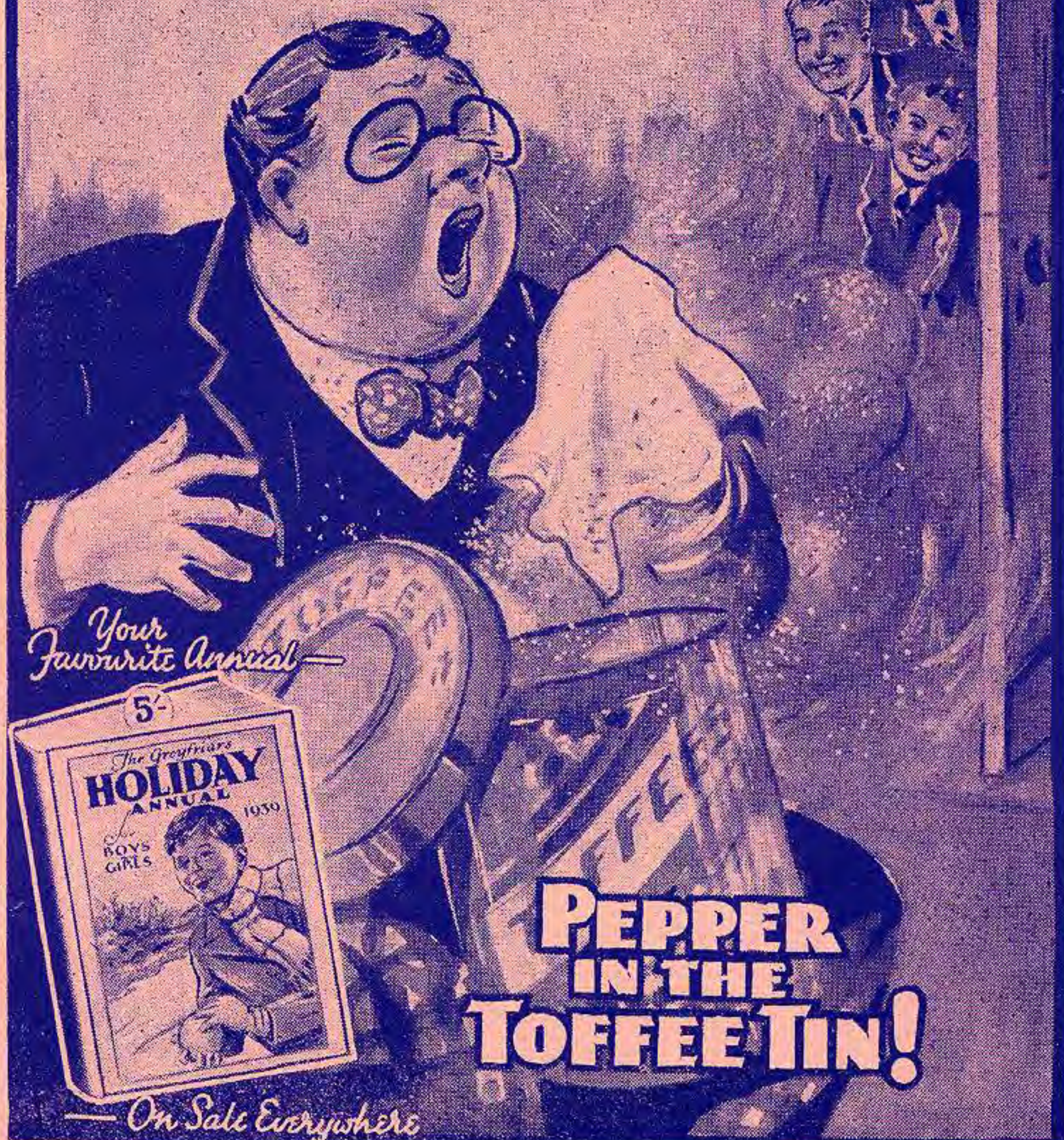


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"IT'S a braw bricht nicht the nicht!" Thus Bob Cherry, when he wants to make me feel at home by talking in Scottish dialect. Well, I was born in the Highlands and know something of my "ain folk," but the only man I ever heard say "braw bricht nicht" was an imitation Scot with a crooked walking-stick on the stage of the Courtfield Theatre Royal.

As a matter of fact, I think I speak your South Country lingo pretty well. I still have a habit of saying "pairson" and "fairst" instead of "person" and "first," but why not? I refuse to admit that "London English" is the last word in purity of speech. "Pairsonally," I'm fond of my Scots dialect. It's broad, rugged, and musical, like Old Scotland itself.

I'm sorry in a way that real old Scots talk is slowly dying out, owing to the radio and the tourists who bring their "Oxford accents" to the Highlands. You will have no difficulty in understanding the talk in any part of Scotland nowadays, except perhaps a few remote crofters and islanders who still speak the Gaelic.

It was different a few years ago. Highland-men spoke what was virtually a language of their own, not English nor Gaelic, but a mixture of the two, with a pronunciation like nothing else in the world. Robert Burns, for instance, was merely a Low Country man—he lived in Dumfries, which is next door to England, and his speech was far more English than that of the Highlands. Yet how many Greyfriars fellows can understand his poems? Take "Duncan Gray," for instance:

"Duncan fleech'd and Duncan pray'd,
Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig;
Duncán sigh'd baith oot and in,
Grat his een baith bleer't and blin',
Spak o' lowpin ower a linn,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't!"

If chaps had to construe Burns in class they'd say he was worse than beastly Virgil. Perhaps I'll write a Scots Dic. one day. Here's an advance extract from it, so that you'll be able to construe the verse above—which tells how Duncan Gray came along to give "Maggie" the glad eye, and got the cold shoulder instead.

Extract from
THE NEW IMPROVED DICTIONARY
OF THE SCOTTISH LINGO
(R. D. Ogilvy).

FLEECH.—To pull the leg with words of honeyed flattery, in the manner of Bunter trying to cash a postal order.

DEEF.—Slightly hard of hearing, as Tom Dutton.

AILSA CRAIG.—A rocky isle in the Firth of Clyde, 1,100 feet high. Population—50 people and 10,000,000,000 sea birds.

BAITH.—Both. As in this sentence, "They baith had a bathe in the bath."

GRAT.—Wept bitterly. Bunter will "grat" when I get after him for raiding my bannock cake.

EEN.—Eyes. Bunter will have two black een before long.

BLEER'T or BLEERIT.—Sore with weeping. Bunter will be bleerit all over.

BLIN'.—Blind. I must have been "blin'" to leave the key in my study cupboard, with Bunter about.

SPAK.—Spoke. I'll put a "spak" in Bunter's wheel before long, though this is the other sort of spoke—talked.

LOWPIN.—Jumping. I'll make Bunter "lowp" in a minute.

OWER.—Over—but not the six-ball kind.

LINN.—Actually the word means a waterfall; but here it is used to signify a precipice or cliff.

O'T.—Of it. Bunter will get it "o't" as soon as I find my cricket stamp.

friars, I'll give him tea in the study to show that I forgive him—at last!

Desperately poor, outcast, hunted fugitives, the Ogilvys still stuck grimly together in their mountain retreats—and to-day they are still there, though not as hunted fugitives. To-day, my pater is "The Ogilvy," but I do not expect ever to step into his shoes, for I have no less than six brothers, all older than I am.

And though I've nae wish to boast, I can pipe a skirl wi' the best of 'em. Hoots, mon!

RECIPE FOR HAGGIS

My Aunt Elspeth has sent me a haggis, and that fat boulder Bunter has been eyeing it wolfishly ever since it arrived. He asked me this morning what a haggis is made of. Well, here's the genuine recipe, which my Aunt Elspeth always uses.

First, take one dead dog. It is better if the dog has died naturally, because it has more flavour. Snip off its head and feet and dismantle its works, then stuff its outer case with two dozen salted sea-snails and half-a-pound of ants'-eggs. Put in a handful of fresh thistles, with a sprinkling of chopped newts, and then garnish with a few minced spiders. Boil the stuffed dog slowly for two hours, then put it into a bag of sausage-skin with some fried mice to give it flavour. Serve hot with fungus-sauce.

(There! If Bunter still wants to pinch my haggis after a recipe like that, I shall be quite surprised!)



Aunt Elspeth making the haggis.
(For Bunter's benefit only!)

RHYME AND REASON

"I'm as bold as a lion," said Billy Bunter—He'll find that I'm a Big-game Hunter!

"I'm a curious card," says Horace Coker—I rather fancy he's The Joker!

"I've never been left," said Fish-to-night, It's our idea he's never been "right."

"I'm quite good-tempered," says Peter Todd—An "even" temper's rather odd!

FACTS WORTH KNOWING

(By the Ogilvy News Service, Copyright.)

Snakeskin is used chiefly to keep the snake together.

By a queer coincidence, General Wolfe died on the last day of his life.

Charles Dickens was closely related to his younger brother.

The words "Spare the rod and spoil the child" were written by Mr. Quelch.

Mr. Prout's lower jaw is the nearest known thing to perpetual motion yet discovered.



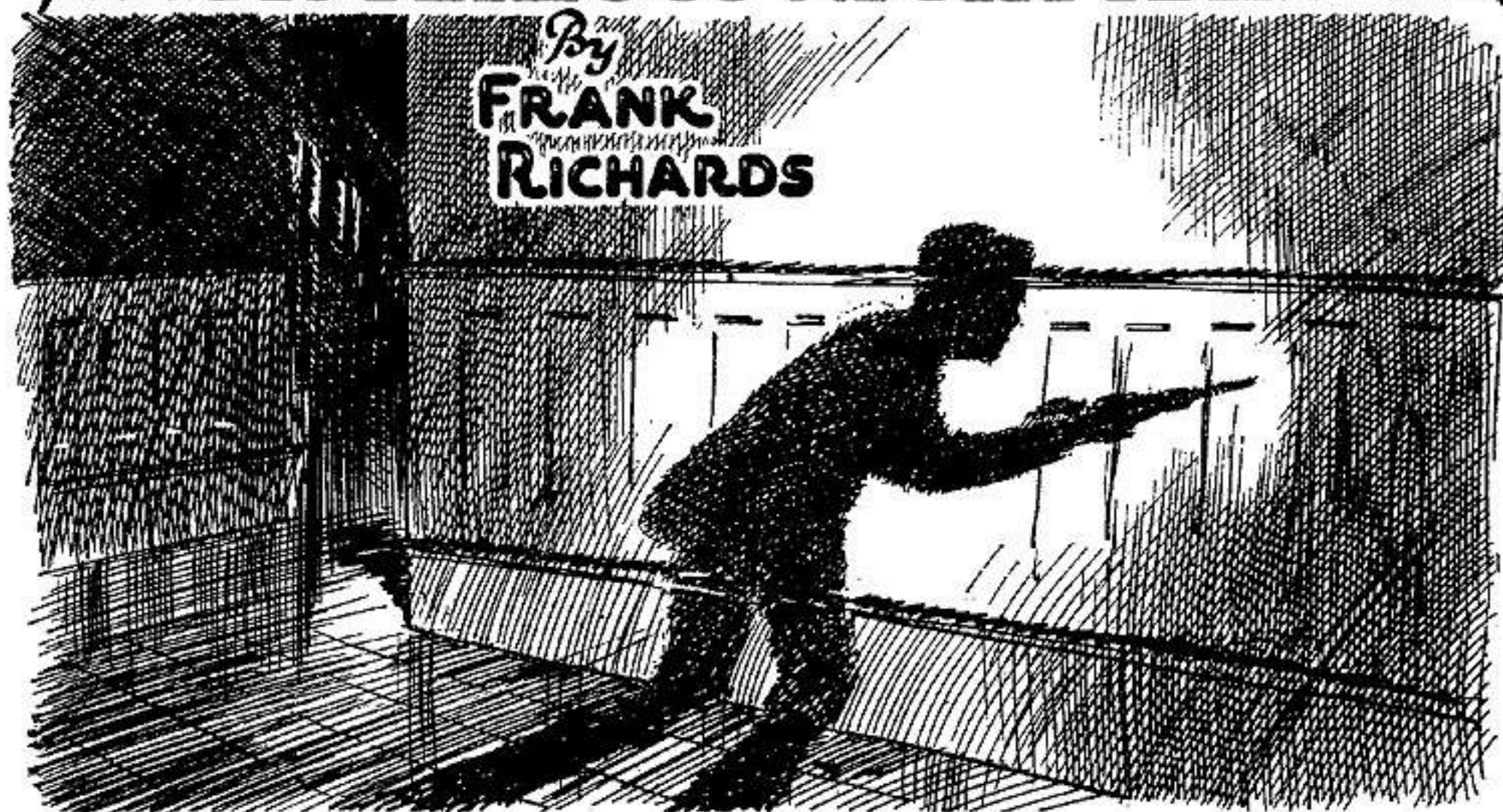
ROBERT DONALD OGILVY

The Scottish junior of the Remove is fair-haired, sturdy, solid, and reliable. He is a real Highlander, his home being in the mountains of Inverness, not far from Ben Nevis. "Don" or "Oggy," as he is called, is good-tempered and popular. He is not a first-rate scholar, though he plods along steadily. On the playing-fields he is a good man, especially at Soccer, which suits him better than cricket. He shares Study No. 3 with Dick Russell, and the two are great friends. Oggy is a pretty good boxer, if not actually in the front rank. He is the youngest of seven stalwart sons, and at home he can handle the bagpipes splendidly. His great ambition is to be a famous architect.

