

MORE FREE FOOTBALLS! Another Great Opportunity for Footer-Stamp Collectors!

The Magnet ^{2D}

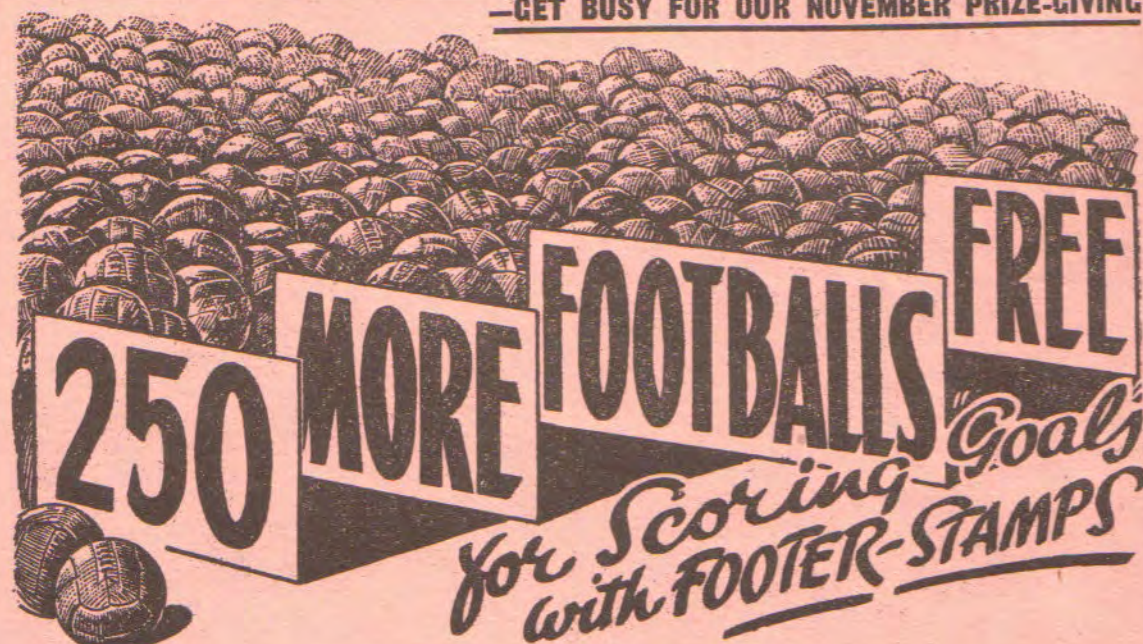
*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper*



THE GUY COMES TO LIFE!

ANOTHER HUGE PRIZE OFFER STARTING!

—GET BUSY FOR OUR NOVEMBER PRIZE-GIVING



LOOK! LISTEN! Another 250 Super Footballs to be won FREE in yet another thrilling "Footer-Stamps" Competition!

If you are already collecting "Footer-Stamps" and haven't so far won a ball, you will want to make another great effort to be a winner. Or if you haven't started, here's your chance—jump straight into this month's competition!

It's a great idea! "Footer-Stamps" are appearing every week, and the object is simply to make up as many "goals" as you can with them. The stamps illustrate six different actions on the football field.

The six actions are: **KICK-OFF—DRIBBLE—TACKLE—HEADER—SHOT—GOAL**, and every complete set of the six actions you collect scores a "goal." (The "goal" stamp by itself does not count as a "goal.")

There are ten stamps below and you will find a complete "goal" among them. Then go all out to get as many more of these stamps as you can. Ask your friends for them, swap with them if you like, or even collect them together. The more you get, the more "goals" you'll score—and here's good news—

FOOTER-STAMPS with complete "goals" are also in other famous papers like GEM and MODERN BOY—get the stamps from these papers to swell your score.

The 250 Prize Footballs in the November prize-giving will go to the collectors scoring the most goals for the month. No stamps to be sent in yet—just wait until we give you the word at the end of the month. So if you haven't won a football yet—get busy with "Footer-Stamps."

OVERSEAS READERS—you are in this scheme also, and special prizes in cash are to be awarded for the best scores from readers outside the British Isles. There will be a special closing date for you, of course.

RULES: 250 Footballs will be awarded in the November contest to the readers declaring and sending in the largest number of "goals" scored with "Footer-Stamps." The Editor may extend or amend the prize list in case of too many ties, and no reader may win more than one prize in "Footer-Stamps."

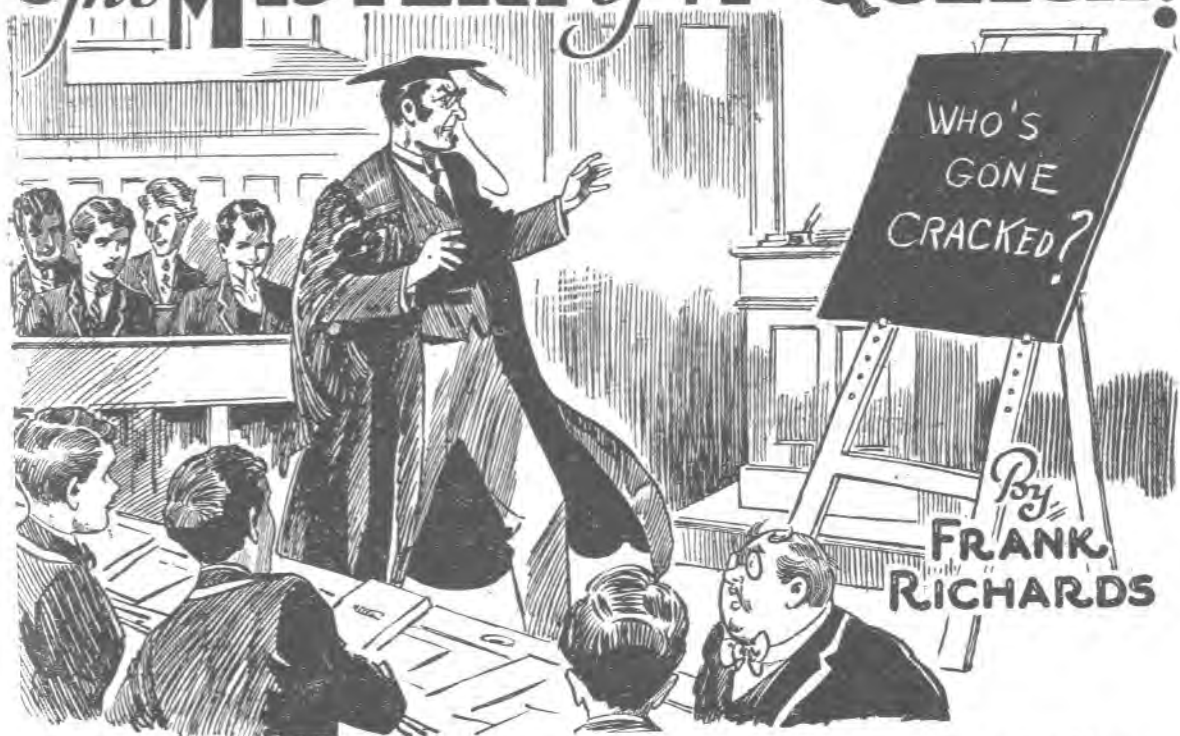
Each "goal" must consist of a set of "Footer-Stamps" Nos. 1 to 6, inclusive—and all claims for prizes to be made on the proper coupon (to be given later). No allowance made for any coupon or stamps mutilated, or lost or delayed in the post or otherwise. No correspondence! No one connected with this paper may enter, and the Editor's decision will be final and legally binding throughout. (N.B.—"Footer-Stamps" may also be collected from the following papers: Gem, Modern Boy, Boy's Cinema, Sports Budget, Detective Weekly, Thriller, Wild West Weekly, Champion, and Triumph.)

TEN MORE "FOOTER-STAMPS" FOR YOUR PILE!



Someone in cap and gown is playing mad pranks at Greyfriars! Who is the culprit? Strange as it may seem, suspicion falls on Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove!

The MYSTERY of MR. QUELCH!



Mr. Quelch stood as if dumbfounded, gazing at the inscription. His face was almost pale with rage.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Incredible!

BANG!

Harry Wharton & Co. jumped. Mr. Prout, the master of the Greyfriars Fifth, fairly bounded.

It was startling! Indeed, it was not merely startling. It was amazing, unthinkable, extraordinary, dumbfounding!

It was one of those things that could not happen! Yet there it was—happening!

Banging of crackers had not been uncommon, the last few days at Greyfriars. The festive Fifth was at hand and the Greyfriars fellows were pleased to remember the Fifth of November. Thoughtless fags were liable to set crackers cracking, or squibs squibbing, at any odd moment. But this—

It was morning break. The Famous Five of the Remove were punting a footer in break, and it rolled on the path under Masters' windows, where, of course, a footer was not supposed to roll. The portly Prout was walking on that path, and as the juniors cut after the ball, Prout raised a plump hand, and addressed them in severe tones.

Prout was telling them, severely, to take that footer to a safer distance from the windows of Masters' Studies—when it happened!

Mr. Quelch's window was open.

Within, a glimpse could be had of a figure in cap and gown. The face could not be seen, as a handkerchief was held to the nose, apparently for the purpose of blowing the same. But Harry Wharton & Co. had no doubt that it was Mr. Quelch, their Form-master, for no other break was likely to be there.

Prout, as he came to a halt to address

the juniors, had his back to that window, so he did not see the master within, though the juniors did.

He did not see—but they saw—an arm suddenly lifted, and something whiz out of the open window from the lifted hand.

For a second they wondered what it was, and wondered that Quelch should be shying things so recklessly out of the window.

Then it hit Prout in the middle of his portly back.

It exploded at the same moment!

It was a cracker! It was a large cracker! It banged with a terrific bang!

Mr. Prout, as the cracker dropped banging behind him. "Who—how—what—"

He revolved swiftly on his axis.

Then he, too, glimpsed the figure in cap and gown. He glimpsed, at the same moment, a small, whizzing object. Before he realised what it was, it tapped on his portly chest, and dropped at his feet, and—

Bang!

Prout bounded again. It was not really easy for Prout to bound, for the law of gravitation had a lot of effect on sixteen stone. But he did bound—clear of the earth.

"Mr. Quelch!" shrieked Prout. Slam!

The window-sash shut down. The figure within disappeared from sight. But Prout had seen it—Harry Wharton & Co. had seen it—several other fellows whose attention had been drawn by the first bang had glimpsed it! There was no mistake about it!

"I say, you fellows!" came an excited squeal from Billy Bunter. "I say, did you see that—old Quelch chucking fireworks at old Prout!"

Mr. Prout stood gasping. To say that he was astounded would be to put it mildly.

He almost gibbered with amazement. "Quelch!" he gasped. "A Form-master—a member of Dr. Locke's staff—Quelch—Mr. Quelch!—upon my word! Can I believe my eyes? Goodness gracious! Quelch!"

He stood staring, and almost gibbering, at the window—now shut! For a long, long minute, Prout stood—staring, rooted with amazement, wrath and resentment gathering in his portly brow.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,603.

Amazing Schoolboy Adventure Yarn, Starring HARRY WHARTON & CO., the World-Famous Chums of GREYFRIARS.

Prout bounded and roared with surprise.

Harry Wharton & Co. jumped in sheer amazement, and then stood transfixed. They gazed as if mesmerised at the open window of their Form-master's study.

Quelch—unless their eyes had deceived them—Quelch, the master of the Remove, had chucked a cracker at Prout, the master of the Fifth!

Unless Quelch had gone suddenly mad, it was incomprehensible.

"What—who—what—" spluttered

Then he rolled away along the path heading for the door of the House!

Evidently he was going in to see Quelch and demand an explanation of the Remove master's astounding action.

It seemed incredible that Quelch, a middle-aged and sedate Form-master, had taken to playing reckless practical jokes, like some unthinking fag in the Second or Third Form. But he had done it! Two crackers from Quelch's window had banged on Prout—the first behind him, the second in front of him—raking him fore and aft, as it were! Prout had to believe his eyes—and his ears! Quelch had done this! Unimaginable as it was, Quelch had done it! Prout rolled in to see Quelch about it! He had some emphatic remarks to make to Quelch!

He left the juniors fairly agape with astonishment. A dozen fellows gathered around the Famous Five were standing. Billy Bunter poked up one of the exploded crackers, blinked at it through his big spectacles, and held it up. Fellows stared at it.

"My only hat!" said Harry Wharton at last. "What—what—what's the matter with Quelch?"

"Must be potty!" said Frank Nugent in wonder.

"The pottyfulness must be truly terrific!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"It—it—it was Quelch!" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"Quelch all right!" said Johnny Bull. "But how—and why—and what—"

"I say, you fellows, he must have gone off his rocker!" said Billy Bunter. "I say, fancy a beak pelting another beak with crackers!"

"Did you fellows see Quelch do it?" exclaimed Herbert Vernon-Smith.

"Yes," gasped Harry. "We saw him—"

"Sure it was Quelch?" asked the Bounder. "Quelch can't have done it unless he's gone batty!"

"He has!" said Bob. "Must have! It was Quelch! It was a beak, anyhow—and no other beak would be in Quelch's study, I suppose."

"Well, if a beak did it, it would be as likely to be Quelch as any other beak—but sure it was a beak?"

"Yes, ass—we saw him!"

"I jolly well saw him!" said Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, Quelch has gone batty!"

"He was all right in second school!" said Vernon-Smith. "But if he's really been pelting another beak with crackers—"

"He has—"

"Mad as a hatter, I suppose."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, look out!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as Mr. Quelch's study window was suddenly opened.

All eyes fixed startled, on that window, as the sash shot up. If Quelch had gone batty, or if he had unaccountably taken to larking in middle life, more crackers might be coming!

But the next moment the juniors saw that it was Prout at the window. The Fifth Form beak stared out.

"Have you boys seen Mr. Quelch leave the House?" he called out.

"No, sir!" answered Harry Wharton. "Isn't he in his study, sir?"

"He is not! No one was here when I reached the study! He appears to have gone out immediately after—after his extraordinary actions. You have not seen him?"

"No, sir!"

The window shut again.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry.

"Quelch is dodging him—"

"I say, you fellows—fancy Quelch—"

"Chuckling crackers like a fag, and then dodging like a fag!" said Johnny Bull. "Well, this beats the band!"

"It does—it do!" said Bob.

The crowd of fellows moved away from Masters' windows—excitedly discussing that amazing happening. News of it spread all through the Remove, and other Forms, before the bell rang for school. Whether Quelch had gone batty or taken to practical joking, it was equally amazing, and the Greyfriars fellows discussed it breathlessly and endlessly, and were still discussing it when they went in for third school.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Batty!

"I SAY, you fellows, think it's safe?" Billy Bunter asked that question as the Remove gathered at the door of their Form-room.

The fat Owl blinked round at the crowd of faces through his big spectacles with a very uneasy blink. Billy Bunter was not feeling easy in his mind. If Billy Bunter's Form-master had gone batty, Bunter would have preferred to give him a wide berth. On the other hand, he had to go in for third school. It worried Bunter.

"Fathead!" was Bob Cherry's reply, which did not comfort Bunter.

"Well, I mean to say, if Quelch is potty," argued the fat Owl—"I mean, suppose he broke out suddenly with a ruler or the poker?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! He's batchy all right!" said Bunter warmly. "I can jolly well tell you fellows that I don't want to be brained by a mad beak."

"You're in no danger, old fat man!" grinned Bob. "Chap can't be brained unless he's got some brains to be brained with. You're all right."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Gilbert Tracy, the new junior in the Remove, looked curiously at Bunter, and then glanced round at the other fellows.

"What is that fat ass driving at?" he asked. "Is anything the matter with Quelch?"

Tracy, apparently, was the only fellow in the Form who had not yet heard the startling news.

"Didn't you see what happened in break?" asked Skinner.

"No; I was in my study, doing lines. What happened?" asked Tracy.

Three or four fellows told him at once.

Tracy looked incredulous.

"Pulling my leg?" he asked.

"No, you ass! Quelch pelted Prout with fireworks from his study window," said Vernon-Smith. "A dozen fellows saw him."

"He's mad, of course," said Bunter. "And I can jolly well tell you fellows I don't feel safe with a mad beak."

"If he did that he must be as mad as a hatter!" said Tracy, staring. "But it wants some believing."

"It happened," grunted Bob Cherry. "I saw it, for one."

"He's gone off his rocker," said Bunter. "Perhaps it's through you, Tracy—"

"What?" ejaculated Tracy.

"Well, look how you've been badgering him and ragging him all this term," said Bunter. "Everybody knows that Quelch talked your uncle into sending you here, and that you've set out to worry him till he lets you go home again. You've been worrying Quelch

ever since the term started. I dare say that did it."

"You silly ass!" said Tracy, laughing.

"Anyhow, he's potty," said Bunter, "and I jolly well don't like being shut up in the Form-room with a potty beak—"

"Shut up, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton hastily, as an angular figure in cap and gown came up the corridor.

"Shan't! You know that Quelch is batty as well as I do!" hooted Bunter. "Absolutely batty and batchy, and—"

"Here he comes, you fat ass!" hissed Bob Cherry.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked in terror at the Remove master as he rustled up to the door of the Form-room.

Mr. Quelch's face, when first seen, had worn quite a genial expression; but that expression had suddenly changed. Only too clearly the fat Owl's words had reached his ears as he came up the corridor. His gimlet eyes glinted, and his lips set in a tight line as he glanced at Bunter.

He made no remark, however, till he had unlocked the Form-room door and the juniors had entered. As they took their places he called to the fat Owl.

"Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter, in dismay.

Bunter did not, as he had said, like being shut up in a Form-room with a potty beak. Least of all did he want to draw that potty beak's attention specially to himself. His eyes almost bulged through his spectacles at Mr. Quelch.

"I heard you make a disrespectful remark concerning your Form-master, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I wasn't speaking, sir! I never said you were batty, sir! I—I mean, I—I don't really think you're batty, sir—nothing of the kind! Oh lor'!"

Mr. Quelch looked at Bunter. The whole Form looked at Mr. Quelch.

Quelch's countenance indicated angry annoyance, which was not surprising, in view of Billy Bunter's remarks.

But certainly it did not indicate anything in the nature of insanity. He looked his usual severe and self-possessed self.

Looking at him, it was hard to believe that only a quarter of an hour ago he had been larking like a mischievous fag in the Second Form.

But seeing was believing, and unless Quelch had gone a little "off his rocker," it was difficult to account for his actions.

The intense interest the whole Form were taking in him was not lost on Mr. Quelch. It added to his annoyance.

He picked up a cane from his desk.

"Bunter," he rapped, "come here!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

He did not "come there." He stood where he was, blinking at his Form-master with starting eyes behind his spectacles.

"Do you hear me, Bunter?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh lor'!"

"Get a move on, you fat dunder!" whispered Peter Todd.

"Oh, really, Toddy! If—if he's mad, you know—"

"Bunter, come here this instant!"

Slowly, as if hardly able to drag his fat legs along, the Owl of the Remove approached his Form-master.

His eyes and his spectacles were glued on Quelch, watching him like a cat.

At the first sign of active insanity Bunter was prepared to bolt round the desks and escape. But, to his relief, Quelch's manner was quite normal.

The Remove master pointed to a desk with his cane.

"Bend over that desk, Bunter!" he said sternly. "I do not understand the cause of your present extraordinary behaviour, but I conclude that it is intended for impertinence. Bend over at once!"

Bunter hesitated. He was unwilling to take his eyes off Quelch, in case he was, after all, potty. However, he bent over at last.

Whack!

"Ow!"

Whack!

"Wow!"

Whack!

"Yaroooooh!"

Mr. Quelch laid down the cane.

"You may now go to your place, Bunter."

"Ow! Wow! Yow!"

"If there is any repetition of this impertinence I shall punish you more severely. Go to your place at once!"

"Ow! Yow! Wow! Ow!"

Bunter tottered to his place. Mr. Quelch's stern glances followed him there, and then swept round over the class. Fellows dropped their eyes before it, unwilling to meet the gimlet eye.

Mr. Quelch shut his lips hard.

He could see that there was something "on" in the Remove. He sensed the suppressed excitement of the whole Form.

Fellows avoided meeting his eyes, but they glanced at him furtively and stealthily, turning their eyes away again at once if he looked at them. Mr. Quelch's brow grew grimmer and grimmer.

"Wharton!"

"Oh, yes, sir!" said the head boy of the Remove.

"Have you forgotten that it is your duty to give out the papers?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, yes, sir—no, sir!" stammered Harry.

Mr. Quelch gave him a hard, grim look. Something was "on," and his trusted head boy was in it.

He handed Wharton the Latin papers for the Form, and the head boy gave them out and returned to his own place. Mr. Quelch sat at his high desk, his eyes on the Remove. The juniors set to work, but every minute—or, rather, every moment—a head was lifted, and some fellow shot a swift glance at Quelch and dropped his eyes to his Latin paper again. And Quelch's face grew harder and harder, till it looked as if it was moulded in iron.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Quelch Wants to Know!

"SILENCE!"

Mr. Quelch rapped out that word for the fifth or sixth time. Whispering in the Remove died away.

But the silence lasted only a few minutes. Again there came a faint buzz of whispering in the class.

Quelch had looked quite good-tempered when he came along to take his Form in third school. Now he looked anything but good-tempered. He was angry, and growing angrier and angrier.

The juniors could see that plainly enough. Knitted brows, glinting eyes, and compressed lips were danger signals plain enough to be seen. But, really, they wondered what Quelch expected. A Form-master who "chucked" fireworks at another master, under the eyes

of a dozen members of his Form surely ought not to be surprised if he caused a sensation in that Form.

Quelch looked as if he did not know what was on; but he must know, unless he had already forgotten his amazing performance in break.

He stepped away from his desk at last, and stood with his eyes glinting at the Remove. Something was on, and he was going to know what it was and deal with it.

"Wharton!" he rapped.

"Yes, sir!" answered Harry.

"Something is going on in this Form," said Mr. Quelch, "into which I intend to inquire. You are aware of it, Wharton, as I see very plainly. I require an explanation, and I ask you, as my head boy. What is the subject of this incessant whispering?"

Harry Wharton did not answer. He stood looking at his Form-master, hardly knowing what to say.

"Do you hear me, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir; but—"

"But what?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"But—but don't you know, sir?" stammered Harry.

"If I knew, Wharton, I should not inquire of you. I am determined to keep order in this class," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "There is some topic under incessant discussion here. I demand to know what it is."

"It—it—it's what happened in break, sir!" stammered the captain of the Remove. He had to answer.

"What happened in break?" repeated Mr. Quelch. "I am unaware that anything of an unusual nature happened in break, Wharton."

