
the lawn
chase.

of the next
the Head
old dance.
been brave
he thought
Frank Fear-
that the
was hot on
found he had

Speeding
champion
er-track, he
lawn and
Jolly Lodge
angly short

reached the
at the
house. And
idea came
Jolly.

There's a
in that shed
for the
is the gro-
ed. "Let's

fetch it out an' try to
ensnare the bear!"

"Good wheeze, pa-
ter!" grinned Jack
Jolly. "Lend a hand,
you chaps!"

While the Head con-
tinued to dodge about
with the bear still hum-
bering after him, Jolly's
pals lent a hand—and
soon emerged from the
shed armed with the
netting.

General Jolly and
Merry took one end
between them while Jolly
and Bright took the
other end. Then they
sallied forth.

It was a thrilling mo-
ment when at last they
mannidged to dash in
between the bear and
his quarry. They had a
still bigger thrill when
the bear lurched into
the net and rolled over,
fighting fiercely to es-
cape.

It needed a lot of
patience to subdue the
grate beast; but sub-
dued it they did in the
end.

By that time it was
wrapped round and
round at least a
duzen times—and
so firmly entangled
in the netting that
it could scarcely
move a lin.

"Gentagad! That
was waria work
while it lasted,
boys!" gasped the
general. "But I
fancy it's harmless
enuff now. Let's
got back to the house
and ring up the
circus!"

"Yes, rather!"
As they tramped
back to the house,
Doctor Birchemall
emerged from behind
a bush and joined
them. Now that
the danger was over,
the Head was grin-
ning cheerfully
again.

"Thanks awfully,
everybody, for help-
ing me to capture
the beast," he said.
"It must have been
a grate strain to
nervous people like
you; but, of course,
I didn't notice it
myself!"

"Grate pip!"
"Why, I never
saw such an egg-
hibition of funk in
all my life!" cried

General Jolly. "The
only thing that puzzles
me is that you had
pluck enuff to go near
it in the first place."

"Pah! A meer noth-
ing, my dear general!"
grinned the Head. "If
anybody tells you it was
only because I thought
it was Fearless dis-
guised, don't believe
him. The fakt is, it was
because I am such a
hero!"

"My hat! Now we
understand!" grinned
Jolly. "You must have
been lissening to us in
the library, sir!"

"Ahem! Well, I may
have overheard a few
snatches of conversation,
Jolly," admitted the
Head cautiously. "But
the fakt remains that it
takes more than a bear
to scare me. You—"

The Head broke off
suddenly—an egg-
pression of sheer terror
in his eyes!

Coming down the steps
of the house was another
bear. True, it was a
much smaller bear than

the previous one and
the chances were that it
was only Frank Fearless.
But the Head was taking
no chances this time.

He turned round and
made a wild dash for the
lodge at the gates—
followed by a yell of
harfter from Jack Jolly
& Co., who had already
reckernised Fearless be-
neath the bearskin that
covered him.

By the time the Head
reappeared that day it
was too late to catch the
train back to St. Sam's.
So the return was post-
poned till the following
day, and they all had a
ripping time at the
circus in the evening.

And that, in the
opinion of Jack Jolly &
Co., made a very fitting
end to the affair of
Doctor Birchemall and
the Bear!

WHO "NOSE"?

Fish has a cousin in
the U. S. Navy.
A nasal naval officer,
we wonder?

KIPPS TOOK HIS TRICKS TO THE PARTY!

But Nobody Asked Him to Play

When Kipps is
asked to a party,
he takes it for
granted that he
and his conjuring
tricks are going
to be the star
turn of the even-
ing.

That was what
he thought when
he was asked to
a party at Maul-
ever Towers.

When he arrived
he had two bags
with him—a very
small one and a
very large one.
The very small
one contained
his pyjamas and tooth-
brush; the very large
one contained his con-
juring tricks.

But nobody asked
Kipps to do any con-
juring tricks.

Of course, this was
awfully thoughtless of
them. But the fact is,
chaps get all they want



of Kipps' conjuring
tricks during term time,
and it's rather a relief
to be free of them over
the hole.

Kipps failed to see it
in that light. He had
come prepared to do
conjuring tricks, and
he intended to do them
in the hole.

As soon as high tea was
over, he said:

"What about a few
tricks?"

But Mandy had hired
a band and there were
girls present from Cliff
House. And when some-
body said: "What about
a dance?" Kipps had to
take a back seat.

But this was not for
long. Just when the
band was about to strike
up, a chap with a trom-
bone discovered that his
trombone would not
play.

Kipps offered to look
into it and find out what
was wrong with the
instrument. Can you
guess what he found in-
side it?

Half-a-dozen tennis
balls and about half-a-
mile of coloured ribbon!

The ribbon he sol-
emnly piled up in a
heap beside the band
and the tennis-balls he
used for a brief exhi-
bition of juggling.

"Now, look here, you
chaps, what about a few
conjuring tricks?" he
asked persuasively, when
he had finished.

But conjuring tricks
were still at a discount

and everybody prepared
to dance again.

Then there was an-
other stop. Weird sounds
were coming from the
violin.

Kipps looked into it.
Coolly removing the back
of the violin, he brought
to light a live pigeon,
which he sent on a flight
round the ball-room!

"If you'd care to see
a few tricks—" he
began.

And then, when the
guests still ignored his
suggestion, he began to
set to work in earnest.
Rabbits and mice began
to appear on the floor
as if by magic, and Kipps
started discovering eggs
in fellow's ears and
mouths. The dance
ended in disorder.

Mandy finally called
for silence.

"Begad! I think, for
our own comfort, we had
better let Kipps do a
few conjuring tricks!"
he said. And Kipps did;
and after that everybody
was happy.

The moral seems to
be—if Kipps brings his
tricks to a party, for
goodness' sake ask him
to play!

BUNTER'S BIG BLUNDER!



(Continued from page 13.)

master and the beginning of the investigation.

Somebody had been out of the House. Nobody was out of the House now. The unknown miscreant had got in again long ago.

Gosling had been questioned. Gosling, it seemed, had been pottering about. But he had seen no one in the quad except a master.

Which master he did not know, but he knew that it was one of the masters by the cap and gown. Probably Mr. Wiggins, who had gone out for a few minutes' trot after tea. He had seen nobody else. Loder of the Sixth was very glad that Gosling had not had a close view of the wearer of the cap and gown.

Mr. Mumble had been questioned. Mr. Mumble had been touching up the paint on the tuckshop door—which needed touching up after Quelch had rubbed off so much on his gown. But Mr. Mumble had seen nobody about except someone whom he thought was one of the masters in the dusky distance. Probably Mr. Wiggins again!

Gosling and Mumble were, therefore, as good as drawn blank. Nobody else was likely to have seen anything outside the House.

"Looks as if they won't get the man!" Bob Cherry remarked. "Unless—"

"Unless?" asked Harry.

"Unless the Head has come down heavy on somebody to-day. I suppose the fellow, whoever he was, must have had his back up to do such a thing."

"That might be a clue!" agreed Wharton.

But nobody could hear of any fellow on whom the Head had "come down heavy" on the first day of term.

It looked, really, as if the episode was a wild and reckless prank of some utterly irresponsible fellow. And by the time supper in Hall was announced, and no discovery had been made, most of the fellows came to the conclusion that no discovery was likely to be made.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Amazing News!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"For goodness' sake chuck it, Bunter! Nobody's going out after that mouldy cake—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"And if anybody did he would hand it over to the owner!" added the captain of the Remove. "So ring off and give us a rest!"

"But I say—"

"Pack it up, old fat man!" said Bob Cherry.

It was after supper. In the excitement of what had happened to the Head, and the search for the secret snowballer, Harry Wharton & Co. had quite forgotten about Bunter and his cake. Neither were they pleased to be

reminded of it. They "shooed" off the fat junior like a fowl!

But Bunter was not to be shooed off. His eyes were popping with excitement behind his spectacles.

It was not the cake that excited Bunter now. That cake had been retrieved and disposed of before supper. In had, indeed, filled up so much of Billy Bunter's capacious interior that he had hardly wanted a fourth helping at supper. Bunter was wildly excited—from quite another cause.

At supper he had heard about the Head. He had been wondering—so far as his thoughts wandered from Loder's cake—who it was that had got the snowballs at the Head's gate. Now he knew!

He was bursting with it. Quelch had snowballed the Head. It was amazing—so amazing that even Bunter hesitated to tell such a tale. Moreover, Quelch was his Form-master, and would, of course, be fearfully enraged if given away. But it was a physical impossibility for Bunter to keep it quite to himself.

"I say, you fellows, don't be asses!" he breathed. "I say, I don't know what to do about it."

"Take it back to Loder!" suggested Bob.

"Eh? Take what back to Loder?"

"His cake!"

"I ain't talking about the cake, fat-head! I ate it before supper—"

"Did you?" Harry Wharton gave the fat Owl a little attention at last as he heard that.

If Bunter had eaten that cake that cake must have been fetched into the House. Some fellow must have gone out for it. And masters and prefects were hunting up and down and round about for some fellow who had gone out of the House.

"Yes, never mind that!" said Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, come up to the study. I've got something to tell you—it's awfully important."

"Who fetched in the cake for you?"

"I did!"

"You did?" ejaculated the captain of the Remove.

"Yes! You jolly well know you refused—"

"You've been out of the House since lock up?" exclaimed Johnny Bull, with a very peculiar look at the Owl of the Remove.

"I couldn't get it without going out, could I?" yapped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, come up to the study! I don't know whether to keep this dark—"

"You'd better, I think!" gasped Harry.

"It can't have been that fat ass!" said Frank Nugent, staring blankly at Bunter. "He wouldn't have the nerve—and he can't hit a haystack with a snowball, or anything else—"

"He says he's been out of the House!" said Johnny Bull.

"Eh? So I have!" said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, come up to the study—I don't want everybody to hear!"

"Come on!" said Harry curtly.

If Bunter—as seemed deducible from his words—was the fellow who had snowballed the Head, it was undoubtedly an exploit to be kept dark. The Famous Five lost no time in getting to Study No. 1, where Bunter shut the door as soon as they were all inside.

"I say, you fellows, this is pretty awful!" gasped Bunter. "If it gets out Quelch will be fearfully wild, of course, and—"

"What made you do it—if you did it?" demanded Wharton. "Gone right off your potty rocker?"

"Oh, really, Wharton! You refused to do it—"

"I!" gasped Wharton.

"You jolly well know you did—I asked you to do it—"

"You asked me to snowball the Head?" gasped Wharton.

"Eh? No! To fetch in the cake—Wharrer you mean? I asked all of you, and a lot of other fellows, too, to fetch in that cake."

"You blithering, blethering bloater, what are you burbling about?" hissed Bob Cherry. "Did you buzz those snowballs at the Head or not?"

Billy Bunter jumped almost clear of the floor.

"Me! No! You silly idiot! Wharrer you mean? Think I'd snowball the Head? Why, even you ain't fool enough!"

"What?" roared Bob.