(Cartoon by H. SKINNER)

The MYSTERIOUS NIGHT RAIDER!

By
**FRANK
RICHARDS**



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missing. But if it wasn't the pie, what was it?" asked Bunter. "I never had the cake! I couldn't carry it along with the pie—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did one of you fellows take the cake?" asked Bunter. "I think you might have whacked it out, if you did. I'd have whacked out the pie, only it went so quick, you know—I mean, I'd have whacked it out if I'd had it, but of course, I never did! But if Quelch was after the cake—"

"You blithering owl," said Bob. "Quelch was after a fellow who went out of bounds, after lights out, and he copped him."

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter. He was relieved.

If a fellow had been caught breaking bounds after lights out, it was an awfully serious matter for the fellow concerned. But it was not serious for Billy Bunter, as he was not the fellow! So it was all right! Billy Bunter had nothing more serious than a pie on his fat conscience.

"I say, you fellows, who was it?" asked Bunter. "Was it you, Smithy?"

Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, chuckled.

"Not this time, old fat man!" he answered.

"Was it you, Hazel?"

Hazeldene of the Remove spun round with startled eyes, glaring at the inquiring Owl.

"You fat idiot, what do you mean?" he exclaimed. "I was in bed when Quelch came up—all the fellows know I was in bed—what do you mean, you gabbling fat chump?"

"Well, I was only asking," said Bunter, blinking at him. "You're looking rather seedy and sickly—"

"You babbling Owl—"

"Well, you look as if you ain't slept much," said Bunter. "Besides, I know you went up to the Three Fishers on Saturday afternoon—"

"Will you shut up, you fat fool?" yelled Hazel.

"I'm only asking you if it was you who was caught breaking out last night! I suppose you can answer a civil question?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hazel clenched his hands and made a stride towards Bunter's bed. The fat Owl promptly turned out, on the other side.

"Here, you keep off, you beast!" he gasped. "Tain't my fault if you've been copped breaking out at night, is it?"

"You burbling bloater," roared Bob Cherry, "it wasn't Hazel!"

"Oh, wasn't it? Then what is he getting so jolly shirty for?" asked Bunter, blinking warily at the exasperated Hazel across the bed. "I never said it was Hazel—I only asked him if it was! Was it you, Skinner?"

"Idiot!"

"Well, who was it?" demanded Bunter. "If a chap's going to be sacked to-day, I'd like to know who it is. Was it you, Wharton?"

"I!" ejaculated the captain of the Remove.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you seem to be pulling a jolly

long face over something. I say, old chap, I'm sorry if you've been copped—"

"I'll make you sorrier, if you don't stop talking rot, you blithering fat owl!" growled the captain of the Remove.

"It was Tracy, you ass!" said Bob. "Oh! Tracy!"

Billy Bunter turned his eyes and his spectacles on Gilbert Tracy, the new fellow in the Remove.

Gilbert was sitting on the side of his bed, putting his shoes on. His look and manner were quite cool and unconcerned.

Many fellows, as well as Bunter, were looking at Tracy. Nobody envied him the prospect before him. A good many wondered at his coolness. Gilbert Tracy, the mutineer of the Form, the "bad hat," reputed the worst boy in the school, had been in incessant trouble ever since he had come to Greyfriars; and now he was up against it once more, worse than ever.

But it did not seem to be worrying Gilbert unduly. Everybody else was a little excited, and a good many were concerned; Gilbert seemed neither excited nor concerned.

"Might have guessed it was Tracy!" said Bunter. "He's always up to something. I say, Tracy, did you really go out after lights out?"

"Quite!" assented Gilbert.

"Oh crumbs! And Quelch knows?" gasped Bunter.

"He came up and found Tracy's bed empty!" said Nugent.

"Oh jiminy! Did he bag you, Tracy?" gasped Bunter.

"Yes; got me at the box-room window when I got in!" yawned Gilbert.

"I say, you fellows, you might have woke me up!" said Bunter reproachfully. "I've missed all this! Did Quelch bring you in, Tracy? I think you fellows might have called me! Missing a thing like this—"

"Fathead!"

"But, I say, Tracy, where had you been?" asked Bunter eagerly.

"Only walking round the House!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Just a little trot!"

"Oh crikey! Did you tell Quelch that?"

"Yes!"

"He, he, he!" cachinnated Bunter.

"Oh crumbs! He, he, he! Fancy spinning Quelch a yarn like that! Think he'd believe it?"

"Hardly!" said Gilbert. "At least, I gathered from his manner that he had some strong doubts."

"He, he, he!"

"Look here, Tracy," said Harry Wharton. "You'll be up before the Head! Don't be such an ass as to spin him a silly yarn! You'll get it tough enough, in any case—don't talk rot to the Head!"

Gilbert laughed.

"Wouldn't you advise me to tell the Head the truth?" he inquired.

"Yes, certainly!"

"Well, that's the truth!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

The captain of the Remove turned away from him impatiently. He was not likely to believe that a fellow had broken bounds in the middle of the night simply in order to take a walk round the House!

Neither was anyone else—least of all Mr. Quelch and the headmaster!

Gilbert shrugged his shoulders.

"He, he, he!" chortled Billy Bunter. "You've got a nerve, old

chap! I say, you won't be sacked like any other fellow, because Quelch knows you want to get away from the school, and he jolly well won't let you! But, I say, you'll get a fearful whopping, and very likely a week in punny—you're for it, and no mistake. But, I say, you fellows, you're sure Quelch never said anything about a pie?"

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! If he didn't, all right! Perhaps Mrs. Kebble never told him! She may think the cat had it! What do you think?"

"Blitherer!" answered Bob.

"Beast!"

And Billy Bunter turned at last to his brief wash—relieved in his fat mind. No doubt he was sorry for Gilbert, considering the awful prospect before him; but clearly matters might have been worse; Quelch might have known about that pie!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Fellow In A Funk!

"WHERE'S Tracy?"

Harry Wharton & Co. were in the quad, after breakfast that morning, when Hazel came up and made that inquiry.

The Famous Five of the Remove were not looking quite so merry and bright as usual.

They could not help feeling a little concerned about the member of the Remove who was "for it."

Any fellow who was up for a Head's flogging, with probably the punishment-room to follow, would naturally have been an object of some sympathy, even if he "asked for it" so earnestly and persistently as Gilbert did.

Certainly, the chums of the Remove had their own opinion, and a strong one, of a fellow who was given to breaking bounds, pub-haunting, backing gee-gees, and "breaking out" after lights out at night.

All these sins had Gilbert committed, not only once, but a good many times; and in consequence, he had had a thorny path to tread at Greyfriars School.

There was no doubt, in fact, that he would have been expelled before he had been in the school a week; but for the peculiar circumstances of the case.

Gilbert wanted to get away from the school, even if he had to be "sacked" to get away; so in his peculiar case, expulsion would not have been punishment, but rather a reward!

That was the only reason why he was still at Greyfriars.

Ever since he had come, he had had a "feud" on with his Form-master; and though uncounted whoppings had come his way, he had undoubtedly given Mr. Quelch a tremendous amount of trouble.

No doubt he was a bad hat; probably, as Quelch believed, the worst boy in the school; still, most of the fellows knew that he kicked over the traces chiefly to make Quelch tired of keeping him there.

He had been as unpopular with the Remove fellows as with the Remove master. But of late there had been a spot of a change!

It had really looked as if the bad hat of the Remove was turning over a new leaf! Several times he had, so to speak, astonished the natives by acting quite decently!

He had been Harry Wharton's unscrupulous enemy; yet he had done Wharton a good turn, and saved him from a rather serious row; and the

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captain of the Remove could not forget that, and did not want to forget it.

Wharton had, indeed, hoped that the fellow was going to make an effort to wash out his bad start, settle down to what could not be helped, and begin again—and he was more than willing to give what aid and encouragement he could. And his chums were ready to back him up in it.

So it was rather a shock and a disappointment to all of them when Gilbert proved once more that he was the same old Gilbert, unchanged after all—as could hardly be doubted, when Quelch “snaffled” him getting into the House by the box-room window, and marched him back to his dormitory at nearly midnight!

Gilbert was for it now—hard and heavy! Any other fellow would have been sacked. Gilbert Tracy would not be sacked—but, short of that, he would get the hardest and heaviest punishment that could be handed out to any fellow.

And the Famous Five, who had noted the look on Quelch's face when he had brought back Gilbert to the dormitory the night before, could not help feeling a spot of compassion. He had asked for it—beggared for it, in fact—but what he was going to get, was going to be very tough!

The chums of the Remove were discussing Gilbert when Hazel came up. Hazel was, as Billy Bunter had remarked, looking rather seedy and sickly that morning. Most of the Remove had been awakened in the night; but Hazel looked as if he had hardly slept at all.

“Seen Tracy?” he asked, before any of the Co. could answer his first question. “I can't find him anywhere!”

“He's gone to speak to Quelch,” answered Harry Wharton. “I think he's waiting in Quelch's study now—”

“In Quelch's study? Why? He hasn't got to see the Head till after third school, has he? What does he want to speak to Quelch about?” exclaimed Hazel.

The Famous Five fairly blinked at him.

Hazeldene's face had gone quite white. Other fellows in the Remove were feeling concerned about the fate of the bad hat; but certainly not to this extent.

“What's the matter, Hazel?” asked Harry, in astonishment. “You're looking quite sick—”

“Oh, don't talk rot!” snapped Hazel. “Look here, Quelch is with the Head—I know he went to Dr. Locke's study, so—”

“Jawing over Tracy,” said Bob Cherry. “They've got to decide what the silly ass has got coming to him!”

“Yes, but why has he gone to Quelch's study?” exclaimed Hazel. “He can't have anything to say to Quelch, unless—” Hazel broke off sharply.

“Unless what?” asked Harry Wharton quietly. “For goodness' sake, Hazel, you haven't been mixed up in his pub-haunting stunts, have you?”

“Oh, don't be a fool!”

With that polite reply, Hazeldene turned away and hurried off to the House, almost at a run.

Harry Wharton & Co. stared after him as he went.

“He can't be mixed up in it!” said Bob Cherry blankly.

“Looks as if he's afraid of something!” said Johnny Bull, with a grunt. “He's just twittering with funk.”

“The funkfulness seems to be truly terrific!” remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. “But the esteemed and

ridiculous Hazel was not out of bounds last night. He was in bed when Quelch came up.”

“I saw him there!” said Frank Nugent, with a nod. “I noticed that he didn't wake up, like most of the fellows, when Quelch barged in—but he was there all right!”

“Quelch would have spotted it fast enough if he hadn't been,” said Harry Wharton slowly. “Nobody was out, but Tracy! But”—his brow darkened—“you can see that he's afraid of what Tracy may say to Quelch! If that rotter has been leading that weak-kneed fool into his own rotten ways I'll—”

“Fat lot of leading he wants!” grunted Johnny Bull. “He was in a row last term—before Tracy came!”

Harry Wharton's lips set hard.

It was true that Hazel landed himself in trouble, almost as regularly as clockwork. Twice a term he was in some scrape or other—he had once been within measurable distance of the sack. But it was due more to weakness of character than to anything else—Hazel was generally more or less straight, if worse fellows left him alone.

The idea that a reckless and unscrupulous young rascal might have led Marjorie Hazeldene's brother into his own rotten ways and risky pursuits roused Wharton's deepest anger. He could imagine Marjorie's feelings if she heard that her brother was mixed up in a disgraceful row at his school with the bad hat of his Form.

“If that's it—” said Harry, with a deep breath.

“They're not pally,” said Bob uncomfortably. “I've never seen them together.”

“You can see what it looks like!”

Bob made no reply to that. All the Famous Five could see only too clearly what it looked like!

Harry Wharton, as he walked on with a knitted brow, was no longer feeling a compassionate concern for Gilbert Tracy! He was feeling strongly inclined to punch him right and left—and whatever the Head gave him, the captain of the Remove would willingly have given him a little more!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Dog With A Bad Name!

GILBERT TRACY stood in his Form-master's study, looking rather glumly from the window in the quad.

Quelch was with the Head; no doubt discussing what was to come to the young rascal who had been caught out of bounds after lights out. Gilbert was waiting for him.

In the presence of the other fellows, the bad hat of the Remove kept up an appearance of cool unconcern. But now that he was alone, his real feelings appeared in his face. It was clouded—reflecting gloomy thoughts.