"Oh!" gasped Harry.

All the Remove stared at Mr. Quelch. It looked as if Quelch was losing his memory as well as his wits.

"Tell me to what you refer, Wharton, at once!" said Mr. Quelch angrily.

"The—the fireworks, sir."

"Fireworks!" repeated Mr. Quelch. "Has any boy in this Form introduced fireworks into the school before the Fifth? You are all aware that it is forbidden to do so."

"Oh, no, sir! No fellow here—"

"Then what do you mean?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"I—I—I mean—"

"What?"

"The—the—the fireworks in your study, sir!" stammered the captain of the Remove. "We—we—we were all rather—rather surprised, sir, when you—"

"Fireworks in my study!" repeated the Remove master. "Has any boy dared to set off fireworks in my study? Impossible!"

"Oh, no, sir! You—"

"I!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"You—you haven't forgotten, sir?" exclaimed Harry blankly.

"Forgotten what?" almost roared Mr. Quelch.

"Chucking—I—I mean throwing—the crackers at Mr. Prout, sir—"

"What?"

"I—I—I—"

Harry Wharton's voice trailed off. He simply did not know what to say. Quelch evidently had forgotten.

The Removites gazed at him, dumbfounded. Clearly Quelch's mind was a blank on the subject.

For a moment there was a deep silence. Then Mr. Quelch spoke again, in a voice that was like the grinding of a saw.

"Wharton, what are you saying? Have you the audacity, the impudence, the insolence, to pretend for one moment to suppose that I—I, your Form-master—"

the staff? Are you in your right senses? Who has told you this absurd story?"

"I—I saw it, sir!" gasped Harry.

"I saw you—"

"You saw me?" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir."

The Remove master gazed at his head boy. The expression on his face was simply terrifying. The Remove watched him, breathless. He spoke at last.

"You state that you saw me, Wharton—you saw me—Upon my word! You state that you saw me, your Form-master, acting in a frivolous, foolish, and undignified manner. It is you, then, you who have spread this ridiculous story! You have dared to say—"

"But, sir—" gasped Harry helplessly.

"I cannot suppose, Wharton, that you have deliberately invented a falsehood, and dared to repeat it to my face. Apparently you have made some ridiculous mistake. Such a mistake is inexcusable. Wharton, it is my duty to punish you for this."

"But, sir—"

"Not another word!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Mistake or no mistake, you have acted in an utterly disrespectful manner in repeating this absurd, this ridiculous story among the other boys. Stand out before the Form, Wharton!"

The captain of the Remove, in a state of utter bewilderment, stood out before the Form.

Mr. Quelch gripped his cane.

"Bend over that desk, Wharton!"

"But, sir—"

"Not another word! Not another syllable! Bend over that desk instantly, or I will report you to your headmaster for a flogging!"

Wharton bent over the desk. He was amazed and bewildered—as were most of the other fellows in the Form-room. The Remove master wielded the cane with a heavy hand. His face was almost pale with anger.

Bunter had had three. Wharton received six, and every one a swipe!

The Remove looked on with breathless excitement. Wharton was getting six for telling Quelch what he had asked him—telling that he had seen what a dozen other fellows had seen! Quelch had lost his memory or his senses, or both! Likewise, he had evidently lost his temper.

The six administered, Mr. Quelch signed to Wharton to go back to his place, which he did with set lips and gleaming eyes. Then Mr. Quelch looked over the silent, staring Form.

"Another whisper during this class," he said, very distinctly, "and I shall cane the whole Form."

He went back to his desk.

But there was not another whisper in the Form-room. No fellow wanted to share what had happened to the head boy. Amazed, excited, dumbfounded as they were, the Removites were as silent as stone images, and very, very glad when the time came to dismiss.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Facer For Prout!

"HEARD about Quelch?"

"Quelch?"

"He's mad!"

It was all over the school.

The Remove hummed and buzzed with it. Fellows in other Forms were deeply interested. Really it was thrilling.

After being dismissed, the Removites gathered in groups in the quad, discussing it breathlessly. Fellows in the

Fourth and the Shell listened to the strange tale; fags of the Third and the Second lapped it up; even seniors of the Fifth and Sixth gave ear.

It was a real sensation.

Quelch's action, in the first place, in "chucking" crackers at the Fifth Form beak had been amazing, unnerving. But the fact that he had, within half an hour, forgotten what he had done put the lid on.

That he had forgotten was clear. He had caned Wharton, his head boy, for saying that he had seen what he and a dozen other fellows had seen. Evidently it had not occurred to Quelch that others beside Wharton had seen that astonishing occurrence.

"Mad as a hatter!"

"Simply potty!"

"I say, you fellows, the Head ought to know! I say, I don't think we ought to have to go in with a mad beak this afternoon!"

"It beats Banagher!"

"The beatfulness is terrific!"

"Poor old Quelch—gone right off his rocker!"

Mr. Quelch, coming out of the House for a walk in the quad before dinner, was the cynosure of all eyes.

He noticed it at once, and his eyes glared.

This, he had no doubt, was due to the absurd story invented, or imagined, by Wharton, his once-trusted head boy.

It was annoying enough. Tubb of the Third was standing by the steps when Mr. Quelch came out, and, after a startled look at Quelch, George Tubb broke into sudden flight and scuttled across the quad.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips hard.

Coming out into the quad, he passed near Coker, Potter, and Greene of the Fifth Form. They had been excitedly discussing something; but they fell silent as Mr. Quelch came along, and backed away to give him plenty of room to pass.

Then a startled squeak was heard:

"I say, you fellows! Here he comes! Hook it!"

Quelch's eye swept round, glittering. He beheld Billy Bunter, the fat ornament of his Form, in full and frantic flight. He breathed hard! He had not forgotten the amazing words he had overheard the fat Owl utter.

Other Remove fellows, though they did not follow Bunter's example of scuttling, moved off to give him, so to speak, plenty of sea room. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth, who were coming towards him, suddenly turned and walked very quickly in the opposite direction.

Monsieur Charpentier, the French master, eyed him very curiously and uneasily as he approached, and made a movement to walk away. Mr. Quelch, with compressed lips, called to him:

"One moment, Monsieur Charpentier."

But the French master did not stop. He did not seem to hear. Not only had he heard the breathless talk among the boys, but he had received a full account from Mr. Prout. He felt uneasy under Quelch's glittering eye.

Affecting not to hear, the dapper little gentleman walked quickly away, and Quelch was left breathing harder than ever.

His colleagues were avoiding him. Apparently they had heard that ridiculous story. Was it possible that they believed it?

But if there were some of Quelch's colleagues who preferred his room to his company, there was one who did not.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY. No. 1,603.

Mr. Prout, in the quad, rolled directly towards him as soon as he saw him.

He had not been able to see him in break. But he was anxious to see him and demand an explanation. Now the portly master of the Fifth bore down on him like a galleon under full sail.

"Mr. Quelch, pray stop a moment!" boomed Prout.

"Certainly, Mr. Prout," answered the Remove master, stopping at once.

From a dozen different directions eyes were on the two masters. Some fellows ventured near to hear what was said.

"You are probably aware, Quelch, that I require an explanation," said the Fifth Form master coldly and ponderously.

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows.

"An explanation of what?" he asked.

"Of your extraordinary action during break this morning, sir. You do not, I presume, consider that it is in accordance with the dignity of a Form-master to fling exploding crackers from your study windows," said Mr. Prout with ponderous sarcasm.

"Am I to understand, sir, that you have heard that absurd story, and that you are foolish enough to take heed of it?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"What?" gasped Prout. "What?"

"That absurd story, sir, was invented by a boy in my Form, whom I have punished severely for his audacity," said Mr. Quelch. "I should hardly have supposed that it was necessary for me to tell you that I was guilty of no such action, Mr. Prout."

"Sir!" gasped Mr. Prout. "Fire-works were flung at me from your study window—hurled at me, sir—"

"Possibly!" said Mr. Quelch. "As I was not in the study during break I cannot say what may have happened there—"

"You were not in the study, sir!" stammered Prout.

"I was not!"

"Are you speaking seriously, Mr. Quelch? I saw you in your study—"

"You certainly did not, Mr. Prout, as I was not there."

"I saw you, sir, in the act of hurling a firework at me!" boomed Prout.

"Nonsense!"

"What-a-t? What did you say, Mr. Quelch?"

"I said nonsense!" replied Mr. Quelch grimly. "And I repeat, nonsense! A boy of my Form appears to have seen what occurred and to have made the same foolish mistake! I have caned him for it. But I should expect, sir, a little more common sense from you than from a junior in the Lower Fourth Form."

Mr. Prout gazed at the Remove master. His jaw dropped in his amazement and he stared like a fish out of water.

"I—I—I fail to understand you, Quelch!" he gasped at last. "Your action was amazing—unprecedented—unparalleled—I feel bound to demand an explanation. But that you would deny your own action naturally never occurred to me for one moment."

"The action was not mine, Mr. Prout, but, if it occurred, that of some boy who must have gone into my study, taking advantage of the fact that I was absent. You should be aware of this without my telling you."

"Sir, I can believe my own eyes!" gasped Prout.

"I should not advise you to do so, Mr. Prout, if you fancy you saw anything of the kind in my study. I should recommend you to consult an oculist!" said Mr. Quelch icily.

"Sir!" gurgled Prout. "Sir! I saw you, and a number of boys saw you—"

boys of your own Form and other Forms—"

"Nonsense!"

"Your head boy Wharton among them—"

"I have caned Wharton for making a similar statement, Mr. Prout."

"Upon my word! Then you have punished the boy unjustly, sir!" boomed Prout. "He was not alone; others—I can give you names: Nugent, Bull, Cherry, the Indian boy, Vernon-Smith, Bunter, and others—and they all saw you—"

"Nonsense!"

"If you describe my remarks as nonsense, Mr. Quelch—"

"I can describe nonsensical remarks in no other way, Mr. Prout! If you persist in talking nonsense you must expect me to regard your remarks as nonsense!"

Prout seemed on the point of choking.

"Then I will say no more, sir! I will not trouble you with any more nonsense!" he gurgled. "I shall place the matter before Dr. Locke."

"If you choose to waste your own time, and the headmaster's time, by telling Dr. Locke that you have made a childish mistake, it is your own business, sir!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Enough, sir!" gasped Mr. Prout.

"Enough!"

He rolled away towards the House. Mr. Quelch cast a grim look after him and resumed his walk in the quad.

Twenty fellows at least had heard what had been said—twice or thrice as many had watched the interview from a distance. They exchanged excited looks and whispers.

Mr. Quelch did not prolong his walk, as he had intended, till dinner. It was altogether too disagreeable to be the cynosure of so many eyes—the centre of such breathless attention. He walked back to the House with a red spot glowing in either cheek, and went in—and he went in with thunder in his brow.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bad Luck For Bunter!

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

"Oh!" gasped Billy Bunter.

Bunter was startled.

That sudden roar was enough to startle any fellow who was engaged in a surreptitious search of another fellow's study!

Bunter, at the moment, was in Study No. 1 in the Remove, which belonged to Wharton and Nugent and the new fellow Tracy. Bunter had, of course, no business there—which doubtless accounted for his presence in the study!

He was standing at the study cupboard, blinking into the same through his big spectacles, when Bob Cherry's ruddy, grinning face looked into the room, and his roar made Bunter jump.

The fat Owl spun round, gasping.

"Well, what are you doing in Wharton's study?" inquired Bob.

"Oh, nothing! I mean, I—I was going to borrow Wharton's Latin dick!" stammered Bunter.

"You fancy he keeps it in the cupboard?"

"Oh, yes! No! I mean—"

"There it is, on the table, if you want it."

"Oh! I—I mean, I—I don't want Wharton's Latin dick, I—I'm looking for—Nugent's algebra!"

"Not for Nugent's cake?" asked Bob.

"Oh, no! Certainly not! If Nugent had a cake from home this morning I

don't know anything about it, Cherry. If you think I saw him unwrapping it you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stop cackling!" snapped Bunter. "Can't a fellow look in a fellow's study to borrow a French conversation book without a silly fathead butting in and cackling?"

"Taken to swotting?" grinned Bob. "You must be going to put in some tough work before dinner if you want a Latin dictionary, an algebra, and a French conversation book all at once. Mind you don't get them mixed."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Bob Cherry, chuckling, went on up the passage.

It was a great relief to Billy Bunter to see him go. He resumed his search of the study—though he certainly was not searching for a Latin dick, an algebra, a French conversation book, or any such aid to knowledge. Bunter, as Bob had accurately guessed, was in search of a cake.

Bob, however, had no objection to Bunter continuing his search for Frank Nugent's cake. Unknown to Bunter, that cake had been whacked out in break by five fellows, and had gone the way of all cakes.

As that cake had been parked in equal proportions by all the members of the Famous Five, and had disappeared to the last crumb and the last plum, Bob did not in the least object to Billy Bunter searching Nugent's study for it! Indeed, he wished him joy of the search. So he went on up the passage, chuckling, and left the fat Owl to it.

Bunter shut the door after him and got busy again.

He was very keen to discover that cake. It was close on dinner-time, it was true, but Bunter had time to park that cake before dinner, if he found it, and had no doubt of having plenty of space left for dinner.

It did not occur to his fat brain that the cake was already a "goner." He supposed that Nugent would leave it in his study till tea-time. Still, it seemed difficult to discover.

It was not in the cupboard. It was not to be seen about the room. If it was in the study at all, it had been placed out of sight.

"Beasts!" murmured Bunter, as he blinked to and fro through his spectacles.

It was just like them, he reflected bitterly—hiding a cake, just as if they suspected that a fellow might be after it! A suspicious lot!

But Billy Bunter did not give up the search. He was hungry—his usual state—and to wait a quarter of an hour till dinner was impossible—if there was a cake available, at all events!

He rooted industriously through the study.

He scanned the bookshelf, he looked in the corner behind the armchair—he opened the box-seat under the study window.

No cake was to be spotted. That cake had been in a cardboard box when Bunter had seen Nugent unpack it, but there was no cardboard box to be seen, either.

Where was that cake?

His eyes, and his spectacles, fixed on a small imitation-leather attache-case that lay in the box-seat.

He had never seen that attache-case before, it was evidently a new possession of some member of the study.

He picked it up and blinked at it—and grinned! He fancied that he had discovered the cake at last!

The suspicious beasts had, of course, parked it inside that attache-case! If it was not there, at any rate, it was not

in the study at all, so Bunter had no doubt that it was there.

He fumbled at the fastenings, and made the discovery that both locks on the leather case were locked.

"Beasts!" hissed Bunter.

That settled it, to his fat mind! What would a fellow want to keep an attache-case locked for, unless to hide something from discovery—and what could it be but a cake?

Bunter had two or three keys in his pocket, and he tried them one after another on that attache-case. Naturally, they did not fit the locks.

He blinked at it in great exasperation. The cake was inside—he had no doubt about that! The suspicious beasts had suspected that he might be after it, and locked it in that attache-case! He was sure of it!

He wondered whether he could open it by hanging it on the table. The locks were neither large nor strong, and a jolly good bang might do it! Even Bunter hesitated at that drastic method.

But he did not hesitate long. He had spent a quarter of an hour already, hunting for that cake. Other fellows in the Remove might be breathlessly interested in Mr. Quelch's strange proceedings that morning, but Bunter's

fat mind was concentrated on cake. He lifted the attache-case at last in both fat hands and banged it down on the study table.

As he did so the sturdy door opened, and Gilbert Tracy came in.

Bunter gave a startled jump.

"I—I say, Nugent," he gasped. "I wasn't—" Then he saw that it was Tracy, and gasped with relief—the cake had nothing to do with Tracy, and as he was on the worst of terms with his study-mates, he was not likely to intervene to save Nugent's cake! "Oh! You! I say, shut the door, Tracy, will you, in case one of those beasts comes along."

Tracy stared at him for a moment—then, as he saw the attache-case in Bunter's hands, a startling expression came over his face.

He came across the study with the spring of a tiger, and snatched the bag from Bunter's hands, panting as he did so.

"You spying cad, what are you doing with that?" he panted.

"Oh, really, Tracy—"

Tracy examined the locks on the case hastily. But they were still intact; the

(Continued on next page.)

WE WANT PAIN'S FIREWORKS!

For Fun On The
5th

PAIN'S BIG 7':
THE LONDON ROUSER
TIGER FLASH • ZING ZOOM
FLIP UP • DRAGON'S FLAME
FURYKRAK • DYNAMINE

bang on the table had not jerked them open as the fat Owl had hoped.

Billy Bunter glared at him indignantly.

"Look here, you beast, you give me that case!" he hooted. "Think you're going to snoop Nugent's cake, you beast?"

"You fat rotter!" said Tracy, between his teeth. "What were you trying to open my bag for?"

"Your bag!" exclaimed Bunter.

"Yes, mine, you pilfering fat rascal!" snarled Gilbert. "By gum, I'll stop your prying and spying in this study."

"I—I—say—yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as Tracy, grasping the attache-case in both hands, swiped with it.

It was not a heavy case, and it did not seem to contain anything very heavy. But it was heavy enough to make Billy Bunter see a whole variety of stars, as it banged on his fat head!

"Oh! Owl! Stoppit!" yelled Bunter, as he tottered. "Why, you beast, I thought it was Nugent's, and had his cake in it—"

Swipe!

"Yaroooh!" yelled Bunter, as the attache-case swung round again, this time landing on a fat ear.

Bunter went rolling over.

He rolled and roared, as Tracy, with a set, savage face, swiped again, and yet again, with the attache-case! He put plenty of beef into the swipes, and the hapless fat Owl yelled with anguish.

Whatever it was that that looked case contained, there was no doubt that the new junior was enraged and alarmed by finding it in Bunter's hands. He landed swipe after swipe with unsparring energy.

Bunter rolled, and roared, and yelled, and howled, and spluttered.

"Owl! Stoppit! Will you stop it? Yaroooh! I thought it was—wow!—Nugent's—I mean, I was not going to open it—ow! I'm not after your rotten smokes, you beast—yo-ow! Leave off! Stoppit! Yaroooh!"

Billy Bunter hardly knew how he escaped from that study! A final swipe from the attache-case caught him on the back of his fat head as he bolted, and sent him spinning headlong along the Remove passage.

Gilbert Tracy slammed the study door after him.

"Owl! Yow! Wow! Beast! Yow-ow!" faded away towards the stairs.

Billy Bunter had often found trouble owing to his Peeping-Tom activities. But he had seldom, or never, hit up against it so hard as now! In a dizzy, breathless, painful, and aching state, he tottered away to the stairs—feeling too damaged even to give any further thought to Nugent's cake! He was still mumbling and rubbing his aching fat head when the dinner-bell rang—and even steak-and-kidney pie for dinner hardly comforted him!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Mystery!

"PRAY come in, Mr. Quelch!" said Dr. Locke.

Mr. Quelch entered the Head's study.

His glance, for a moment, went to Mr. Prout; the Fifth Form master was there. But he gave Prout no heed.

"You desired to see me, sir?"

"Certainly, Mr. Quelch! Pray be seated! It is necessary for this very extraordinary matter to be cleared up!" said Dr. Locke. "Obviously there is some kind of misapprehension—a very extraordinary misapprehension."

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Mr. Quelch set his lips.

Prout had carried out his intention of placing the matter before the Head! Dr. Locke, plainly, was deeply puzzled and perplexed.

He could hardly believe that a member of his staff had acted in the childish way described by Prout. Yet there was Prout's plain statement of what he had seen, or believed that he had seen. The Head, in fact, could not make head or tail of it, but it had to be cleared up.

"I am sorry, sir, that Mr. Prout should waste your time by acquainting you with the most absurd mistake he has ever made!" said the Remove master grimly.

The Head coughed.

"I have made no mistake, sir!" boomed Prout, his eyes gleaming at Quelch. "I can believe my eyes, sir! I am prepared to call before Dr. Locke a dozen boys who saw what I saw, sir, at your study window, if Dr. Locke chooses to hear their evidence."

"It appears, Mr. Quelch, that—that fireworks were thrown from your study window during morning break," said Dr. Locke. "Two—hem—crackers struck Mr. Prout, and exploded—no doubt startling him very considerably. So far, we have the facts—"

"No doubt, sir! As I was not in my study during break this morning, I cannot say what may or may not have occurred there. Some mischievous boy may have acted in the manner described by Mr. Prout."

"Mr. Prout is under the impression that he saw you there, sir—"

"An entirely erroneous impression, sir! I went to the library after dismissing my Form from second school, and did not leave that apartment till the bell rang for third school."

Snort from Prout.

"Some boy, no doubt—" said Mr. Quelch.

"Is there any boy in this school, sir, who wears a master's gown and a master's mortar-board?" inquired Mr. Prout with ponderous sarcasm.

"Certainly not! What do you mean?" snapped Mr. Quelch, staring at the Fifth Form master.

"I mean, sir, that I saw the person in your study hurling the—the cracker at me, and that he was clad in gown and cap, sir!" snorted Prout.

"Impossible!"

"I can give the names, sir, of a dozen boys who saw what I saw!" said Mr. Prout grimly. "Your head boy, Wharton, was one of them; there were many others."

Mr. Quelch stared at him in silence. It dawned upon his mind that there was more in this than he had realised.

If Prout had actually seen a figure in cap and gown in his study, his belief that it was Quelch was natural enough. And his statement could hardly be disbelieved, especially as he was prepared to call witnesses; and, indeed, Mr. Quelch, remembering what Harry Wharton had said in the Form-room, realised that Wharton must have seen what he said he had seen.

"I—I fail to understand this," said Mr. Quelch at length. "I was, as I have said, in the library at the time, engaged in sorting over certain black-letter documents referring to my historical work on this school. Of what may have occurred in my study I know nothing. It is news to me that Mr. Prout saw a master there—"

"I have said that I saw you, sir!" boomed Prout. "I have said—"

"Certainly you have said so, sir; and, as I was not there, I naturally supposed that you were making a nonsensical mistake!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "I supposed

that some boy must have acted in the manner described, and that you fancied you—"

"I have said that I saw you—"

"It appears that you saw someone," said Mr. Quelch. "You certainly did not see me! Upon my word, if you saw, as you suppose, a master there, it was obviously some other master."

Snort!

"Can you tell, Dr. Locke, sir," exclaimed Mr. Quelch, "that you positively recognised me as the—the person who flung fireworks from that study? I defy you, sir, to make such a statement!"

"I have not told Dr. Locke that I recognised your face and features, sir!" boomed Prout. "I could scarcely do so when they were covered by a handkerchief you held in your hand—"

Mr. Quelch fairly jumped at this.