"Not even you!" said Bunter, blinking at him. "And I know I ain't! Catch me snowballing old Locke! I'd watch it!"

"Then what are you burbling about?" asked Frank Nugent. "You say you were out after lock-up?"

"I had to fetch the cake, hadn't I! You refused—you know you did—"

"Get on with it, fathead!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I fetched in the cake—you see, I'd stacked it by the Head's gate. You know that place between the gate-post and the elm? Well, that's where I was when I saw Quelch."

"Quelch!"

"Yes, Quelch!"

"Quelch has been out, I believe," said Harry Wharton. "What about Quelch?"

"Oh, I know he's been out!" grinned Bunter. "As far as the Head's gate! He, he, he!"

"Do you mean that Quelch spotted you there, or what?"

"Catch me letting him spot me! No such ass!" said Bunter. "I jolly well kept doggo, I can tell you! That was how I saw him snowball the Head—"

It was the turn of the Famous Five to jump. They did not merely jump—they bounded.

"Quelch—" stuttered Bob.

"Snowballed the Head—" gurgled Johnny Bull.

"You potty ass!" roared Harry Wharton. "What do you mean by getting us here and telling us a yarn like that!"

"Eh? I saw him!" said Bunter, blinking at them. "That's what I want to ask you fellows about! I say, Quelch must have been in a fearfully ratty temper to leave snowballs at old Locke—"

They gazed at him.

"Does that potty porpoise really fancy that he saw anything of the kind?" gasped Bob. "Or is he just burbling?"

"Just burbling!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, you fellows! What I want to know is what I'd better do," said Bunter. "If I tell on Quelch he will jolly well take it out of me, you can bet on that. Think he'd be sacked for pitching snowballs at the Head? In that case, of course, I should be all right."

"Fan me!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"You see, it's a bit ticklish," said Bunter. "A fellow hardly knows what to do. If Quelch was sacked, short and sharp, we might get a pretty easy time while they were getting another back. There's that. But if he wasn't sacked you can bet he would make me sit up for giving him away. It's a bit of a problem, ain't it?"

"Is it possible," almost moaned Harry Wharton, "that you really think that you saw Quelch snowball the Head, Bunter?"

"I saw him all right! I wasn't three or four feet from him when he did it! I didn't know who he was getting—whether it was the Head, or Hucker, or old Gosling pottering about—might have been anybody in the dark. But I know now, of course. All the school knows that it was the Head!"

"It was the Head—but it wasn't Quelch, you frabjous owl!" gasped the captain of the Remove. "What on earth made you think it was Quelch?"

"I saw him!"

"If you couldn't see the Head in the dark, how could you see the other man in the dark, fathead?"

"He was nearer—on my side of the gate!" explained Bunter. "When he backed under that tree to watch for the Head to come out, I could have touched him by putting out my hand. Of course, I didn't!"

"He backed under the tree? Did you recognise him by his back?"

"Yes, of course!"

"Of course!" repeated Harry, blankly. "Do you generally recognise people by their backs, you boiled owl?"

"Eh? No! But the paint—"

"The what?"

"You remember Quelch smothered his gown with white paint, in Mrs. Mumble's shop, owing to that beast, Skinner?"

"What about that, fathead?"

"Well, of course, I couldn't see his face in the dark especially as his back was to me, you know!" said Bunter. "But I know his gown, with the white paint on it, all right! You see, I knew it was a beak, right from the start, seeing his cap and gown: and as soon as I saw the paint, I knew that it was Quelch!"

The Famous Five gazed speechlessly at Bunter.

"They would have required proof—quite a lot of proof—before they would have believed that any beak—especially Quelch—would have lain in wait for his venerable chief, and buzzed snowballs at him. Had George Washington told them so, they would have doubted it! So they were not likely to credit it from the fat Ananias of the Remove."

"Now, what I really want, is some advice from you fellows," said Bunter, with a blink of owl-like seriousness at the staring five. "What's a fellow to do? Quelch might be sacked on the spot—but then again, he mightn't be. He might deny it—"

"He might?" gasped Bob.

"The mightfulness is terrific!"

"And then, where should I be?" said Bunter, anxiously. "The Head might take Quelch's word against mine—"

"He might," gurgled Bob.

"What I mean is, some people are unscrupulous," explained Bunter. "Lots of people would tell whoppers, to get out of a scrape. I wouldn't! But you fellows might, you know—"

"You fat, frabjous, footling frump—"

"Well, I think Quelch very likely would!" declared Bunter. "Can any of you fellows see him standing up to the Head and owning up that he buffed him over with snowballs?"

"Hardly!" gasped Bob.

"Well then, where do I come in?" said Bunter. "I mean to say, the Head doesn't know how truthful I am—"

"He knows how truthful you're not!" chuckled Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry! You fellows think it would be safer to say nothing about it?" asked Bunter, anxiously.

"Much safer, I think!" gasped Harry Wharton. "If you spin a yarn like that about the school, old fat man,

you'll get a flogging first, and then the sack to follow. Quelch will skin you alive, and the Head will take off what's left with his birch!"

"You think Quelch would deny it?" asked Bunter.

"Oh crumbs! Sort of!"

"Schoolmasters don't tell whoppers, though!" argued Bunter. "The fact is, you fellows, I can't see old Quelch telling lies to save his life, let alone his job. I mean to say, he ain't that sort. Still, of course, he might. If he did, I should be in the soup."

The Famous Five exchanged glances. "Is that the lot?" asked Bob. "Now tell us whether it was you buzzed those snowballs at the Head?"

Bunter blinked at him.

"You silly ass, I've just told you it was Quelch, and I saw him!" he snapped.

"You can tell us that till you're black in the face, but you won't find any takers!" said Bob. "Can't you—even you—see that it's an outside in crammers—much too whopping for any fellow to swallow?"

"Beast!"

"It boils down to this," said Harry. "Bunter was out of the House, and on the spot where the snowballing was done. I can't begin to guess where he got the nerve to do it, but it looks as if he did."

"I jolly well know what the beaks and prefects would think, if they knew that Bunter was out of the House after lock-up!" grinned Bob.

"I suppose he did it!" said Johnny Bull, staring grimly at the fat Owl. "But why—"

"The whyfulness is preposterous! Whyfully did you do it, my esteemed, idiotic Bunter?"

"Yes, why?" said Nugent. "What had the Head done to you, you jiffing porker?"

Billy Bunter blinked at the Famous Five in turn. His fat face registered alarm.

"I—I say, you fellows, I didn't do it!" he gasped. "It was Quelch—"

"Chuck it, you fat chump!"

"I—I say, do—do you think they'll think that I did it, if it comes out that I was out of the House at the time?" gasped Bunter.

"Of course they will!"

"Oh crikey! I—I shan't tell anybody, then! I mean to say, I wasn't out of the House at all—"

gasped the fat Owl, in great alarm. "I say, don't you fellows get making out that I went out after lock-up! I didn't!"

"You fat villain, you've just said that you did!"

"That—that was only a—a figure of speech!" gasped Bunter. "What I really meant was that—that I didn't—"

"Oh crikey!"

"I never went after Loder's cake!" gasped Bunter. "I never fetched it in, and I never ate it in my study, and that wasn't why I hadn't any appetite at supper! Besides, it wasn't Loder's cake! I wasn't there at all—I—I was in my study all the time—"

"The time you were at the Head's gate?"

"Yes, exactly! I—I mean, the time I wasn't at the Head's gate! The fact is, I don't think I could find my way there, after dark! I know I had to grope along the wall—I mean, I should have had to grope along the wall if I'd gone—which I never did! I was in the Rag all the time!"

"As well as in your study?"

"I mean, in my study! I never went out of the House, if they're going to

think it was me snowballed the Head!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! Why, if they make out it was me, I might get flogged!" gasped Bunter. "Might get sacked! I say, you fellows. I've told you in confidence you know, about going out after lock-up—besides, I never went! I was in Hall with a lot of fellows—"

"As well as in the Rag and in your study?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Beast! Look here, you fellows, keep it dark about my going out, and—and remember that I never went out!" gasped Bunter.

And with that solemn injunction, the fat Owl rolled out of Study No. 1, leaving the Famous Five staring at one another.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

Nobody Knows, But Bunter!

TERM had started, at Greyfriars School, with a spot of excitement.

The next morning, the usual buzz and hustle of first day in school occupied the minds of the Greyfriars fellows much less than the strange, startling happening of the evening before.

Had the victim been anyone but the Head, there would have been, no doubt, some excitement—but much less. The Head was far above japes—far above anything disrespectful or derogatory.

Even the Bounder, the most reckless ragger in the school, never dreamed of a rag on the Head. It was the sort of thing that was not done—and not even thought of.

And this was not merely a rag. A single snowball, knocking off the headmaster's hat, would have been unthinkable—or, if not unthinkable, awful to think of. But it was worse than that—for there could be no doubt that the attack had been meant to cause damage.

Hard snowballs had been rained on the head with a heavy hand, knocking him over, smashing on him as he lay. That was not a "rag." It was assault and battery. There was a strong element of brutality in it. The fellow had meant to hurt his victim.

Which made it all the more mysterious; for who, possibly in all Greyfriars, could want to hurt the Head?

Fellows had, at times, done rather reckless things. There had been an occasion when some fellow had buzzed whitewash at Mossos, through his study window. There had been an occasion when Walker of the Sixth was snuffed in the quad and walloped. These things, however, paled into utter significance in comparison. Mossos was a beak; Walker was a prefect; but the Head was the headmaster, Olympian in his majesty, far out of the scope of ragging.

Mr. Prout, in describing the occurrence as unprecedented and unparalleled, really under-stated the case.

It was—or ought to have been—unimaginable.

But it had happened.

Everybody wondered who the awful offender was. Nobody, of course, was going to give him away, if found—but most fellows were prepared to give him a jolly good ragging, on their own. Even the Bounder, who had little respect for authority, declared that he would like to boot the cheeky swab who had snowballed the Head.

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But it was just a mystery.

The Famous Five knew that Bunter had been out of the House—which looked as if Bunter had done it. But they could not quite believe that the fat and funky owl had had the nerve to do such a thing.

Besides, from what was learned, the aim of the secret snowballer had been remarkably good. Every shot had told. That did not sound like Bunter.

Even had Bunter done it, it was a safe bet that most of his shots would have missed, even at a short range.

Really, such a mad escapade was not in Bunter's line. Still, they were careful not to mention what the fat Owl had told them. Suspicion, certainly, would have fallen on Bunter, had the beaks and prefects learned that he had been out after look-up on that occasion.

As for his tale that he had seen Quelch do it, the chums of the Remove did not, of course, believe that for a moment. That they regarded as the pottiest yarn that even Bunter had ever told.

So far as the official inquiry went, it seemed that nobody was in the quad at all—except one or two masters at one time or another.

Masters, of course, no one was likely to suspect of a jape on the Head—with the exception of Billy Bunter, who, of course, knew what he had seen with his own eyes and spectacles.