Many of the fellows knew that he had gone in to speak to Quelch before class, though they did not know why. There was nothing that he could say—no doubt about what he had done, and no defence that he could make. If he was thinking of making an appeal to his Form-master, any man in the Remove could have told him, in advance, that it was useless.

Gilbert turned from the window as the door suddenly opened. But it was not Mr. Quelch who came in, as he expected. It was Hazeldene, white-faced and breathless. Gilbert stared at him.

“Hazel! What the thump do you

want here?” he exclaimed. “Get out, you ass!”

Hazel threw the door shut, and came across to him, panting. He was, as Johnny Bull had said, twittering with funk.

“What are you going to do?” he panted. “What have you come here for? You're not going to the Head till after third school—”

“I know that!”

“Well, then—what— Look here, what have you got to say to Quelch? If you're going to give me away—is that it? I never asked you to barge in last night—you know I never did! You did it of your own accord! You can't give me away after that—you can't.”

Gilbert looked at him.

“You rotten funk!” he said. “Get out, before Quelch catches you here! If he sees you with me, he may guess something—”

“But you're not—not—” stammered Hazel.

“Oh, don't be a cowardly fool!” said Tracy contemptuously. “Do you think I'm a miserable funk like you—to chop and change? I pulled you through last night—not for your own sake! Can't you see that I've got to stand for it now, whether I like it or not? You're safe!”

Hazel gasped with relief, but he still seemed doubtful. It was hard for him to believe that a fellow was prepared to face another fellow's punishment—especially Gilbert Tracy!

“Pull yourself together!” snapped Gilbert. “You're safe as houses! Suppose I told Quelch what happened last night—do you think he would believe a word of it? I couldn't give you away now, if I wanted to. Can't you see that?”

“But—” stammered Hazel.

“Suppose I told Quelch the whole story?” sneered Gilbert. “Suppose I told him I found that you'd gone out after lights out and heard him coming up and got into your bed to pull his leg! Think he'd believe it? He believed then that you were in bed, and that I'd gone out—think he wouldn't go on believing it?”

“Oh! But—”

“Think he'd believe that I came out afterwards to warn you, and let you in by the Sixth Form lobby and got in at the box-room window myself, after being out of the House only a quarter of an hour? A likely story—to be told by the worst boy in the school!” jeered Gilbert.

“But—” gasped Hazel.

“It's not the sort of thing a fellow would do for another fellow, as a rule,” said Gilbert. “Think I'd have done it for you on your own account? Your sister did me a good turn—and I did it on her account, not yours! So far as you're concerned personally, you could be turfed out of the school this morning—think I should care?”

“You—you—you came here to speak to Quelch—what have you got to say, then, if it isn't—”

“That's my business! Nothing about you!” said Gilbert scornfully. “Did you think I'd come here to crawl out of it by giving you away? You rat!”

Hazel stood panting. That was exactly what he had thought—or feared, at least! Even yet he did not feel sure.

“I never asked you to butt in,” he muttered.

“I know that! I tell you I'm not going to mention you to Quelch! Get out before he comes back.”

“It's not so bad for you as for me,” muttered Hazel. “They won't sack you—they know you want to be sacked. Very likely Quelch will think you did

it specially to drive him into kicking you out. But I—I—"

"I know all that! I tell you you're safe! You silly ass, I tell you Quelch wouldn't believe a word of it if I told him! Could I prove it?"

"But—"

"Quelch may be back any minute—it's close on class! Don't let him catch you here, or he may guess something. He's sharp as a razor. Get out, you ass!"

"You—you—you're not going to—to mention me—"

"Haven't I told you so?" snarled Gilbert. "Get out—you make me sick!"

Hazel turned to the door. He was partly reassured, but not wholly. Tracy, so far, intended to stand by what he had done. He could see that. But when it came to facing the music he—

"For goodness' sake, get out!" growled Gilbert. "If Quelch—oh, my hat—here he comes!"

There was a step in the passage, and the door opened. Mr. Quelch came into the study.

Hazel made a desperate effort to pull himself together. He dreaded that his Form-master might read the truth in his face.

Mr. Quelch started a little at the sight of the two juniors. He had not expected to find anyone in his study. His brow darkened at Gilbert.

"What are you doing here?" he snapped, addressing the two together.

"I—I came to speak to Tracy, sir—" stammered Hazel.

"Leave my study at once!"

Hazel was glad enough to leave it; glad, too, that Quelch hardly gave him a glance, his attention being fixed on Tracy.

"May I speak to you, sir?" asked Gilbert, with more respect in his manner than the rebel of the Remove usually displayed towards his Form-master.

"I desire to hear nothing from you, Tracy! I have reported your conduct to your headmaster, and you will see Dr. Locke after third school, as I have already told you. You may go."

"If you'd let me speak, sir—"

"It is useless," said Mr. Quelch. "But I will hear you—be brief."

"I'd like to tell you, sir, that it wasn't exactly as it looked last night," said Tracy. "I was out of the House—but not out of school bounds. I never went outside the school, sir."

"You can hardly expect me to believe such a statement, Tracy. It is absurd on the face of it," said the Remove master. "Your dealings with disreputable characters outside the school are well known to me. You have been detected more than once. Now you have been detected once more. Your statement is not only incredible, but impudent."

"It's true, sir."

"Nonsense! You may leave my study."

"I—I'd like you to try to believe me, for—for once, sir!" said Gilbert. "I—I don't want my uncle to hear that I'm in disgrace again—"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch, with grim sarcasm. "This is somewhat new, Tracy! Your uncle, Sir Giles Oakwood, is perfectly well acquainted with the fact that you have been in disgrace ever since you came to Greyfriars. It was because of your disgraceful conduct and bad associations, and your unmanageable character, that your uncle sent you here. It was only my concern for an old friend with such a problem on his hands that induced me to let you come here at all. Now you tell me that

your uncle's opinion weighs with you! I should be glad to hear it—if there were a word of truth in it."

"It's different now, sir!" said Tracy. "I had a letter from my father yesterday—"

"And what difference does that make?" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Your father is a helpless invalid, in a nursing-home, owing to trouble from old wounds received in the War. You have never, so far as I am aware, given him a single thought—certainly you have never considered him, or what he might think of your conduct, if he knew."

Gilbert winced.

"He wrote to me, sir, that he's getting better, and may be able to leave the nursing-home. That makes a difference! I—I don't want him to hear that I'm in disgrace here. He doesn't know, so far; he's been too ill to be told anything. But now—"

"And you chose such a time for breaking out at night!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Say no more, Tracy! If I could believe that regard for your father had caused some desire for amendment in you I should be glad; but I can believe nothing of the kind. If there were a word of truth in what you are saying, you would certainly not have left your dormitory after lights out last night."

"I've told you, sir—"

"Enough! Leave my study!"

A black and bitter look came over Gilbert's face.

He did not see—or did not choose to see—that he had tried his Form-master's patience too far, that one reckless, mutinous, and unscrupulous act after another had made it impossible for Mr. Quelch to place the slightest faith in him.

He was not going to have a chance; he was a dog with a bad name, and a dog with a bad name he was going to remain. With bitter, savage resentment in his breast, he turned to the door and left the study without another word.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Rag In The Remove!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter was grinning as he joined the Remove fellows at the door of the Form-room for first school.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the latest keyhole news, old fat man?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Beast! I say, they're getting punny ready!" said Bunter. "I saw Trotter, and he said he had to get the room ready! You're for it, Tracy!"

Tracy laughed.

It was seldom that the punishment-room at Greyfriars had an occupant. But if it was being prepared for one, there was no doubt who that occupant was going to be. He had not yet seen the Head and received his sentence; but Billy Bunter's news revealed the fact that it was not only a flogging that he had to expect.

"Rough luck, old man!" said the Bounder. "You won't get a chance, this time, of locking Quelch in."

Some of the juniors laughed. Once before Gilbert had been sentenced to punny, and the Remove were not likely to forget what had happened then. With a cool impudence that was really amazing, Tracy had contrived to lock the door on his Form-master, and Mr. Quelch had been a prisoner in the punishment-room for nearly two days, the key in Tracy's pocket, and all

Greyfriars mystified to guess what had become of the Remove master!

Gilbert was not, as the Bounder remarked, likely to have a chance of playing that extraordinary trick over again. He was quite capable of it, but Quelch was not likely to be caught napping a second time!

But Gilbert did not seem dismayed by the prospect of being imprisoned in punny. He seemed rather amused.

"I say, it's pretty awful, old chap!" said Bunter. "You won't get much in the way of grub! Just the school grub, you know!"

Bunter shook his head. He could feel for a fellow who was going to get only enough grub for one!

"It wouldn't be so awful if you got out of lesson," continued Bunter. "But you'll have your school books, and you can bet that Quelch will see that you put in your work, all the same! Very likely something extra. You've got Quelch's rag out, old chap."

"I'll get it out a little more before I've done with him!" said Gilbert.

"You won't be able to do anything when you're in punny!" said the fat Owl. "You'll be locked in, taken out twice a day for exercise, when the other fellows are in class, with a prefect or a beak keeping an eye on you. They won't even let you go to the tuckshop when you're out, poor old chap!"

"Which is really awful to think of!" remarked Peter Todd sarcastically.

"Yes, ain't it?" said Bunter, deaf to sarcasm. "Just the school grub, you know—and not a lot of that! Fearful!"

"The fearfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here comes Quelch!"

"Mind your eye!" murmured Skinner. "He doesn't look pally!"

Some of the juniors grinned. Mr. Quelch's grim countenance, as he approached, looked anything but pally. But the grins died away as Quelch came up. It was no time for grinning, judging by Quelch's expression.

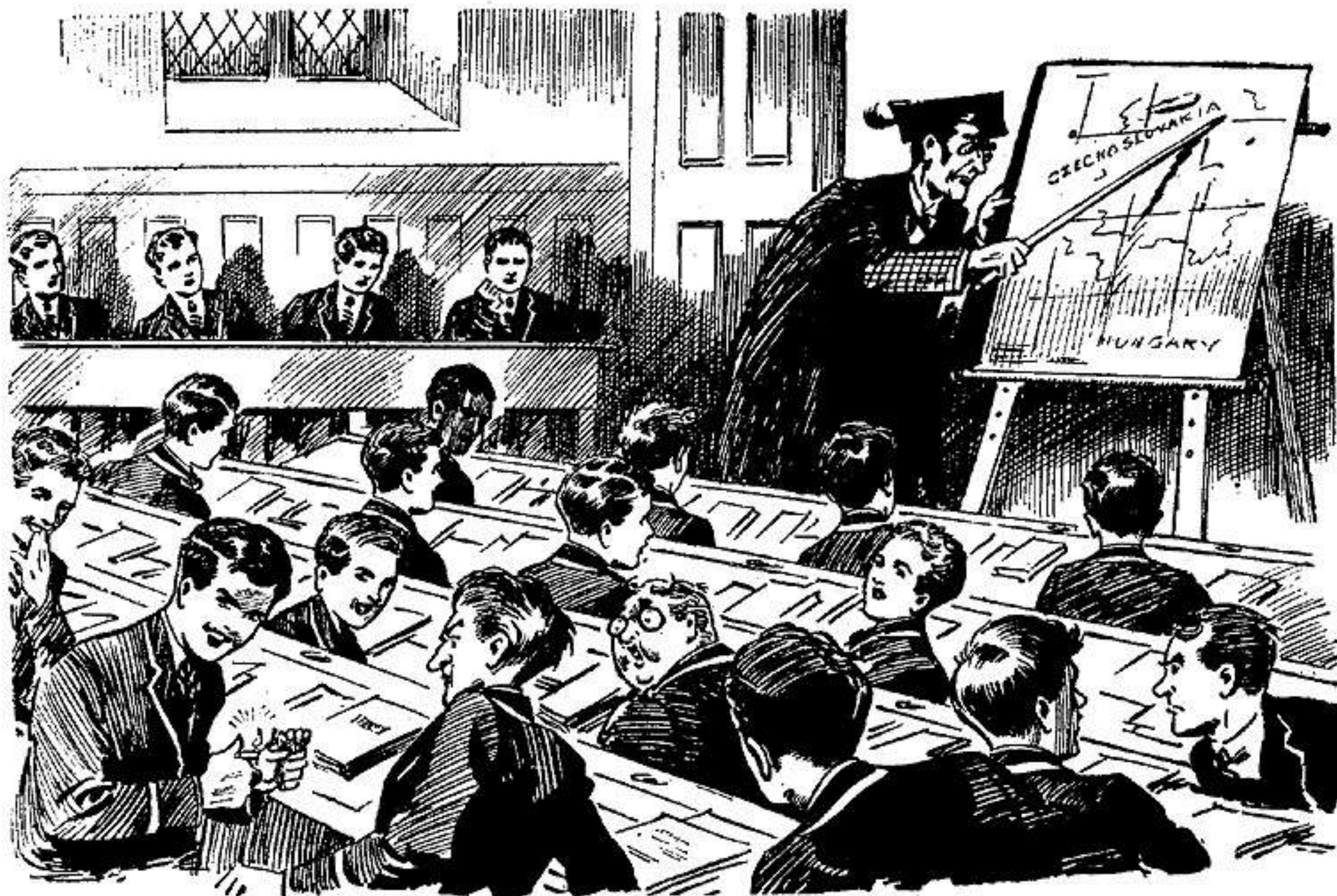
The Remove went in and took their places. Tracy, as he had not yet been up for judgment, took his place with the rest of the Form, though there was no doubt that this would be his last appearance in the Remove-room for some time to come.