"You saw a person in the study whose face was covered!" he exclaimed. "In the name of common sense, sir, did it not occur to you that the person's face was intentionally covered?"

"Possibly—possibly!" boomed Prout. "My impression when I see a man holding a handkerchief to his nose, sir, is that he is blowing his nose. But possibly—very possibly—you preferred to make an attempt to conceal your identity while playing a childish trick—an insensate practical joke worthy only of a thoughtless boy in the Second Form—"

"Sir, I absolutely deny—"

"One moment, please!" interposed the Head, raising his hand. "It appears to be beyond doubt that Mr. Prout saw a master in your study, Mr. Quelch."

"It would appear so, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "Now that Mr. Prout makes an explicit statement, and his meaning is clear, I cannot doubt his assertion, sir. He saw some master in my study. It certainly was not I."

"And what member of Dr. Locke's staff, sir, would be likely to enter your study to play a childish prank on another master?" snorted Prout.

"The occurrence is absolutely inexplicable to me," said Mr. Quelch. "But if your statement is correct, some member of the staff must have done so."

Snort!

Mr. Quelch, with crimson cheeks, looked at the Head. Dr. Locke was puzzled and perturbed. Prout's statement was explicit. Some member of the staff had done this extraordinary thing, and it had happened in Quelch's study.

"I will say more!" boomed Prout. "I feel bound to say, Dr. Locke, that this is not the first occasion this term that Mr. Quelch has appeared to display a most remarkable propensity for practical joking of a particularly childish nature!"

"I, sir?" exclaimed the Remove master.

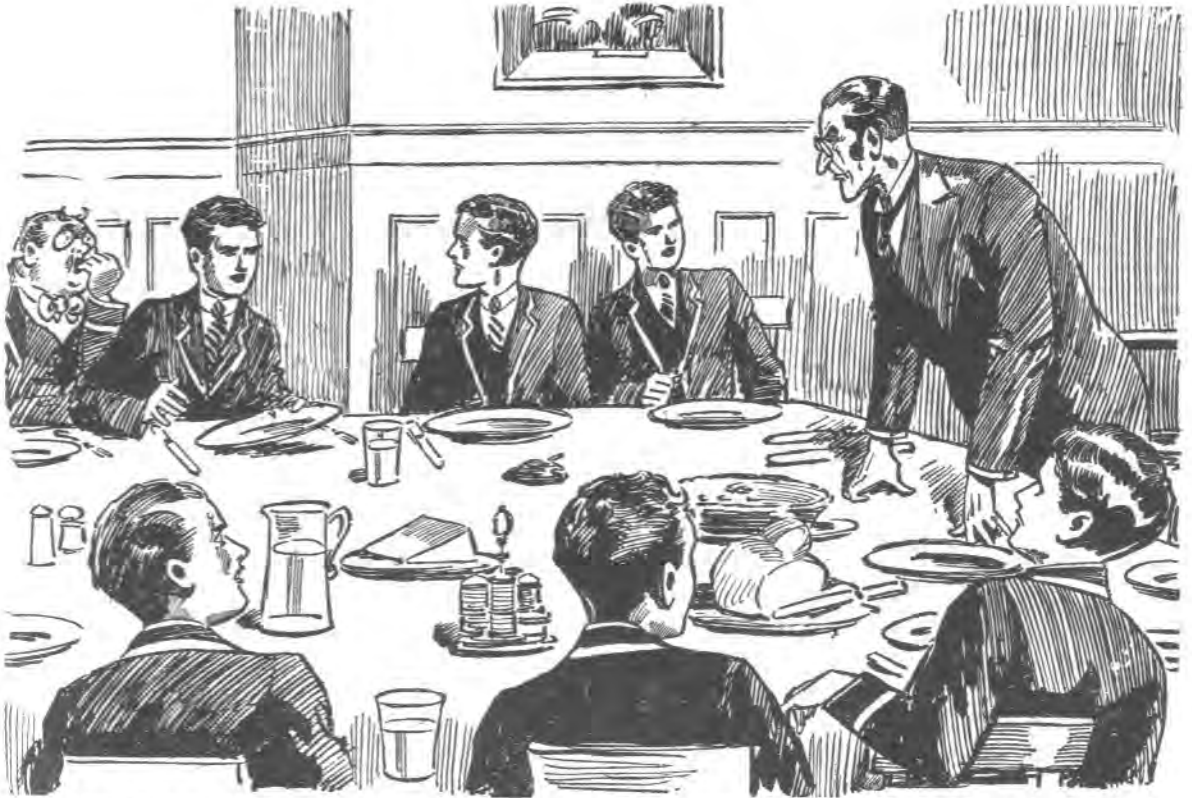
"You, sir!" retorted Prout. "I have not forgotten, sir, that at the beginning of this term the French master was tripped up in your study by a cord tied across the floor, and he had no doubt that it was an insensate practical joke, and—"

"That act, sir, was the act of a boy in my Form—the new boy, Tracy, who was severely punished for it!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch excitedly.

"There was another occasion, sir, well known to all the staff!" boomed Prout. "A ridiculous message was left in Monsieur Charpentier's study, written on a fly-leaf from one of your books—"

"That was the act of the same boy, sir, and he was discovered and punished."

"Possibly," said Mr. Prout—"possibly! But these are occurrences, sir, that ought not to occur! In view of the prank you played this morning, sir—"



"Cracked, by gum!" There was a general convulsive start as Tracy uttered the words. Mr. Quelch rose to his feet, his eyes glittering. "How dare you, Tracy?" he said, his voice trembling with anger. "Leave the table at once, and go to my study!"

say deliberately, the prank—you can scarcely expect—"

"I have said that I did nothing of the kind, Mr. Prout!"

"And I have said, sir, that I can believe the evidence of my eyes and the eyes of a dozen witnesses!"

"I refuse to discuss the matter with you further!" said Mr. Quelch hotly. "I place the matter entirely in Dr. Locke's hands! I am prepared to resign my position in this school, here and now, if my chief should decide against me!"

Dr. Locke made a soothing gesture.

"Nothing of the kind, Mr. Quelch," he said. "The occurrence is utterly inexplicable. It is bewildering. Never in all my career as a schoolmaster have I encountered anything of the kind before. But the fact that the person in your study cannot be positively identified leaves the whole matter in doubt."

The Head paused.

"It appears that some member of my staff has so utterly forgotten himself and his position as to act in a foolish and irresponsible way," he went on. "That member of my staff will be requested at once to resign when his identity is established. But until the facts are positively known, the matter must remain in abeyance."

"Then the matter ends here, sir," breathed Mr. Prout.

"For the present, certainly."

Prout rose ponderously to his feet.

"It is for you to decide, sir," he said, with a great deal of dignity; and he rolled out of the study.

Mr. Quelch paused a moment before he followed.

"I can only say, sir, that I am in total ignorance of the whole affair," he said quietly.

"Quite so, Mr. Quelch," said the Head urbane.

Mr. Quelch, with deep feelings, followed Prout from the study. He knew that a doubt was left in his chief's mind. That was inevitable.

Some master at the school had done this. That appeared to be established. If a master had done it, it was as likely to be the Remove master as any other master. And it had happened in Quelch's study.

Quelch, of course, knew that he had not done it. He knew that he had been in the school library poring over black-letter at the time. But who had? He ran over his colleagues in his mind, and could not think of one of them who could be suspected of such an infantile prank.

The thing was utterly inexplicable. Quelch was hopelessly puzzled.

But if Quelch was puzzled to guess the identity of the mysterious master who had taken to playing mad pranks, the rest of Greyfriars did not feel puzzled about it. Greyfriars generally had made up its mind that Quelch was the man, and the only doubt was whether it was an extraordinary outbreak of practical joking or whether Quelch was "off his rocker."

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Quelch Comes Down Heavy!

"MIND your eye!" whispered Skinner, when the Remove went in to third school the next morning.

But the juniors hardly needed to be warned.

Every man in the Form knew that Quelch was not to be trifled with. The mysterious affair of the previous day had told on his temper.

The Remove, like everybody else, believed that Quelch had played that

mad prank. Some of them believed that he had a screw loose. Quelch was perfectly aware of it. It was more than enough to give an edge to his temper.

In first school that morning Quelch had had an eye like a hawk on his class. Generally a very just man, he seemed to be on the look-out for offences.

The whole Form, indeed, had given offence—by believing what Quelch knew that they believed.

He could not, of course, whop fellows for their beliefs—which they shared with all Greyfriars. But he could, and would, whop any fellow who gave him fair cause, as fellows naturally did every now and then.

No fewer than six fellows in first lesson had been given two hundred lines each for whispering in class. Quelch had no doubt taken it for granted that they were whispering about that unfortunate affair.

It was rather rough on Lord Mauleverer to get two hundred lines for asking Wharton to lend him a new pen-nib. Two hundred lines was rather a heavy punishment for Smithy for whispering to Bob Cherry that it looked like being ripping weather for the football match at St. Jude's that afternoon. And Billy Bunter felt that it was very tough, indeed to get two hundred lines for inquiring of Peter Todd how many k's there were in Caractacus!

With Quelch in this stern mood, the Remove were quite glad that second school was French with Mossos. Mossos was quite a nerve-rest after Quelch.

But in third school they had Quelch again, and every fellow was going to be wary, especially the footballing members of the Form. The bare idea of a possible detention was dismaying to fellows who were booked to go over to St. Jude's for the match there.

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Never had the Form been so quiet and so orderly as when Mr. Quelch came to let them in for third lesson.

But the Remove master's stern face did not relax.

Quiet and respectful as the juniors were, Quelch knew what was in their thoughts. All, or almost all, of them believed that he had played that mad prank on Prout. Some of them believed, in consequence, that he had a screw loose! Any amount of outward respect could not alter that.

It was so intensely annoying and galling to Mr. Quelch, that really it was no wonder that he was in a bitter mood—a mood to come down with the greatest severity upon the slightest fault.

In grim silence he opened the Form-room door, and the Remove went in. And the next minute there was a sharp snap from Quelch:

"Upon my word!"

"Oh crikey!" murmured Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, look at the blackboard!"

But the fellows were already looking at the blackboard!

It stood on its easel, ready for use in the lesson. It should have been, of course, blank. But it was not blank.

Some surreptitious hand had chalked on it. In large capital letters a sentence stared the Remove and the Remove master in the face:

"WHO'S GONE CRACKED?"

There was an awful silence in the Remove-room.

Mr. Quelch, after his first startled exclamation, stood as if dumbfounded, gazing at the inscription on the board.

His face was almost pale with wrath.

The Removes hardly breathed. Some of them quaked. Who could have been as enough, idiot enough, to rag Quelch like this in his present temper?

Harry Wharton's eyes turned on Tracy. He had an immediate and strong suspicion that Gilbert knew who had chalked those words on the blackboard.

Gilbert met his quick glance and grinned.

He did not care whether the captain of the Remove guessed or not. Indeed, he did not care if Mr. Quelch suspected him, so long as nothing could be proved.

But Mr. Quelch, when he turned at last from the blackboard and looked at his class, did not specially single out Gilbert.

Generally, his suspicions in such a case would have turned at once upon the rebel of the Remove—the boy who was at the school on his responsibility, and who hardly made a secret of his intention to tire out his patience by causing him every kind of trouble that he could.

But at the present time the whole Form were in Quelch's black books. Any one of them might have done this!

The gimlet eyes scanned the whole class.

Quelch's voice broke at last the awful silence.

"Some boy has entered this Form-room in break and chalked on the blackboard! I command that boy to stand out before the Form!"

He picked up his cane.

No fellow was likely to stand out before the Form, with that cane in Quelch's hand, and that look on his face! The juniors did not stir.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir!" said Harry quietly.

"Yesterday I punished you for

having made a ridiculous and inexcusable mistake—"

"Indeed, sir!" said Harry Wharton dryly.

He did not believe that he had made a mistake, but if he had, he had made it in numerous company, and he was not going to pretend that he regarded that punishment as just.

"Have you done this, Wharton?" asked Mr. Quelch, pointing with the cane to the blackboard.

"No, sir!"

Mr. Quelch gave him a hard, cold look. His head boy was not in his good graces just at present.

"Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!"

"I have not forgotten, Bunter, the stupid remarks I heard you make yesterday. Have you done this?"

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I don't really believe you're cracked, sir. I—I don't, really, sir! Besides, if you are, you can't help it, sir, I know. I—I know you wouldn't go cracked on purpose, sir."

"Take two hundred lines, Bunter!"

"Oh lor!"

"Vernon-Smith!"

"Yes, sir!" said the Bounder coolly.

"Do you know anything of this?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Tracy!" The gimlet eyes fixed on Gilbert. "Have you done this, Tracy?"

Gilbert raised his eyebrows.

"I, sir! Oh, no, sir!"

There was a brief pause. Quelch had questioned Wharton, who had been caned; Bunter, whom he had heard remark that his Form-master was batchy; Vernon-Smith, who was known as a reckless ragger; and Tracy, who was capable of anything and everything that would cause discomfort or humiliation to the Form-master who was keeping him at Greyfriars against his will.

All four had denied knowledge of the chalking on the blackboard. Quelch was left guessing.

He scanned every face in turn. He spoke at last.

"This is not merely a disrespectful trick; it is a deliberate and intentional insult to your Form-master. For the last time, I command the boy who has been guilty of this to stand forward."

Nobody stood forward.

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch between his closed lips. "The Remove will be detained for extra school this afternoon. There will be no half-holiday to-day."

"Oh!" gasped several fellows.

"We shall now proceed!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

Third school proceeded—in an electric atmosphere. Dismay sat in almost every face—and especially in the faces of the footballers who were due at St. Jude's that afternoon. And there was anger, and deep resentment as well as dismay.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Cracked!

THAT cur!" said Harry Wharton, between his teeth.

Wharton's eyes were gleaming when he came out after third school with his friends. His eyes turned on Gilbert Tracy, who strolled out of the House with a faint grin on his face.

"Tracy—" said Bob.

"That rotten worm!" said Wharton savagely.

"But—" said Nugent.

"He did it!" snapped Wharton.

"Who else would do it? He knew jolly well that Quelch would fly off the handle, and he's done this to dish us for the football match this afternoon."

"You think—" began Johnny Bull.

"I don't think so—I know!" The Remove captain's voice trembled with rage. "This is because the rotten rascal is dropped out of the team. That's why he's done it—to dish us, as he dished us last week."

"It never was proved—" said Nugent slowly.

"Oh, rot! Somebody put in a spoof telephone call from St. Jude's, and washed out the match!" said Wharton savagely. "Who but that plotting cad? We've fixed it up with Lunn to play the match this week—and now we're dished again. Last week he pulled Quelch's leg on the phone to dish us—this time he's brought it off by insulting Quelch in the Form-room. Isn't it perfectly plain?"

The Co. were silent and dubious.

They did not like Gilbert, and they did not trust him; but it seemed to them that their leader was rather jumping to conclusions.

"Looks as if we never shall play that match at St. Jude's," said Bob at last. "It was postponed last week; now it's got to be postponed again. Lunn and his men will be getting fed-up at this rate."

"It's pretty thick to detain the whole Form, because some fellow has played the goat!" said Johnny Bull. "If Quelch calls that justice, I don't agree with him."

"The justice does not seem terrific!" remarked Hurrell Jamset Ram Singh. "But the esteemed Quelch is terrifically infuriated."

Vernon-Smith came up to the Famous Five. His brow was black.

"Are you going to wash out the St. Jude's match again, Wharton?" he asked.

"What else can we do?" grunted the captain of the Remove. "We can't play football while we're stuck in 'extra,' I suppose."

"I don't think we ought to stand it! We all know what's the matter with Quelch!" snapped the Bounder. "He's made a silly fool of himself, and he knows that we know he did—that's the long and the short of it. If he doesn't like being called cracked, he shouldn't act as if he'd gone cracked."

"I suppose it wasn't you did that silly chalking—" began Bob.

"Don't be a silly ass! Think I'd have risked detention to-day?" snarled Smithy. "It was some fellow who doesn't care a rap about the footer."

"It was some fellow who cares a good deal about the footer, and has his back up because he's chucked out of the team for foul play!" said the captain of the Remove bitterly.

"I suppose you mean Tracy? You fancy that Tracy does jolly nearly everything that ever happens!" snapped Vernon-Smith. "You'll be saying next that he chucked those crackers at Prout yesterday, I suppose. Can't anything ever happen without Tracy having a finger in it?"

"I know that Tracy did this, and I know why," answered Harry Wharton. "He's been up against Quelch ever since he came. And he's up against Remove football, so long as he's barred from the team."

"Oh, rot! Anyhow, it doesn't matter much who did it. Quelch has come down on the whole Form for it, whoever it was. That washes out the match at St. Jude's, if we give Quelch his head."

"What else can we do?"

"Cut extra school, and go over to St. Jude's just the same, and leave Quelch to stew in his own juice!" said the Bounder savagely.

"Oh, don't be an ass!"
"We couldn't do that, Smithy," said Bob.

"I don't see why we couldn't. Are we going to have our football fixtures washed out, because Quelch has gone cracked?" growled Smithy. "I wonder the Head hasn't asked him to resign after what he did yesterday. I know Prout went to the Head about it. It's time Quelch went."

"Well, that's not for us to decide—that's up to the Head. We can't do anything, except let them know at St. Jude's, and ask them to fix a new date."

"They'll get pretty tired of fixing new dates. I'd go and chance it, if I were skipper!" snapped Vernon-Smith.

"Lucky for everybody concerned that you're not skipper, then," said the captain of the Remove dryly.

The Bounder snorted angrily, and stalked away. He was ready for any reckless act; but the other fellows were not likely to take the same view. Cracked or not, Quelch was master of the Remove, and to carry on in defiance of his authority was not practical politics.

If the juniors hoped that Quelch might relent, they did not receive much encouragement from his looks when they saw him again at dinner. Mr. Quelch's face, at the head of the Remove table, was as grim as a gargoyle.

He was evidently deeply offended with his Form. Certainly he did not look anything like relenting.

The Removites were silent and glum and resentful. The footballers were deeply exasperated, and the other fellows looked forward with anything but pleasure to a half-holiday in "extra."

Only on one face was a faint grin, and Harry Wharton, glancing at Gilbert Tracy, noted it with set lips. He was quite assured that Gilbert had chalked that inscription on the black-board, knowing well that Quelch would go off at the deep end as soon as he saw it. For the second time he had dished the Remove footballers, and he was inwardly rejoicing over his success. The captain of the Remove had no doubt of it.

"Cracked, by gum!"

There was a general convulsive start at the Remove table as those words were heard.

It was Tracy who spoke. His voice was not loud, but in the glum silence at the table it reached every ear.

Mr. Quelch jumped in his chair.

All eyes turned on Gilbert, and then on Quelch. The Remove master rose to his feet, his eyes glittering along the table.

"Tracy!" he gasped.

Gilbert looked round at him. His face was quite calm, his manner cool. The juniors looked at him blankly. He was asking for it, begging for it, but he seemed quite unconcerned.

"Yes, sir," said Tracy. "Did you speak to me, sir?"

"I heard your words, Tracy."

"Did you, sir?"

"How dare you, Tracy?" Mr. Quelch's voice was trembling with anger. "I am accustomed to your impudence, your insolence, but this—this—Tracy, you will leave the table at once, and go to my study!"

"I haven't finished my dinner, sir!"
"You will not finish your dinner, Tracy! You will wait for me in my study, where I shall inflict the most

severe punishment for your insolence!"

"What have I done, sir?"

"What! I repeat that I heard your insolent words—"

"But my plate really is cracked, sir!"

"Your—your plate?"

"Yes, sir," said Tracy innocently. "Is there any harm, sir, in my mentioning that my plate is cracked?"

Mr. Quelch stood dumb. The juniors fairly gasped.

No doubt Tracy's plate was cracked. It was far from uncommon for crockery at a junior table to show a crack or two.

Certainly there could be no harm in

198 Overseas Readers Win Prizes in Our Great "Armaments" Stamps Race!

The Editor is pleased to announce the result of the Overseas Section of our "Armaments" Contest No. 1, for which there was a special late closing date.

As stated in the competition offer, there were special prizes for good "scores" from overseas, and these have been awarded in cash form as follows:

FIRST PRIZE: £2, Gordon Emery, 227-27, Street W., Saskatoon, Sask., Canada (whose stamp total was 1,050. Congratulations, Gordon!).

SECOND PRIZE: £1, Keith Murray, 6, Brighton Avenue, Preston, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia (who came next with a "score" of 737).

For space reasons we are unable to print all the other winners' names here. All "scores" of 166 and over qualified for prizes, however—totals of 255 and over winning special consolation prizes of 5s. each, while totals of 254 down to 166 were awarded prizes of 2s. 6d. each. These prizes have all been posted.

Well done, winners! And those of you who haven't yet won, remember that there are still two other ARMAMENTS "Overseas" prize-givings to come; we hope you've sent in for them.

Also, ALL of you should have a crack at "Footer-Stamps"—see page 2. There is also a special cash prize list for overseas readers each month!

Tracy mentioning that trifling circumstance.

But all the fellows knew, of course, why he had mentioned it. The word cracked had the effect on his Form-master of a red rag on a bull.

He was, in fact, pulling Quelch's leg. Nevertheless, it was difficult to see how Quelch could call him to account for it. A fellow could hardly be punished for mentioning that his plate was cracked.

For a long moment Mr. Quelch stood dumb. His face reddened till it was like a beetroot. When he spoke at last it was in a gasping voice:

"Were you referring to your plate, Tracy?"

"Certainly, sir! What else could I be referring to?" asked Gilbert, with an air of wondering innocence.

Mr. Quelch did not answer that question.

Some of the fellows barely repressed a chuckle. Billy Bunter, unable to repress one, cachinnated explosively.

"Ho, he, he!"

Mr. Quelch's glittering eye fixed on the fat Owl.

"Bunter, what—?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, reduced to gravity at once. "I—I wasn't laughing, sir; I—I was kik-kik-coughing. I—I mean sneezing, sir. Some—some pepper got in my nose, sir—"

"Take a hundred lines, Bunter, for bad manners at table!"

"Oh lor'!"

Tracy rose from his chair. Mr. Quelch made him a gesture.

"You may sit down, Tracy."

"Am I not to go to your study, sir?"

"No," said Mr. Quelch, between his shut lips. "You may sit down, Tracy, and be silent."

"Thank you, sir!"

Tracy sat down again. He winked at the other fellows with the eye that was farthest from Mr. Quelch. But no fellow dared to grin. It was not safe to grin under the gimlet eye that was glittering along the Remove table.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

O.K.!