Gosling and Mumble had both seen masters about—or thought they had. Herbert Vernon-Smith had no doubt that one of the "masters" was the prefect he had seen rig himself up in Quelch's cap and gown. But Smithy did not think of connecting Loder's strange masquerade with the attack on the Head.

Loder had been "up" to something—something that required disguise. He might have been speaking over a gate, or a wall, with some bookmaking pal from outside the school. Smithy thought—so far as he troubled to think about the matter at all.

But it never occurred to him that Loder had snowballed the Head, in that disguise: for Loder obviously had no motive for doing anything of the kind.

Had Loder "got" Hacker as planned, no doubt then the Bounder would have put two and two together. But Loder had not "got" Hacker.

Smithy knew nothing of his scheme of vengeance: did not know that Loder had seen Hacker going across to the Head's gate, and drawn the incorrect inference that he would return the same way.

Nobody—apart from Loder and Walker—thought of connecting Hacker with the matter at all. It was the Head who had been snowballed. Naturally it was supposed that the fellow who had snowballed the Head, had meant to snowball the Head.

Wild horses would not have drawn Loder of the Sixth into such an act, had he been aware of it. So it never even crossed Smithy's mind that Loder was the man. He was as puzzled as anyone.

Only Bunter knew—or fancied that he knew.

It was rather tough on Bunter, to know so much, and to be able to tell so little. He was fairly bursting with what he knew.

Between his desire to confide his amazing discovery to every fellow in the school, and the fear of being subject to suspicion himself, Bunter was in a very worried state.

To keep this to himself was practically impossible. Yet the way the Famous Five had taken his statement showed

him how dangerous it was to wag his lengthy tongue.

In break-that morning, Bunter hooked on to Peter Todd. He was not going to tell Toddy. He was going to give him a hint, to see how he took it. By that time, Bunter had to talk or burst.

"I say, Toddy, you got any idea who snowballed the Head yesterday?" asked Bunter.

"Not the foggiest!" answered Peter.

"Think it might have been a beak?" Peter Todd gave a sort of convulsive start, and looked at Bunter. He seemed to have the startling idea that the fat Owl was wandering in his mind—such as it was.

"Did you say a beak," gasped Peter.

"I mean to say, the beaks are often a bit ratty on the first day of the term—and the Head jaws them, sometimes," argued Bunter. "Suppose he jawed Quelch—"

"Quelch!" said Peter, faintly.

"Yes; think Quelch might have done it, Toddy?"

Peter answered by asking another question:

"Does it run in your family, Bunter?"

"Eh—what?"

"Insanity!"

"Oh, really, Toddy! Now, look here," said Bunter, "suppose Quelch did it—"

"Poor old chap!"

"Eh! What are you poor-old-clapping me for?" asked Bunter, peevishly.

"Well, it's a sad case," said Peter, compassionately. "Here we've all been thinking you simply a harmless idiot, and it turns out you're a lunatic. Poor old Bunter!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" grunted Bunter. "Look here, suppose Quelch did it, and a chap saw him! Think a chap ought to mention it!"

"I believe they make 'em very comfortable nowadays," remarked Peter.

"Eh, what?"

"Padded cells!"

"You silly chump!" looted Bunter.

"Of course, I'm only putting a case! I'm not going to tell you I actually saw Quelch do it, Peter."

"Wha—a—at?"

"I'm not going to tell anybody!" said Bunter, cautiously. "Wharton thinks they'd think it was me, if I did, so I'm keeping that dark!"

Peter gazed at him speechless.

"But, just putting a case you know," went on Bunter. "Suppose a fellow saw Quelch do it, and told on him, do you think Quelch would deny it? A schoolmaster couldn't tell lies about it, could he? Schoolmasters don't! Can you see Quelch telling lies, Toddy?"

"Hardly!" gasped Peter.

"Well, then, if he admitted it, I should be all right. You feel sure that Quelch would admit it, if I told about it, Toddy?"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Peter.

He scanned Bunter's serious fat face. There was only one conclusion to which Peter could come. Either Bunter was insane, or he was trying to pull Peter's leg. Peter decided the latter was the case.

He stooped, and gathered snow with both hands.

Bunter watched that proceeding irritably and impatiently.

"What are you up to, Peter?" he asked.

"Making snowballs!" answered Peter.

"Well, don't bother about that now. I want you to tell me what you think," urged Bunter.

"I'll do that!" said Toddy. "I think you'd better try that game on somebody

whose leg is easier to pull. I think it's the silliest rot you've ever talked—which is saying a lot. I think I'm going to biff snowballs at you, as a tip not to talk out of the back of your neck!"

"Oh, really, Toddy! I say— Yoo-hoooooop!" roared Bunter, as the first snowball flew.

It landed on his little fat nose, and squashed there.

Bunter did not wait for more. He revolved on his axis and flew. The rest of the snowballs caught him on the back of his neck as he went. Peter followed him up, grabbing more snow, and whizzing snowballs, until the fat Owl dodged into the House and escaped.

Until the bell went for third school that morning Bunter was too busy hooking snow out of the back of his neck to give any further thought to his amazing secret. His own snowballing quite banished the Head's snowballing from his fat mind.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Asks for It!

"BUNTER!"

"Oh dear! I mean, yes, sir!"

"You are eating in class, Bunter."

"Oh, no, sir!"

"What? I distinctly saw you place toffee, or some such comestible, in your mouth, Bunter!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I was just scratching my nose, sir."

Quelch was not in the best of tempers that afternoon. On a chilly, frosty day, when there were twinges of rheumatism about, Quelch never was at his bonniest. First day in the school, too, was always a bit of a bother to a Form-master. And Quelch had other causes of annoyance.

His gown had gone to the cleaner's, for the removal of Mr. Mumble's white paint. Quelch had to sort out his best gown, which was, as a rule, only used on State occasions. It irritated Mr. Quelch.

Then there was this mysterious affair of the Head's snowballing. In the Common-room, the beaks discussed that affair, world without end, so to speak.

It was agreed on all hands among the staff, that a junior had done it—it being inconceivable that a senior boy would do such a thing.

Quelch himself thought so, so far as that went.

But there seemed to be a general consensus of opinion in Common-room that the junior, if found at all, would be found in the Remove.

That annoyed Quelch deeply.

Mr. Prout, indeed, had asked him whether he did not think it advisable to make a very special and searching inquiry in his Form, with a view to revealing the culprit. "Undoubtedly, in your Form, my dear Quelch!"—as Prout put it.

Mr. Quelch had answered the Fifth-Form master so sharply and acutely that Prout had been left with a face like a sunset.

Altogether Quelch, that afternoon, was in no frame of mind to be bothered by members of his Form consuming toffee, when they should have been attending with deep attention to his words of wisdom.

Bunter, on the other hand, was keener on toffee than on Latin grammar. He loved toffee; he loathed Latin. Moreover, he wanted to get



"Stand and deliver, you bold, bad bandit!" said Bob Cherry, levelling a pencil at Billy Bunter's fat head. "Gerrouit of the way!" gasped the fat Removite. "This cake's mine! Our chef at Bunter Court made it specially for me to bring back to school!"

clear of that toffee before Ogilvy missed a packet of toffee from his study in the Remove. It was safer, in such cases, to get rid of the evidence.

But Henry Samuel Quelch's gimlet eye was on him. Bunter wondered sometimes whether Quelch had an extra eye in the back of his head. He seemed to be able to spot what went on, even when his back was turned.

Quelch picked up the cane from his desk—a proceeding that Bunter eyed with great apprehension.

"You will stand out before the Form, Bunter," he said, in a voice resembling the musical effect of a flog on a saw. "I should have given you an imposition for your greedy, gluttonous act in eating sweets in class. But I shall cane you for untruthfulness."

"But I wasn't, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I didn't. I—I never—"

"Stand out at once, Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!"

Bunter cautiously opened a chunk of toffee under his desk, and rolled out before the class.

Mr. Quelch switched his cane.

"Last term, Bunter," he said severely, "I had several occasions to punish you for untruthfulness. I had hoped for better things this term. But it seems—"

"I—I—I hadn't any toffee, sir!" groaned Bunter. "I—I wouldn't dream of bringing toffee into the Form-room, sir! I—I don't like toffee. It—it's one of the things I never liked!"

Mr. Quelch eyed him with deep suspicion. He was a just master. Perhaps he was aware that twinges of rheumatism, and other irritations, made him a little juster, so to speak. Anyhow, he was going to make quite sure before he whopped Bunter.

"You have no toffee, Bunter?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Turn out your pockets!"

"Eh?"

"Turn out your pockets!"

"Oh crikey!"

In the lowest of spirits, Bunter laid a toffee packet on the desk.

Mr. Quelch breathed hard through his nose.

"You utterly untruthful boy, you stated that you had no toffee!" he exclaimed.

"That's right, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"I—I hadn't—"

"There is the toffee!" almost shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"Tain't mine, sir! I never had any! That's Oggy's!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the Remove. Every fellow laughed, except Robert Donald Ogilvy.

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Bunter, your prevarications pass all patience! Bend over that chair!"

The cane whished!

Bunter blinked at it. He did not bend over the chair. He blinked at Quelch.

The beast was going to whop him. And Bunter knew enough to get him sacked. It was pretty thick, Bunter thought, to be whopped by a beast whose fate he held in the hollow of his fat hand.

If Quelch only knew what Bunter could do, if he liked, he wouldn't dare to whop him. Bunter realised that.

On the other hand, standing up to Quelch in defiance was a terrifying idea. Bearding a lion in his den was a joke to it.

"I—I—I say, sir—" gasped Bunter, at last.

"I have told you to bend over that chair, Bunter."

"I—I—I'd rather not be cased, sir!" bleated Bunter.

"Wha-a-!"

Quelch fairly blinked at him; so did all the Remove.

Any fellow up for a whopping would naturally rather not have been cased. There was nothing surprising in that. But it was very surprising for a fellow to tell his Form-master so. That was really astonishing.

"You—you you—" Quelch stammered. "You—you would rather— Bless my soul! What do you mean, Bunter?"

"I—I'd really rather not, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I don't think you ought to cane me, sir."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch, quite blankly.

"Is that fat ass mad?" whispered Vernon-Smith.

"Mad as a hatter, I should think!" said Skinner, in wonder.

"The madfulness is terrible!"

"Right off his rocker!" murmured Bolsover major.

"Silence in the class! Bunter, are you out of your senses? Bend over that chair at once!"

"I—I—I mean, I—I mean to say, I—I think you might let me off, sir, considering—"

"What? Considering what?" thundered Mr. Quelch. "What do you mean, Bunter?"

Bunter blinked at him, and his heart failed. He simply dared not say: "Considering that I know you snow-balled the Head." He would have liked to say it, but he just couldn't. Quelch was altogether too terrifying.

"I—I mean—" he stammered.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing!" gasped Bunter.

"If you do not immediately bend over that chair, Bunter—"

Bunter immediately bent over the chair. It was rough, and it was tough. THE MAGNET LIBRARY. No. 1,560.

considering what he knew. But he bent over the chair.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Whack, whack whack!