Mr. Quelch gave him no special attention. In fact, he almost ignored him in class. But Gilbert's attention was given to his Form-master, though not in the way of taking special heed of the words of wisdom that fell from his lips.

For the last week or two—ever since, in fact, Marjorie Hazeldene's kind and friendly influence had made him take a rather different view of things—Gilbert seemed to have forgotten that he had a feud with his Form-master. He had been unusually quiet, orderly, and attentive in the Form-room, and in other respects, as Harry Wharton & Co. knew, he had been a changed Gilbert!

But that was over now. His interview with Quelch, in the Remove master's study had settled that! If he was going to be a dog with a bad name, Gilbert told himself sourly that he might as well have the game as the name! Now he was once more the mutineer, the rebel of the Remove, determined to give Quelch all the trouble he could, and all the more because of what was coming to him when he saw the Head, after third school.

The lesson was geography, and Quelch was pointing out places on a map on the high easel with a pointer. Most of the Remove were giving him attention, though Billy Bunter was



Tracy waited until Mr. Quelch turned to the blackboard. Then, under cover of his desk, he withdrew a petrol-lighter from his pocket and set light to the fuse of the jumping cracker!

more interested in a stray bullseye he had discovered in a sticky pocket, and Hazel was thinking much less of geography than of what Tracy might let out when he came up before Dr. Locke. But two or three of the juniors noticed, from behind, that Gilbert slipped his hand into his pocket and drew something therefrom, which he kept down below the level of his desk, out of sight of Quelch, if he had looked round.

"Oh, gum!" murmured the Bounder, as he saw what it was.

"Tracy, you ass!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"For goodness' sake, you ass——" whispered Lord Mauleverer.

Mr. Quelch's ears were keen. He glanced round; and at the glint of the gimlet eyes the whispering died away at once.

Geography was resumed. But fellows who knew what Tracy had in his hand were much less interested in geography than in that jumping cracker, left over from the Fifth of November.

That even the reckless rebel of the Form intended to set that fearsome firework going in the Form-room during class seemed incredible. He was already up for the birch and the punishment-room, which would have been enough to satisfy any other fellow. But Gilbert, apparently, was bent on asking for more!

Certainly, he could not venture to strike a match. Such a proceeding would have been detected at once.

But a small object presently appeared in Gilbert's other hand, under cover of the desk, but visible from the rear. It was a small petrol lighter!

He was in no hurry. He waited, calmly, till he was quite sure that Quelch's eyes were well away from him.

"And here," said Mr. Quelch, indicating with the pointer some town

with an unpronounceable name, which had lately ceased to be Czech and become German, "here——"

Gilbert's hands moved under his desk. There was a momentary gleam, and the fuse of the cracker was touched. The next instant Tracy had tossed the cracker away, and it dropped lightly on the floor, just behind Mr. Quelch.

He did not see it, or hear it. He was speaking, and did not hear the slight sound of a fizzing fuse. The whole Form sat spellbound, breathless. In a few seconds——

"And here," said Mr. Quelch, "is the town of Pjhzycjhn, a name somewhat difficult to pronounce, but which is now called, in German—— Yarooooooop!"

Bang!

Mr. Quelch uttered a startled yell as the cracker suddenly banged behind him, almost under his feet.

"Yarooop! Ooooooh! What—— Oh! Ooooooh!"

Bang, bang!

Quelch fairly bounded. His gown floated in the air as he cleared the floor with a startled leap.

Bang, bang!

"What——" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a sudden irresistible yell from the Remove.

Really, they could not help it!

Quelch was generally a grave, dignified gentleman. Now he was neither grave nor dignified. The sight of their majestic Form-master bounding in the air, with his gown fluttering round him, and yelling at the top of his voice, was too much for the Remove. They yelled, too!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What——what——oh——how——what——"

Bang, bang!

It was a jumping cracker—a repeating cracker! There were, in that fearful firework, many bangs—bang on bang! And it hopped, and banged, and

jumped, and banged round the leaping Remove master.

Bang, bang, bang!

"Upon my word! What—what——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The firework hopped with every bang, and so did Mr. Quelch. Never had the Remove seen their Form-master display such activity. His mortar-board slipped aslant, giving him quite an intoxicated look, as he hopped and leaped and bounded.

BANG!

With a final bang, that cracker came to rest, leaving a scent of gunpowder.

Mr. Quelch came to rest, too. He stared at the expended cracker on the floor. He understood at last. And then his eyes turned on the Remove, and the expressive expression on his face caused every sound of laughter to die away quite suddenly—the Roman Senate, of ancient times, had nothing on the Greyfriars Remove for gravity as they met that wrathful glare!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Unexpected!

"WHO has done this?"

Silence!

"Who has dared to introduce fireworks into the Form-room?"

No answer.

"Who has ventured to commit this—this outrage during class? I command the boy to stand forward at once!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Nobody stirred in the Remove.

A dozen fellows, at least, knew that Gilbert Tracy had done it! But they had, of course, no intention of telling Quelch so! Neither, evidently had Tracy!

Gilbert sat tight!

Mr. Quelch scanned face after face. His eyes lingered for a moment on Herbert Vernon-Smith. The Bounder was a reckless ragger—though this was rather too reckless a rag, even for Smithy. Then the gimlet eyes fixed on the worst boy in the school.

"Tracy!"

"Yes, sir!" drawled Gilbert.

Nobody was surprised when Quelch picked on Tracy. Indeed, the Removites would have been surprised if he had not.

Tracy was naturally the first fellow to be suspected in such a case! He was the fellow who was up against authority; the fellow who had, times without number, ventured on rags too reckless even for the Bounder.

But Gilbert, as usual, had been cunning and cautious. Quelch had seen nothing of his action. No man in the Remove would give him away. Quelch might be certain in his own mind, as he had been on many occasions before, but he could not punish without proof or evidence. Gilbert looked like getting by with it.

"Tracy! Did you set off that firework?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Gilbert looked at him with mocking coolness.

"You told me in your study this morning, sir, that you cannot believe a word I say!" he answered.

"What—what? That is certainly the case, Tracy! You are a most unscrupulous and untruthful boy! Your word is worth nothing—nothing whatever!"

"Then what is the use of asking me, sir?"

"What! I warn you, Tracy, not to be insolent!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "I command you to answer me. Did you, or did you not, set off that firework?"

"Oh, no, sir!" answered Gilbert calmly.

Harry Wharton's lip curled. He was one of the fellows who had seen the cracker in Tracy's hand. Not to save a licking, or a dozen lickings, would the captain of the Remove have uttered that falsehood. But Gilbert uttered it without turning a hair.

Mr. Quelch eyed him grimly, doubtfully. He suspected Tracy—as a matter of course. Still, there were other raggers in the Remove, and really, so far as Quelch knew, any fellow might have done it. And, in fact, remembering that Tracy was already up for the severest punishment that could be inflicted, short of the sack, he began to doubt. Even that reckless mutineer, with the Head's birch in prospect, could surely not want six from Quelch's cane to go on with!

Gilbert met his eyes with cool self-possession! The other fellows were silent! They wondered how Quelch was going to deal with this! Obviously, so wild and reckless a rag could not be passed over.

The Remove master scanned every face in the Form. There was a long minute of silence. Then he spoke, in a voice that was like unto the grinding of a saw.

"For the last time, I command the boy who set off that firework to stand forward!"

Nobody stood forward.

"I am unaware," said Mr. Quelch, "of the identity of the offender! But I have no doubt that many boys here are perfectly well aware of it. I regret that I have no choice but to take the severest measures with the whole Form."

There was an awful pause.

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"The whole Form will be in detention for one hour after class every day for the remainder of the term," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "or," he added, "until the boy who set off that firework in the Form-room chooses to confess to his action."

"Oh!" murmured the Remove.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter.

"We shall now resume!" said Mr. Quelch acidly.

A good many fellows looked at Gilbert. Most fellows, when the matter had come to such a pass as that, would have owned up. Public opinion in the Form would have forced almost any fellow to own up. But nobody expected Gilbert Tracy to do so. Gilbert's concern for his own skin—and for nobody else's—was rather too well known in the Remove.

Gilbert glanced round him—a sneering, sarcastic glance. He knew what the fellows were thinking—that he was too much of a worm and a swab to do what any decent fellow would have done. He knew, too, that he was going to surprise them!

There was general surprise when he rose to his feet.

"May I speak, sir?" he asked meekly.

The gimlet eyes glinted at him.

"I can give you the name of the fellow who set off that cracker, sir!" said Gilbert.

"Sneak!" came a loud whisper from the back of the class, from Bolsover major.

Bolsover was one of the fellows who had not seen the cracker in Gilbert's hand, and did not know that Gilbert was the culprit.

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Tracy, you may sit down! I shall not allow any boy in this Form to give information against another—as you ought to be aware! Take your place, and be silent!"

"But, sir—"

"I have ordered you to be silent, Tracy! I will not allow you to give me a name!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Not even my own, sir?" asked Gilbert coolly.

"Wha-a-t?"

"My own, sir!"

"Your own!" repeated Mr. Quelch blankly.

"Yes, sir! Although you have told me that you can never believe a word I say, I hope you will be able to take my word in this instance!" said Gilbert demurely. "It was I who set off the cracker, sir!"

"Oh!"

Mr. Quelch stared at Tracy. His grip closed almost convulsively on the pointer.

"It—it—it was you, Tracy!" he gasped at last. "A few moments ago you told me that it was not! You confess—"

"Yes, sir!"

There was a pause. All the Remove, including Gilbert, expected the next words to be "Bend over." But Mr. Quelch paused—and the pause was long. Finally, he spoke.

"I have no doubt, Tracy, that on this occasion, you are speaking the truth—"

"Thank you, sir," said Gilbert. "I do, sometimes."

"What—what did you say, Tracy?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"I said that I do speak the truth sometimes."

"What? Be silent! As you are about to appear before your headmaster, Tracy, for severe punishment, I shall not cane you!" said Mr. Quelch unexpectedly. "You may sit down, and be silent."

Gilbert sat down.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Coming To Blows!

HARRY WHARTON threw open the door of Study No. 1 in the Remove passage.

There was a startled exclamation in the study as he did so.

Gilbert Tracy was bending over a box which he had just unlocked, and of which he had raised the lid. He was taking something out of the box as the captain of the Remove tramped in.

The Remove had been dismissed, in break. Most of the fellows were out of the House; and why Tracy had gone up to the studies, Harry Wharton did not know, and did not care. But he knew that he had to speak to Tracy—and this was the last opportunity, as Gilbert was not likely to be seen again after third school. From the Head's presence he was most likely to be taken direct to the punishment-room, which was to be his abode for some days, at least—probably a week.

What was in Gilbert's hand as he spun round, startled, Wharton did not see distinctly. It looked to him like a key! But it disappeared instantly into Gilbert's pocket.

"You fool!" snapped Gilbert. "You startled me! What—"

"Getting a supply of smokes for punny?" asked the captain of the Remove sarcastically. "Safe enough—Quelch won't search your pockets."

Gilbert shrugged his shoulders.

"No bizney of yours!" he answered. "What do you want?"

"I want a few words with you, Tracy! I saw Hazel cut in to speak to you before class, when you were waiting in Quelch's study. I want to know what it means."

"Better ask Hazel!" sneered Gilbert.

"I'm asking you." Harry Wharton's face set. "You're a thorough rotter, Tracy. You're the most thorough bad egg I've ever seen or heard of. I've thought, just lately, that you weren't quite so thoroughly rotten as you seemed—that you were trying to pull up and put in a spot of decency! But even when I thought the worst of you, I never supposed you'd be rotter enough, cad enough, worm enough, to lead a silly, weak-kneed fellow into your own putrid ways! If that's what you've done—"

Gilbert stared at him, quite blankly, for a moment. Then he burst into a laugh.

He was sardonically amused! What he had done was to save Marjorie's brother from disgrace, and probably from the sack, at the cost of facing the music in his place! But of that, none but Hazel and himself had the slightest knowledge, and he realised at once how it would look to other fellows if they found that Hazel was mixed up in this trouble and frightened of what he might say to Quelch. He laughed.

"So you think it's a laughing matter?" asked Wharton, between his set lips.