"WHARTON, what do you want here?"

"I came to speak to you, sir."

"Be brief, then—very brief."

Mr. Quelch, coming into his study shortly after dinner, found the head boy of his Form waiting for him there.

He did not seem pleased to see his head boy—nor desirous of hearing what his head boy had to say. His brow was grim; his voice like a file. All the Remove were in Quelch's black books these days. The head boy as much as any other, if not a little more.

But Wharton had come there to speak, and he was going to speak. There was a slightly stubborn expression on his face.

Remove football matches, whether Quelch understood it or not, were important functions. It was Wharton's right, and indeed his duty, as captain of the Form, to make that as clear as possible to Quelch.

Quelch was not in a relenting mood. The incident at the dinner-table had, so to speak, put the lid on. He fixed his eyes grimly on the head boy.

"It's about the extra school this afternoon, sir."

"There is nothing to say upon that subject, Wharton."

"Perhaps you were not aware, sir, that one of our regular fixtures with St. Jude's is due this afternoon."

Mr. Quelch paused a moment. He had been aware of it; he took an interest in Remove games, but, in the stress of other matters on his mind, he had forgotten it. But his face remained grim and uncompromising as he replied:

"I regret that the Form games should be interfered with, Wharton. In this case, it cannot be avoided."

"If you would be so kind, sir—"

Mr. Quelch raised his hand.

"I am surprised, Wharton, that you should come here to make any such request, knowing that I am deeply displeased with you, and for very good reasons."

"I don't see why, sir," said Harry. "I've done nothing that I know of."

"You have not forgotten that I caned you in the Form-room yesterday, Wharton?"

"No, sir; I've not forgotten that."

"Nor the reason, I presume?"

Wharton's lips set.

"You had no more reason for caning me, sir, than for caning a dozen

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,603.

other fellows—and Mr. Prout, too," he answered.

Mr. Quelch gave a start.

"Wharton!" he ejaculated.

"I did nothing but answer your questions in the Form-room, sir," said Wharton stubbornly. "I told you what I saw, as you asked me—the same thing that other fellows and Mr. Prout saw. I was bound to answer you."

"You were not bound to make a ridiculous mistake as to what you saw, Wharton, and repeat it as a fact," said Mr. Quelch harshly. "I have been placed in a most intolerable position, and it is largely due to you, my head boy, from whom I had a right to expect something in the way of judgment and common sense."

"If I was mistaken, sir, every other fellow there was mistaken in the same way, and so was the Fifth Form master."

"No doubt!" said Mr. Quelch bitterly. "No doubt! You have come here to ask me to make a concession, Wharton, after a deliberate insult in my own Form-room, and at the same time you repeat your belief that you saw me, your Form-master, act in a childish and irresponsible way. I wonder at your audacity."

Wharton stood silent, looking at him. He had seen what he had seen, and if Quelch really had forgotten he surely must be cracked.

Certainly he did not look cracked. But what else could it mean?

"You are my head boy," went on Mr. Quelch. "Your opinion has weight in the Form. You have done great harm by this thoughtless foolishness, Wharton. In a stupid boy like Bunter it would be excusable, but I can find no excuse for you."

"If—if you've forgotten, sir—" stammered Harry.

"I have not forgotten what never occurred!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "I did not expect such obtuseness from you, Wharton. Cannot you understand that the fact that the person in this study on that occasion kept his face covered is a proof that it was not I?"

"N-n-not you, sir!" stammered Harry.

"Certainly not I!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "You should not need telling so, Wharton. Some person appears to have entered this study while I was in the library yesterday."

"In—in the library?"

"I did not enter this study during break on Tuesday at all, Wharton. Is it necessary for me to ask you whether you believe your own Form-master's word?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, no, sir! But—but—but it was a master, sir," gasped Wharton, "and—as he was in your study I thought—we all thought—Mr. Prout thought—"

"I shall say nothing of Mr. Prout.

But whatever Mr. Prout may or may not think, you should not have fallen into such an error."

"Oh!" gasped Harry.

"You will hardly say, Wharton, that you recognised me on that occasion?" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"I—I didn't see your face, sir, as you had your handkerchief over it at the moment!" stammered Harry. "I—I remember you had the hanky in your right hand, and threw the crackers with your left—"

"You adhere to your belief that it was I, in spite of my assurance to the contrary, Wharton?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, no, sir! I mean—" Harry Wharton was so bewildered that he hardly knew what to say. "It certainly was a master, sir—I mean, we all saw that he had a gown and a mortar-board."

"I have heard so from Mr. Prout. But if some master in this school, Wharton, so far forgot himself as to play a foolish prank, you should have known that it was not your own Form-master. Have I ever given you any reason to suppose me capable of such folly?"

"Oh, no, sir; certainly not! But—but as it was a master, and—and in your study—" stammered Harry.

"But I understand now, of course, sir. Now that you've told me, I know that it must have been somebody else."

"You should have guessed as much from the fact that the person kept his face covered!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Obviously he was concealing his identity, and could only have intended that a mistake should be made to my cost."

"I—I thought he was blowing his nose."

"Nonsense!"

"Well, I did, sir. But—but I can see now. I'm sorry, sir! I can see that it was a mistake now!"

"I am glad of that," said Mr. Quelch grimly.

Then, as his eyes scanned Wharton's crimson and confused face, his manner became kinder.

"Perhaps I should make allowance for your mistake, Wharton, annoying as it was, in view of the fact that others, including a Form-master, made the same error. But you can see the intolerable position in which I am placed by such a ridiculous belief among the boys of my Form. It has led some of them to surmise that their Form-master is not in his right mind. That is scarcely to be tolerated with patience."

"I quite understand, sir. If it was somebody else—"

"If!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"I mean, I know it was somebody else if you say so, sir. But surely, sir, the Head will find out which of the masters—"

"I hope so—I trust so. Dr. Locke is quite in the dark. I have to confess myself quite in the dark also. The whole occurrence is inexplicable. But if I have completely disabused your mind of this absurd misapprehension, Wharton—"

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

"In that case," said Mr. Quelch,

more placably, "it is possible that you may be of some assistance in elucidating the facts. You actually saw the person in this study fling the fireworks out of the window?"

"I did, sir."

"I am aware that you did not see his face. Had you done so, no such mistake could have arisen. But you saw his general appearance—"

"A master in cap and gown, sir—that's all I saw."

"Quite so—quite so; but most of the masters here differ considerably in build. I, for instance, am somewhat tall; others not so tall. Did you notice the height of the master you saw through the window?"

Mr. Quelch's manner was very keen now, and his eyes gleamed as he saw Wharton give a little start.

"Answer me carefully, Wharton," he said.

"Yes, sir, certainly. It was rather difficult to notice a man's height looked at from below, outside the window. Of course, I saw only the upper half of whoever it was. But—"

"But what?"

"Now that I think of it, sir, I'm practically certain that he was not so tall as you. I believe that he was no taller than Monsieur Charpentier."

"That is a very considerable difference," said Mr. Quelch. "It could not have been the French master, as he does not wear cap and gown. If you are sure of this, Wharton—"

"I feel sure, sir, that whoever it was was a good deal shorter than you are," said Harry. "I hadn't thought about that before, but now I think it over I'm certain of that much."

"That is something," said Mr. Quelch, "and I am obliged to you, Wharton. You are now convinced by your own observation. I shall trust you to set this matter right, so far as lies in your power, in the Remove."

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

There was a pause. The grim expression was quite gone from Mr. Quelch's face now. Once more, it seemed, his head boy was reinstated in his good graces.

"With regard to the matter you came here to speak about, Wharton—"

Mr. Quelch paused again.

"Yes, sir. I wanted to point out that whoever wrote that cheeky nonsense on the blackboard, it was not one of the footballers. We were all very anxious not to do anything that might cause a detention, sir."

"If you are assured of that, Wharton—"

"I am sure of more than that, sir. I am quite sure that it was done by a fellow who wanted to dish us at St. Jude's, and who dished us last week by putting through a false telephone-call," said Harry. "I cannot mention names, sir; but I do feel quite sure of that."

Mr. Quelch gave a start.

"That is what I came here to tell you, sir," said Harry. "I thought you ought to know that much before you decided."

There was a long, long pause. Wharton waited hopefully.

The fact of the matter was that Quelch was being made use of to dish the footballers. If that fact became clear to Quelch, the result was hardly in doubt. And Mr. Quelch's face revealed that he was beginning to see how the matter lay.

He spoke at last.

"Wharton, I trust you as my head boy, and I shall accept your assurance. You may tell the Form that extra school to-day is cancelled."

Harry Wharton's face brightened.

"Oh, sir, thank you!"

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"You may go, my boy!" said Mr. Quelch, with a smile. The captain of the Remove almost bolted from the study.

Mr. Quelch's face still wore a smile as he went; but that smile was soon replaced by a thoughtful frown. With knitted brows, Quelch thought and thought over that strange problem. Who had played that prank on Prout? He had a clue now, a slight one, but a clue, which he owed to his head boy. Whoever had done it was shorter than Quelch.

Unluckily, most of the members of the staff were shorter than Quelch. Still, it was something to go upon, and the Remove master concentrated on it, and hoped that something might come of it.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Gilbert Gets Busy!

GILBERT TRACY stood and watched the coach as it rolled away with the Remove footballers and as many other Removites as could pack into it on the road for St. Jude's.

He watched it with glittering eyes and set teeth.

The "worst boy in the Remove" had one good point, at least—he was genuinely keen on Soccer, and he played a first-class game so far as football went. Playing the game in other ways was not in his line.

It was for foul play that he had been dropped from the team; it was for the trick by which the St. Jude's match had been washed out a week ago that he was definitely barred from Remove football.

Many of the fellows, he knew, were dissatisfied with Harry Wharton's decision, and there had been warm and angry argument on the subject; but as Wharton was prepared to resign the captaincy rather than play him again, there was nothing to be done. He was the best junior footballer at Greyfriars, but he had no more chance of playing in a match than Billy Bunter—and that was that! All that was left him was the miserable satisfaction of dishing the footballers, and now even that wretched satisfaction was denied him.

His brow was black and his feelings were bitter as he watched the coach roll away, leaving him behind.

Other fellows wheeled out bikes to follow the coach, but Gilbert had no desire to follow their example; he was not interested in a game in which he was not playing—indeed, he hoped that the Remove team would return defeated. He stood and scowled after the departing coach; and old Gosling, at his lodge, glanced at him with an eye of disfavour; and a fat junior who was blinking at him through a pair of large spectacles gave a fat chuckle.

"He, he, he!"

Gilbert with set lips looked round at Billy Bunter.

Bunter favoured him with a wide grin.

"Feeling left out in the cold?" he asked affably.

"You fat frog!"

"Yah! You can go in and smoke," said Bunter scornfully. "That's your long suit, not footer! Think I don't know you've got smokes packed in that attache-case you're so jolly particular about? Yah!"

Gilbert stared at him for a moment.

Then he came over towards Bunter, with an expression on his face that made the fat Owl decide that it was time to go—and to go quickly.

Bunter went quickly, but he did not

go quite quickly enough; Gilbert cut after him and landed a boot on the fat Owl's tight trousers.

"Yoo-hooop!" roared Bunter.

The fat Owl careered on, narrowly escaping a collision with Mr. Hacker, who was walking in the quad. The master of the Shell frowned at him and frowned at Gilbert. Gilbert walked away scowling, leaving the Owl of the Remove to his own devices.

It was a cold afternoon, but very fine for the time of year. Most of the Greyfriars fellows were making the most of the half-holiday out of doors. The Remove footballers were gone over to St. Jude's with a crowd of other Removites. Two football matches were on hand on the Greyfriars ground—a junior game between Fourth and Shell, and a senior match between Fifth and Sixth. There was also a fag game beginning between Third and Second, with an ample allowance of kicking and rushing, barging and bawling. When Tracy went into the House it seemed quite deserted.

Mr. Capper, the master of the Fourth, had joined Hacker, the master of the Shell, and they were walking and talking on the path by the windows of Masters' Studies—a favourite walk of the masters, which the juniors called the "Beaks' Grind."

Tracy glanced at them as he went in.

They were pacing to and fro by the very spot where Prout had stood the day before when the crackers flew from Quelch's study window. He noticed that they glanced towards that window several times and guessed that they were discussing that singular happening—which, of course, was a topic of the deepest interest in Common-room.

Quelch's window was closed; it could not be seen whether he was in his study or not. But Tracy, who had been keeping an eye on his Form-master, knew where Quelch was—in the school library, where he was deep in black-letter manuscripts dating from ancient days when Greyfriars had been a monastic establishment, and from which Quelch was deriving information to be used in his celebrated "History of Greyfriars."

Mr. Quelch was probably as glad as his form that that extra school had been cancelled. While his boys were enjoying the half-holiday in their own way the Remove master had his own form of enjoyment—which certainly would not have appealed to fellows in his Form.

Deep in those entrancing manuscripts in ancient monkish Latin, Quelch was not likely to stir till tea-time, if by then. In such happy circumstances troubles and worries rolled away from his mind.

Gilbert Tracy stood for a few minutes at the foot of the staircase with a thoughtful wrinkle in his brow and a gleam in his eyes.

Then he went up to the Remove passage.

He passed only one fellow—Coker of the Fifth, who was coming down the stairs.

Coker did not even glance at him—going on his lofty way, regardless of such microbes as Lower Fourth juniors.

In the Remove passage only one Removite was to be seen; it was Fisher T. Fish, the American junior, going up the passage to his study.

Tracy glanced along the passage after him, and loitered till Fishy had gone into Study No. 14 and shut the door.

Then he went into his own study—Study No. 1—which he shared with Wharton and Nugent, now on their way to St. Jude's for football.

He remained a few minutes in that

study, and when he emerged he had a brown-paper parcel in his hand; it was tied with string, and had a label on it as if for posting.

He walked quickly across the landing and down the Remove staircase, and on the next landing met Billy Bunter face to face coming up.

The fat Owl eyed him warily and backed away across the landing, evidently apprehensive of boot-leather.

At the same time he eyed the parcel in Tracy's hand curiously.

"I say, what have you got there, Tracy?" he asked.

"Find out!" snapped Tracy.

"I say, old chap, if it's a picnic—" said Bunter eagerly.

It was certainly very fine for the time of year, but a picnic in the early days of November was improbable. Still, if a fellow went out on a half-holiday with a parcel in his hand, Bunter could not guess what it might possibly contain unless it was tuck.

If it was tuck, Billy Bunter was prepared to forget and forgive that application of boot-leather and to extend the right hand of friendship. He blinked eagerly at the parcel.

"You fat fool!" was Tracy's reply.

"Oh, really, Tracy! I say, you ain't going on a picnic on your lonely own, I suppose?" urged Bunter. "If you'd like a fellow to come—"

"You fat ass, it's something I'm posting home, and I'm going to the post office!" snapped Gilbert.

"Greedy pig!" said Bunter disdainfully—which implied that he did not believe that statement.

"Look at the label, fathead!" said Tracy.

Bunter blinked at the label. Undoubtedly it was addressed to Oakwood Place, Surrey. That convinced even Bunter, and he gave a grunt.

"Oh, blow your mouldy parcel!" yapped Bunter. "If it was a picnic I jolly well wouldn't come! I'm rather particular whom I'm seen with! Yah!"

And Bunter cut on, in a hurry to get to a safe distance after that remark.

Tracy gave him no heed, however.

He hurried down the stairs and was lost to Bunter's sight. But, once downstairs, he did not leave the House. With the parcel under his arm, as inconspicuous as he could make it, Gilbert moved in the direction of Masters' Passage.

He stopped at the window at the end of that passage and looked into the quad. He could see Hacker and Capper walking and talking on the Beaks' Grind, passing and repassing Quelch's study window as they walked and talked.

He looked along the passage.

The coast was clear. It was a half-holiday for masters as well as boys. Quelch was in the library; Hacker and Capper in the quad; Prout and Lascelles had gone out of gates; Mr. Wiggins and Mr. Twigg were playing chess in Common-room. No beak was to be seen about; if any was in his study, the door was shut.

Tracy hesitated a long minute, then he cut swiftly along the passage and whipped into Mr. Quelch's study. There was a faint click as he turned the key after him. Had Billy Bunter's eyes and spectacles been still on Tracy the fat Owl would certainly have wondered what he was doing in his Form-master's study with the parcel labelled for home.

He might even have guessed that that parcel contained not something that Gilbert was going to post home, but

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,603.

HOSKINS HATES BIG BANGS!

Shellfish Seeks Cure for Shudders

Claude Hoskins, of the Shell, is funky over fireworks.

In other years, he has squealed at the sound of a squib, cried at the crash of a cannon-cracker, and run away at the report of a rocket. Gny Fawkes Night usually found him hiding in some obscure corner, with his hands over his ears, shivering and shaking like a jelly!

This year, he squared his jaw and gritted his teeth and made up his mind to cure himself of his fatuous fears.

We must say he has taken this firework complex well in hand.

He started a course of training for the "Fifth" well over a week ago. Having purchased a stock of fireworks, he set about hardening himself to their use.

For a kick-off, he schooled himself to light the mild and inoffensive squib. Watched by an interested and critical crowd in a corner of the quad, he placed the squib on the edge of a wooden bench and tried to light it.

He used a dozen matches before success crowned his efforts. With the first eleven matches, he just jabbed at the taper and bolted, and nothing happened. At the twelfth go, however, he lingered long enough to fire the taper; and the squib duly fizzed, with Hoskins standing only a dozen yards away.

Loud cheers greeted his well-earned achievement.

During the next half-hour or so, Hoskins managed to light half-a-dozen squibs. He became so bold at the finish that he could actually stand a bare five yards away from them while they were in action. He returned to the School House feeling considerably bucked and fortified by unstinted congratulations from his friends.

On the following day, he went one better and held a lighted golden rains in his hand. The effort was somewhat spoiled by his swooning from excitement shortly afterwards, but the fellows admitted that he had earned full marks for a feat he had never previously attempted.

He had a set-back at his next trial, when he lit a roman candle under the erroneous belief that it was non-explosive. The big bang from the firework sent him diving under a rhododendron for cover, and he

hurriedly abandoned practice for the rest of the day.

But he came up smiling again the next day and actually lighted no less than a score of chinese crackers without help. Not content with this, he went to the length, two days later, having first protected himself with leather gloves, a face-mask and ear-plugs, of applying a match to a genuine jumper.

Responsible witnesses assure us that on another occasion he set a couple of catharine-wheels in motion and stood by without flinching while somebody else lighted a flower-pot for him.

So, taking it all round, you must admit that you've got to hand it to Claude Hoskins of the Shell.

At his present rate of progress, there is really no telling what he will do before he finishes.

By the age of 90, he may reasonably hope to light a cannon-cracker without chucking a faint and to send off a rocket without uttering more than a mild shriek of horror.

It only shows what a man can do when he tries!

Keep it up, Hoskins, old chap! We shall expect bigger things of you on the Fifth! Don't let us down!



GREYFRIARS

No. 317.

EDITED

FIREMEN BOLD LEAVE "FIFTH" FANS COLD!

Wild Scenes at Fags' Bonfire

The Remove Fire Squad made a smart turn-out when danger was reported from the big bonfire on the Fags' Sports Ground.

Chief-Officer Penfold and half-a-dozen firemen were on the scene with a hand-pump and a length of hose within a couple of minutes. They made contact with the nearest hydrant with their usual promptitude and were all set to put out the fire before the fags had time to realise they were there.

The trouble was the difference of opinion that arose over the degree of danger that existed.

Chief-Officer Penfold's expert view was that the wind was blowing sparks in the direction of the hut that serves the fags as a pavilion and that the hut was in imminent danger of igniting.

The fags' answer to that view, delivered with emphasis and unanimity, was "Rats!"

Now, the chief officer of a fire squad feels a certain amount of resentment when his expert view is received in such a disrespectful manner as this.

Penfold's quick retort was: "Rats yourselves, you inky young idiots! The hut's in danger, and we're going to put out your bonfire!"



LATE SPORTS NEWS!

By Our Special Contributor . . .
H. Vernon-Smith.

It's the unexpected that happens!

Last week I was chortling over our winning the first three games of the season against three of the doughtiest teams in the table.

This week comes the anti-climax in the shape of a beggarly draw with Redelyffe—and on our own ground, too!

Redelyffe were the bottom team in the table last week, their points record being represented in the shape of a duck's egg. They had three defeats to show against our three victories, and the general opinion was that their visit to Greyfriars was a hopeless one from the start.

But footer, my friends, as I have mentioned before, is an uncertain game, and over-confidence is one of the worst diseases that can attack a team.

Our boys—yes, and I am included in this!—went on the field over-confident. Not a single Greyfriars player had the

slightest doubt about our winning all hands down.

We had a shock, however, when we found the Redelyffe chaps standing up to us, and when they had the nerve to score the first goal, something akin to panic seized us!

The trouble about over-confidence is that it breeds carelessness, and carelessness explains that first goal just before half-time.

When we settled down to get the equaliser in the second half, we had got rid of our over-confidence. But over-anxiousness took its place, and that's just about as bad. We played much better footer in the field, but owing to our eagerness to put things right, our finishing was a little ragged, and it was not until ten minutes from the end that we drew level.

We were attacking hotly when the final whistle went, and I think another five minutes on the game might have given us full points. Let it be acknowledged, however, that Redelyffe played well and deserved to share the honours with us.

I hope and firmly believe that this shock will have a salutary effect on the

team I rashly called a "super" team. I don't think we shall suffer from over-confidence again in a hurry, anyway!

Other results alter the table somewhat this week. St. Jim's, on their own ground, scored heavily against St. Jude's, winning by 5-0, but Greyfriars remain at the top with a point in hand. Abbotsford, who lost by three clear goals at Rylombe, are now the only team in the list without a point to their credit.

Don't blame us too much for dropping that point, chaps. Every team has its "off" days—and I fancy we're not going to have many this season!

CHAMPIONSHIP TABLE.

	P.	W.	D.	L.	F.	A.	Pt.
	Goals						
1. Greyfriars	4	3	1	0	10	3	7
2. St. Jim's	4	3	0	1	8	3	6
3. Rylombe							
G. S.	4	2	1	1	7	5	5
4. Highcliff	4	2	1	1	8	9	5
5. St. Jude's	4	2	1	1	7	9	5
6. Bagshot	3	1	1	1	4	3	3
7. Rookwood	3	1	0	2	6	6	2
8. Claremont	3	0	2	1	3	6	2
9. Redelyffe	4	0	1	3	3	7	1
10. Abbotsford	3	0	0	3	1	6	0

The MARS HERALD

BY HARRY WHARTON.

November 5th, 1938.