"Yaroo-hoo-hoop!" roared Bunter.

Queleh had intended to give Bunter one whop. Now he gave him a full "six."

The fat Owl tottered back to his place gasping. It was frightfully hard lines on a fellow who had only to open his mouth to get Queleh sacked; but there it was. And Bunter sat wriggling through the remainder of that class, with his fat mind very nearly made up to tell on Queleh.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Tea in the Sixth!

L ODER of the Sixth started.

In fact, he jumped.

After class Loder had gone across to the school shop. Coming out therefrom, he sighted Mr. Hacker in the quad.

He did not specially notice a group of juniors at hand. His eyes fixed on Hacker with a baleful stare. Loder's ear was no longer feeling the effects of Hacker's twist; but his temper was still feeling the effects.

But he shook his head.

After his disastrous exploit the previous evening, he was fed-up with back-stalking.

Hacker had to be allowed to get by with it. Some slight satisfaction might be derived from whopping Hobson of the Shell at the first excuse. But stalking beaks was too dangerous a game.

Loder had just come to that sage conclusion, when a voice from the group of juniors reached him, and he almost bounded. It was the voice of William George Bunter, the plump ornament of Mr. Queleh's Form.

"You can cackle, if you like; but I jolly well know who snowballed the

Head yesterday. I can jolly well tell you!"

Gerald Loder looked round, his heart sinking below zero.

Loder's one consolation for his disastrous bungle at the Head's gate, was the absolute certainty that he never could be suspected.

Nobody was likely to think of a Sixth Form prefect in such a connection. And though he knew that both Gosling and Mumble had glimpsed him in the quad, he knew that, owing to his cunning device of borrowing a master's cap and gown, they had taken him for a master in the gloom—so there was nothing whatever to fear in that direction.

Bunter's fat squeak fell on him like a thunderbolt. How could that fat young idiot know anything? Certainly a fellow might have been surreptitiously out of the House after lock-up—especially on the first evening of the term. Was it possible—

With a sinking heart, Loder stared at the group—Billy Bunter, with Skinner, Snoop and Hazeldene—all three grinning. If that fat and frowzy young rascal had been spying on him, it would be all over the school soon.

"I say, you fellows, I tell you I jolly well know!" said Bunter. "And I'm not sure now that I'm going to keep it dark, either. Wharton said they might think it was me if I let it all out; but Toddy says he doesn't think the beast would tell lies about it. And I can jolly well tell you, I'm not going to be whopped by that beast, when I could get him the sack—see?"

Gerald Loder hardly breathed.

He had not "whopped" Bunter that term—yet. But he remembered that he had, the previous afternoon, cuffed him.

He had cuffed Bunter for what seemed to him a good reason—Bunter had been in the railway carriage when Hacker pulled Loder's ear, and had laughed. Merely cuffing him was, really, letting him off lightly.

No doubt it was that to which Bunter

was referring. It seemed so to Loder, at all events, for he could hardly doubt that the fat Owl was speaking of him. If he knew, as he stated, who had snowballed the Head, he knew that it was Loder.

"After all, why should I keep it dark?" went on Bunter. "I saw him—saw him as plain as I see you now. I don't believe he could wriggle out of it if he was up before the Head. And if old Locke knew, it would be the sack for—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you fellows don't believe me—" roared Bunter.

"It sounds so true!" chuckled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rightest one you've ever told, isn't it?" asked Snoop.

"I tell you I saw him—"

"Clammon!"

"I saw him quite plain—beaving those snowballs at old Locke, and knocking him over—"

"Ware, prefect!" whispered Hazel, spotting Loder.

Billy Bunter blinked round. He spotted Loder, but he did not care. Bunter was deeply annoyed by that caving in the Remove Form Room. After that he wasn't going to keep Queleh's rotten secrets for him. So he did not care if Loder did hear him.

"I tell you I saw him!" he yapped.

"Shut up, you ass!" breathed Skinner. "Loder's looking this way! He can hear you!"

"I don't care if Loder hears me!" said Bunter, quite loudly. "I know what I know, and I know what I jolly well saw, and I've a jolly good mind to go straight to the Head, and say—"

"Bunter!" gasped Loder. "Carry this parcel to my study for me, will you?"

"Yes, Loder."

Bunter took the parcel of good things that Loder had just bought in the school shop for tea in his study. The Remove did not fag, but Bunter was not the fellow to argue with a bully like Loder. He carried the parcel meekly across to the House, and Loder followed him in.

The parcel was landed on Loder's study table, and Bunter turned to go.

To his surprise, Loder had closed the study door, and stood with his back to it.

Loder was eyeing him with quite a peculiar expression.

He was, in fact, yearning to pick up his ashplant and give Bunter the whopping of his life. But if Bunter knew what he had stated that he knew, he was not a fellow to be whopped. He was a fellow to be treated with tact, and indeed, somehow, to keep his mouth shut.

Between the desire to thrash Bunter and the necessity of treating him with tact, Loder's feelings were quite mixed.

Bunter blinked at him warily. With a bully like Loder, you never could tell. To his relief, Loder gave him a smile.

"Unpack the things, Bunter," he said genially—rather a ghostly genially. "Take to stop to tea?"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He had not known what to expect, but most certainly he had not expected that. He could hardly believe his fat ears.

"The fact is, I'd like a bit of a chat with you, if you'd care to tea here," remarked Loder.

"Yes, rather!" agreed Bunter.

He grinned. He realised that Loder had heard what he had said to the fellows in the quad, and he had no doubt that Loder wanted to learn more. Still, he thought it was rather decent of Loder to ask him to tea for a chat instead of "coming the prefect."

Tubb of the Third, who was Loder's fag, looked in. Tubb's expression was worth more than a guinea a box when he found that he had to get tea ready for a Remove junior as well as his fag-master. He gave Bunter a series of fierce and ferocious smiles while he did his fag duties.

But Loder dismissed him very soon, and sat down to tea with Bunter.

Bunter beamed. He was in a happy and friendly frame of mind—just the frame of mind Loder wanted him to be in if he really knew who had snowballed the Head. Loder was going to ascertain whether he really did know.

"Tuck in, kid!" said Loder hospitably.

Bunter was already tucking in. Hospitality like this from a Sixth Form prefect was a rich and rare occurrence.

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and Bunter did not know how long it might last. He was the man to make hay while the sun shone. An arrow from a bow had little on Bunter for speed as he started travelling through the foodstuffs.

"Now, what's this about snowballing the Head?" asked Loder, with the same ghastly geniality. "I think you were saying something about it—"

"Oh, yes!" assented Bunter, with his mouth full. "I know all about that, Loder. I say, is there any more toast?"

"Try the cake! I think you said you saw what happened?" remarked Loder casually.

"So I jolly well did!" said Bunter.

"Then you were out of the House after lock-up?"

"Oh, no—I mean, you—that is, no, not at all!" gasped Bunter, remembering that Loder was a prefect. "I mean to say, yes—no—"

"What did you see exactly?" asked Loder. "You can speak quite frankly to me, Bunter. I'm not going to report you for getting out of the House; this is really a confidential talk."

"Oh erikey!" gasped Bunter. "I mean, all right! I mean, I wasn't out of the House if you're going to report it to the Head, of course. That is, I mean, all right, Loder! I saw the whole thing! I haven't said anything about it, except to six or seven fellows so far!"

"You saw what happened?"

"From start to finish!" said Bunter, between gobbles. "I say, do you mind if I finish this cake?"

"Not at all! You—you—you recognised the—the chap who buzzed the snowballs at Dr. Locke?" articulated Loder.

"Yes, rather!"

"You—you—you know who it was?"

"Of course I do!"

Loder breathed very hard.

"You've not mentioned the—the—the name—"

"Only to a few fellows."

"Oh!" Loder gritted his teeth. "Well, look here, Bunter, don't say any more about it—see? Those fellows you've told—you can let them think you were log-pulling—see? The—the less you say about it the better. I—I'd rather the whole thing was—was washed out and forgotten."

Bunter blinked at him, his mouth full of cake, and a large wedge of the same in his fat hand. He was quite astonished.

Loder, evidently, was in deep earnest; he seemed quite agitated. But why he should be so concerned about Quelch was a mystery to Bunter.

"I'm sure," said Loder, "that you'll do as I wish—to oblige me, Bunter?"

"Oh, yes! All right!" said the worshipping Owl. "I'll keep it dark if you want me to, Loder. But why?"

"Why?" repeated Loder. "Well, I suppose you can see why I'd rather it was kept dark, Bunter?"

"Blessed if I can!" said Bunter, after another bite at the cake. "Still, I'm willing to keep it dark, if you like. I say, is that strawberry jam? I like strawberry jam!"

"Help yourself, kid! Keep it dark," said Loder. "I mean, for your own sake, too, you know. The less said about it the better; but, at the same time, you'd hardly be believed, you know!"

"That's what Wharton said," agreed Bunter, ladling out jam. "Still, it's true, you know—"

"Well, after all, you could hardly swear to recognising a chap's face in the dark," said Loder. "Bear that in mind, you know."

"Of course I couldn't," said Bunter.

"It was the gown I knew, of course."

"The—the what?"

"The gown! Quelch has got a lot of white paint on it, you know, so I knew at once! I could swear to that!"

Loder gazed at him.

"You—you—you could swear to the—the gown? You—you—you never saw the—the—the face?" he gasped.

"How could I in the dark?" said Bunter, blinking at him. "I knew it was Quelch by the gown."

Loder nearly fell off his chair.

"You—you—you—you knew it—it—it was—was Quelch?" he babbled.

"Yes—with that paint on his gown, you know—"

Loder sat and stared at him. Slowly it dawned on him that Bunter did not, after all, know who had snowballed the Head. Like others who had seen a figure in cap and gown in the gloomy quad, he had supposed that it was a master he saw. From some stain or other on Quelch's gown, he supposed it was Quelch. He had, it seemed, witnessed the snowballing, and thought that it was Quelch who had done it.

Loder gasped with relief.

He was deeply thankful that he had adopted that disguise—in his own proper person, this spying little beast would very likely have known him; he had not had the faintest idea that prying eyes were near the spot.

Bunter supposed that it was Quelch. He could suppose that it was Quelch, if he liked—or that it was Hacker, or Mr. Prout, if it came to that. It was all right, so long as he did not know that it was Loder!

Loder rose from the table.

Realising that Bunter was in utter and complete ignorance of the true facts, he realised that he had nothing to fear from the fat Owl. He did not care if Bunter told the whole school that it was Quelch. He had wasted a pile of toast, a cake, and a pot of jam—not to mention a lot of geniality—on the fat junior, thinking that he knew. And he knew nothing!

Loder picked up a cane.

He did not speak again. He whacked out with the cane, catching Bunter across his fat shoulders with a terrific whop.

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, taken quite by surprise. "Urrrrgggh! Gurrngggh! Gurrngggh! Yurrgh! Goooooh!"