"Sort of!" agreed Gilbert, grinning.

"You'll find it isn't! Hazeldene was scared out of his wits this morning," said Harry. "He's looking sick—if Quelch noticed him, he might guess something. You can haunt pubs and mix with racing blackguards as much as you like, as far as I'm concerned—but you're not going to drag another fellow into it—"

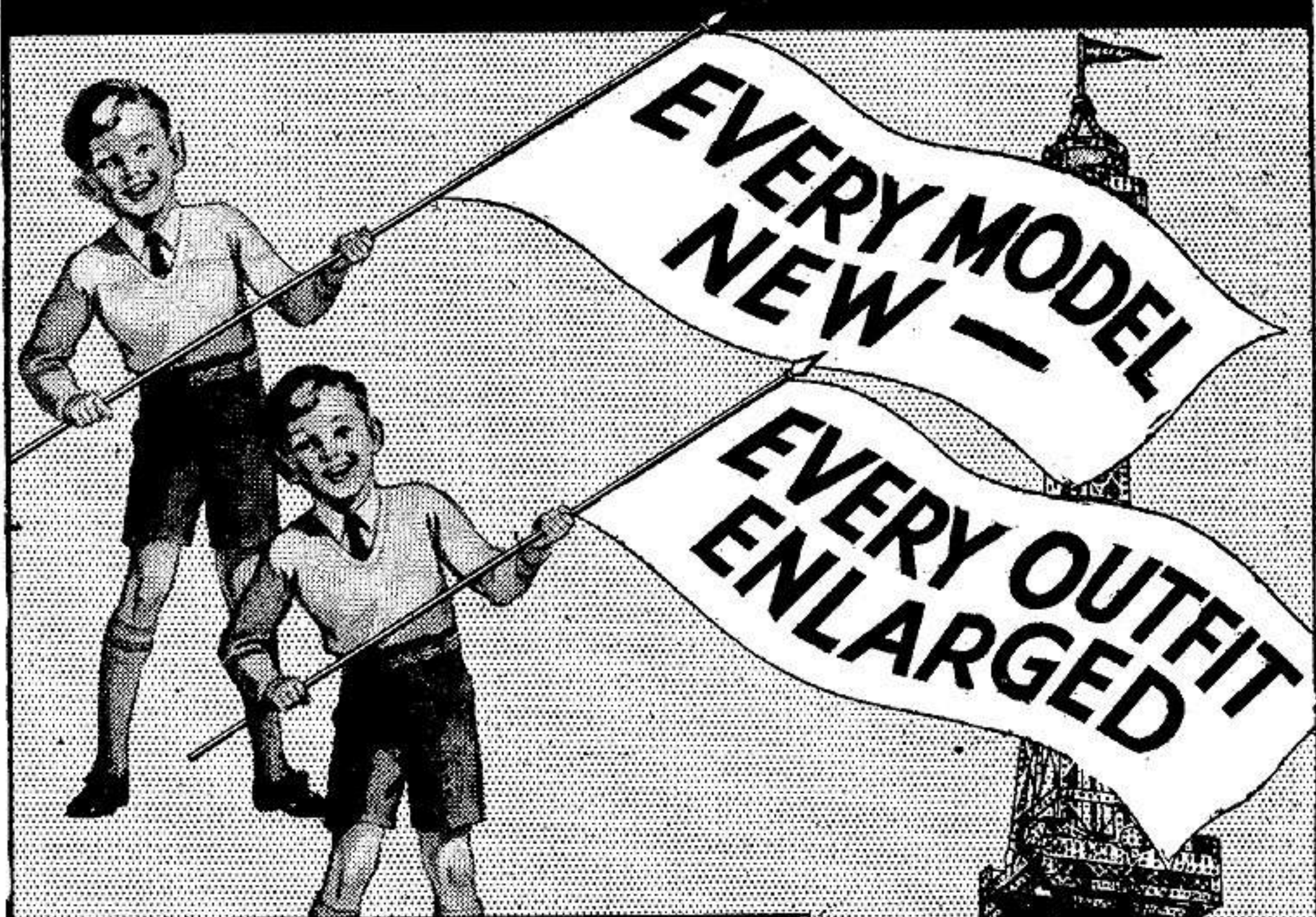
"Has Hazel asked you to look after him?" jeered Gilbert.

"The weak-kneed fool is more likely to flare up in a temper at the idea of being looked after—but he wants looking

Continued on page 10.

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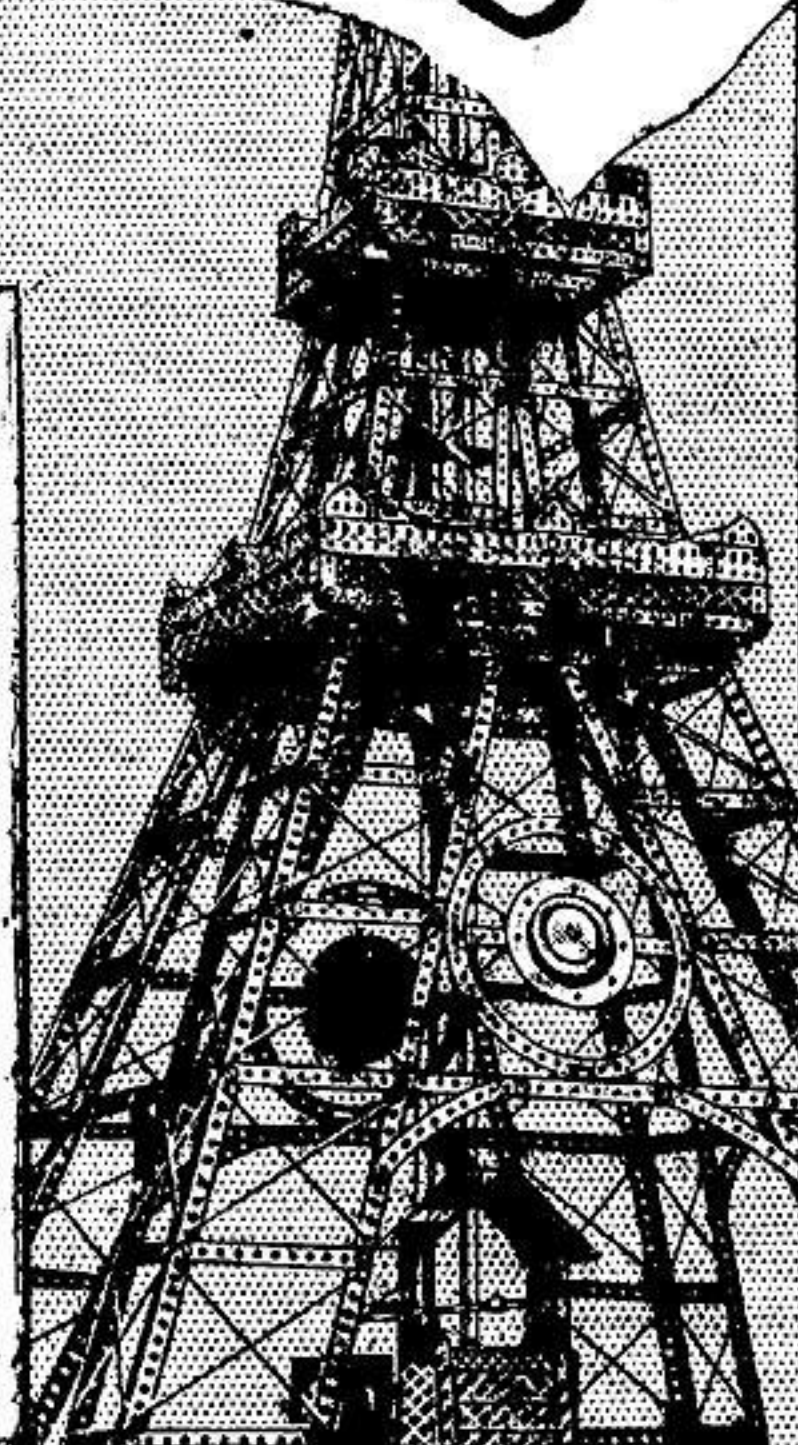
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after, all the same! He gets into scrapes once or twice every term, and generally lands the trouble on other shoulders—"

"You know him!" grinned Gilbert.

"But he's all right when left alone," said Harry. "So far as I know, he was keeping straight this term. I've heard Bunter say that he was up at the Three Fishers—but that fat ass is always gabbling about somebody. But—"

"But now you've spotted it!" said Gilbert mockingly. "He's got mixed up with me—and that tears it!"

"I never knew he had anything to do with you, till this morning, or I'd have had something to say before," said Harry savagely. "His sister Marjorie is a friend of mine, as you may happen to know, and she's not going to hear that her brother is up for the sack, if I can stop it. He's fool enough to be led into anything by a cunning rascal like you—"

"Thanks!"

"I'm not going to beat about the bush! You're a rotten blackguard from the toes up!" said the captain of the Remove scornfully. "I want to know whether Hazel is mixed up in this row that you're in now—as it looks! Have you been getting him into your own rotten rascality?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gilbert. "Go it! You're fearfully amusing! In fact, you don't know how amusing you are! Carry on!"

Harry Wharton clenched his hands.

"I don't want to handle you, considering what you've got coming," he said. "But you've got to answer me, Tracy. Is Hazel mixed up in this?"

"Find out!" said Gilbert coolly.

"I'm going to!" said Harry Wharton, breathing hard. "If you've dragged that silly duffer into it—"

"Does he need dragging into trouble?" asked Gilbert, with a grin. "Doesn't he walk round looking for it?"

"Will you answer my question? You're going up to the Head for breaking out at night and pub-haunting. Is Marjorie Hazeldene's brother mixed up in it, or not?"

"What does it look like?" asked Gilbert banteringly. "I've been spotted—I'm going up to the Head! You've noticed that Hazel is in a blue funk! He gets the wind up because I go in to speak to Quelch! Put two and two together—that's easy arithmetic, suitable for your poor little brain! Can't you see for yourself what it looks like?"

"It looks," said Harry savagely, "as if Hazel is in this with you, and he's afraid you may mention his name."

"Wouldn't he be?" grinned Gilbert. "Isn't it like him?"

"Even you wouldn't be cur enough to give him away, after getting him into a scrape—"

"Why not?" asked Gilbert.

"Why not?" repeated Harry.

"Yes—why not?" grinned Gilbert. "Ain't I the worst boy in the school? Ask Quelch! Ain't I such a rotter that my uncle can't stand me at home any more? Ask old Giles! Wouldn't the Head have turfed me out long ago, only that he's left me to Quelch to handle? Ask the Big Beak! Ain't I the limit—a regular rotter, and rat, and rascal? Ask any man in the Remove! But don't you know all that already, without asking anybody?"

"Will you answer me?" roared the captain of the Remove. "If Hazel's in this, his friends may be able to help him out. Will you tell me how it stands?"

"No, I won't!"

"You will! I shan't be able to speak to you again—you'll be in punny. I'm

going to know, and you're going to tell me? Will you?"

"No!"

Harry Wharton made a stride across the study towards the bad hat of the Remove, his fists clenched, and his eyes gleaming.

Gilbert faced him coolly, the mocking grin still on his face.

"You've got to answer!" Wharton tried to speak calmly. "If you've got a rag of decency you might think of his sister at Cliff House, and what it will mean to her if she hears that he's up before the Head. But I suppose that doesn't matter a straw to you?"

Gilbert laughed.

"Why should it?" he asked. "Am I the kind of fellow to bother my head about a schoolgirl?"

"No; I suppose not! You rotter! You worm! You cur! Tell me how Hazel's mixed up in this, so that we can see whether anything can be done—"

"You want an answer to that?"

"Yes; and at once!"

"There it is!" And Gilbert, with cool mockery, snapped his fingers in the face of the captain of the Remove. "That's my answer—and all you will get from me."

Harry Wharton was coming at him the next moment, with lashing fists; and Gilbert's hands flew up. In a moment more they were fighting furiously.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Chuck It!

"I SAY, you fellows—the y're scrapping!"

"What—"

"Who—"

"Wharton and Tracy!" said Billy Bunter cheerfully. "I say, they're going it like anything! He, he, he!"

The Co. were in the quad when Billy Bunter rolled up with that interesting information.

"You howling ass!" said Bob. "What do you mean? They've got nothing to scrap about. Where are they?"

"In the study!" explained Bunter. "You see, it was like this! I wondered what Tracy went up to the study for, in break—I mean, I happened to go up to the studies to get a—a—a book, and then Wharton came up—"

"Are they in the study?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Yes! Tracy was getting a key out of a box—at least, it looked like a key, but Wharton asked him if he was getting smokes to take into punny with him—he, he, he!—and then he asked him whether Hazel was mixed up in his row with Quelch—"

"Oh!" said Bob.