"I'M NOT ONLY BROKE, BUT I'M BENT!"

Says Billy Bunter, Appealingly

Dere Pater,—Just a few lines, hoping that this finds you as it leaves me at present. I am pleased to say that I am well, apart from a severe attack of indigestion and an acute shortage of cash.

I sincerely hope, dere pater, that you can relieve the latter by sending me a prompt remittance for a jennerosum sum. The need is urgent—in fact, I mite say, desprit.

After eggasting for a week entirely on the paltry skool rashuns, I have waisted away to a shadow of my former self. As true as I'm sitting here, pater, I don't weigh an ounce above 14 stone at the time of writing.

To a chap of my delicate constitution, this is a jolly serious matter. As I gaze in the mirror at my gaunt frame and hollow cheeks, I wonder to myself how long it will be before the breaking point is reached and I collapse from sheer exhaustion.

The skinny beests in this place seem to delight in making things as bad as possible for me. At one time, I could borrow tuck from other fellows' studies in a moment of need—with the strict intention of replacing it later, of course! But this term nearly all the rotters have fixed patent locks to their cupboards; so even this consolation is denied to me.

I beseech you, pater, to send me a remittance for all you can spare—or, at the very least, a tuck-hammer filled to bursting-point with good, solid, substanshall grub. Unless you do this quickly, undermurishment may overcome me and I shall probably drop to the floor in a state of comma, with all my activities brought to a fullstop.

I am sure you don't want to be called to the skool

to see a lifeless skellington in place of your handsum firstborn. So my tip to you, dere pater, is: Don't delay, but send to-day!

Your affeckshunate son,
WILLIAM.

Exactly!

Mr. Prout's trouser leg caught fire during the celebrations on the "Fifth," and the seniors' anxiety to save him was so great that Mr. Prout was nearly drowned by buckets of water.

We understand that he was very much "put out."

Strange, But True!

Second Form fags became so heated at the dinner-table over an argument about the Gunpowder Plot that force had to be used to stop them fighting.

War to the "knife"—their weapons "spoons"—and all on account of Guy "Forks"!

Our Mistake!

Coker has angrily objected to being called the biggest fool in the Fifth. Sorry, Coker—we didn't know you'd been med into the Sixth!

"Try it and see!" was the shrill response of the fags.

Penfold tried.

"Cherry!" he rapped.

"Train a jet into that fire—the hut side to me with!"

"Ay, ay, sir," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Man the pump, you others, and see that we keep it going!" added the Fire Chief.

Bob Cherry took the hose and directed the stream to the blazing bonfire. The rest of the squad seized the handles of the pump.

But they did not know that. Before they could get going, a horde of infuriated fags had charged.

Penfold was bowed over. The great leader of the Remove fire-fighters collapsed and disappeared under the feet of the very young Fifth of November "mans."

The rest of the squad were biffed, bashed, pushed, and pummelled, and otherwise maltreated by swarms of cheering Third and Second Formers.

Naturally, the fags didn't have it all their own way. After the first shock of surprise, the Remove Fire Squad started fighting back, and caused quite a lot of havoc among their swarming assailants.

Reserves arrived, too, and piled in to help them. But at the most favourable moment the Remove crowd were outnumbered to the tune of four to one.

How the scrap might have ended had it gone on to an uninterrupted end is a matter for conjecture.

So is the problem of the probable fate of the hut that Penfold wanted to save!

Neither of these two questions can ever be answered now, for

just when the struggle was at its height, sheets of rain began to fall.

Fellows began to run for shelter, and the scrap petered out.

Under torrential sheets of rain, the bonfire soon petered out, too, and all danger of the hut igniting disappeared.

And that was that! Penfold is satisfied that the hut would have caught fire, but for the rain. The fags are satisfied that it would not. A good time was had by all. So everybody is happy!

Mr. Quelch, who gave Skinner "six" for throwing lighted jumping crackers in the path of a "caterpillar" procession of Cliff House girls, remarked that he failed to see anything funny in it.

On the other hand, Skinner maintains that it was a "scream" from start to finish!

Your Editor is looking forward to
FUN ON THE "FIFTH"

Hurrah for the "Fifth"! This is the sentiment that has been animating most Remove fags in the last week. I am writing the above the start of the great annual fireworks festival, so I must leave now for the actual event to other pens; but I can assure you that sufficient has happened already to fill a dozen numbers of the "Herald."

No normal boy can help getting a thrill out of the bangs and the bright lights of a fireworks display—particularly while he is setting them off himself! Some of the more lordly seniors at Greyfriars affect a lofty disdain for fireworks, and express loud opinions about the "Fifth" being a childish institution. But I am perfectly sure that this attitude is a pose on their part. Really, I'll bet they enjoy the loud explosion of a "Boy Scout Rouser," or the brilliant starry shower of an immense rocket just as much as the little fag in the Second.

Mind you, I do understand that fellows like Lodge and a good deal to object to in the "Fifth." Some of the long-suffering Lower School are not above pinning a blame-cracker or two to their coat-tails on the festive night just to show the old scores can be settled; and indeed very pleasant when a senior fag that half the "guys" are moved on himself!

But these drawbacks to the great day apply only to a small minority who have richly earned the japing and "guying" they get. To the vast majority of the fags at Greyfriars, Guy Fawkes Night is, and will continue to be, one of the really great occasions of the year.

That your particular celebrations may be the best ever, is the sincere wish of your pen.

HARRY WHARTON.

BOUGHT GUY—SOLD PUP!

Fisher T. Fish struggled into the Rag two nights before the "Fifth," dragging behind him a big, heavy, shapeless bundle that attracted a good deal of attention.

"What is it, Fishy?" came a prompt inquiry from a dozen Remove men.

"Don't start littering up the Rag with dead bodies, old sport!" counselled Vernon-Smith. "You know how keen Quelch is on keeping the room tidy. If you've slain somebody, take the giddy corpse to the police-station like a man and own up to it!"

The crowd chuckled. Fish grinned cheerfully.

"Any guy want a guy?" he asked. "I got a guy hyer that's the elephant's hind legs an' then some! I guess this guy's a guy a guy can be proud of! What offers?"

He jumped on to a table and displayed the object he had brought in with him.

It looked good. There was no two opinions about that. What exactly it was, nobody knew.

It reminded you of a diver's suit; but the headpiece was more

square and Robot-like than a diver's helmet, and the body looked too stiff for it to be a diver's suit.

"What is it?" everybody asked.

"Search me!" Fishy answered. "I guess I picked it up cheap from a marine-store dealer's dump in Courtfield. Whatever it is, this little suit is just what you want for your Fifth of November celebrations. Stuffed out with shavings and lubricated with paraffin, I'll say it'll be the best guy ever! What am I bid?"

Bolscover major offered a shilling. Lord Mauleverer sleepily called out: "Half-a-crown, begad!" Vernon-Smith doubled it, and Tom Brown, who was in funds, sent the bidding up to seven - and - sixpence. Mauly yawningly made it ten shillings. Smithy, who looked keen, went up to fifteen.

Had Mauly remained awake, he would probably have remained sufficiently interested to bid against the Bounder.

But at this stage in the proceedings he fell fast asleep, and, after tearful pleas from Fishy for somebody to



make a "real" offer for it, the weird-looking suit was knocked down to Smithy.

On the following evening, the Bounder decided to anticipate the "Fifth" by making a bonfire of his purchase.

He took it to a secluded spot at the back of the playing-fields, stuffed it with shavings, and soaked it with paraffin. Then he erected it securely and put a match to it.

Greatly to his surprise, the guy obstinately refused to catch fire. The paraffin flared up then died out, leaving the guy standing untouched.

The same thing happened about a dozen times.

Then Wingate appeared on the scene to inquire what was happening.

He was told. He examined the guy.

Then he grinned. Finally, he yelled with laughter.

"Ye gods! What a choice you made for a guy!" he gasped, between his yells. "Do you know what it is?"

"Not exactly. What is it?"

"It's an asbestos fireproof suit—guaranteed not to catch fire even in the fiercest heat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wha-a-at!" The Bounder of Greyfriars fairly gasped with astonishment.

Wingate went off—roaring. Smithy then went off—glaring. He tried to find Fishy. At the time of going to press, he is still trying.

But Fishy has wisely made himself scarce. It will probably be a long time before Smithy sees him—and a longer time still before he sees his fifteen bob!



(Continued from page 15.)

something that he desired very much to keep out of sight in the House.

But there was no eye on Gilbert, and neither Bunter nor anyone else in the school had the remotest idea of the Remove rebel's mysterious proceedings.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Drawn Blank!

"I SAY, Fishy—" "Absquatulate!" said Fisher T. Fish laconically.

"But I say—" "Beat it!" "I want a key!" hooted Bunter. "Oh!" Fisher T. Fish laid down his pen and became interested.

Fellows had different ways of enjoying a half-holiday. Harry Wharton & Co. were playing football. Gilbert Tracy was playing some mysterious trick on his Form-master. Fisher T. Fish was making financial calculations—totting up the profits he had made by buying cheap and selling dear among his schoolmates—a source of never-ending satisfaction to Fishy.

But the business man of the Remove was ready for business. He hooked an enormous bunch of keys out of a drawer, with a clang and jingle. Fishy never lost a chance of securing any old key to add to that bunch.

Fellows who lost or mislaid keys, could generally get one from Fishy to replace it; locks on juniors' receptacles not being often of a complicated nature.

"What sorta key you want?" asked Fishy.

"I've lost the key of a suitcase!" explained Bunter. "Not one of those small attache-cases, you know—a suitcase. Still, I dare say the key of an attache-case would fit it."

"Three D!" said Fisher T. Fish. "Bring it along and you can try the bunch on it!"

"Well, it's rather heavy," said the fat Owl. "I don't want to lug it all the way up the passage from No. 1."

"Eh? What's your suitcase doing in Wharton's study?"

"Oh! I—I mean No. 7," explained Bunter hastily. "The trunk's in my own study, of course."

"The trunk?"

"I mean the attache-case—that is, the suitcase! I say, don't waste time, Fishy—I want to get through before that beast comes back from the post office."

A much less keen, spry, and smart guy than Fisher Tarleton Fish might have guessed, from this, that the bag Bunter wanted to open, did not belong to Bunter!

But if Fishy guessed that much, he guessed also that it was no business of his!

Bunter was at liberty to do as he liked with the key, if he paid Fisher T. Fish threepence for it! The threepence was the one consideration that the

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,603.

Remove merchant was particular about.

"I'll take the bunch," said Bunter, stretching out a fat hand. "I'll bring it back in ten minutes, Fishy."

"Yep! Cash down!" said Fishy.

"If you can't trust a fellow for three-pence, Fishy—" began Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

"You said it!" agreed Fisher T. Fish, with a nod. "I guess I'd trust you as far as I could see you with my eyes shut! No further'n that."

"Yah!" Billy Bunter unwillingly disinterred three coppers from a sticky pocket, disentangled a bullseye from one of them, promptly transferred it to his mouth, and handed over the required sum.

Then he departed from No. 14 with the bunch of keys in his fat hand—with liberty to retain possession of the key that would fit that suitcase, trunk, or attache-case, or whatever it was.

Fisher T. Fish dismissed him from mind, resuming abstruse financial calculations.

Bunter rolled down the Remove passage, and, like Iser in the poem, he rolled rapidly.

True, Tracy had told him that he was going to the post office; a statement that was borne out by the labelled parcel in his hand, and the other members of that study were over at St Jude's. Still, the fat Owl did not want to linger over what he had to do. He lost no time.

He rolled into Study No. 1 only a few minutes after Tracy had left it, and shut the door after him.

He grinned a fat expansive grin, as he rolled across to the box-seat under the window!

A few moments more, and the box-seat was open, and that looked attache-case was in Bunter's fat hands.

The fat Owl had not forgotten the terrific swiping and banging that Tracy had given him, with that attache-case, the day before. Bunter was now going to get his own back.

He had no doubt what the case contained.

It was Tracy's, and Tracy kept it carefully locked, and flew into a fierce temper when he found a fellow handling it! That meant that it contained something that Gilbert was very anxious to keep out of sight! Smokes—Bunter had no doubt!

All the Remove knew that Tracy smoked. He had done so openly and recklessly, when he first came to Greyfriars. But Mr. Quelch had not been long in putting paid to that! Severe swipes from the Remove master's cane had not cured Tracy of the bad habit—but had made him very cautious about it.

Fellows like Skinner and the Bounder, who kept cigarettes in their studies, were careful to park them in hidden spots, and Tracy had adopted similar cautious tactics. Billy Bunter had not the slightest doubt that he would find Gilbert's supply of smokes in that attache-case, when he got it open. Something, he was sure, was hidden there, and what could it be but Tracy's smokes?

Bunter was going to snaffle those smokes and throw them out of the study window!

That, Bunter considered, would be a just return for the swiping and banging the beast had given him!

Tracy would be fearfully exasperated when he found his smokes gone, but he could hardly make a fuss about it, as no fellow, of course, was allowed to have such things in his possession.

Bunter was going to lock up the case, leaving it empty for Tracy, when he went to it for another smoke!

This struck Bunter as very funny indeed; and he chuckled as he began to try Fishy's bunch of keys on the locks.

Those locks, on a cheap attache-case, were simple enough, and he had no doubt that at least one of Fishy's keys would fit.

He was right, for the fifth key that he tried turned the lock!

Grinning at his success, the fat Owl unlocked the second lock.

Then he opened the attache-case!

Then he stared!

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter.

It was empty!

Not a single, solitary cigarette was there! Not the ghost of a cigarette!

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

He had drawn blank! The expenditure of three sticky pennies had gone for nothing! There was nothing in the attache-case, and Billy Bunter had had his trouble and expenditure for nothing!

"Oh, the beast!" breathed Bunter.

Tracy, certainly, could never have guessed that Bunter, or any other fellow, would obtain a key to fit that case, and look into it. He could not have removed the contents in anticipation! But clearly he had removed them—whatever they were!

Bunter still did not doubt that they were smokes! He could not think of anything else that a fellow could want to keep so carefully hidden. He remembered that Tracy had passed him on the landing—coming away from his study! No doubt the beast had taken his cigarettes out with him, to smoke on the sly, out of gates!

"Beast!" Bunter said, for the third time.

He shut the attache-case, and locked it again. He had missed his game this time, but if Tracy did keep smokes in that attache-case, another visit, later, would be more lucky! The fat Owl resolved to pay another visit next half-holiday, when the coast would be clear again.

Having re-locked the attache-case, he dropped it back into its place, and shut the lid of the box-seat. Then he rolled out of the study, and rolled up the passage—to return Fisher T. Fish his bunch of keys, minus the one that fitted Tracy's attache-case. That key remained in Bunter's possession—ready for his next surreptitious raid on Gilbert's supply of smokes!

That there never had been smokes in that attache-case, but that its mysterious contents had been packed in the parcel Gilbert had taken downstairs under his arm, did not occur to Billy Bunter!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Inky!

"OH!" "Ooooooh!" Hacker, master of the Shell, uttered the first ejaculation. Capper, master of the Fourth, uttered the second.

Both pruned.

Like Prout on a previous occasion, they bounded.

Pacing to and fro on the Beaks' Grind, Hacker and Capper were talking, the topic being Mr. Quelch and his amazing antics in the practical-joking line.

They did not, like some of the juniors, suppose that Quelch had actually gone cracked, but they condemned his irresponsible and undignified conduct in unmeasured tones.

A sudden outbreak of practical joking in a middle-aged Form-master was not

only amazing; it was scandalous! Hacker and Capper agreed on that.

They really could not understand why Quelch had not been asked to resign. Surely the Head could not think of retaining on his staff a master so utterly lost to all sense of dignity!

Quelch's contention that some other master, not himself, had played that mad prank in the study they rejected with contempt. To them, as to the rest of the staff, it seemed the flimsiest pretext, put up by a man who realised what a fool he had made of himself.

Discussing this matter, in complete agreement that Mr. Quelch ought to resign and go, Mr. Hacker and Mr. Capper naturally glanced at times at the study window of the master they were discussing, and which they passed and repassed as they walked up and down the path.

Thus they noticed that the lower sash was raised, and, as they noted this circumstance, they subdued their voices. They did not, of course, want Mr. Quelch to hear what they were saying about him, which was possible when the window was open.

The sash rose only about six inches, however.

Within they had a glimpse of a master's gown, and then of a mortar-board, as a head was bent to the opening under the sash.

As the head was bent towards them, they saw, naturally, only the mortar-board, not the face underneath it.

Quelch—they had, of course, no doubt that a person in cap and gown in Quelch's study was Quelch—was at the window. Hacker and Capper were aware of that from what they observed. But most certainly they did not dream of what was coming next.

What came was a whizzing spurt of ink from a squirt!

Whiz! Splash!

It was then that Hacker ejaculated "Oh!" and Capper spluttered "Ooooh!"

Ink—black ink—streaming from a squirt, played like a hose on Mr. Hacker's face, streaking it zebra-like, and then, passing on to Mr. Capper, caught him full and fair on his startled nose!

It was enough to make them ejaculate, jump, and bound. It was more than enough.

Slam!
The sash shut down suddenly and hard after the discharge of the squirt. The curtain on the window hid the interior of the study.

Not that either Hacker or Capper was looking. Both Hacker and Capper were slaving at streaming ink on their faces, spluttering with amazement and anger.

Mr. Capper jerked out a handkerchief and dabbed dazedly, backing out of range of the study window as he did so for fear of another volley of ink. Hacker clawed at his inky face, astonished, but more enraged than astonished.

"Capper—" he gasped.

"Hacker—" gasped the Fourth Form master.

"Quelch—again?"

"Is the man mad, Hacker?"

"Goodness knows! I will not endure this!" panted Hacker. "I will not tolerate this! Prout yesterday, us today! Capper, this is not to be tolerated!"

"He must surely be insane!"

"He must go!" hissed Hacker. "I shall go to Dr. Locke this instant! I shall let him see what Quelch has done! If Quelch does not leave the school, I myself shall resign my position here! I ask you, Capper, if this kind of thing—absolutely senseless practical joking on

the part of a Form-master—is to be tolerated?"

"Certainly not!" gasped Mr. Capper. "It—it is beyond understanding—beyond comprehension! A man of Quelch's age—goodness gracious—squirted ink like a mischievous small boy! Upon my word!"

"Come with me, Capper!"

"Certainly, Hacker!"

Dabbing at ink, the two masters hurried to the door of the House. Fellows in the quad stared at them as they passed. Beaks with inky faces were a rare sight in the Greyfriars quadrangle.

Mr. Capper, who was a mild-tempered gentleman, was in a state of bemused amazement. Hacker, who was called the "Acid Drop" in the Shell, was in a state of towering rage.

They spluttered into the House together.

"Oh, sir, has anything happened?" exclaimed a startled voice.

Gilbert Tracy was coming from the direction of Masters' Passage when the two beaks came in. He had a brown-paper parcel under his arm, labelled as if for postage. To that circumstance, naturally, neither Mr. Hacker nor Mr. Capper thought of paying any attention.

They spluttered on without answering, but Mr. Hacker paused and turned back.

"Tracy!" he rapped.

"Yes, sir! Has there been an accident?"

"Never mind that! Where is your Form-master? Do you know where Mr. Quelch is at the present moment?"

"I think he is in his study, sir," said Gilbert demurely. "But I have not seen him since dinner, sir."

"One moment, Capper!" said the master of the Shell; and, almost running, he hurried into Masters' Passage and looked into Mr. Quelch's study.

Mr. Quelch was not there.

If he had been there he was gone. No one was there. But on the floor, just under the window, lay an inky squirt. Evidently it had been dropped there after streaming ink at the two masters outside.

Mr. Hacker's glinting eyes spotted it at once. He darted into the study and grabbed it up.

Squirt in hand, he rejoined Mr. Capper.

Tracy was going up the staircase, that labelled parcel still under his arm. But he paused to glance down over the banisters, and saw the master of the Shell hold up the squirt for Capper's astonished inspection.

"Look!" hissed the Acid Drop.

"A—a—squirt!" stuttered Mr. Capper.

"I picked it up in Quelch's study, where he dropped it under the window. He was gone. The Head shall see this! Perhaps Mr. Quelch will state again that he was not in the study—that some other master was there!" said Mr. Hacker bitterly. "We shall see! And we shall see whether Dr. Locke will give him credit. Come, Capper!"

The two inky masters spluttered away to the Head's study, Hacker with the inky squirt in his hand.

Gilbert Tracy hurried up the stairs. Possibly he was anxious to get that parcel out of sight. Hardly a fellow was indoors that fine half-holiday; he saw no one till he entered the Remove passage. There he almost ran into Billy Bunter, coming out.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, as he saw him.

Evidently Gilbert had not gone, after all, to the post office. Billy Bunter fairly quaked at his narrow escape. Less than five minutes earlier Tracy

would have caught him in Study No. 1 exploring that attache-case.

Gilbert hurried past him to his study. Bunter blinked after him. He blinked in surprise at the parcel under Gilbert's arm. Why a fellow should take a parcel downstairs, labelled for the post, and bring it up again unposted, was quite a mystery to Bunter.

Tracy went into his study and shut the door.

Billy Bunter, thankful that he was outside that study and not inside it, rolled away down the stairs.

A few minutes later Bunter forgot all about Tracy and his parcel. News was already spreading of the second amazing incident at Mr. Quelch's study window, and Bunter found a crowd gathering downstairs, buzzing with excitement on the subject. Once more Mr. Quelch's name was on every tongue, his amazing antics the one exciting topic.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Who?

"I SAY, you fellows, there's Quelch!" "Oh, there he is!" gasped Coker of the Fifth.

Two or three dozen fellows in the quad stared at one of the tall windows of the library, where Mr. Quelch stood looking out.

Quelch was looking out, with a slight expression of annoyance and surprise on his face.

That expression intensified as the whole crowd of fellows stared at him, wide-eyed.

Of what had occurred the Remove master as yet knew nothing. But a loud and excited hum of voices from the quad had caught his ears as he sat poring over ancient documents in the library, and he had stepped to a window to look out to ascertain the cause.

Fellows stared at him as if spellbound.

A majority of the Greyfriars fellows were on the playing fields, or out of gates, that afternoon. Still, there were a good many about the quad, or in the school shop, or in the day-room, or the studies; and every one of them had heard by this time of the latest and maddest outbreak of that unexpected and amazing practical joker, Henry Samuel Quelch!

Three or four fellows, in fact, had seen, from a distance, what had happened on the Beaks' Grind! A dozen fellows had seen Hacker and Capper streaking for the House with inky faces. Everybody knew that they had gone to the Head—some had seen the squirt in Hacker's hand!