He bounded from the table, his mouth full of strawberry jam. Quite a lot of it went down the wrong way in that sudden surprise. Bunter gasped, and gurgled, and guggled.

Whack, whack!

"Gurrgh! Ooooooh! Yarooooop!"

Why Loder was cutting up rusty like this, all of a sudden, was a complete mystery to Bunter. Asking a fellow to tea, for a chat, and then suddenly grabbing up a cane and whopping him—it was really extraordinary, even for a bully like Loder.

But Bunter was less interested in why Loder was doing it than in the unpleasant fact that he actually was doing it. He bounded for the door.

Whack!

"Yoo-hoop! Boast! Ooooh!"

Whack!

Bunter tore the door open.

Whack!

A last lick caught him as he fled, and he flew, yelling, down the Sixth Form passage.

Loder slammed the door after him. He had been frightened for nothing; his secret was safe. All the safer, in fact, if that fat young ass spread a story about the school that a "beak" had

done it! Such a story, certainly, was not likely to be believed; but it helped to keep surmise from the right quarter.

Loder was feeling satisfied, though he wished he had given Bunter a few more before he got away.

Bunter was feeling far from satisfied, though he was glad that Loder had not given him a few more!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Means Business!

"PREP!" said Peter Todd.

"Rats!" retorted Bunter.

Hardly a fellow at Greyfriars was keen to begin on prep. It was not one of the attractions of the new term. Still, prep, like the hail and the rain, fell alike on the just and the unjust. It had to be done. Not, however, apparently, by Billy Bunter.

While Toddy and Dutton, in Study No. 7, sat at prep, Billy Bunter disposed his lazy, fat limbs in the study armchair and slacked.

Instead of doing prep, Bunter was doing some thinking!

Thinking was not Bunter's long suit. But he had food for thought now. It seemed, to Bunter, that a fellow who could get a beak sacked, if he liked, was by no means bound to jump to the orders of that beak.

Quelch had whopped him in the Form-room. Considering the circumstances, that was like Quelch's cheek. But Bunter had only to tell what he knew, and Henry Samuel Quelch would get the order of the boot, right on the spot. The more Billy Bunter thought about that licking the more indignant he grew. Firmly he made up his fat mind that he wasn't going to have any more of it.

Cutting prep was a beginning. If Quelch nailed him down in the morning, he was jolly well going to tell Quelch where he got off.

A Form-master who snowballed his chief was not going to be allowed to dictate to William George Bunter. Not if William George knew it!

Three or four times Peter Todd looked up from his work to remind Bunter of prep. Every time Bunter replied: "Rats!"

"Look here, you fat chump!" said Toddy at last. "If Quelch puts you on con in the morning—"

"Let him!"

"He will know at once you haven't looked at it."

"I don't care!"

"You frabjous, frumpious fathead!" said Peter. "Quelch isn't in the best of tempers just now. Didn't you notice that this afternoon?"

"Let him try it on again, that's all!" said Bunter darkly. "I'll show him!"

"You—you—you'll show him!" gasped Peter.

"Yes. I'll jolly well show him! Whopping a fellow who knows all about him!" said Bunter warmly. "He wouldn't dare if he knew what I know!"

"It isn't possible," said Peter, gazing at him, "that you really believe the rot that you were gabbling to me in break this morning!"

"Don't I?" sneered Bunter. "I suppose I can believe my own eyes! I know I saw Quelch snowballing the Head yesterday!"

"You frightful ass—"

"Yah!"

"You didn't, and couldn't!" shrieked Peter. "Whatever you saw, you didn't see that! Are you right off your dot?"

"Well, I know what I saw!" jeered Bunter. "And Quelch is jolly well—"

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going to hear, too, if I have any more of his rot! Whopping a fellow who could walk him up to the Head to be sacked?"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Peter.

"The only thing is," said Bunter, with a recurrence of doubt, "that he might deny it. But—how could he? How could a Form-master tell lies about it? Do you think he would, Toddy?"

"He didn't do it!" howled Peter.

"Oh, he did it, all right. I saw him. Look here, Toddy, do you think that Quelch could stand up before the Head and tell a pack of lies?"

"No, ass! No, fathead! No, chump! No, idiot! No, petty porpoise!" gasped Peter. "But—"

"Well, I don't think so, either," said Bunter. "I don't mean that Quelch is naturally truthful, like me, for instance, but—"

"Oh, ye gods!"

"But there's such a thing as dignity, and all that. How could a beak stand up and roll out whoppers, like Smithy does? He couldn't. Besides, the Head's a downy old bird," said Bunter sagely. "He has a really uncanny way of getting at the truth. When a fellow stretches it the Head always knows. I don't know how, but he does!"

"You potty, piffing, pie-faced porker—"

"He does, Toddy. Look at that time I was up for bagging a pie out of the pantry," said Bunter. "I don't mind admitting that I stretched it a bit. How the Head spotted it I don't know, but he did. I told him I hadn't been to the pantry, and that the pantry door was locked, anyhow, so I couldn't have had the pie. But somehow he knew!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Toddy.

"You can cackle," said Bunter, "but I jolly well know that the Head always spots a crammer, somehow. He will spot Quelch if he tries it on. School-masters don't tell whoppers. Quelch will be for it if I give him away. As soon as he knows that, I fancy he will toe the line all right. You'll see."

"You—you—you're going to let Quelch know you fancy that he buzzed those snowballs at the Head?" moaned Toddy.

"I'm going to let him know that I know he did!" said Bunter firmly. "I'm not standing any more of his rot, when I can get him scooted out of the school. I jolly well know that."

"Oh crikey!" said Peter.

And he gave it up.

Bunter did no prep that evening. A fellow who held his Form-master in the hollow of his podgy hand wasn't bound to do any prep.

If Quelch cut up rusty, as was possible—and, in fact, probable—all Bunter had to do was to let him know how matters stood, and see him cringe!

Bunter rather liked the idea of seeing Quelch cringe! It was a sight that had never yet been beheld at Greyfriars, so it would be rather interesting—when it happened!

Quelch, obviously—to Bunter—couldn't afford to be given away. He must have been fearfully ratty with the Head, Bunter thought, to lay in wait for him with snowballs. All the same, he didn't want to lose his job at Greyfriars, where he had been on the staff for donkey's years!

Bunter went to bed that night in a mood of grim determination.

The more he reflected on this matter, in fact, the more Bunter realised what tremendous power he had in his hands.

He was not only going to cut prep. He was going to slack in class. He was jolly well not going to be caned! If

he was given lines, he was jolly well not going to do them! The more Bunter thought about it, the more glorious the prospect seemed!

When the rising-bell clanged in the dim frosty morning—always an unwelcome sound to Bunter's fat ears—and the Remove turned out, Bunter did not turn out with the rest.

It was Bunter's way to get a few more minutes, by reducing washing to the very minimum. But on this special morning he allowed himself more than a few extra minutes.

He put out his fat little nose, sniffed the cold air, and turned his fat head on the pillow to go to sleep again. His interrupted snore resumed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Sticking in bed all day, Bunter?"

"Snore!"

"Turn out, fathead!" said Harry Wharton. He gave Bunter a shake. "Get up, you fat slacker! We're all going down!"

"Lemme alone!" grunted Bunter. "I'm not getting up yet! It's too jolly cold!"

"You fat ass!" said Wharton, staring. "Do you think you can stay in bed as long as you like?"

"Yes, that's it!"

"Do you want Quelch to come up after you, fathead?"

Bunter grinned.

"I don't mind if he does! That's all right! If Quelch asks, tell him I'm cutting prayers this morning, but I shall be down to brekker!"

"Yes; I can see myself telling Quelch that!" gasped the captain of the Remove. "Turn out!"

"Shan't!"

"You fat chump, turn out!"

"Shan't!" roared Bunter. "And don't give me any cheek, Wharton! I may ask Quelch to whop you, if you're cheeky!"

What that remarkable statement meant, Harry Wharton did not know, and did not inquire. He grabbed Bunter's bedclothes, and stripped them off the bed.

"Now turn out!" he rapped.

Bunter sat up, shivering and glaring with wrath.

"You cheeky rotter!" he roared.

"I'll jolly well—Yaroooh! Keep that sponge away, you beast! If you dab that sponge down my back, I'll—Groooogh!"

Billy Bunter turned out, after all. He could—or he fancied he could—defy Quelch. But he could not argue with a wet sponge squeezed down his fat back. He snorted with rage, but he turned out, and went down with the Remove.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Gets Going!

"YOU will go on, Bunter!"

Bunter breathed hard.

The tug-of-war was coming!

In first school that morning, the Remove were tackling their old friend, P. Vergilius Maro.

Towards that old friend, Billy Bunter had no friendly feelings whatever. Latin was not so foul as maths, perhaps; but it was indescribably foul, all the same; and Bunter loathed it.

There were, doubtless, a few fellows in the Remove who would have been willing to absorb Latin without having it driven into their heads, like nails into wood. But Bunter was not one of that few.

Even when Bunter prepared a lesson, his "con" was generally enough to make the angels weep. When he had not prepared it, his fat mind was nothing more than a beautiful blank.

Even had he wanted to construe "*Lucus in urbe fuit media, hotissimus umbræ*," etc., he could not have done it without constant resort to the Latin "dic." But he did not want to; and he was jolly well not going to.

But he felt a slight sinking of the heart, and his fat knees had a feeling that they were going to knock together at the idea of defying Quelch.

It was, in fact, much easier to defy Quelch in his thoughts when he was not in that gentleman's presence, than to do so in words, when the gimlet-eye was fixed on him.

"Do you hear me, Bunter?" snapped Mr. Quelch sharply. "You are keeping the Form waiting, Bunter."

"Oh, yes!" stammered Bunter. "I mean, no! Oh, yes!"

"Construe!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

Had Bunter done his prep the previous evening, and been able to tackle that passage, probably he would have surrendered, at that juncture, and left defying Quelch till a later date. But, as it was, he had buried his boots behind him!

"I—I can't!" he mumbled.

"What?"

"Perhaps you'd better pass me over, sir!" suggested Bunter.

"Wha-a-t!"

The gimlet-eye almost bored into Bunter. The whole Remove stared at him. Fellows sometimes had the luck to be passed over in con. But this was the very first time in history that a fellow had been known to suggest to his Form-master to pass him over.

Mr. Quelch seemed hardly able to believe his ears. Indeed, he hardly could. He stared quite blankly at Bunter.

"Is that intended for impertinence, Bunter?" he gasped.

"Oh, yes! I mean, no, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"I conclude, Bunter, that you have done no preparation!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"No, sir! None at all!" said Bunter, quite breezily.

"Upon my word!" Mr. Quelch's eye strayed to the cane on his desk. But he refrained from grabbing it. "Bunter, you have always been the most incorrigibly idle boy in my Form! I am determined, Bunter, that you shall show some signs of amendment this term. I do not wish to be severe with any boy at the beginning of the term; but I cannot let this pass. Bunter, you will take five hundred lines!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"You will hand in those lines by tea-time!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!"