"I wasn't listening outside the door," further explained Bunter, "not the sort of thing I would do, of course. I happened—"

"Are they scrapping, or are you gammoning, you fat ass?" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

Frank Nugent was already cutting off to the House. His friends followed him, leaving Billy Bunter to relate to other interested fellows the news of the scrap that was going on in the studies.

That that news was well founded the Co. learned at once when they arrived in the Remove passage. From Study No. 1 came a sound of heavy trampling and scuffling and panting breath.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob, as he kicked the door wide open. "Chuck that, you silly duffers!"

Neither of the combatants heeded. Two or three chairs had been knocked over, books and papers lay on the floor.

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and in the midst of the disorder Wharton and Tracy were fighting hard.

Gilbert was no match for the captain of the Remove, as he had found in more than one encounter already. But he was putting up a fierce fight, and though he was getting the worst of it, Wharton seemed to have his hands full. There were marks on his face, and Gilbert's nose was streaming crimson.

"Stop it!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Stop them!" grunted Johnny Bull.

And as neither heeded, the Co. pushed in.

Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry grasped Wharton by the shoulders and dragged him back. Nugent and Hurree Singh shoved Gilbert backwards with such energy that he tottered and sat down on the box-seat under the window.

"Leave me alone, you silly fatheads!" exclaimed Wharton, struggling in the grasp of his chums.

"Chuck it!" said Bob. "Look here, Wharton, that cad's got enough coming to him without anything from you."

Gilbert staggered, panting, to his feet.

"Oh, let him come on!" he jeered. "What are you barging in for? Let the fool come on!"

"You shut up!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Rats to you!" retorted Gilbert. "Shut up yourself, you meddling fat-head!"

"Will you let me go?" breathed Wharton.

"No," answered Bob coolly. "Leave him alone. He's up for a flogging in an hour from now—that's enough."

Harry Wharton panted.

"You dummy! He's as good as admitted that Marjorie's brother is mixed up in his putrid pub-haunting! I'm going—"

"Well, we guessed that one," said Bob. "Not much doubt about it, after the funk we saw Hazel in. But—"

"So that's how it is, you swab, is it?" growled Johnny Bull.

"Find out!" snarled Gilbert.

Johnny gave him a glare.

"Might as well let Wharton get on with it," he said. "If ever a rotten cad wanted whopping—"

"Oh, chuck it!" exclaimed Bob. "Look here, Wharton—"

"I tell you—"

"And I tell you—"

The clang of a bell interrupted. Break was over, and it was the bell for third school.

"That's for class," said Bob. "Come on, old bean! You can't tell Quelch that you're late because you were busy punching Tracy."

"The rotter—"

"Yes; come on—"

"The cur—"

"Speech taken as read! Come on!"

And the Co. fairly barged their leader out of the study.

Angry as he was, the captain of the Remove realised that he could not be late for class, because he had not finished punching Gilbert. He hurried down the stairs with his friends.

Gilbert stood in the study, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief, which was spotted with red. He was ruffled and breathless, and rather damaged, and he cared little if he was late for class. He left the study and went along to the tap at the end of the passage to bathe his nose, which really needed it badly.

Third school had been going on for a quarter of an hour, when Tracy lounged into the Form-room.

Mr. Quelch's eyes fixed on him, and all the Remove looked at him, some of them grinning at the sight of his nose,

which had rather the aspect of an over-ripe tomato.

There was a giggle from Billy Bunter.

"Tracy, you have been fighting!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir!"

"You are fifteen minutes late for class."

"I was bathing my nose, sir."

Mr. Quelch set his lips.

"You may go to your place, Tracy!"

Evidently Quelch was unwilling to handle the cane, in view of what Gilbert had coming to him after third school. But his gimlet eyes followed Tracy grimly as the worst boy in the Form went to his place.

However, he took no further notice of him, and Gilbert dabbed his damaged nose from time to time, ignored by his Form-master, till third school was over.

When the Form was dismissed, Mr. Quelch curtly bade Tracy remain.

The Remove marched out, leaving Gilbert with his Form-master.

Hazeldene lingered in the doorway a moment or two, casting an almost haggard glance at Tracy. But as Mr. Quelch's eyes turned on him he hurried away.

"Tracy, you will now come with me to Dr. Locke," said Mr. Quelch.

"Any old thing!" drawled Gilbert.

"What—what did you say, Tracy?" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

"I said any old thing, sir."

Mr. Quelch's eyes glinted; but he said no more, and Tracy followed him from the Form-room.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Trusting Bunter!

"POOR old Tracy!" said Billy Bunter sadly.

Billy Bunter made that remark to a number of fellows on the Remove landing, after tea.

"Poor old chap!" added Bunter, in a tone of deep feeling. "I say, it's tough!"

Bunter seemed quite concerned.

Other fellows in the Remove gave Tracy a compassionate thought or two, but Billy Bunter seemed really sorrowful about it.

Which was, rather odd, because Bunter, as a rule, was not a fellow to trouble his fat head very much about any fellow who was not named W. G. Bunter.

There had been a vacant place in the Remove Form Room that afternoon. Tracy was not there, and for a whole week he was not to be seen there again.

All the fellows knew that he had had his flogging. Some of them knew, by experience, what a Head's flogging was like, and the others could imagine it fairly easily. So though Tracy had undoubtedly asked for it, there was some sympathy on the subject.

But the effect of that flogging would wear off—probably was wearing off already. Worse than that, many of the juniors thought, was the week in punny to follow.

Gilbert was in the punishment-room now. It was a secluded room at the end of a long corridor, high up the building, far from the occupied portions of the House. It was out of hearing of the life of the school; even the clang of the bell only reached it faintly.

A fellow in punny had not even the consolation of getting out of the school work. He had to do his lessons there, on his lonely own, with an extra task or two to keep him occupied. Twice a day he would be taken out for exercise, under an official eye; but only when the school was in class. He would have no

opportunity of seeing or speaking to other fellows. Such a state of isolation was a severe punishment, though certainly not too severe for a fellow who was a law unto himself, and who disregarded all the laws of the school right and left.

But worst of all—from Billy Bunter's point of view, at least—was the fact that the meals taken to the punishment-room were the bare school fare, and not too much of that!

Bunter could manage on enough for three, though what he really liked was enough for six! Tracy was going to have enough for one, and it was going to be plain and wholesome fare, unadorned by any of the delightful things that could be obtained at the school shop. No doubt such an awful prospect touched Billy Bunter's plump heart.

"Just think of it, you fellows!" said the fat Owl, blinking round at the juniors through his big spectacles. "Dish-water and doorsteps—same as we get in Hall when we're too stony to tea in the study! Only one helping at dinner! Poor old Tracy!"

"The poorfulness of the esteemed old Tracy is terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, look here, he ain't such a bad chap, you know," said Bunter. "Of course, he's rather a rotter and a swab and a rank outsider—still, he's down and out, you know. I believe in standing by a fellow when he's down. Kindest friend and noblest foe, and all that, you know. If you don't want that cake you had from home to-day, Wharton—"

"I do," said Harry.

"Well, I wouldn't be mean," said Bunter. "Think of poor old Tracy with nothing but door-water and dish-steps—I mean, doorsteps and dish-water! If you'd like to hand over that cake for me to take to him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the fellows on the landing.

They had rather wondered why Billy Bunter was so concerned about the prisoner of the punishment-room. They knew now!

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter peevishly. "I'm willing to take all the risk. I know where Quelch keeps the key of punny in his study. Well, I get hold of the cake—I mean, the key—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, do stop cackling! I get hold of the key, and—and put it back before Quelch misses it! I've got the nerve—you fellows know my nerve!"

"We do!" grinned Bob Cherry. "You've got lots of nerve, old fat man—tons, to try on a game like that!"

"The nervefulness is truly terrific."

"Think how poor old Tracy would enjoy that cake if he got it!" urged Bunter.

"If!" chuckled Nugent.

"Large size in 'ifs,'" remarked Skinner. "I fancy that cake wouldn't get much farther than Study No. 7!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose you can trust me with a cake, Wharton?"

"Something wrong with your supposer, then!" answered the captain of the Remove, laughing. "I can't!"

"Well, if Wharton's going to be mean, what about you other fellows?" asked Bunter, blinking round at the grinning juniors. "You've got lots of stuff in your study, Smithy!"

"And it's staying there!" said the Bounder.

"I say, you fellows, if Smithy's going to be as mean as Wharton, I think some of you might play up!" said

Bunter. "I've had hardly any tea—I mean, Tracy's had hardly any tea!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you stop cackling?" hooted Bunter. "What about you, Bob? You ain't mean like Wharton and Smithy!"

"Not a bad idea!" said Bob, rather unexpectedly. "I've got a tin of toffees in my study. But—"

Billy Bunter's little round eyes glistened behind his big round spectacles. Bunter liked toffees! In fact, he loved them!

"I say—fine!" he gasped. "Nothing I'd like better—I mean nothing Tracy would like better, old fellow! I say, trot it out!"

"Sure you've got the nerve to bag the key from Quelch's study?" asked Bob.

"Yes, rather!"

"You might get spotted going to punny!"

"I'd chance that!"

"Well, if you mean it, old chap, I'll fetch that toffee-tin."

"You silly ass!" roared Johnny Bull. "Are you going to let that fat spoofer pull your leg like that?"

"Is he pulling my leg?" asked Bob innocently.

"Why, you fathead, think he'd have the nerve to bag a key from Quelch's study—and think he'd take the toffees to Tracy if he had? You chump, he would take those toffees round the first corner and scoff them!" snorted Johnny.

"You shut up, Bull!" hooted Bunter. "Bob can trust me with a tin of toffees, can't you, old chap?"

"Well, I think I can trust Bunter not to eat anything in that toffee-tin," said Bob. "I'll jolly well fetch it!"

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

Unheeding those compliments to his intellect, Bob Cherry went up the passage to Study No. 13. Billy Bunter was left grinning with happy anticipation, the other fellows staring.

No doubt Bunter could feel for a fellow in punny, shut off from the delights of the tuckshop. But there was equally no doubt that Billy Bunter would as soon have ventured into a tiger's cage to take away a bone, as have ventured into Mr. Quelch's study to snaffle the key of the punishment-room.

It was, in fact, perfectly clear that Billy Bunter was, as usual, on the make, and that anything of an edible nature, trusted into his fat hands, was not likely to go up into the punishment-room, but down into Bunter's capacious interior.

Probably it was the fact that Wharton had a cake that had put the bright idea into Bunter's head. Anyhow, no fellow on the Remove landing doubted what would become of anything edible that was handed over to Bunter!

Except, it seemed, Bob Cherry. Bob came out of his study in a few minutes with a large toffee-tin in his hands.

It was a seven-pound tin, and bore the inscription on the outside: "Blunt's Super-Cream Toffees."

Billy Bunter's eyes almost popped through his spectacles as he saw it. Really, it was difficult to believe in his good luck. Bob had rather a trusting nature, it was true; but Bunter had hardly hoped to find any fellow in the Remove quite so trusting as this!

"Here you are, Bunter!" said Bob cheerily.

Bunter fairly grabbed that toffee-tin. It was rather heavy—it weighed, in fact, seven pounds. But Billy Bunter did not mind how heavy it was. The

heavier it was, in fact, the better Bunter liked it. Bunter would not have minded had it weighed fourteen pounds, or even twenty-eight!

"Mind that goes to Tracy, you know," said Bob. "No larks!"

"Oh, yes, of—of course!" said Bunter. "I—I'm going down to bag that key off Quelch now. Don't any of you fellows come!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean, Quelch might notice something, you know, with a lot of fellows crowding about. I'm not just thinking of getting out of sight with this tin of toffee."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fellows stay here! Don't any of you come down!"

And Billy Bunter, with the big, heavy toffee-tin under his fat arm, rolled away down the Remove staircase, and disappeared.

But that he had gone to snaffle a key from Quelch's study, or that the prisoner of the punishment-room would ever see that tin, no fellow on the Remove landing believed.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Hot Stuff!

"YOU ass!"

"You chump!"

"You terrific fathead!"

"You howling duffer!"

Four members of the famous Co. made those remarks all at once as Billy Bunter disappeared with the toffee-tin down the stairs. They addressed Bob Cherry, who grinned cheerfully.

"What's the row?" he asked. "Think Bunter can't be trusted with that toffee-tin?"

"The thinkfulness is terrific!"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!" growled Johnny Bull. "Do you fancy, for one minute, that Bunter will go anywhere near Quelch's study, or anywhere near Tracy?"

"Well, no," admitted Bob. "Probably not! I hope he won't, anyhow! I should hate Tracy to get that toffee-tin!"

"Eh? Well, he won't get it!" said Harry. "Bunter will open that tin as soon as he's out of sight, and scoff the toffees. That's what he was after!"

"Bet you he won't!" said Bob.

"Oh, fathead!"

"Bunter may open the tin," agreed Bob. "I shouldn't wonder. But I'll bet any man here ten to one in doughnuts that he won't scoff any toffees out of it. How could he, I mean, when there ain't any in it?"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Oh!"