So the sight of Mr. Quelch at the library window caused a tremendous thrill of excitement! Some of the fellows would not have been surprised had he chuckled crackers or squirted ink from that window! They all stared at him with popping eyes!

"Loder!" called Mr. Quelch.

Loder of the Sixth was in the buzzing throng. He made a step towards the library window as Quelch called, and then paused.

"Yes, sir?" he answered.

"Pray step nearer, Loder. I cannot speak to you at that distance!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch testily.

"Oh! Ye-es, sir."

Loder approached in a rather gingerly way. After what had already happened, no fellow knew what to expect from Quelch! And Loder had no desire to be the target for either crackers or ink!

"Has anything occurred, Loder?" demanded Mr. Quelch from the window.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,603.

"There seems to be some unusual excitement."

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Loder.

He stared blankly at Quelch. Surely Quelch ought to know what had occurred, as he had done it!

"I do not understand you, Loder! What has happened?"

"I—I suppose you know, sir—" stammered the prefect.

"I fail to see why. What do you mean?"

"I—I—I mean, you squirted the ink and—"

"What?"

"The—ink, sir!"

"Are you out of your senses, Loder?"

Loder was greatly inclined to ask Mr. Quelch himself that question. However, he just stared.

"Tell me at once what has happened!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Did you say that someone has been squirting ink?"

"Yes, sir; from your study window," gasped Loder. "Mr. Hacker and Mr. Capper were drenched with it—"

"Good gracious! From my study! But who—is it known who—"

"Yes, sir; you!"

"What?"

"W-w-wasn't it you, sir?" stuttered Loder.

"How dare you ask so foolish and disrespectful a question, Loder?" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Upon my word! I shall report your impertinence to your headmaster, Loder! How dare you?"

"Oh gum!" gasped Loder. "Hacker and Capper think so, sir. They've gone to the Head about it. Hacker found the squirt in your study. Some fellows heard them say that they saw you—"

Mr. Quelch opened his lips—and shut them again! He stared at Loder.

It was the episode of the previous day over again; he realised that! For a long moment he stared at Loder, dumb. Then he gasped.

"You say they have gone to Dr. Locke?"

"Yes, sir—they're both with him now!"

Mr. Quelch disappeared from the window. There was a renewed buzz from the fellows in the quad.

"Is the man potty?" ejaculated Coker.

"I suppose he knows what he did!"

"I say, you fellows, he's gone cracked and—"

"Softening of the brain, I should think," said Loder, in wonder. "By gum! The beaks will be giving the Beaks' Grind a wide berth after this—it ain't safe to walk past Quelch's window!"

Mr. Quelch had hurried out of the library by an inner door. He was making his way in haste to the Head's study. If Hacker and Capper believed what Loder stated—as Prout had believed the previous day—and had gone to lay the matter before Dr. Locke, the sooner Quelch was on the scene, the better.

He arrived almost breathless at Dr. Locke's study, tapped at the door, and entered.

Two masters turned inky faces towards him as he did so. Mr. Quelch gazed at them, catching his breath. There was no doubt about what had happened, so far as the ink was concerned, at all events!

Dr. Locke's face was set and grave. His eyes fixed on Mr. Quelch with a very penetrating look.

Mr. Quelch understood that look!

The Head was wondering—he could not help wondering—whether the Remove master was suffering from some slight mental aberration that caused

him to indulge an extraordinary propensity for practical joking!

Quelch's face crimsoned.

"I have just heard—" he exclaimed. "Mr. Hacker—Mr. Capper—you surely cannot suppose, as Mr. Prout did, that I—I—"

"There is no supposing about it, sir!" said Mr. Hacker bitterly. "We have stated the facts to Dr. Locke—that you drenched us with ink—"

"From your study window—" said Mr. Capper.

"With a squirt," said Mr. Hacker, "which I afterwards picked up in your study! There it lies, sir, on Dr. Locke's table! Do you deny having used it, sir?"

Mr. Quelch glanced at the inky squirt.

"I have never used it before! Who ever used it must have dropped it in my study, if you found it there—"

"Another master!" sneered Mr. Hacker.

"More probably a mischievous boy, and—"

"A boy—in cap and gown!" said Mr. Hacker sardonically. "You appear to be unaware, that we saw you, Mr. Quelch—"

"We saw you, at all events, your mortar-board, as you stooped at the window to use the squirt!" said Mr. Capper.

Mr. Quelch uttered a sharp exclamation.

"You saw the person in the study—you did not see his face?"

"You took care that we should not, sir!" sneered the Acid Drop. "No doubt you preferred not to be identified in your action, sir."

"Dr. Locke! For the last hour or more I have been in the library, busy with documents. I knew nothing of this occurrence until my attention was drawn to some excitement going on in the quadrangle—"

"Then who, sir, was in your study?" asked the Head quietly.

"I cannot say. From Mr. Hacker's description, one member of your staff—"

"Which member, sir?" asked Mr. Hacker, in his acidest tones. "Not I, sir, or Mr. Capper, as we were the victims of the outrage. Not Mr. Wiggins, or Twigg—both of them were, and are, in the Common-room. Not Mr. Prout, or Mr. Lascelles, both of whom have gone out for the afternoon. Not Monsieur Charpentier, whose attire bears no resemblance to that of the man in your study, sir. What other member of the staff, sir, do you suggest was in your study?"

"I make no suggestion, as I have no evidence!" said Mr. Quelch. "I can only declare, most solemnly, that I have not been in my study during the past hour. Obviously, this wretched trickster desires that his action may be attributed to me. That is all I can say."

"I leave the matter to Dr. Locke's judgment, sir!" said the Acid Drop, and he left the Head's study, followed by Mr. Capper.

Both of them, as a matter of fact, were badly in need of a wash!

Mr. Quelch, with crimson face, confronted his chief.

Dr. Locke still had that penetrating look in his eyes.

"I can add nothing, sir, to what I have said!" Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

"If I am doubted, I have no resource but to place my resignation in your hands."

"You—you are not—not feeling ill, Mr. Quelch?"

The Head spoke slowly and hesitatingly.

"I am not, sir! I understand the drift of your question, and certainly the man who has been guilty of these strange freaks must have developed some mental weakness. I repeat that it was not I!"

"But who, Mr. Quelch—"

"I am quite in the dark, sir!"

"Obviously, Mr. Quelch, this cannot continue," said the Head. "Unless some definite discovery is made, and within a very short time—" He paused, and coughed. "Possibly it might benefit you, sir, to take a rest—a few weeks away from the school, if—if—" He paused again. "Arrangements can be made for your Form to be taken by a temporary master—"

"If I leave Greyfriars, sir," said Mr. Quelch, with closed lips, "I leave dismissed from your staff. If that is your desire, you have only to state it."

"Certainly not, Mr. Quelch!" said the Head hastily.

And the Remove master, with a formal bow, left him.

Dr. Locke was left in deep and painful thought. He liked Quelch, and esteemed him; but he could scarcely help thinking that he was suffering from some strange aberration, and that a few weeks away from the school would be for the benefit of everybody concerned. For if the mysterious practical joker was not Henry Samuel Quelch, who was he?

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Strange Suspicions!

HARRY WHARTON & CO, rolled in, in time for calling-over, in very cheery spirits, on their return from St. Jude's.

They had beaten Lunn and his merry men, on their own ground, by three goals to two; which was not only satisfactory in itself, but especially satisfactory to the captain of the Remove, as a demonstration that the Remove could win football matches without the help of that wonderful man Tracy!

There was hardly a member of the team who did not think that Gilbert Tracy ought to have been in the eleven; and had they come home defeated, there would have been deep dissatisfaction, sore feelings, and high words.

But a victory covered a multitude of sins, as it were; St. Jude's had been fairly beaten, after a hard game, and all was calm and bright.

It was a relief, as well as a satisfaction, to Harry Wharton, and his face was bright when he stepped down from the coach.

Football and St. Jude's, however, took a second place in his thoughts when he found what was going on at Greyfriars—and had been going on in the absence of the team.

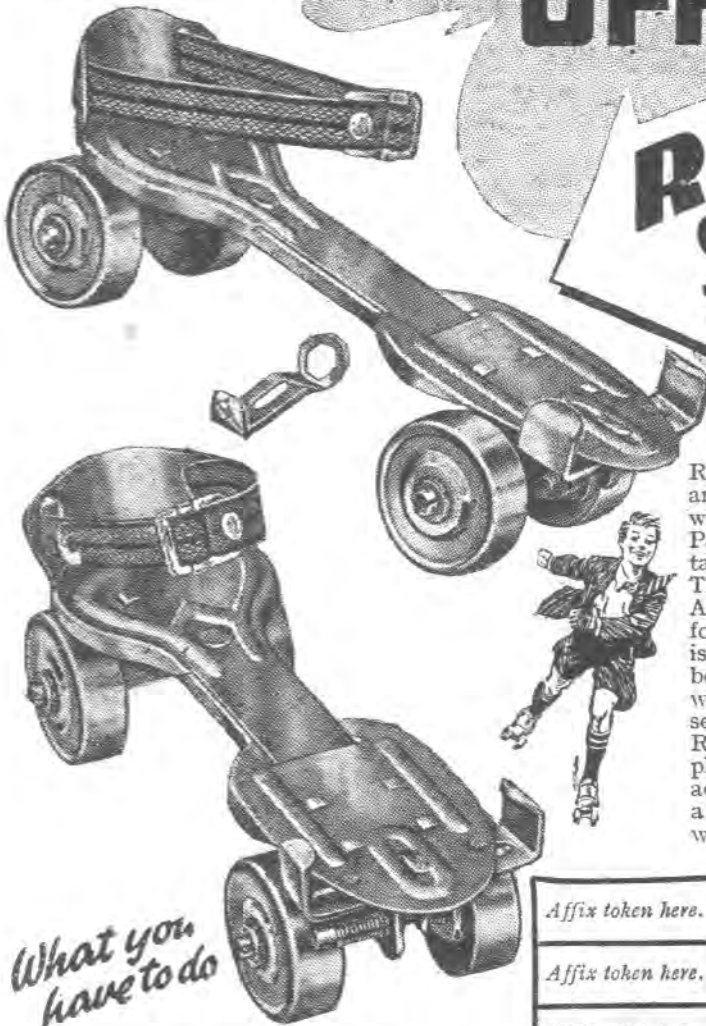
They got the news at once! Quelch had been at it again! Quelch was madder than ever! After chucking crackers at Prout on Tuesday, he had squirted ink over Hacker and Capper on Wednesday! There was a rumour that he was sacked. Another rumour that he had resigned! Another that the whole body of beaks had sent him to Coventry, and that not a single master would speak to him in the Common-room. Another, that Hacker had threatened to resign if Quelch did not go! Another, that Mr. Prout had declared his intention of calling in a mental specialist to see Quelch. Rumours, indeed, were thick and numerous, buzzing all over the school.

(Continued on page 20.)

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That Quelch had neither resigned nor received the sack, was proved when Greyfriars went into Hall for calling-over. For the Remove master was present.

It was, as it happened, his week for taking the roll, and he took it, calling the names in his usual clear, sharp voice as if nothing unusual had happened.

All eyes in Hall fixed on him, as if glued to him.

Certainly, he must have been conscious of it; but the fact was not betrayed in his calm, sedate face. Nevertheless, it must have been an ordeal to him.

The whole school regarded him as an irresponsible practical joker! Many regarded him as having a screw loose, if not having gone actually cracked! It must have been fearfully unpleasant for Quelch; and, really, it needed a nerve of iron to take roll in Hall in the circumstances.

Quelch went through it without turning a hair; but he must have been glad when it was over and the school dismissed.

Some fellows noted that he went immediately to his study. It was no doubt true that he would have received the ioy eye in Common-room.

In Common-room Prout boomed, Hacker spilled acidulated words, and all the other beaks had something to say—about Quelch, and his extraordinary and unnerving outbreak. No doubt Quelch preferred to give Common-room a wide berth in the present strange and painful circumstances.

In the Rag the juniors discussed the affair breathlessly, and at endless length. Even the football match at St. Jude's was hardly mentioned—it was a case of Quelch first and everything else nowhere!

"I say, you fellows, he will have to go!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I say, I wonder what sort of a beak we shall get next?"

Bunter was taking it for granted that Quelch would have to go! But the fat Owl was not alone in that opinion. To most of the fellows it seemed inevitable—many wondered that he had not already gone!

Harry Wharton stood silent, listening to the buzz of voices about him, and trying to think it out.

He had believed Mr. Quelch that day—he believed him still. He had the evidence of his own eyes that the man who had japed Prout was shorter in stature than Quelch. But he was staggered.

"Poor old Quelch!" said Bob Cherry. "About the last man one would ever have expected to go dotty!"

"Must be dotty," said Vernon-Smith. "But, as jolly old Shakespeare remarks, 'there's method in his madness!'" He took jolly good care not to let his face be seen, so it can't be actually proved on him.

"Lunatics are jolly artful!" said Skinner.

"The artfulness of esteemed lunatics is terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But as the esteemed Quelch's absurd chivvy was not seen, it may not have been the ludicrous Quelch at all."

"Rot!" said Bolsover major.

"Rubbish!" said Skinner.

"You're the only fellow here who thinks it mayn't have been Quelch!" said Gilbert Tracy, with a sneer. "Everybody knows it was. Of course, he will have to go."

"Bit of luck for you, if he does, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,603.

Tracy!" said the Bounder, with a curl of the lip.

Gilbert gave him a quick look.

"What do you mean by that, Smithy?" he muttered.

The Bounder laughed.

"Everybody knows that it's only Quelch who's keeping you here," he answered. "The Head would have turfed you out before this if Quelch wasn't making a point of it. We all know that Quelch promised your uncle to keep you here for a whole term, and you've tried every trick to make him fed up with it. Now he seems to be playing right into your hands."

Tracy shrugged his shoulders and made no reply.

The Bounder laughed again.

"If Quelch goes, that lets you out!" he said. "Bet you the next beak won't stand you as Quelch does—what?"

"I say, you fellows, it would be a jolly good thing if Tracy went," said Billy Bunter, with an inimical blink at the new junior. "Nobody wants him here, I can jolly well tell him! I say, I shall be jolly glad, if Quelch goes, if Tracy goes after him! Wow!" added Bunter, as Gilbert's foot shot out—and the fat Owl retreated to a safe distance, before he continued his remarks on the happy prospect of seeing the last of Gilbert.

Harry Wharton, silent, looked at Gilbert with a startled expression in his eyes.

The Bounder's words had started a strange thought in his mind.

Back to his memory came the words Tracy had uttered in Study No. 1 in his first days at the school.

Tracy had come unwillingly to Greyfriars. He wanted to go; and it was Mr. Quelch who stood in his way. He had done things that other fellows would have been expelled for to get away—but he had not been allowed to get away! He had even run away from school, and had been brought back. So long as Mr. Quelch was on the staff at Greyfriars, Gilbert was booked to stay—and his bitter feud with his Form-master had been a topic in the Form ever since the term had started.

As he had said, in his rage and bitterness after a whopping, that Quelch might have to go—Wharton remembered it now! He had dismissed the wild and reckless words from his mind—but they recurred, now that there was a prospect of Quelch going!

For there was no doubt that Smithy was right—if Quelch went, Tracy would not stay. Quelch had personal reasons for doing what he could for the nephew of Sir Giles Oakwood; a new master of the Remove would have no such reasons! A new master would not stand what Quelch stood—Tracy's first reckless act of rebellious insolence would be followed by the sack—which was what he wanted!

"Oh!" breathed Wharton, startled as he thought of it.

Was it possible that Gilbert had a hand in this?

Yet how could it be?

According to what all witnesses had seen, it was a master who had played those mad pranks in Quelch's study—whether Quelch or not! Tracy, certainly, could not influence the actions of any master, however irresponsible. Wharton shook his head.

It was impossible! Yet the thought would not leave his mind. It haunted him while he listened to the buzz of incessant talk in the Rag, till it was time for prep.

The Remove went up to prep at last; Wharton and Nugent and Tracy in

Study No. 1, as usual. During prep, the captain of the Remove looked at Tracy more than once—quietly, scrutinisingly. The fellow seemed to be in a state of inward satisfaction; that was all he could note.

After prep, Gilbert went down, but Wharton did not immediately leave the study. He threw the door shut.

"What do you think about this, Frank?" he asked. "Quelch, I mean!"

Nugent smiled.

"I think he must have a screw loose," he answered.

"You think it was Quelch?"

"Don't you?"

"No!" said Harry slowly.

"My dear chap—" murmured Nugent.

"I've been going to tell you, Frank. I had a jaw with Quelch this afternoon—when he let us off 'extra.' He was in the library when Prout got those crackers yesterday."

"You saw him yourself—"

"I saw a beak with a handkerchief over his face. And while we were away this afternoon, Hacker and Capper saw a beak—with his head bent, so that they could see only his mortar-board, not his face. Frank, it wasn't Quelch!"

"Um!"

"I remembered, and told Quelch—the man I saw seemed to me shorter than Quelch—as short as Mossoo."

Nugent laughed.

"You didn't think of that at the time, Harry."

"No. I thought of it when Quelch explained to me. But I'm pretty sure of it, Frank. The man was not Quelch. I'll stick to that against the whole school!"

"Um!"

"There's another thing," went on Harry slowly. "What's happened is just pie for Tracy."

"He looks pleased," grinned Nugent. "He would."

"Well, if he had a hand in it, somehow—"

Frank Nugent stared blankly.

"Tracy? What on earth are you getting at?" he asked, in amazement. "Tracy's a pretty cunning rotter. I know—but how could he have had a hand in this? Think he's able to put up a beak to play tricks on Quelch!" He laughed.

"No; but—"

"But what, then?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Wharton frankly. "But he would play any dirty artful tricks he could on Quelch—I know that. I can't make it out, but—but—"

"You see Tracy in everything," grinned Nugent. "He's always the nigger in the woodpile—what?"

"Well, I stick to it that Quelch never played those mad pranks!"

"You'll find yourself the only fellow who thinks so," said Frank Nugent.

And that, as Harry Wharton soon discovered, was the fact. He had his belief, and he kept to it; but he had it entirely to himself.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Man In The Mist!

"COME on, Bunter!" "Too jolly foggy," said Bunter.

"It wouldn't be November without a spot of fog. We want you, old chap!" urged Bob Cherry.

Bunter shook his head.

It was a cold and misty morning, and there was more than a spot of fog in the old quadrangle at Greyfriars

drifting up from the sea. No doubt it was seasonable, but it was rather soupy.

Fellows going out into the quad looked rather like grey spectres in the mist, and visibility was anything but good.

Still, many fellows were going out after morning class. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, had gone out for his usual stroll. The Famous Five were not likely to stay indoors on account of even a large spot of fog. Moreover, they had business on hand. In Gosling's shed—secured from the old porter for a consideration in coin of the realm—was the effigy of that historic gentleman, Guido Fawkes, which was going to be paraded in procession on that great and glorious fifth.

That effigy was still in an uncompleted state. Bob Cherry had manufactured a gigantic cardboard mask to serve as its face, under an ancient top hat, and this was going to be added with artistic touches of paint to make it lifelike.

"Do come, old fat man!" urged Bob. "We really want you this time. Don't be afraid of a spot of fog."

The Co. paused, while Bob addressed the fat Owl in surprise. They did not specially want Bunter. Few fellows ever did. It seemed, however, that Bob Cherry was, for once, in the unusual state of wanting Bunter's society.

But the fat Owl shook his fat head again.

"No fear," he said. "I ain't going out in this. Not while it's so jolly foggy, and Quelch is outside."

"What difference does that make, fathead?"

"Well, you know he's cracked," said Bunter. "Might spring on a chap all of a sudden from the fog, for all I know."

"You footling ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, while the other fellows chuckled.

"You can call a fellow names," said Bunter; "but you jolly well know he's cracked, though you make out that he never did it. Chucking crackers at Prout, and ink at Hacker and Capper—Might go for one of us next."

"Oh, come on, you fellows!" said Harry.

"Hold on a tick!" said Bob cheerfully. "Sure you won't come, Bunter, when you're specially asked?"

Bunter appeared to hesitate.

"Is it a feed?" he asked. "I'll cut across to the tuckshop with you if you like. All of you keep together—round me, you know—in case Quelch springs at us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, he might. I don't mind coming to the tuckshop, and chance it."

"But we're not going to the tuckshop," chuckled Bob. "We're going to Gosling's shed to get on with the guy for to-morrow."

"What do you want me for, then?" demanded Bunter.

"Life model," explained Bob. "I want to make that guy's face the absolute limit!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"The ugliest ever—"

"Why, you—"

"Of course, I can paint from memory; but with you standing there as a model, it would come easier."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Co., quite entertained by the expression on Billy Bunter's fat face as Bob explained why he was wanted.

"You—you—you—you—" gurgled

Bunter, in breathless wrath. "You—you—"

"Coming?" asked Bob.

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter did not come. He seemed to have no desire to be used as a model for the ugliest guy ever. He snorted with indignation as the Famous Five, laughing, plunged into the mist and disappeared.

"Thick, and no mistake!" said Bob, as the juniors groped across the misty quad.

"The thickfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But what is the oddfulness, so long as the happiness is preposterous?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's that?"

"That" was a sudden, howling yell from the mist. It sounded as if someone was hurt.

"Yoo-hoo-oooh!" came the howl.

"Somebody walked into a tree, and found it tougher than his nose," grinned Bob. "Sounds like Coker's dulcet tones."

"Ooooh! You mad old fool!"

"Wharrer you think you're at?" came the howl, unmistakably in the voice of Horace Coker of the Fifth Form.

The words were startling.

Harry Wharton & Co. groped quickly towards the spot whence Coker's loud howl proceeded, wondering what was up.

"Ow! Oooch! Ow!" Coker loomed up in the gloom, hatless, and rubbing his head. "Oh, the mad old ass! Mad as a hatter! Oooch!"

"What's up, Coker?" exclaimed Bob.

Coker's wild and whirling words brought back to his mind what Bunter had said, before the chums of the Remove came out. The Famous Five could not help feeling startled.

"Who's that?" Coker glared through mist. "Oh, you fags! Look here, you'd better keep that mad beak of yours on a chain. Larking in the fog—My hat! The old goat! I'll jolly well go to Prout about this!"

"Quelch!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Jumping at a fellow, and banging his hat off!" roared Coker. "Is that the way for a beak to carry on? I ask you—what?"

"Oh crumbs!" breathed Bob.

"Where is he now?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, staring round in the thick, clinging mist.

"How should I know?" roared Coker.