"The loss of your half-holiday this afternoon, Bunter, may be a warning to you!" said Mr. Quelch sternly.

"Now—"

"I—I'd rather not do my lines, sir!"

"What?" almost roared Mr. Quelch.

"What did you say, Bunter?"

The Remove gazed at Bunter spell-bound. Even the Bounder never ventured to get Quelch's rag out like this. It was simply amazing, in Bunter.

"Mad as a hatter!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"I—I mean, sir—" gasped

Bunter. His courage failed—which was no wonder—at the expression of Quelch's speaking countenance. "I—



Peering from under the table, where he crouched, Vernon-Smith watched the senior put on the gown belonging to Mr. Quelch and then adjust the mortar-board that went with the gown. In breathless amazement, he waited for what was going to happen next.

"I—I mean, I—I—I will—will do the lines. I—I—I want to do them, sir! I—I—I like lines!"

"Be silent, you foolish boy!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Vernon-Smith, you will go on!"

Smithy went on with "Lucas in urbe fuit media."

Bunter sat and gasped for breath. He had almost done it—but not quite. All over the Form, fellows were staring at Bunter, wondering what on earth was the matter with the fat Owl.

When the Remove were dismissed for break, Billy Bunter lingered behind the rest.

It occurred to his fat brain that, if Quelch was to know where he got off, he would have to be given a hint on the subject. So far, Quelch was totally unaware of the tremendous power in Bunter's hands; so he could not, of course, be expected to play up.

Bunter was going to give him the necessary hint.

He lingered in the doorway, and Mr. Quelch, who was sitting at his high desk, glanced up and saw him there.

"What is it, Bunter?" he snapped.

"I—I was going to say, sir—" stammered Bunter.

"Well, what?"

Again the fat Owl's courage failed. He was finding it much harder than he had anticipated, to make Quelch cringe.

"Oh, nothing, sir!" he gasped. "I—I mean to say—that is—er—nothing."

"Leave the Form-room at once, Bunter!"

Bunter left the Form-room at once.

In third school that morning, Mr. Quelch glanced several times at Bunter. He was puzzled by the fat junior.

There was, undoubtedly, something peculiar about Bunter that day; he could not help observing it.

If Bunter was taking up ragging in

class, on Smithy's lines, Quelch was prepared to nip that new departure in the bud very forcibly. But he could not quite think it was that. Really, he could not make Bunter out.

After third school, classes were over for the day, as it was a half-holiday. The snow had cleared off, and Harry Wharton & Co. were able to get some football. Other fellows had other occupations for the half-holiday. Billy Bunter's occupation was—or was supposed to be—lines! Five hundred lines amounted to detention for the afternoon, as they had to be handed in by tea-time.

Bunter did no lines.

If his tremendous power was worth anything, now was the time to handle it. Writing lines for a whole afternoon did not attract Bunter in the least. Laziness helped him to screw up his courage to the sticking-point.

It was, in fact, the tug-of-war now! Either he had to write five hundred lines, or he had to tell Quelch where he got off!

He resolved firmly that he would tell Quelch where he got off! If he did not do the lines, he had got to get down to business with Quelch—and he was too lazy to do the lines if he could help it.

He rehearsed in his fat mind what he was going to say to Quelch if he asked for those lines.

"I know who snowballed the Head the other day! Leave me alone, and I'll leave you alone!"

That, Bunter thought, would be effective.

He pictured Quelch's start of surprise—his look of alarm—very likely he would turn pale! Anyhow, he would know where he got off, and that was that!

Bunter realised that it was easier to

rehearse that effective speech in his own fat mind than to utter it when the time came, with those gimlet-eyes boring into him. But he made up his mind to it. In fact, he left himself no choice, as by tea-time he had not touched the lines.

When the Famous Five came up to tea, fresh and ruddy after football practice, Bunter was waiting for them at the door of Study No. 1.

"I say, you fellows—" he began. "I've been waiting for you chap! I was going to get a spread ready for you in the study—"

"Happy thought!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Why didn't you?"

"I've been disappointed about a postal order—"

"Same one you were disappointed about last term, and the term before?" asked Bob sympathetically.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Done your lines?" asked Frank Nigent.

"Eh? Oh, no! I'm not doing any lines for Quelch!" said Bunter cheerfully. "Why should I?"

"Well, fellows generally do lines for a beak!" said Johnny Bull, staring at him.

Bunter chuckled.

"Not when they know what I know!" he retorted.

"Oh crumbs!"

"I say, you fellows, as my postal order hasn't come, I'll tea with you fellows, if you like!" said Bunter. "I'll stand you a spread back, when my postal order comes, see?"

"Oh, do!" said Harry Wharton. "We may be hard up in our old age, and it will come in useful."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, fathead, Quelch said those lines were to be taken in before tea," said the cap-tan of the Remove. "How many have you done?"

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THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

"You, Sir!"

MR. QUELCH stepped into Study No. 1, with so grim an expression on his face, that a bolder fellow than Billy Bunter might have been alarmed thereby.

The juniors rose respectfully to their feet.

Billy Bunter instinctively backed round the table.

He was going to tell Quelch where he got off. But it seemed safer to tell him from the farther side of the table.

Mr. Quelch had looked, first, into Bunter's study, No. 7, where he had learned that Bunter was teasing in Study No. 1. He came along to Study No. 1 for Bunter. He had a cane under his arm.

"I sent Trotter for you, Bunter!" he said.

"Did—did you, sir?" stammered Bunter.

"As you did not come to my study, Bunter, I asked Trotter whether he had delivered my message, and he informed me that he had done so. Am I to understand, Bunter, that you have disregarded a message from your Form-master?"

"Oh! Yes! No! I—I mean, no!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I was just coming, sir!" Somehow, it was not easy to assume a manner of bold defiance under Quelch's gimlet-eyes.

"You should have come at once, Bunter, but if you delayed, perhaps, to finish your lines—Where are your lines?"

"I—I—I haven't done them, sir!"

"You—have—not—done—your—lines?" asked Mr. Quelch, enunciating every word with terrifying distinctness.

"Nunno!"

"I shall cane you, Bunter, with the greatest severity. I hardly understand you to-day, Bunter. You appear to have developed an extraordinary spirit of impertinence. This will not be allowed to continue." Mr. Quelch took the cane from under his arm. "Bend over that chair, Bunter!"

Bunter did not stir.

"Look here, sir," he gasped. "I—I know—"

"What?"

"I—I—I know—" stammered Bunter.

"You awful ass, shut up!" breathed Harry Wharton.

The Famous Five were standing silent, almost in terror of what Bunter might say next!

"You need not speak, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch. "Bunter, I have ordered you to bend over that chair! What do you mean by this delay?"

"I—I—I—I know—" gurgled Bunter.

"You know what, you foolish boy!"

"I—I—I know who snowballed the Head!" gasped Bunter.

It was out at last. Billy Bunter had, so to speak, hurled his bombshell. Now was the time for Quelch to cringe.

Quelch, unexpectedly, did not cringe. He stared at Bunter in surprise, and lowered the cane. He showed no sign whatever of cringing, but evidently he was interested.

"Indeed!" he said. "That has nothing to do with the matter in hand, Bunter, but if you actually know who committed that dastardly attack upon your headmaster, I must hear what you have to say. As a rule, I should not allow a boy to give information, but in such a very serious matter as this, I am bound to do so. Are you speaking seriously, Bunter?"

"Oh, yes! Rather!" gasped Bunter.

The Famous Five stood horrified. They had known, of course, that Bunter, in his extraordinary belief, was making some weird and ghastly mistake. But if they had not known it, Quelch's manner now would have told them so.

But it did not tell Bunter so. He was only puzzled. His belief was not shaken! After all, he knew what he knew!

"Do you mean that you witnessed the attack," asked Mr. Quelch, "or that the boy concerned has told you?"

"The—the boy!" gasped Bunter, blinking at him. "It wasn't a boy."

Mr. Quelch started.

"Unless you witnessed the attack, Bunter, you cannot know anything of the kind," he said. "Did you, or did you not, witness the attack?"

"Yes, I did!" gasped Bunter.

"In that case, you were out of the House after lock-up!"

"Oh, no! Yes!"

"Very well." Mr. Quelch compressed his lips. "That is a trifling matter, if you can let in light on this very mysterious outrage. You say that it was not a boy who attacked the Head with snowballs?"

"You—you know it wasn't!" gasped Bunter.

"What? I know nothing of the matter, as I was at the railway station when it occurred," said Mr. Quelch, staring at him. "What do you mean, Bunter? How could I know anything of it?"

"Oh erkey!"

"Did you, or did you not, see the person who attacked the Head that evening?" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, I did!"

"You say that it was not a boy?"

"Nunno!" gasped Bunter.

"You mean, presumably, that it was a man?"

"Oh erkey! Yes!"

"I cannot believe it!" said Mr. Quelch. "You have made some very strange mistake, if you are speaking the truth, Bunter. I cannot believe that one of the servants—"

"It wasn't one of the servants."

"Upon my word! Do you mean that some man—some extraneous person—someone not belonging to the school, gained admittance? Nonsense!"



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"Nonsense! I—I mean, it was a beak!" gasped Bunter. "It was a master, as you jolly well know!"

Quelch jumped.

"A master!" he shrieked. "Bunter, how dare you! How dare you suggest for one moment that a member of Dr. Locke's staff—Are you out of your senses? Upon my word! What is the matter with this boy?"

"I saw it all!" yelled Bunter.

"You dare to say that you saw a master in this school hurl snowballs at Dr. Locke?" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, I jolly well did!"

"Upon my word! Is this boy wandering in his mind? Is this an impudent falsehood, or an extraordinary delusion?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "If you really believe this, Bunter, tell me at once the name of the master whom you fancy you saw—"

"It was—"

Bob Cherry made frantic signs to the fat Owl to shut up. He ceased then, suddenly, as the gimlet-eye glared at him.

"Answer me at once, Bunter!" booted Mr. Quelch. "Who was it?"

"You, sir!"

"Eh?"

"You!"

Mr. Quelch almost fell down.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Is Not Believed!

THERE was a brief, but awful, silence in Study No. 1.

The Famous Five stood in horror. Quelch stood transfixed. Billy Bunter blinked at him across the table. He was still hopeful of seeing Quelch cringe. But it was bitterly disappointing to Bunter. Quelch showed no sign whatever of cringing.

He was too thunderstruck to speak for some moments. When he found his voice at last it came with a gasp.

"Bunter! This—this amazing insolence! Bless my soul! How dare you, Bunter! If you are not insane, how dare you?"

"I saw you!" gasped Bunter.

"The boy is mad!" said Mr. Quelch.

"I jolly well saw you—"

From the Remove passage came a buzz. Remove fellows were gathering round the open doorway of Study No. 1.

The news that Quelch had come up to the Remove with a cane had drawn the juniors out of the studies. A dozen fellows, at least, outside the study, had heard Bunter's amazing statement.

They shared Mr. Quelch's momentary impression that the fat Owl had taken leave of his senses.