"But it wasn't empty!" exclaimed Nugent. "That fat-ass would have noticed at once if it was empty!"

"No, it wasn't empty," assented Bob Cherry. "Bunter would have noticed that by the weight. That's why I packed an old newspaper and some chunks of coal in it!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mean to say there's nothing but chunks of coal in that toffee-tin?" yelled Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, yes, there's something else!" admitted Bob. "About a couple of ounces of pepper!"

"Pepper!" gasped Johnny Bull.

"Pepper!" said Bob, with a nod.

"The fellow who grabs the lid off that tin will get a pretty hefty whiff of it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I really hope it won't be Tracy—I don't want to lark with Tracy! But it ain't likely!" said Bob, shaking his head. "I'm not a suspicious chap, I hope, but I can't help thinking that that toffee-tin will never get anywhere near Tracy! I'm afraid Bunter was on the make!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anyhow, we'll soon see!" said Bob cheerily. "If he starts for punny with that tin, we'll soon stop him. But I rather fancy we shall hear him sneezing. Let's go down!"

A dozen chuckling juniors went down the stairs.

They were quite keen to see Bunter again. It was probable that they would hear him before they saw him—as they did not doubt that he had the lid off the toffee-tin by that time. If Bunter really and truly started to smuggle that tin to the prisoner in punny, there was plenty of time to stop him. But they fully expected to track Bunter down by a sound of sneezing!

"Seen Bunter, Hobby?" asked Bob, as they passed Hobson of the Shell at the foot of the staircase.

"Yes. He went into the Rag a minute or two ago," answered Hobby.

"Come on, you men!" grinned Bob.

Evidently Billy Bunter had not headed for Quelch's study after that key. Evidently he had no intention of doing so. He had carried that toffee-tin into the Rag, there to devour his prey! It was not likely, however, that he was doing any devouring.

The juniors cut along to the Rag. Bob Cherry threw the door open.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Listen to the band!" he ejaculated.

"Aytishoo!" came from within. "Atchoooh! Ooooooh! Oh crikey! Aytishoo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors crowded in.

Billy Bunter was seated in an arm-chair in the Rag. The toffee-tin lay at his feet on the floor. Bunter had settled down in comfort to deal with the contents of that tin. But he did not look fearfully comfortable. He had jerked the lid off the tin to get at the toffees. The result was quite unexpected—by Bunter!

How a cloud of pepper happened to fly out of a toffee-tin Bunter did not know. Neither had he time to think out that strange mystery. He was too busy sneezing.

Sneeze, sneeze, sneeze!

Gurgle, gurgle, gurgle!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Urrrrgh!" Billy Bunter sprawled in the chair, his eyes and nose streaming, spluttering, gurgling, gasping, and sneezing—Gargantuan sneezes. "I say—Gurrgh! Aytishoo! Woooooooh!"

"Go it, Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groooh! I say, you fellows—Ooooooh! I say—Aytishoo! Woooooooh!"

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

"I say, you fellows—oooooh!—there was pepper or something—Groooh! I say—Yoo-whoop! Aytishoo! You silly idiot, Cherry! Wharrer you put pepper in on the toffees for? Groooh! Atchoooooh!"

"What did you open the tin for?" grinned Bob.

"I—I—I—Ooooooh! Aytishoo! Groooh! I was only going to—aytishoo!—to—to—to—Groooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "You did that on purpose, you beast, because you

(Continued on page 14.)

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thought I should— Ooooooh! Woogh! Grooooh!

"Carry on!"

"Go it!"

"Wooooooh! Ooooooh! B-b-because you thought I should open the— aytishoo!—the tin! Ooooooh! Beast! Grooooooh!"

"He's guessed it!" said Bob. "What a brain!"

"The brainfulness is preposterous!"

"Look at me!" howled Bunter. "I've nearly blown my nose off! Ooooh! Aytishoo! Beast! Can't trust a fellow to— Ooooooh!"

"I trusted you to open the tin—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You should keep your esteemed hands from the pickfulness and the stealfulness, my esteemed Bunter—"

"Urrgh! Beast! Wurrgh!"

Billy Bunter gurgled, and gasped, and sneezed, and dabbed his fat little nose, which glowed like a danger-signal, with his handkerchief.

"Urrgh! You silly idiot! You've spoiled those toffees now, putting pepper on them!" he gasped. "I know I jolly well shan't touch them—I mean, I shan't take them to Tracy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, the pepper hasn't done any damage!" said Bob cheerily. "A spot of pepper doesn't damage coal—"

"Coal!" yelled Bunter.

"Did you think it was toffees in the tin?" asked Bob.

"Why, you—you—you beast, you said it was a tin of—aytishoo!—grooooh!—woogh!—toffees!"

"Your mistake, old fat man! I said I had a tin of toffees in my study! So I had—but I turned the toffees out before I put the coal in—"

"You—you— Atchooh! Woogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry, chuckling, picked up the toffee-tin and shot the contents into the fire in the Rag.

Billy Bunter gave him a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

"Urrgh! Beast! Pulling my leg all the time! Urrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Atchooh! Woogh! Aytisho! Ooooh!"

Billy Bunter sneezed and sneezed. It was quite a long time before the sneezing ceased from troubling and the weary Owl was at rest. Not for the first time in his fat career, the Owl of the Remove discovered that the way of the transgressor was hard!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Prisoner In Punny!

GILBERT TRACY rose from his chair at the table in the punishment-room, at the sound of footsteps in the corridor without.

He stood looking towards the door, with a dark and sullen scowl on his face.

It was some hours since he had had a visitor, and it seemed like ages.

During the afternoon, while the Remove were in Form, he had been allowed to walk for an hour for air and exercise. Since then he had been under lock and key. By that time he was recovering from the effects of the Head's flogging. He was thinking less of the flogging than of the dreary hours in that secluded room.

He had his school books; he had Latin exercises to keep him busy. Neither was much of a comfort to him.

He had, however, done his task, ready for Quelch's eyes when he came. Really, it was better than mooching about the room doing nothing; neither

did he want "six" for leaving his work undone. He had no doubt that Quelch would bring a cane under his arm when he came, and he had no desire to sample that cane after the Head's birch.

The room was secluded, silent, and was, of course, out of bounds for the school. No one was likely to come there. In silence and solitude, Gilbert would have been glad of a whispering voice through the keyhole. A few whispered words would have broken the monotony.

But he had no friends to stand by him when he was down on his luck. He was more or less friendly with Skinner and Snoop, but they were not fellows to take risks. And any fellow caught approaching the punishment-room to speak to the inmate would have been booked for six of the best.

Harry Wharton & Co., he had no doubt, would have run the risk—had he been on friendly terms with them. They had been on much better terms of late, but that had been quite knocked on the head now by the happenings of the previous night. They wanted nothing to do with a fellow who stole out of bounds after lights out and came back at midnight in charge of a beak. And that was not all—they knew that Hazel was mixed up in the affair, and they laid the blame on him. The scrap in Study No. 1 showed exactly how friendly the captain of the Remove felt towards him.

But Hazel— Gilbert reflected bitterly that he might have taken the risk. But Hazel had not come—probably had not thought of coming.

It was to save him that Gilbert had landed himself in this—not for his own sake, certainly. Still, he had saved him, and the fellow might have remembered it. No doubt Hazel was feeling quite easy in his mind now—since Tracy's interview with the Head; he knew that Gilbert had not given him away, and that, as Gilbert reflected bitterly, was all he wanted to know.

Not a fellow cared—not even the fellow whose worthless skin he had saved at his own cost!

After all, why should they care? He was a bad hat—a disgrace to his Form and to his school; nobody wanted him at Greyfriars. A schoolgirl's influence had helped to put his feet on the right path, and the prospect had been brightening when his own act had spoiled everything again; and that act had been to save the wretched Hazel from discovery and disgrace by taking the burden on his own shoulders.

His brow was black, his face sullen, his look almost snarling when the door of the punishment-room opened and Mr. Quelch appeared.

Behind him came Trotter, the House page, carrying a tray. That tray contained supper for the imprisoned junior—plain fare of bread and cheese and cocoa.

Gilbert gave it a disdainful glance.

Trotter placed the tray on the table and, with a furtively compassionate look at Gilbert, withdrew.

Mr. Quelch proceeded to examine Tracy's Latin paper. As Gilbert had anticipated, he had a cane under his arm.

But while he looked at the Latin paper, Mr. Quelch did not fail to be wary. He had not forgotten the occasion when Tracy had contrived to whip out of the punishment-room and lock him in. He would not have been surprised at some attempt to repeat that performance on the part of the worst boy in his Form—he would have been, in fact, surprised at nothing whatever from Gilbert Tracy.

But Gilbert was not thinking of anything of the kind. It was useless, and he did not want six from that cane under Quelch's arm.

"You can do better than this, Tracy!" said Mr. Quelch, tapping the paper on the table with his forefinger.

"Do you think so, sir?" drawled Gilbert, with as much impertinence in his tone as he could venture upon—in view of the cane under Quelch's arm.

The Remove master's eyes glinted.

"I am unwilling to punish you further, Tracy—"

"Thank you, sir!" murmured Gilbert.

"But I shall certainly do so if you require it!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "You will not be allowed to waste your time here, Tracy; and I advise you not to be impertinent."

Gilbert made no reply to that.

Mr. Quelch paused, and then went on:

"You will not return to the Form-room, Tracy, for a week. During that time you will have ample leisure for reflection. I recommend you to reflect upon your conduct since you have been at this school and make some resolution to amend it."

"I've done that, sir," said Gilbert coolly.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch very dryly. "It would not appear so, Tracy, from your action last night."

Gilbert grinned. He wondered what Quelch would have thought could he have known what had really happened the previous night.

"I've told you, sir, that I never went out of the school!" he said.

"That is a quite incredible statement, Tracy. But if there is any truth in it, why did you leave the House at all?"

Gilbert was silent.

"Any boy who left the House at night would be flogged," said Mr. Quelch. "But if I could believe that you did not leave the precincts of the school, Tracy, your punishment would end with the flogging you have received. For what reason did you break House bounds, if not to break School bounds?"

No answer.

A contemptuous look crossed the Remove master's face. He turned to the door without speaking again.

Gilbert watched him in sullen silence. The door closed on the Remove master; the key turned in the lock outside, and Gilbert heard it withdrawn.

Then the footsteps of Mr. Quelch died away down the corridor.

Gilbert was left alone, a prisoner in the punishment-room, to remain alone till the door was unlocked in the morning—at least, that was Mr. Quelch's belief.

He would have been rather shaken in that belief, however, had he been able to see Gilbert a few minutes later.

From his pocket the imprisoned junior drew a key—a long key that was an exact duplicate of the one with which Mr. Quelch had locked the door, and which he had taken away in his pocket.

Gilbert grinned at that key.

Neither Mr. Quelch, nor anyone else at Greyfriars, knew that it was in his possession—or in existence at all.

Yet it had been simple enough. On the occasion when he had locked his Form-master in the punishment-room the key of that room had been in Gilbert's possession for two days.

With an eye to the future, the young rascal had taken a wax impression of the key.

From that impression it had been easy to get a key made, later, in Court-field, and the new key had been in

Gilbert's possession ever since. He had kept it safely locked up, against the time when he might be locked in the punishment-room—which was likely to happen any time to the rebel of the Remove.

Quelch had left him, as he supposed, safely locked in; but, in point of fact, it was in Gilbert's power to unlock the door and let himself out at any moment he chose.

During the daytime it was futile; he would have been seen, and the duplicate key discovered. But if Gilbert chose to wander in the small hours, there was nothing to stop him—little as Mr. Quelch or anyone else guessed it.

"Old ass!" murmured Gilbert, grinning.

He put the key back in his pocket and sat down to his supper.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

In The Night!

"I SAY, you fellows, something's up!"

"Go hon!" said Bob Cherry.

After prayers, in the morning, everybody at Greyfriars knew that something was "up."

Mr. Quelch's face was seen by the startled eyes of his Form to resemble the blackest of black thunderclouds.

All the beaks were seen to be looking very serious.

Mr. Capper was heard to say "Shocking!" Mr. Prout was heard to say "Unparalleled!" Mr. Hacker was seen shrugging his shoulders. Prefects of the Sixth Form looked fearfully solemn.

Something was up—something very serious and unusual. The juniors wondered what it was. It was unlikely that another fellow had been caught out of bounds, like Tracy; and even so, it would hardly have caused all this perturbation. But something clearly was up.

After breakfast the Head was seen accompanying Mr. Quelch to his study. Many eyes were on him.

This looked as if something had happened in Quelch's study.

Had Gilbert Tracy been at liberty, everyone would have surmised that it was a rag on Quelch.

Tracy had ragged that study before most effectively and efficiently, though he had with great skill contrived to prove that he was elsewhere when the rag had taken place.