"He jumped at me, and banged my hat off, and jolly nearly cracked my nut! Ow! Mad old ass—"

"Are you sure it was Quelch, Coker?" asked Harry Wharton quietly.

"Of course it was. Quelch is the only master here who's gone mad, isn't he?" hooted Coker.

"I mean, did you see that it was Quelch? Did you recognise him?"

"Of course I didn't. I hardly saw him before he nipped off again. Just a squint at him, that's all. But it was a beak; he was in cap and gown. Of course it was Quelch! Think the other beaks have gone cracked like your beak?" hooted Coker.

And Coker, snorting with wrath, groped about for the hat that had been knocked off. And, having found it, tramped off to the House, to relate this latest instance of the pottiness of Quelch.

"By gum, it's getting thick!" said Nugent, as the Famous Five resumed their way. "If the Head hears of this, it will be the finish. Quelch can't stay here. He must be absolutely cracked and dotty."

"Practical joking breaking out late

in life," said Bob Cherry. "Must have a screw loose."

"The loosefulness must be terrific!"

"I don't believe it was Quelch," said Harry Wharton, between his set lips. "Coker never saw who it was, except that it was a beak. You can see that he never let Coker see his face."

"Well, Quelch wouldn't, as he denies these games afterwards. We know he's out in the quad somewhere."

"So does the tricky rotter who is doing this," said Harry Wharton. "I feel sure—"

He broke off sharply with a startled cry.

The juniors had heard no sound from the fog; but no doubt their own voices had been heard at a little distance. A figure suddenly loomed up.

Before the juniors could realise that it was there, a loud smack rang like a pistol-shot, and Harry Wharton, taken utterly by surprise, reeled over, and fell with a crash to the ground.

The figure darted away and disappeared—all that four pairs of startled eyes could see of it being a glimpse of a mortar-board and the flutter of a master's gown!

Bob Cherry made a jump after the fleeing figure. But it had vanished in the fog, and he groped back to his friends.

Harry Wharton sat up, gasping, his head spinning from the blow.

Nugent gave him a hand to his feet. He staggered up.

"Who—" he panted dizzily.

"Quelch!" breathed Bob.

"Did you see him?"

"I saw a master—"

"It was a master—" said Johnny Bull.

"The esteemed and potty Quelch!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton rubbed his head. Obviously he had been knocked over by the same person who had knocked Coker's hat off. His comrades had no more doubt than Coker that it was the Remove master—absolutely cracked, and playing mad pranks in the fog!

"Did he seem as tall as Quelch?" asked Harry.

"How could a fellow see in the fog when he was gone in a flash!" said Bob. "But it must have been—it was a beak, anyhow."

"Come on," muttered Nugent. "Stick together, and keep your eyes open! This is getting a bit too jolly exciting! What Quelch wants is a strait-jacket, I think."

Harry Wharton was silent as they groped their way on and arrived at the porter's shed. He hardly knew what to think—yet he clung to his belief that it was not Quelch. But if it was not, it was, it appeared, some other master—which was equally astonishing and inexplicable.

Someone in cap and gown was lurking in the fog, playing pranks as cracked as those that had been played at Quelch's study window the two previous days! Either it was Quelch, or it was someone who desired to see Quelch dismissed from Greyfriars! But which, Wharton could hardly make up his mind—though the other fellows had made up theirs.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise For Billy Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER grinned as he blinked through his big spectacles into the quad after school on Saturday.

What he saw seemed to interest Bunter.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,603.

There was a glimmer of winter sunshine. Plenty of fellows were out of the House, and some of the masters.

But the masters who were in the quad were keeping clear of the "Beaks' Grind"; the walk under Masters' windows. No member of the staff seemed to desire to go near the window of Mr. Quelch's study!

That window was shut. But evidently the beaks doubted whether it might not open for some new mad prank on the part of the master who was now generally believed to have a screw loose!

Many glances were cast towards that window! But everybody kept at a safe distance from it!

Harry Wharton & Co., and some other Remove fellows, were punting a footer. From more distant quarters an occasional pop and squizz could be heard, telling that some of the fags were too impatient to wait for nightfall to set off their fireworks.

That evening, there was to be the usual celebration; and a huge bonfire was already stacked in the school field ready for the fall of darkness.

But what interested the fat Owl of the Remove as he blinked out of the House was the fact that Gilbert Tracy was joining in the punt-about!

Bunter was specially interested in Tracy! He was making sure that the new junior was occupied outside the House! This was an opportunity for the fat Owl to carry on with his scheme for snaffling Tracy's smokes—hidden in that attache-case in Study No. 1.

He had drawn blank once! But it did not seem likely that he would draw blank at the second shot! Anyhow, he was going to try it on at the first safe opportunity; and this opportunity seemed safe enough.

Grimming, Billy Bunter turned from the door and heaved his weight up the stairs to the Remove passage.

Not a fellow was to be seen there; and Bunter slipped into Study No. 1, shut the door after him, and turned the key in the lock.

Grimming from ear to ear, he lifted the lid of the box-seat and sorted out that attache-case.

Quickly he slipped Fishy's key into the locks, one after the other, and unlocked it.

In a few moments it was open; and Bunter was blinking into it—with an amazed blink; his little round eyes almost bulging through his big round spectacles in his astonishment.

He had fully expected that, if there was anything in the bag at all, it would be Tracy's secret supply of smokes.

But what he saw was simply astonishing!

There were no smokes in that attache-case! There was a brown-paper parcel! It was wrapped, and labelled, as if for the post! It was, in fact, the parcel Bunter had seen under Tracy's arm on Wednesday afternoon!

Bunter had been surprised at the time by Tracy taking down a parcel for the post and bringing it up to his study again. But the circumstances had not lingered in his fat mind. He had quite forgotten it!

Now, however, he remembered it!

Tracy had not posted that parcel! Here it was! But why a fellow should wrap up a parcel, label it, and pack it away in a locked attache-case was a really amazing mystery.

Billy Bunter was not quick on the uptake! But even on Bunter's fat brain, it dawned that that parcel could not really be intended for the post.

It did not contain something that Tracy had intended to post home to

Oakwood Place. It contained something that he wished to keep carefully out of sight and which he had, therefore, packed into a parcel with that innocent and unsuspecting appearance.

But what?

It could hardly be smokes, after all. It was not a large parcel, but it was much too large to be supposed to contain cigarettes. But what?

Bunter blinked at it, his amazement changing into curiosity. He had come there to chuck away Tracy's smokes, as sit-for-tat for the swiping Gilbert had given him. There were no smokes to be chucked away, that was clear; but there was a mystery that deeply interested Bunter! Inquisitiveness was his besetting sin!

He was going to see what was in that mysterious parcel! Clearly, it was something that Tracy wanted to keep out of sight!

Taking the parcel from the attache-case the fat Owl examined it, his eyes fairly glittering with curiosity through his spectacles.

Close examination revealed that it was not carefully tied, as it naturally would have been for the post. One end of the brown paper, in fact, was simply tucked in, so that it could be quickly opened and the contents taken out without delay if required.

Bunter pulled out that end.

He groped inside!

A garment of some kind was under his fat fingers! He could feel the texture. Some sort of clothing was packed in that parcel.

Was it, after all, some old garment that Tracy had intended to post home? But if so, why was it so carefully concealed in a locked case? It could not be that. But what—

Bunter was going to know! He opened the paper wrapping further and blinked at the folded garment he drew out.

Then he almost fell down with amazement!

The garment unfolded in his hand. It had been closely folded, to take up the smallest space possible. As it unrolled something dropped from it—a master's mortar-board! The garment itself was an old Master of Arts gown—such as the beaks wore, but older and shabbier than any generally seen at Greyfriars.

Bunter blinked at it, dumbfounded.

Tracy, so far as he could see, had snaffled a master's outfit from a master's study and hidden it here. Possibly it was a disused outfit; for it was certainly very old and shabby. It did not occur to Bunter that that old cap and gown might have been bought at a second-hand clothes-dealer's shop, for he could not have imagined any reason why Tracy should have spent money in such a way! He blinked and blinked at it, astounded.

"Oh crikey!" said Bunter at last.

He was still gazing at the amazing discovery, when there was a footstep in the passage and the doorhandle turned.

Bunter jumped! He had been a good deal longer in the study than he had intended. Someone had come up. He was deeply thankful that he had locked the door. If it was Tracy—

It was Tracy! Bunter heard the doorhandle angrily rattled, and then there was a sharp, angry voice.

"Who's in there? Why is the door locked? Let me in, you fool!"

Bunter's fat heart quaked.

Tracy had pitched into him a few days ago simply for having found him with that attache-case, unopened, in his fat hands. What would he do if he found him with the case open, blinking at the mysterious contents!

But the door was fortunately locked,

and Bunter had time. Swiftly he folded up the gown with the mortar-board inside, to replace it where he had found it.

There was an angry thumping at the door.

"Who's in there?" shouted Tracy. "Let me into my study, I tell you!"

Bunter did not heed.

Carefully he pushed the folded gown back into the brown paper wrapping, and tucked in the end as he had found it.

While Tracy, outside, thumped savagely at the panels, the fat Owl replaced the parcel in the attache-case, locked the latter, and returned it to its place in the box-seat, and shut down the lid.

There was nothing now to reveal what he had been doing when Tracy came in. Unless Tracy guessed that he had a key to the case, he could suspect nothing; and he was not likely to guess that.

Thump, thump, thump! came at the door.

Bunter rolled across to it.

"Is that you, Wharton?" he squeaked.

"Bunter! Let me in, you fat fool!"

"Is that you, Nugent?"

"It's Tracy, you silly Owl! Why have you locked yourself in my study?" howled Gilbert.

"Oh! Is it you, Tracy?"

"Yes, you burbling idiot! I'll smash you for locking me out of my study! What are you up to there, you spying fat worm?"

"Oh, really, Tracy—"

"Will you open this door?" howled Tracy.

"Not if you're going to kick up a row!" retorted Bunter. "I can come into a pal's study if I like, I suppose. Wharton wouldn't mind—"

"It's my study, you blithering idiot, and I want to come in!"

"Wharton wouldn't mind me sitting in his study to read his 'Holiday Annual.' I'm not going to let you in to pitch into me as you did before."

"Let me in at once!"

"Shan't, if you're going to kick up a row!"

"You burbling bloater, I won't touch you, unless you've been meddling with my things."

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter.

With Wharton's "Holiday Annual" in one hand, he unlocked the door with the other. Tracy flung it open and stamped in. His first glance shot towards the box-seat, as Bunter did not fail to notice. Then his eyes fixed on the fat Owl and the open volume in his hand.

"You fat fool!" he snarled. "Get out!"

"I can sit in Wharton's study if I like!" retorted Bunter.

"You fat frump, do you think I don't know you've been at the study cupboard?" snapped Tracy. "That's why you locked the door, you pilfering pig! Get out! I'll help you out!"

Evidently Tracy did not believe that Bunter had been sitting in the study reading the "Holiday Annual." Still, his conclusion that the fat grub-raider had been at the study cupboard was just as useful to Bunter!

He grabbed the fat Owl by the collar to sling him out of the study.

Bunter roared.

"Beast! Leggo! You said you wouldn't kick up a row if I let you in! Will you leggo, you beast?"

Tracy swung him to the doorway.

Crash!

The "Holiday Annual," wielded in both Bunter's fat hands, crashed on



The grotesque figure, with a Guy Fawkes mask on under a master's mortar-board, and fluttering gown, hurled a bundle of crackers at Mr. Prout. Bang, bang, bang! "Oh! Ah! Whoop!" The Fifth Form master spluttered and staggered.

Tracy's nose! He staggered back, and sat down suddenly with a howl.

Bunter did not wait for him to get up again! He dropped the volume, and fled! He was going down the Remove staircase two at a time by the time Gilbert Tracy staggered to his feet.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Quelch Says Good-bye!

"PLEASE to remember,
The Fifth of November,
The gunpowder treason and plot—"

Mr. Quelch, pacing his study as the November dusk fell on the old quadrangle at Greyfriars, heard the ancient rhyme, chanted by some fellow in the quad.

He did not heed it; he was busy with his own thoughts; dark and troubling thoughts.

But, as the chanting voice went on, he gave a sudden start, and listened. There was a change in the usual words of the old chant:

"Now what is the reason,
At this jolly season,
That Quelch has gone off his dot!"

The Remove master came to a sudden halt in his pacing. He stood for a moment, breathing hard and deep, and as he stood, a sound of laughter from outside the House came to him.

With set lips he stepped to the study window and threw up the sash. There was a sudden shout:

"Look out!"

"Ware crackers!"

And there was a scampering of feet. Three or four dim figures vanished in

the mist and the falling dusk. Quelch opened his lips to call, but he shut them again.

He could not recognise any of the scampering figures, though he had an impression that Gilbert Tracy's was one of them, and he thought that it was Tracy's voice that he had heard chanting.

He closed the window again.

His face was pale and set.

The headmaster had told him that the present state of affairs could not continue. Quelch knew that without being told.

Unless the truth came to light, he could not remain at the school. All Greyfriars, with the single exception of the head boy of his Form, believed that he had a screw loose, as the juniors expressed it, and was carrying on in an utterly irresponsible and ridiculous manner.

What had happened in the mist had, so to speak, put the lid on! Coker of the Fifth had talked of it far and wide—it was generally alluded to as "Quelch's latest."

Quelch had known nothing of it till afterwards. But it was futile to say so. If it was not Quelch, who was it? Obviously it was the same man who had flung crackers, and squirted ink from his study window; and everybody believed that that man was Henry Samuel Quelch!

Generally, Quelch was equal to any situation; but this one had him hopelessly puzzled and beaten! Someone was playing mad pranks, and letting him get the credit of it. Who?

He could not begin to guess!

Nothing fresh had come to light! There seemed no prospect of anything coming to light! And it could not continue! He could not carry on as a Form-master in a school where he was

regarded, on all sides, as an object of astonishment, derision, contempt, or pity. He had to go.

Tap!

"Come in, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch, very kindly, as his head boy opened the study door.

Harry Wharton entered. His face was grave as he looked at his Form-master and read the plain traces of worry and trouble in his face.

He was sincerely concerned for Quelch! It was true that, when the present strange state of affairs had begun, Quelch had given him a quite undeserved six. But Wharton was not the fellow to nurse a grudge, or to set a single hasty act against a long course of justice and kindness. That licking was already forgotten; and the captain of the Remove would gladly have done anything that he could, to help his Form-master in this strange and inexplicable difficulty.

"You sent for me, sir?" he said.

"Yes, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch. "I desire to speak to you, my boy, before I leave—"

"Leave?" repeated Harry blankly.

"You, I think, are the only boy in the school sensible enough to see how this strange and painful matter really stands," said Mr. Quelch. "I trust, Wharton, that you have not lost your faith in your Form-master."

"No, sir!" said Harry. "I can't understand what's going on, any more than any other fellow; but I'm absolutely certain that there is some trickery in it, though I can't make it out."

"Thank you!" said Mr. Quelch. "I am glad of that—very glad, my boy. But in the peculiar circumstances I have no choice but to retire, at least, temporarily, from the school. I hope and trust that the truth may be dis-

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,603.

covered later. At present there seems to be no hope of it."

"But—you're not going, sir!" exclaimed Harry. "We"—he paused—"at least, I shall be very sorry if you go, sir."

Mr. Quelch smiled faintly.

"The present state of affairs is intolerable, Wharton! I leave Greyfriars this evening. I shall not see my Form again; but I desire to say good-bye to you, my boy. I hope I may return if and when the facts come to light."

"But, sir—" stammered Harry.

He said no more. He knew that everybody was wondering why Quelch had not gone already, and he could hardly be surprised that the Remove master had decided to go.

"I'm sorry, sir!" he said.

"Thank you, Wharton! Good-bye, my boy!" Mr. Quelch shook hands with his head boy. "Keep your faith in me; some day it will be justified."

"I am sure of it, sir! I am sure that you will come back, and that everyone will be sorry you had to leave."

"I shall hope so," said Mr. Quelch, with a smile; and with that he dismissed his head boy.

Wharton closed the door, and went down the passage with a grave set face. A crowd of fellows were gathering in the quad, as the November dusk fell—some of them with Guy Fawkes masks on their faces, some letting off crackers and squibs. But the captain of the Remove did not feel disposed at the moment to join the merry throng. He was thinking of the Form-master he had left, with pale troubled face, and his heart was heavy.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Light At Last!

"I SAY, old chap—"

"Don't bother!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Buzz off, fathead!"

"But I say, what did Quelch want?" asked Billy Bunter. "Has he missed anything?"

"What do you mean, ass?"

"I mean, a gown, or a cap, or anything!" grinned Bunter.

Harry Wharton stared at the fat Owl of the Remove.

He had gone up to his study, after seeing Mr. Quelch, and was alone there. His friends were expecting him in the quad, but he was in no hurry to join them. He was trying to think out that strange, mysterious puzzle, wondering whether, at the last moment, something might be done.

But the thing seemed hopeless. He was in no mood for Bunter—and he waved him away as he put a fat face and fat head into the study.

But Bunter was not to be waved off like a fat bluebottle. He was curious to know why Quelch had sent for his head boy—having an idea in his fatuous fat mind what it might be about.

"A gown—or a cap!" repeated Harry, staring blankly at Bunter's grinning face. "What on earth do you mean?"

"He, he, he! If they ain't Quelch's, they must be some beak's!" grinned Bunter. "As Quelch sent for you, I fancied he might have missed them! Of course, they must be Quelch's—Tracy wouldn't snaffle any other beak's togs. It's Quelch he's up against, ain't it?"

"Are you dotty?" inquired Wharton politely.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"If not, what are you burbling

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,605.

about?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove impatiently.

"Look here! Has Quelch missed a cap and gown?" asked Bunter.

"Not that I know of."

"Well, it's jolly queer!" said the fat Owl. "Tracy's had them since Wednesday. I suppose they're an old lot that he's put aside; still, it's queer that he hasn't missed them all this time, if they're his!"

Harry Wharton gave a start, and caught his breath. Back into his mind came that vague suspicion that Tracy, somehow, had a hand in the mysterious affair of Mr. Quelch. He made a stride towards Bunter, grabbed him by a fat shoulder and hooked him into the study, and shut the door.

Bunter gave a startled squeak.

"I say, leggo! Wharrer you up to?"

"Now, what's this about Tracy having a master's cap and gown?" said Harry quietly, but breathing hard with excitement. "If he has, they don't belong to any master here, or they'd have been missed. He must have got them outside the school somehow. Have you seen anything of the kind?"

"What ho!" grinned Bunter.

"Where?" breathed Harry.

"In this study!"

"You fat ass, there's nothing of the kind here!"

"That's all you know!" grinned Bunter. "I can jolly well tell you where he parks them, and show them to you, if you like!"

Wharton gazed at the grinning fat face.

His heart was beating fast.

It had not occurred to him, or to anyone else, that a Greyfriars fellow might have obtained possession of a master's cap and gown from some source outside the school.

But it occurred to him now, as he realised that the Peeping Tom of the Remove must have spotted such things in Tracy's possession.

If it was true, the mystery was a mystery no longer! He remembered that the "beak" seen in Quelch's study had been much shorter than Quelch—as short as Mossoo! A schoolboy got up in a schoolmaster's garb—now that he had the clue, the whole thing flashed on him!

"If that's true, Bunter—" he panted.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Show me at once."

"All right! But you look here!" said Bunter anxiously. "Tracy nearly copped me to-day. If he comes up and turns nasty, you'll keep him off!"

"I'll smash him to a jelly if he lifts a finger!" said Harry Wharton, between his teeth. "Don't worry about that! If Tracy's got anything of the sort hidden in this study, point it out at once!"

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter cheerfully.

He took a key from his pocket, and stepped to the box-seat.

Wharton watched him blankly.

He had not the faintest idea of what the fat Owl was going to do. But as Bunter lifted the attache-case out of the box-seat, he spoke sharply:

"That's Tracy's!"

"That's where he keeps it!" grinned Bunter, as he unlocked the attache-case. "I—I happened to have a key! He, he, he! I thought he had smokes in it, you see, and I was going to chuck them away, but it turned out—"

"Oh!" gasped Harry.

"He keeps them wrapped up in brown paper, labelled, as if he was going to post the parcel, see?" grinned Bunter. "He took it downstairs on

Wednesday—while you were away at St. Jude's, you know!"

"On Wednesday!" breathed Wharton. He had not forgotten what had happened on Wednesday, while the footballers were over at St. Jude's.

"Yes. But he never posted it—he brought it up to the study again!" grinned Bunter. "Of course, I never knew he kept it in this case, till I looked for his smokes. He, he, he!"

"Oh!" gasped Harry again.

It was growing clear in his mind now. Tracy, if he put on a master's cap and gown to play his trickery, could not, of course, risk being seen in such attire, or being seen carrying such things! But any fellow could carry a parcel labelled for posting without attracting a glance. That was how he had done it!

Wharton hardly breathed, as Bunter opened the attache-case.

Then there was a startled squeak from Bunter.

"Oh crikey! It's gone!"

"Gone!" repeated Harry.

The attache-case was empty!

Bunter blinked into it.

"Oh crumbs! The beast has taken it away again—just when I was going to show it to you! I—I say, old chap, it's true, you know!" said the fat Owl anxiously. "I ain't pulling your leg! I tell you he had a master's cap and gown rolled up in a brown-paper parcel in this attache-case—honest Injun!"

Wharton set his lips.

"You fat ass! Are you sure?"

"I tell you, I saw it there this afternoon!" squeaked Bunter. "He must have taken it away since, like he did on Wednesday."

"On Wednesday?"

"Yes. I looked into this case for smokes then, but it was empty. That was when he took the parcel downstairs, you know. But it was there all right when I looked this afternoon. Now he's taken it away again! I say, have you seen Tracy? He must have had the parcel with him, if you did."

Wharton looked hard and long at the fat Owl.

Truth and Bunter were generally strangers, but it seemed impossible that the fat Owl could have made up this story out of his own fat head. Yet the attache-case was empty. There was no sign of what Bunter said it had contained.

Then, like a flash, it came to Wharton. Tracy had taken that parcel from the study. He was at his tricks again!

Dusk was falling thickly—and in the November dusk he was planning further trickery, like that of the misty afternoon when Coker's hat had been knocked off in the fog, and Wharton's head smacked by a figure in cap and gown! In these very moments, the young rascal was at work again—piling up further evidence against Quelch!

"Oh!" gasped Harry.

Tracy did not know that Quelch had already decided to go—only Wharton knew that. But he knew that Quelch would have to go if those mad pranks went on, attributed to Quelch! That was why the attache-case was empty. Tracy, out there in the misty dusk, was already lurking in cap and gown. Harry Wharton saw the whole game now!