"Can you beat it?" murmured Skinner.

"The mad ass!" breathed Peter Todd.

"Is he right off his rocker?" gasped the Bouncer. "What can have put it into his silly head?"

Mr. Quelch's gimlet-eyes almost bored into the fat face, across the table. His first impression, naturally, was that a fellow who made such a statement was out of his seven senses. But inspection of Bunter's fat countenance reassured him on that point. Bunter was in his senses—as much as usual, at any rate.

"This," said Mr. Quelch at last, in a deep, deep voice, "is insolence—such an example of insolence as I have never encountered before in all my career as a schoolmaster. You dare to say, Bunter, that you saw me—me, your Form-master—Upon my word, this passes belief!"

"So I did!" gasped Bunter. He had gone too far to retreat now, though he

wished, from the bottom of his fat heart, that he hadn't started. But everything, now, depended on making Quelch cringe. "I saw you all right! I ain't going to tell on you—"

"Silence!" shrieked Mr. Quelch. "Is it possible—is it barely possible—that this absurd boy believes what he is saying? Can it be possible? Can he, in the dark, have supposed for one moment—Bless my soul! Bunter, if you saw the attack on the Head, as you state, and saw the assailant—"

"I wasn't three feet away!" gasped Bunter. "I saw you all right!"

"You dare to say that you recognised me at that place, on that occasion?" gurgled Mr. Quelch dazedly.

"Of course I couldn't see your face in the dark, but I knew your gown all right with that white paint on it."

The Bouncer, in the passage, gave a jump.

Bunter's words conveyed nothing to any other Remove fellow, except that he was making one of his idiotic mistakes—only a little more idiotic than usual.

But it conveyed something else to the Bouncer, who knew who had been wearing Quelch's gown that night.

"Oh gad!" gasped Smithy.

"I wasn't going to say anything," went on Bunter. "I may have told a few fellows in confidence, that's all. I knew it was you, sir. But I ain't going to tell the Head and get you sacked, sir."

"Grant me patience!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Will you shut up, you born idiot?" hissed Bob Cherry.

"Be silent, Cherry! Bunter, you will come with me to your headmaster. For what reason you have made this false and ridiculous statement I cannot imagine, unless your mental state requires inquiring into. You can hardly expect even the most foolish person to believe such a statement. It is beyond my comprehension—quite beyond it. Follow me at once!"

"I—I don't want to tell the Head, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"I imagine not," rumbled Mr. Quelch. "I imagine not. You can scarcely have the impudence to repeat such a statement to Dr. Locke. But on your own admission that you were out of the House that evening after lock-out, it appears that it must have been you who committed that attack on the headmaster. No one else was out of the House at the time, so far as can be discovered."

"Oh crikey! I—I didn't—I never—I wasn't!" yelled Bunter. "You jolly well know it was you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar from the passage, crowded now with nearly all the Remove.

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily. "Bunter, you have admitted that you were out of the House, and on the spot where the attack occurred. Dr. Locke will doubtless draw his own conclusions. Follow me at once!"

"I—I—I—" gasped Bunter. "Oh, that beast Todd!" He said that you wouldn't tell lies—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Bunter, come with me!"

Mr. Quelch whisked round the table and grabbed the fat Owl by his collar.

Bunter squeaked dimly as he was hooked out of the study.

Squeaking, he was led down the passage.

There was a howl in the Remove passage, when the thunderous countenance of Mr. Quelch had disappeared down the stairs.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, this is too rich!" gasped Skinner.

"The mad ass! Flogging or the sack!" gurgled Bolsover major.

"Poor old Bunter! Poor old potty porpoise!"

"I guess this is the bee's knee!" chuckled Fisher T. Fish. "I'll tell a man that this is the elephant's side-whiskers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, Bunter's done it now!" said Bob Cherry. "We tried to keep him quiet. How even that fat idiot could fancy that Quelch snowballed the Head—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The weird thing is that I fancy he really thinks so!" gasped Harry Wharton. "He fancies he saw Quelch in that gown with the white paint on—"

"I suppose he saw somebody," said Nugent.

"Did he?" grinned Skinner. "I fancy it was Bunter who did the trick. He owns up he was there, and nobody else was there. Not much doubt what the Head will think, anyhow! He's not likely to believe that it was Quelch."

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

"Poor old Bunter! It's the sack for him," said Ogilvy. "But what the thump did he snowball the Head for?"

"What did he expect to get by spinning that yarn to Quelch?" asked Skinner. "Must be absolutely harry! He couldn't have expected Quelch to believe that he did the trick."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can make it out!" said Harry Wharton. "The Head's almost certain to put it down to Bunter, as he admits he was there. What else can he do? It's the sack for Bunter!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith whistled.

"The sack?" he repeated.

"Well, the Head's not likely to believe that Quelch did it. If that fat chump is ass enough to tell him so, it will only put his back up. Let's go down!"

Unfinished teas in the Remove studies were forgotten, in this exciting and extraordinary state of affairs. The juniors crowded down the stairs, eager to learn what had happened to Bunter.

There was a general impression that it was Bunter who was the secret snowballer. He admitted having been on the spot. His amazing yarn about Quelch was past understanding, and the fellows had to leave it at that. Anyhow, it was fairly certain what view the Head would take.

Some of the fellows were amused; some were anxious for Bunter; all were deeply and keenly interested. They gathered at the corner of Head's corridor, as near as they could venture to Dr. Locke's study, to wait for the hapless Owl to come out.

Bunter was in that study, with Quelch and the Head. He was going through it. If he had the nerve to repeat his astounding accusation against Quelch to the Head, it could only seal his doom. On his own confession of having been on the spot, he was the guilty man. A potty accusation against a Form-master could only add to the Head's natural ire and wrath. Indeed, such an accusation was likely to be rewarded with the sack, apart from the snowballing outrage. There could be little doubt that Billy Bunter's number was up!

It seemed an age before the Head's door opened and Bunter came out.

All eyes fixed on him as he tottered up the passage.

His fat face was the picture of woe.

He gave the eager crowd of Removites the dimmest blink ever.

"Sacked!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

The question was superfluous; all the fellows could see what had happened. They had all expected it. The wonder was that Bunter hadn't!

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter. "I say, you fellows—Oh crikey! I say, the Head didn't believe me! He only snorted when I said it was Quelch! Just snorted!"

Bunter gave a deep, deep groan.

"He thinks I did it, because I was there! I told him I wasn't there; but—but he didn't believe me!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"I mean, as he didn't believe that I saw Quelch do it, I told him I wasn't there at all; but he refused to take my word—"

"Oh jiminy!"

"He says I'm sacked!" moaned Bunter. "I—I—I say, you fellows, do you think he means it? Think he was—was—was joking?"

"Oh, my hat!"

Bunter tottered away—in a sympathetic, but grinning crowd.

Herbert Vernon-Smith strolled away to the Sixth Form passage.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Takes a Hand!

LODER of the Sixth stared round angrily, as his study door opened.

He was at tea with Walker when the Bounder coolly stepped in.

Loder reached for his ashplant.

"You cheeky little sweep!" snapped Loder. "What the dooce do you mean by barging into my study? What are you up to?"

He stared at Vernon-Smith as the Bounder shut the door, and then stood, with his hands in his pockets, looking at him.

"Bunter's sacked!" said Smithy.

"Is he?" snapped Loder. "Have you come here to tell me that?"

"Yes. He's owned up that he was out of the House, at the Head's gate, the evening old Locke was snowballed and they think he did it. He's just been to the Head to be bunked."

"Oh gad!" ejaculated Walker.

Loder caught his breath.

"They—they think Bunter did it! Oh! He's sacked for it?"

"Yes."

Loder dropped the ashplant and sat very still.

To do him justice, he felt a deep twinge. He had little consideration to cast on any fellow but Gerald Loder; but the expulsion of a wretched junior, for something that he had himself done, gave him a very uncomfortable pang.

He would have stopped it, if he could, without danger to himself. Still, the young ass had asked for it—he shouldn't have broken House bounds. Loder was sorry for the poor little beast—but not to the extent of taking the grief himself. Very far from that.

Walker was feeling much more disturbed. He gave Loder expressive looks—which the bully of the Sixth affected not to see.

"Well, what have you come here to tell me for?" asked Loder, staring at the Bounder. "Think I'm interested?"

"I think you ought to be!" said

Vernon-Smith quietly. "It can't go on, Loder. Bunter's asked for this—fairly sat up and howled for it, I know that! He's given the Head no choice but to bunk him—but he's not going to be bunked, all the same. I've come here to tell you, so that you can stop it."

Loder felt a chill. There was only one explanation of Vernon-Smith's words, and of his presence in that study—he knew!

"How can I stop it, you young fool!" stammered Loder. "What the dickens has it got to do with me?"

"I'll tell you," said the Bounder. "Bunter saw somebody snowball the Head that evening. He couldn't see who it was in the dark, but he thought it was our Form-master, Quelch—"

"The potty little idiot!" gasped Walker. "Why—"

"He saw a cap and gown that he knew belonged to Quelch," said the Bounder quietly. "I've only just heard that bit—or I should have known at once who was the happy man."

Loder breathed hard.

"Of course, he couldn't have seen anything of the kind!" he remarked.

"Most of the fellows think that," agreed the Bounder, with a nod. "But I happen to know better, Loder."

"And what do you know about it, Vernon-Smith?" asked Loder, between his teeth.

"I know that a Sixth Form man borrowed Quelch's cap and gown that evening," answered Smithy coolly. "I was in Quelch's study, after having borrowed the phone, when that Sixth Form man came in and put them on, and got out of Quelch's window."

Loder staggered up from his chair.

"You—you—" he stuttered.

"Oh gad!" breathed Walker.

"I wondered what you were up to, dropping out in Quelch's cap and gown," went on Smithy. "As it was no business of mine, I never said anything about it, and never bothered a bean. I knew you were up to something, of course, but I never thought of guessing it was ragging the Head. I couldn't imagine why you should do such a thing—I can't now! But you did!"

"I—I—"

"Bunter saw you, and took you for Quelch. It happened that a lot of wet paint had been sundged over Quelch's gown that day—you never noticed it, putting it on in the dark; but it was light enough in the quad for Bunter to see it at close range—and he knew that gown at once. He thought it was Quelch snowballing the Head—"

Loder was already aware of that much. He said nothing, but stood glaring at the cool Bounder.

"As soon as I heard that Bunter fancied it was Quelch, because he'd seen that painty gown, I knew how the matter stood, of course," went on Smithy. "The fat idiot never guessed that a fellow had borrowed a Form-master's cap and gown for disguise—Quelch being out at the time. I don't know whether I should have guessed; but as I'd seen you put the things on only half an hour before it all happened, and drop out of Quelch's window in them, it wasn't necessary to guess. You see, I knew."

"It—it—it's a lie!" muttered Loder hoarsely. "If you dare to repeat—"

"Cut that out!" said the Bounder contemptuously. "You're going to get Bunter out of this, or I'm going

straight to the Head. Do you think I'm going to keep my mouth shut and see a Remove man sacked for what you did that night?"