He cut across to the study door.

"I say, old chap—" squeaked Bunter.

But Wharton was gone. The fat Owl put the empty attache-case back into the box-seat, with a grunt, and rolled from the study. Not for a moment did it occur to Bunter's fat brain why the parcel was gone, or what Tracy was

doing with the cap and gown it contained. But it was clear enough in Harry Wharton's mind, and he ran breathlessly down the stairs, and out of the House into the November dark. He knew, or as good as knew, but he was going to know for certain!

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Caught In The Act!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
"Waiting for you!"
"Time we got the old guy on the go!"
The Co. joined Harry Wharton as he came out. It was quite dark now, and from the school field came a red glare of the bonfire, now ignited. Banging and crackling and fizzing of fireworks sounded merrily.

Crowds of fellows were thronging in the dusky shadows, many of them grotesque in Guy Fawkes masks. Lock-up was later on Bonfire Night, and all the juniors, and a good many of the seniors, had turned out for the Fifth of November celebrations.

"Come on, old bean," said Bob Cherry. "We want to get the guy out of the shed. Anything up?" he added.

Wharton was staring round him in the deep dusk. Where was Tracy? What was he doing—or going to do?

"Have you seen Tracy?" he exclaimed.

"Tracy—I saw him come out about half an hour ago I think—before you went in to Quelch," said Bob. "What about him?"

"Was he carrying anything?"

The Co. stared at Wharton as he asked that question.

"As it happens, he was," answered Bob, in astonishment. "I think he had a parcel under his arm—fireworks, I suppose! What does it matter?"

"A brown-paper parcel?" gasped Harry.

"I think so—but what the thump—"

"This much!" said Harry Wharton, lowering his voice, which almost trembled with excitement. "Don't say anything to put the cad on his guard—but Tracy's got a master's cap and gown in that parcel—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"And there's going to be some more rascally trickery, to be put down to poor old Quelch—"

"Harry, old man!" gasped Nugent.

"How the thump—" began Johnny Bull.

"Never mind how—that's how it is!" said Harry hurriedly. "He's got to be caught—with the things on him. I'll tell you this—Quelch is going because of that young villain's rotten scheming—and that's how he's done it! I've found him out in time—but he's got to be caught out! You fellows back me up in nailing him—"

"But—" gasped Johnny Bull.

"My esteemed chum—" exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I tell you I know—Hark!" exclaimed Wharton, as a sudden outburst of shouting came across the quad.

Bang, bang, bang, bang! roared a bunch of crackers and, amid the roar, came a roar of voices:

"There he is—"

"Quelch!"

"The mad old ass!"

"At it again!"

Harry Wharton dashed off at a rapid run in the direction of the shouting, and his chums, in mingled amazement and incredulity at what he had told them, dashed after him. They were on the spot in a few seconds.

Hobson of the Shell was fairly yelling in the midst of a buzzing crowd.

"Chucked them right at my head—the mad old ass! Made me jump nearly out of my skin! A handful of crackers—just like he did at Prout the other day—"

"Who did?" exclaimed Harry.

"That mad beak of yours!" hooted Hobson. "Jumped at a fellow out of the dark, and chuckled—"

"Did you see him?"

"Of course I saw him! Think I'm blind?"

"I mean, did you see his face?"

"Of course I did!"

"Oh!" gasped Harry. His heart sank. If, for the first time, the trickster's face had been seen and it was Quelch's face, he had been deceived and mistaken, after all. Had he been mistaken?

"You—did you recognise Quelch?" he panted.

"How could I recognise him, with a Guy Fawkes mask on, fathead?" snorted Hobson. "But it was Quelch all right—it was a beak, anyhow—"

"Oh!" gasped Harry. "He had a Guy Fawkes mask on! You said you saw his face, you silly ass!"

"Well, I did—with the mask on it! It was Quelch!"

"Ass!"

Wharton understood—Tracy did not care if his face was seen, with a Guy Fawkes mask on it!

"It's the limit!" roared Coker of the Fifth. "A beak got

(Continued on next page.)



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up in a Guy Fawkes mask—my only hat!"

A red glare from the burning bonfire cast a glimmer of light in the gloom. But the light was dim and uncertain—favourable to the trickery of the young rascal who lurked in the shadows.

Harry Wharton drew a pocket-torch from his pocket, as he stared about him in the dimness. If the figure in cap and gown appeared again, he was going to see it clearly.

"What is all this—what is it?" It was Prout's boom, as the Fifth Form master loomed up on the scene. "What has happened—what—"

"It's Quelch again, sir!" gasped Coker.

"Chucking fireworks at a fellow—" panted Hobson.

"Upon my word!" boomed Prout. "This is too much—this—ah! Oh! Ah! Whoop!"

A figure loomed up, half-seen in the wavering glimmer of light—grotesque, with a Guy Fawkes mask on under a master's mortar-board, and fluttering gown. A bundle of crackers, leaving sparks as it flew, whizzed through the air, and cracked on Prout's portly chest!

Bang, bang, bang! Prout spluttered and staggered, and stumbled over, sitting down with a heavy bump! There was a yell.

"There he is—" "Great pip—"

The figure in cap and gown vanished into the dark. But as it vanished, Harry Wharton shot after it, like an arrow from a bow, switching on the light of his pocket-torch.

"Come on!" he shouted, as he ran. And the Co. rushed after him, and five or six other fellows joined in the chase.

But for Harry Wharton's readiness to act, and his prompt action, the lurking figure would have vanished into the darkness, as it had done before. But the bright beam from the electric torch picked it up, shone on it, and stayed on it—revealing it to the eyes of the Famous Five as they rushed in pursuit.

A face looked back over a shoulder—a grotesque face, with gleaming eyes through the eyeholes of the mask. Then the figure ran on desperately.

But as it ran, Harry Wharton kept pace, and never for an instant did the beam of the torch leave the running figure!

And now that they could see it plainly, all the five could see that it was not nearly so tall as Quelch! It was not, and could not be, the Remove master!

"Not Quelch, by gum!" panted Bob Cherry.

"Come on!" shouted Harry.

He was gaining on the fleeing figure, his comrades at his heels. The fugitive ran hard, and bolder, dodging and twisting and winding, but the captain of the Remove was gaining, and the light still picked up the figure as it ran.

Wharton was almost within grasping distance—and in another moment he would have gripped the fluttering gown, when the fugitive dashed in at the open doorway of a shed, slamming the door after him.

So close behind was the captain of the Remove, that the slamming door struck him, and flung him backwards. He stumbled over, his running comrades behind crashed into him, and there was a breathless mix-up.

The shed door re-opened a few inches—the masked face glared out. But there was no escape—Wharton was scrambling up, and the fugitive had barely time to snatch the key from the outside of the

lock, and slam the door again. As Harry gained his feet, and leaped forward, the key clicked inside—the door of Gosling's shed was locked against him.

"We've got him!" panted Wharton. "Call the fellows here! We've got him—and everybody's going to see whether he's Quelch or not! Bob—Frank—cut off—call the fellows here—"

In two or three minutes, a whole mob of excited fellows were surging round Gosling's shed! Quelch or not, beak or not, the mysterious japer was cornered now, and his game was up.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Gilbert's Last Chance!

GILBERT TRACY panted. He stood there—in the darkness of Gosling's shed, panting for breath—in cap and gown, the Guy Fawkes mask on his face, desperation in his heart.

He was cornered and caught. Again and again he had played this trickery successfully; now he had played it once too often!

Fists were thumping at the locked door; a crowd was gathering all round the shed. He panted and panted. He had gained only a respite by darting into that refuge; unless he could escape from it, all was over. He struck a match and stared round him.

He started at the sight of a strange-looking figure within a few feet of him; but the next moment he knew what it was—the guy that was to be carried in the procession to the bonfire.

That effigy of Guy Fawkes was life-size—in an old long coat, tattered trousers, and boots; stuffed with straw and rags; with a cardboard mask face; surmounted by an old top-hat. It was seated in an old cane chair, and a rope lay ready for tying it on.

The match went out. Tracy had not noticed in his haste and terror what doorway he had darted into, but now he knew from seeing the guy there that it was Gosling's shed—and from that shed there was no exit, except by way of the door he had locked. He had gained only a respite—a brief respite—discovery and stern punishment were certain now.

Any other fellow would have been expelled for what he had done. But he would not be expelled; he knew that. Quelch would not let him gain his ends so easily. But, short of that, the direst and most drastic punishment—

A heavier thump came at the door; it was followed by the boom of Prout's fruity voice.

"Unlock this door, Quelch! I appeal to you, Quelch! If you have any sense or reason left, pray open the door and return quietly to the House! Will you persist in prolonging this scandalous, this absurd tomfoolery? Do you hear me, Quelch?"

Gilbert heard him. Prout was at the door, still in the belief that it was Quelch who had been hunted to that shed. He would soon know different. Then he heard Harry Wharton's voice.

"It's not Mr. Quelch, sir!"

"What? Nonsense!"

"It's certainly not Mr. Quelch!" came Bob Cherry's voice. "We all saw him as he ran, sir; he's a foot shorter than Quelch—"

"Nonsense! You did not see him clearly!" Thump! "Mr. Quelch, it is perfectly well known that you are hiding in this shed; you were followed to the door! Further prevarication is

futile—absolutely futile! I beg of you, sir, to put an end to this unprecedented, this unparalleled scene—"

"So he is cornered at last!" It was Mr. Hacker's acid voice. "Is it certain that he is there, Prout?"

"Absolutely, Hacker! He was followed here by a number of boys; he was seen to enter; he has locked the door—"

"He will find this difficult to explain to Dr. Locke!" sneered the Acid Drop. "The door had better be forced."

"Send for Gosling. Where is Gosling—"

"I say, you fellows," came a fat squeak, "have they really got Quelch—"

"It's not Quelch!"

"Silence, Wharton!" boomed Prout. "Wingate—Loder, fetch Gosling! The door must be forced. I will persuade Mr. Quelch to go with me quietly. The poor fellow is not responsible—obviously not responsible. A doctor—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a sudden roar.

"Silence, Cherry!"

"Here's Quelch!"

"Wha-a-a?"

Tracy, inside the shed, heard a roar of astonishment. As it died down the clear, sharp voice of the Remove master was heard.

"I think you were speaking of me, Mr. Prout!"

"Gig-gig-goodness gracious!" The Fifth Form master fairly goggled at Quelch in the light of a dozen electric torches and lanterns. "You! Arc—are—are you not—not in that shed, Quelch?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Mr. Prout, you can see—"

"Oh, yes! Quite! But—but—but—" Prout babbled. "But—but you were seen—followed—You—you—Bless my soul!"

"I have just come from my study, Mr. Prout. I heard from a dozen different directions that the wretched trickster who has caused so much commotion has been caught at his trickery, and—"

"Bless my soul!" gasped Prout. "He—he—he is in this shed! He was seen—followed. I had no doubt—none whatever! But—but obviously it cannot have been you, Quelch, as—as—as you are here—"

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Hacker. "Some other master! Is it possible that we have been so deceived—"

"I should think, Mr. Hacker, that that was quite clear to you now," said the Remove master bitterly.

"Oh, yes—quite! I acknowledge it! But—but—"

"But who—" stuttered Prout.

"That we shall soon ascertain," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "Gosling, force the door of this shed immediately!"

"Yessir!"

Tracy, in the shed, trembled. Bang, bang! Crash! came on the door. It was a matter of minutes now.

Outside, the swarm of Greyfriars fellows were buzzing with astonishment and curiosity. The mysterious trickster—the mad beak—was not Quelch. That was evident to all eyes now. Who was it? The door creaked and groaned.

Gilbert gritted his teeth. There was no escape; but he struck another match, and cast a wild stare round him, in the hope of a hiding-place. But he knew that the shed would be searched. There was no chance of hiding. Then his desperate eyes fixed on the guy.

(Continued on page 23.)

GREYFRIARS NEWS IN A NUTSHELL by—

The GREYFRIARS GUIDE

ALL ROUND GREYFRIARS. Courtfield Bridge.

(1)

The river runs through Courtfield town,
But there's a bridge to span it;
A massive bridge of granite,
Which isn't prone to tumble down.
And here, while time reposes,
The angler sits and dozes,
And fish turn up their noses,
With a frown!



(2)

The fishers seldom smile or grin,
For it's a serious matter,
And jolly chaff or chatter
Would certainly be thought a sin.
You'll see some old curmudgeon
Haul in his two-ounce gudgeon,
And then go off in dudgeon
To the inn!

(3)

Old Tomlin's boathouse here is large,
And all his boats are roomy,
Perhaps a trifle gloomy,
Reminding one intensely of a barge.
But people hire them daily,
And struggle with them gaily,
Then gasp and falter palely
At the charge!

THE GREYFRIARS ALPHABET

WILLIAM WIBLEY,
the Acting Genius of the Remove.

W is for WIBLEY—he's a
Splendid actor—Julius Caesar,
Hamlet, Macbeth, or Othello,
William Wibley is the fellow
To produce the finest acting,
For his methods are exacting.



He's not good at acrobatics,
All he thinks of is dramatics;
If you see a bearded figure
Enter Study 6 with vigour,
It is not the ghost of Marley,
It is Wibley—as Svengali!
For he's expert at disguises,
Noses of all shapes and sizes;
Wigs and warpaint he affixes
To his face to play his trickses.
Yes, we must admit he's clever—
Hail, O Wibley, live for ever!

ANSWER to PUZZLE

Five to one.



A WEEKLY BUDGET OF FACT AND FUN

By
**THE GREYFRIARS
RHYMESTER**

BUSINESS DIRECTORY.

The new business directory, just published, should be useful to members of the Remove, as it shows the names and addresses of all the business premises in Greyfriars School. Here are some extracts from it:

AUCTIONEERS.—The Remove Auction Rooms, Study No. 14. F. T. Fish, proprietor. Auctions of second-hand goods twice a week. Bankrupt stock sold on commish. No money returned.

BANKS.—The Surefire Savings Bank, Study No. 14. (Branch of F. T. Fish, Inc.) The best bank for fags. Charges moderate. Money kept as long as you like, but not returned.

CHIMNEY-SWEEPS.—Fish & Co., Study No. 14. Hire a fag to sweep your chimney. We have plenty. Charges mod. No money returned.

PUZZLE PAR

Pon, Gadsby, Drury, Merton
and Vavassour met a Remove
fellow in Friardale Lane. What
was the time?

Answer at foot of col 2.

EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGES.—The Fish Fag Agency, Study No. 14. Hire a fag to do your work. Charges from 9d. per hour, according to energy of fag. Fags must be returned in good condition, but no money returned.

ESTATE AGENTS.—Are you looking for a fresh study? Consult the Remove Estate Agency (F. T. Fish, manager). Study No. 14. Booking fee, two bob. No money returned.

INSURANCE COMPANIES.—The Guaranteed Genocine Punishment Insurance Co., Inc. (Under the personal supervision of F. T. Fish.) Study No. 14. Insurance against LINES AND LICKINGS. Policies full of clauses. No premiums returned.

And so on for fifty pages. Fellows who want anything can now look up the address of the supplier in this book (which is published by the Fish Publishing Corp.) and then go straight there.

AFTER SCHOOL HOURS A Jaunt to Jevons

Mr. Jevons is our barber,
He's a melancholy man.
If he ever chose to harbour
Such a trifling little plan
As that which one day sent to quod
The late lamented Sweeney Todd
I really shouldn't wonder,
He seems so full of care;
I feel I'm going under
When sitting in his chair.
"How long?" he asks in mournful tones,
Then pauses to suppress his groans.
I do not like his question,
"How long?" is what he says;
There's just a faint suggestion
Of doom about the phrase.
(A prophet weeping for the slain
Within the cities of the plain!)
"Quite short," I answer, choking;
"That is, I mean, not quite!"
He seems to think I'm joking
And doesn't think it's right!
"Nice day it's been," I faintly cry.
He answers with a grievous sigh,
And then picks up his razor
And strops it till I'm ill.
I fumble in my blazer
For paper—for my will!
With scissors, razor, clippers, comb
He gets to work upon my dome!
His cutlery he flashes
Around my startled head,
And many tiny gashes
Spring up in points of red.
His marks are left from crown to chin
Upon my somewhat tender skin.
"Have mercy, Mr. Jevons!"
I gasp in tones of fear.
"Don't slaughter me! Good heavens,
There goes my starboard ear!"
Then, wrecked and ruined, with a sob
I pay his blood-money—a bob!

It was a chance that flashed into his mind—a ghost of a chance. With discovery inevitable otherwise, it was worth trying on. He stepped to the offigy, dimly seen in the gloom. With swift fingers he unbuttoned the old coat, dragged out the stuffing, and pitched it behind a bench in a corner. Swiftly he threw off the mask and cap and gown.

Then, with breathless haste, he crammed himself into the old coat and trousers and boots, over his own clothes and shoes. He buttoned the coat, fastened the cardboard mask over his face, and jammed on the ancient top hat.

With beating heart he sat in the cane chair, in the place of the guy!

Bang, bang! Crash! came at the door.

The lock was yielding.

Tracy, completely hidden in the outfit of the guy, sat motionless. And he hardly breathed as the door flew open. If they failed to spot him, if they supposed that he had somehow dodged out and escaped—it was his last chance!

A dozen electric torches gleamed in at the doorway. Prout rolled in, followed by Quelch and Hacker, and a swarming crowd.

"What—what—" Prout jumped as his startled eyes fell on the weird figure seated in the cane chair. "What the—"

"Only our guy, sir," said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, absurd!" snorted Prout. "Guard the door! Search the building! He is here! Take care that he does not escape! Where—"

Mr. Quelch, with a startled exclamation, picked up the cap and gown from the floor. He held them up to view.

"Look! The miserable trickster has discarded these! Look at them! It will be easy to ascertain to which member of the staff they belong—"

He broke off as he examined the articles more closely. A strange and startling change came over his face.

"Upon my word!" he gasped. "He's not here, sir! Nobody's here!" called out Coker.

"We shall ascertain his identity from that garment, Quelch!" boomed Prout.

"I fear not, sir," said the Remove master. "Look at this! This gown, this cap, do not belong to anyone here. Obviously they are old articles—probably purchased at some second-hand clothes shop—"

"What?" gasped Prout.

"What?" exclaimed Hacker.

"Look for yourselves!" said Mr. Quelch. "No Greyfriars master has worn these garments! The wretched trickster was not a master at all. Some mischievous, unscrupulous boy—"

"Bless my soul!"

"Some Greyfriars boy!" said Mr. Quelch, between his teeth. "It is he—"

clear to me now—some miserable, unscrupulous trickster—and I think I can guess his name. Search for him! He must be found!"

He was standing hardly three feet from Gilbert Tracy. But from the guy in the cane chair came no sign.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

Alive!

"WHAT—"

"Look!" "Oh, great pip!" "I say, you fellows, it's alive!" yelled Billy Bunter.

There was a sudden roar of amazement, alarm, horror. The guy, supposedly a lifeless figure stuffed with straw, had suddenly leaped from its chair.

Tracy had sat motionless till that moment. But a dozen fellows were rooting through the shed, and failing to find him, though he was known to be there. It could only be a matter of time before attention turned on the guy—he knew that!

The shed was crowded—outside there was a swarm. Escape seemed impossible. But in the sudden surprise of a movement on the part of a Guy Fawkes guy there was a chance! It was all that was left to the trickster!

Suddenly he bounded from the chair! As he did so, his right fist shot out and caught Prout full on the nose!

The sight of a lifeless, stuffed figure leaping suddenly up, not only surprised the Greyfriars fellows—it made them doubt the evidence of their senses!

Prout staggered back against the wall, gaping, his hand to his nose. Hacker jumped clear of the floor. Quelch stood petrified! There were loud exclamations of alarm and amazement, of sheer stupefaction!

The Guy Fawkes guy bounded to the door!

Fellows scrambled out of its way, gasping.

The sight of that effigy, in the long coat and cardboard mask and ancient top hat, endued with sudden life, and bounding along, was simply unnerving.

"It's alive!"

"Look out!"

"What—"

"How—"

"Oh, look!"

That moment of dazed and dizzy stupefaction was enough for Tracy! He tore through the gasping, gaping crowd, some of the fellows falling over one another in their horrified amazement. He tore through, and ran!

"The—the—the guy—"

"What—"

"Look!"

There was a roar from Quelch. He was the first to grasp the situation.

"Follow him! Seize him! That is he—"

"Oh, gum!" gasped Bob Cherry. "He—he—he was hiding inside the guy!"

Oh, great Christopher Columbus—"

"After him!"

"Follow him!" roared Mr. Quelch.

"Seize him, at once!"

The Remove master rushed from the shed. Prout tottered after him. There was a roar, and a crowd of fellows rushed in pursuit.

For a moment the running figure was seen clearly—grotesque, unnering, uncanny! Then it vanished into darkness.

Tracy was running as if for his life! He had a start—a brief start—but he made the most of it.

Breathlessly, as he ran desperately in the dark, he threw off the old hat, the cardboard mask, tore off the coat and dropped it, and kicked off the old boots!

Once rid of his Guy Fawkes outfit, Tracy was safe!

With cool presence of mind, he turned and ran back towards the pursuing crowd; there was nothing now to prove that he had ever been in the shed at all, or had worn the guy's outfit.

Fellows were running up from all directions. Tracy was one of them! Three minutes after he had escaped from Gosling's shed, Gilbert Tracy was mingled in the mob of excited fellows, joining in the hunt—hunting for himself!

Gilbert's escape had been narrow—but he had escaped!

But his game was, of course, up!

All Greyfriars knew the truth now—that the mad japer was not Quelch, that it was not a master at all, that it was some young rascal who had obtained a master's outfit and played a cunning part.

But who it was, was not officially discovered. Mr. Quelch had no difficulty in guessing. But guessing was not proof!

He had to be satisfied with the discovery of the truth—the proof that he was not, after all, gone cracked, and taken to mad japing late in life. The whole thing was cleared up now, and that, of course, was a tremendous satisfaction to the Remove master.

But in the Remove they knew. The Famous Five knew, and Billy Bunter knew—and it was not long before the rest of the Form knew. And though Gilbert escaped official punishment, he had a very painful interview with the captain of his Form—an interview that took place with the gloves on, and that ended with Gilbert lying on his back, licked to the wide, and dismally wishing that he had never, after all, thought of that amazing scheme for getting the whip-hand of his Form-master!

THE END.

(Gilbert Tracy figures prominently in next week's great Greyfriars yarn: "HE LET THE SIDE DOWN!" Don't miss it, chums!)

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