"I did not—"

"Cut it out, I tell you! Bunter's told the Head he saw somebody in that painty gown. The Head doesn't believe him, because he knows that it couldn't have been Quelch. He will have another guess coming when he hears that I saw you put it on and get out of Quelch's study window."

"I can prove that I was out of the House. Walker knows—"

"I can see that Walker knows!" sneered the Bounder. "I can see that in his face! I can't see Walker telling the Head a pack of lies, though, to get a kid sacked for what he hasn't done."

"I should jolly well think not!" exclaimed Walker. "I warned you against this, Gerald—you know I did! I begged you not to do it! You can't let that kid be bunked! You know you can't!"

Loder gave him a fierce look.

"Hold your tongue, you fool!" he hissed.

"I shan't hold my tongue if I'm up before the Head!" retorted Walker.

"I'm a prefect! That kid sacked for what you did—what sort of a dashed rascal do you take me for?"

Loder clenched his hands.

"You're for it, Loder, and serve you jolly well right!" said Vernon-Smith. "Knocking the headmaster over with snowballs, you cad—you rotter! I've been called the hardest case in the school, but I'd cut off my hand sooner than raise it against Dr. Locke! You rotter!"

"Cut that out, you young fool!" snapped Walker. "Loder thought it was Hacker—he was after Hacker for pulling his silly ear first day of term—"

"Oh!" gasped the Bounder.

"You silly little idiot!" hissed Loder. "Think I'd have snowballed the Head if I'd known? I thought it was that old ass Hacker—"

The Bounder laughed.

"Well, you're some schemer!" he said. "You'd better chuck scheming. Loder—it's not your long suit! You bag a master's gown for disguise—with a chap watching you all the time—you lay for the giddy victim, with another chap blinking at you—and then you get the wrong man in the dark. Oh crumbs! You'd better chuck up plotting, old bean, and take to noughts and crosses—more suitable to your intellect!"

Loder clutched up his ashplant, almost foaming.

"Get out of my study!" he hissed.

"Pleased!" drawled the Bounder. "Not more than a quarter of an hour before you go to the Head, please—Bunter's got to be put out of his misery. I'll wait that long—no longer!"

Loder's eyes burned at him, as he opened the door and went out. He would almost have faced the "sack" for the pleasure of laying his ashplant on the Bounder, good and hard. Almost—but not quite!

Vernon-Smith laughed, and walked out of the prefect's study.

Loder looked at Walker, when the junior had gone.

"If you'd stand by me—" muttered

Loder desperately.

"Don't be a fool!"

"I shall have to spin some yarn—"

what? I can't mention Hacker. How can I work it? Look here, if you backed me up—"

Walker left the study. Walker had his limit, though it was a wide one.

Loder was left to wrestle with the problem of what he was to say to the Head.

Fifteen minutes later, he was tapping at Dr. Locke's study door.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

A Narrow Escape for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows—" "Poor old Bunter!" "I say, what's going to be done?" moaned Bunter.

"You are!" said Skinner flippantly. "Shut up, Skinner!"

"You see," said Bunter, "I can't be sacked! The pater would make no end of a fuss if I went home at the beginning of the term. Besides, I don't want to leave the school. In fact, I can't leave! The Head doesn't seem to understand that. He's a bit of a fool, I think. But what's going to be done?"

Bunter was in the Rag with a crowd of fellows. Almost every fellow was sympathetic.

But, really, nobody could tell Bunter what was going to be done—except that he had to pack his box and travel.

The fat Owl sat and blinked dolorously, in the midst of a sympathetic crowd. He seemed unable to get it into his fat head that he really was sacked.

"I wish I'd never gone out after Loder's cake now, you know!" moaned Bunter. "It was really all Loder's fault, you know—leaving that cake about, under a fellow's nose practically! Not that I touched it—I don't mean that! I wouldn't!"

"Oh dear!" said Harry Wharton.

"This is as much Toddy's fault as anybody's, too!" said Bunter.

"Mine!" ejaculated Peter Todd.

"Yes, yours. You said that Quelch wouldn't tell the Head lies about it. I wondered whether he might—and you were so jolly sure he wouldn't—"

"You fearful ass, of course he wouldn't!" shrieked Peter Todd.

"Well, he did!" said Bunter. "Stood there before the Head and said that I had dared to say that he did it! Wasn't that telling whoppers?"

"Oh crumbs! You footling fathead!"

"Beast! I might never have chanced it but for you!" groaned Bunter. "Besides, I thought the Head would spot him, if he told whoppers, same as he did me! But he never spotted Quelch!"

"Does he really think Quelch did it?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I know he did, when I saw him, you dummy!" howled Bunter. "He's putting it on to me—but he did it all right! Think I'd have checked him as I did, if I hadn't known he did it? I thought it would make him cringe, when he found that I knew he'd done it! Instead of that, he takes me to the Head, and makes out that I did it!"

"Didn't you do it?" yelled Bob.

"No!" howled Bunter. "Quelch did!"

"You footling fathead, if you saw somebody at it, it wasn't Quelch! Can't you spot who it was? There might be a chance for you yet, if you could name somebody who was there as well as you. Was anybody there?"

"Yes: Quelch!"

"Fathead! Ass! Chump! Quelch wasn't there! He couldn't have been, and wasn't! Can't you get that into

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS

HAPPY New Year, and the best of luck to you all!

I don't know whether it's the after-Christmas feeling or not, but something seems to have upset one of my Yorkshire chums, who writes to me complaining that Harry Wharton is far too good. Personally, I do not think so myself; but there the matter stands. My disgruntled chum evidently yearns to see Harry Wharton "kick over the traces" and generally cause a nuisance. Well, at intervals Harry does kick over the traces, and many old readers will remember instances of this. And what has happened, can happen again! Despite this grouse, my Yorkshire chum apparently keeps on reading the Greyfriars yarns, which is all to the good!

By special request, I am inserting the following notice:

"The Ilford MAGNET Club, c/o 5, Parkway, Seven Kings, Ilford, Essex, is willing to pay 6d. and postage for any one of the following back numbers of the MAGNET—1373, 1374, and 1386."

Should any reader have these particular issues and wish to dispose of same, he should communicate with Mr. V. Hammond, secretary of the above club.

The next letter comes from W. Richards, of Barnsbury, who writes as follows: "Congratulations on reverting to the orange-coloured covers. They look far more impressive and cleaner than the two-coloured covers. The change should meet with great enthusiasm from 'Magnetites' everywhere."

Another interesting letter comes from Miss A. Williams, of Somerset, who, having been a reader of the Old Paper for fourteen years, says: "The MAGNET is the cheapest and best twopennyworth that anyone could buy!"

You've sure spilled a bitful, Anno, as Fisher T. Fish would say.

your fat head? If you saw somebody, you took him for Quelch, and he wasn't Quelch—see?"

"Did you see anybody, Bunter?" asked Harry.

"Only Quelch!"

"Oh dear!"

"Fancy Quelch denying it, when he knows I saw him!" groaned Bunter. "I never expected that, of course! I told the Head I knew it was Quelch, because of his painty gown—and Quelch actually said that he had gone down to the railway station about some luggage—"

"So he had, fathead!"

"Well, he couldn't have, as he was there, snowballing the Head! I thought I should have him feeding from my hand, you know, when I let on that I knew!" moaned Bunter. "That's why I did no prep last night! That's why I never did my lines! Of course, I thought he'd be afraid to let me go to the Head about it! And then he goes to the Head and makes out I did it!"

The fat Owl groaned.

"I say, you fellows, now Quelch makes out that he never did it, it's landed on me, because I was there! I told the Head I wasn't there, but he didn't believe me—after I'd said I was, you know! But, look here! Suppose you go to the Head, Wharton, as head boy of the Remove, you know, and tell him I—"

"What can I tell him?" asked Harry. "I'd do anything I could—but I don't see—"

Yes, I think I've got room for a few REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Here they are:

"INVALID": Many thanks for your letter. A speedy recovery to health, chum, and I sincerely hope the MAGNET will always be a source of amusement and entertainment to you.

A. SIMPSON (Johannesburg, S.A.): Sammy Bunter's age is 12 years. The oldest junior at Greyfriars is Percy Bokover—16 years 2 months and the oldest senior is George Wingate—17 years, 11 months.

JACK VAN WART (Canada): English schoolboys have the following holidays: Easter, 3 weeks, summer, 7 weeks, and Christmas, 4 weeks. Your newsagent should be able to obtain the map you require.

JOHN RALSTON (Reading): Your sketch of Billy Bunter "Feeding his face" is a very creditable piece of work. Perhaps you may become the MAGNET's special artist one of these days. Who knows?

And now for a word or two about next week's bill o' fare.

Among all the famous Bunter yarns, none will take so prominent a place as next Saturday's grand cover-to-cover story of Greyfriars, entitled:

"BILLY BUNTER'S RICH RELATION!"

By Frank Richards.

As the title suggests, a rich relative of Billy Bunter comes to Greyfriars. In consequence of this, our Billy fancies he's on a really good thing—with bags of "brass" and tons of tuck! But there's a rude awakening in store for the Owl of the Remove—his rich relative cuts him dead! Arthur Carter isn't at Greyfriars to treat Billy Bunter well—he's there for a totally different reason as you will learn when you read this great tale. Enjoy it, I'll say you will! And the other features that go with it, too. Make sure of next Saturday's MAGNET by ordering a copy to-day!

YOUR EDITOR.

"Tell him you know I never did it, because I was with you all that evening, and you know I never went out of the House at all! See? The Head may take your word. He won't take mine!" said Bunter bitterly. "He makes out that I'm untruthful! That's the sort of justice we get here!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Suppose you all go!" said Bunter hopefully. "A dozen of you, and you all say that I never left the House—or perhaps it might be better to say that you came out with me, and saw Quelch doing it—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"The fact is, I don't mind what you say, so long as you get me off the sack!" explained Bunter. "That's the really important thing."

"Oh scissors!"

"That's the chap," murmured Bob. "That expects the Head to take his word!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it's pretty thick, I think, to doubt a fellow's word—especially mine!" said Bunter. "Tain't as if it was one of you fellows. But me, you know—"

The door of the Rag opened, and Mr. Quelch stepped in.

He glanced round, and his eyes fixed on Bunter. Apparently he was looking for that fat youth.

He rustled into the room.

The Bounder quietly followed him on, with a lurking grin on his face.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,382.

"It appears," said Mr. Quelch, "that Loder of the Sixth Form very foolishly

The Bomber grinned.

Now on sale - - - 2d.

"You will now follow me to my study, Bunter. I shall cane you for not having written your lines, and you will hand them to me to-morrow, or they will be doubled. You will be in deten-

THE KNIE

(Who says another yarn-leaving theater and pituitous Bunter? Everlovely Good? Then look out for next Saturday's hip-top tale, "BILLY BUNTER'S RICH RELATION!" It's one of Frank Richards' specials!)

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