But if Quelch's study had been "shipped"—as the juniors called it—the guilt had to be laid on other shoulders now, with the worst boy in the Form safely locked up in punny.

After the headmaster and the Remove master had left that study it was an object of the greatest interest to the Remove fellows. If anything had happened there, they wanted to know what it was.

As soon as the coast was clear, therefore, several Removites ventured along the passage to see what was to be seen—if anything.

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Look!"

The study door showed startling signs of damage. Quelch often locked his study door at night. Apparently it had been locked the night before, but the lock had not stopped a visitor from entering.

The juniors gazed at it. That lock was a fairly strong one, but it had been wrenched open, apparently by a stout chisel driven between the door and the jamb. The signs of damage leaped to the eye.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Harry Wharton.

"I say, you fellows, somebody came down in the night and busted that lock!" gasped Billy Bunter. "Was it you, Smithy?"

"Idiot!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Chump!"

"Well, you're the only chap who would do it, except Tracy—and he's in punny!" said Bunter. "I say, you'll be for it, Smithy, if you did it!"

"Fathead!"

"Well, that takes the cake!" said Johnny Bull. "Whoever did that is booked for the long jump! No wonder Quelch was looking shirty!"

Bob Cherry pushed the door open. Clearly some unknown person had forced the study door during the night. It must have been no easy task, and there must have been some noise; but the studies were a good distance from the sleeping-rooms, and the marauder had got through unheard and undetected. But no one supposed that he had stopped at that; the juniors expected to see something more inside the study when the door was opened.

And they did!

They fairly gasped as they looked into Mr. Quelch's study. Studies had been shipped before at Greyfriars, but never within the memory of the oldest inhabitant had a study been shipped like this.

"Oh!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Great pip!"

"Phew!"

That study looked as if a cyclone had struck it. The table lay upside down, with chairs perched on the upturned legs, and the carpet draped over the chairs; cinders and ashes from the grate were strewn all over the room, mingled with blotches and smears of ink; every drop of ink the ragger had found there had been flung about the room.

The clock lay on the hearth in several pieces; the fender had been pushed partly up the chimney; soot had been raked down in large volumes.

Books lay all over the place, and every one was smothered with soot, or ashes, or ink, or gum, or sealing-wax melted at a match.

The glass over the mantelpiece showed a big star in the centre, where the poker, probably, had smitten it.

But even that was not all. Across the cracked glass was an inscription in large letters in black paint which had dried hard:

WHO WANTS QUELCH?
NOBODY!
GET OUT, YOU OLD ASS!

Breathlessly the Remove fellows gazed at it. Other fellows came up the passage to gaze. Before long there was a swarm of all Forms crowding outside Mr. Quelch's study, gazing in—almost speechbound.

"Oh crumbs!" said Hobson of the Shell. "That means the sack for some of you Remove chaps!"

"Serve 'em jolly well right, too!" said Temple of the Fourth. "That's too jolly thick! That ain't a rag—that's just hooliganism!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"But who the thump—" exclaimed Coker of the Fifth. "Which of you young scoundrels did that?"

"I say, Smithy, if it was you—Yaroooh! Leave off kicking me, Smithy, you beast!" yelled Billy Bunter.

"Was it you, young Vernon-Smith?" asked Coker, staring at the Bounder.

"Was it you, Coker?" retorted the Bounder.

"Eh—what? Don't be cheeky! It was a Remove kid, as you can see by what's written on the glass—"

"Blessed if it doesn't look like it!" said Bob Cherry. "But who—who'd be mad enough—"

"Goodness knows!" said Harry Wharton. "I should think it was Tracy, if he was loose! Some mad ass—"

"Some terrifically potty duffer—"

"Who on earth—"

"And why—"

"Well, whoever it was, he made a thorough job of it," remarked Hobson. "He must have been a couple of hours at work, I should say. Made a night of it, by gum! It's the sack for him when they get him!"

"Cave!" called out Nugent, as Mr. Quelch reappeared at the end of the passage. And the crowd melted away in a buzz of wonder and amazement.

They knew what was "up" now! They knew why Quelch's brow was like thunder that morning! Someone, in the night, had made an utter wreck of Quelch's study—and added insult to injury, as it were, by leaving that impertinent inscription on the glass to meet his eyes in the morning, when he came to his dismantled study. But who?

That was a mystery!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

By Whose Hand?

MR. QUELCH'S face was set, and his eyes gleamed like cold steel, as he faced his Form in the Form-room that morning.

The Remove fellows were very silent and serious.

Quelch scanned face after face, possibly in search of signs of guilt. His glance lingered on Herbert Vernon-Smith, and then on Skinner. Both of them looked uncomfortable.

Other fellows looked uncomfortable, too. Billy Bunter was in a state of obvious trepidation.

It could hardly be doubted that the wreck of Quelch's study was the work of a Remove man—some fellow unscrupulously vengeful and bitterly malicious. Fellows in other Forms had nothing to do with Quelch—it could not be supposed that any fellow in the Fourth or the Shell, and still less a senior, would have wrecked his study. The ragger must have had a motive—and nobody outside the Remove could have had any motive for ragging the Remove master.

Quelch had no doubt—he could have no doubt—that the offender was in the Form before him. Few of the Remove could doubt it, either.

But if the man was there, he was keeping his secret carefully. Nobody knew who it was! There was not the remotest clue to his identity.

The whole Form were, therefore, under suspicion; from Harry Wharton, the head boy, down to Billy Bunter! And that knowledge made many fellows feel uneasy and nervous, and made them, in fact, show signs that a suspicious eye might have construed as signs of guilt!

Smithy knew that he would be suspected, on his reckless reputation. Skinner expected the gimlet eyes to turn on him—and they did! Wibley, who was given to practical joking, sat uneasily on his form. But every fellow felt uncomfortable—not from a sense of guilt, but from the possibility of being

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The MYSTERIOUS NIGHT RAIDER!



(Continued from page 15.)

suspected. Billy Bunter gave an audible gasp when the gimlet eyes gleamed on him for a moment.

There was a long minute of silence—a silence that might have been felt—before Mr. Quelch spoke. He spoke at last.

"Some boy in this Form left his dormitory during the night!" he said. "You are all aware of the outrage that has been perpetrated in my study. Some member of this Form must have left his dormitory after lights out. It is my intention to discover that boy, who will be immediately expelled from the school. Until the discovery is made, all holidays for this Form will be cancelled, and there will be detention classes on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons."

The Remove took that in grim silence.

"In the meantime," said Mr. Quelch, "investigation will proceed. If the boy concerned chooses to confess, I will hear him."

Silence.

"I have hitherto believed," continued Mr. Quelch, "that there was only one boy in this Form capable of such conduct. That boy, however, is under lock and key in the punishment-room, and cannot be guilty on this occasion. It appears that some other boy in the Form is following his example, and has exceeded even Tracy's insolence and audacity!"

There was another silence, while the gimlet eyes scanned the solemn faces in the Remove.

But apart from uneasiness, which was shared by all the Form, there was nothing for even Quelch's keen eyes to read in those faces.

If there was a boy in the Greyfriars Remove who was following the bad example set by the rebel and mutineer of the Form, he was not to be picked out from the rest.

"The strictest investigation will be made," said Mr. Quelch. "I have no doubt that it will lead to the discovery of the offender. I shall say no more at the moment. We shall now commence."

Which was a relief to the Remove.

Mr. Quelch stepped to his desk. The juniors, in silence, exchanged glances.

Who had done it? With the sack in prospect, the delinquent could hardly be expected to own up. It was clear that nobody present was going to do so.

"Oh!"

Crash!

Every eye shot round to Mr. Quelch.

The Remove master had raised the lid of his desk, and sat on the high chair to look into it. Innumerable times Mr. Quelch had sat on that high chair and nothing had happened! But something had happened now!

The juniors fairly jumped, as they saw their Form-master going over backwards, with his long legs flying in the air.

Bump!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter.

"Oh scissors!" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"What—"

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"Oh gum!"

Almost petrified, the Remove stared at the Remove master. What had caused that sudden and startling collapse they did not for the moment know.

Mr. Quelch was extended on his back on the floor of the Form-room. His mortar-board had fallen off. His gown was tangled round him. He was spluttering with amazement and fury.

He sat up.

"He, he, he!" gurgled Billy Bunter.

Mr. Quelch got on his feet. He gave the Remove a look, and Billy Bunter's gurgle died away with great suddenness.

Then he looked at the collapsed chair. The expression on his face was simply terrifying, as he did so.

And the astonished junior saw, now, what had happened. The legs of that chair had given way! Evidently they had been sawn through by some surreptitious and nefarious hand! A single fragment had been left holding the chair together—looking safe enough, till it was sat upon! Sat upon, it collapsed instantly!

"Who—?" Quelch's voice was a roar. "Who has done this?"

He grasped the cane from his desk.

"Who entered this Form-room before class? Who—?"

Mr. Quelch broke off.

The Form-room door had been locked till class; he himself had unlocked it, to let the Remove in.

It dawned on him! This was the work of the night-ragger! The Form-room key, when not in use, hung on a hook in Quelch's study. Evidently the night prowler had used it, and replaced it where Quelch had found it in the morning! He had visited the Form-room as well as the study—leaving the chair with the sawn legs as a surprise for Mr. Quelch!

The Remove master stood panting for breath! The Remove sat dumb!

Who had done this? The same fellow who had ragged the study—but who? Not a fellow could guess—and Mr. Quelch, though he was longing, indeed yearning, to use that cane, could not guess, either! He looked, indeed, as if disposed to cane the whole Form!

But he controlled his wrath! Breathing hard, he stepped back to his desk to lay down the cane.

Then there was a startled ejaculation. The cane, though no longer grasped, was sticking to his hand!

He stared at it—the Removites stared at it. He had to take that cane in his left hand, to jerk it away from his right! He had not noticed, when grasping it, that it was sticky with liquid cement! He noticed it when he came to lay it down!

He stood with an expressive expression on his face, staring at the sticky palm of his right hand, after he had got rid of that cane.

It was some moments before he found his voice.

"Wharton! I—I shall leave you in charge here for a—a few minutes!"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Harry.

Mr. Quelch whisked out of the Form-room. He had to rub and scrub, and scrub and rub, at that sticky palm, before he did anything else.

In deep silence the Remove watched him go. But when he was gone, the silence was broken!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What larks!" chuckled the Bounder.

"He, he, he!" cachinnated Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, that cane was sticking to his paw—he, he, he!"

"But who—" gasped Peter Todd.

"The same sportsman who ragged the study—he bagged the Form-room key

there, of course!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"But who—?"

"Some lad, whoever he was!"

chuckled Smithy.

"Not you?" asked Bob.

"No fear! Outside my limit!" grinned the Bounder. "Blessed if I knew there was a man in the Remove with the nerve—except Tracy! Who the dooce—"

"Blessed if I don't begin to think it was a man in another Form!" said Harry Wharton. "I can't believe any fellow here—"

"But who—?"

"Oh, I give that up!"

There was a buzz of discussion till Mr. Quelch's returning footsteps were heard. Then there was silence as of the tomb! Quelch's expression was eloquent; and the Remove realised that they had to walk very warily that morning! That morning, indeed, Quelch's Form might have been mistaken for a flock of lambs!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Hazel's Secret!

"O H, stop that row!"

Harry Wharton paused in the Remove passage as he heard that snapping, shrill, almost hysterical voice from Study No. 2.

It was after class—after a far from happy day for the Remove. Quelch, in the Form-room, had been rather like a live wire!

Strict investigation, as he had told his Form, was proceeding—but, so far, it did not seem to have produced any results.

The mystery of the mysterious night ragger was as deep a mystery as ever. Not only masters and prefects, but the Removites themselves, were puzzled to guess who he could possibly be. Harry Wharton was thinking about it, as he came up to the studies; but he dismissed it from his mind as he heard Hazel's voice. And he stopped.

Tom Brown's voice came from Study No. 2 in reply. Browney was twiddling dials on his portable wireless. Hazel, evidently, was annoyed.

"You ill-tempered ass—" said Browney.

"Stop that row, I tell you! I can't stand it!" howled Hazel. "Take the rotten thing somewhere else!"

"I'm going to take it down to the Rag, old bean," said Tom. "But I'll give you a tip before I go! You'd better pull yourself together if you don't want Quelch to spot you!"

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

"I mean that I've seen his eye on you to-day," said Tom. "You've been looking as sick as a cat ever since Tracy was copped, and a good many fellows know you were mixed up with him somehow. If you don't want Quelch to know, too, you'd better pull up and stick your nerves together. I can tell you that I saw Quelch's eye on you in the Form-room—"

"Oh, shut up, and take that rotten thing away!"

Tom Brown quitted the study with his radio under his arm. He passed Harry Wharton in the passage, and went down the staircase.

Wharton stood hesitating.

Several times he had thought of speaking to Hazel, if only to give him the warning that Browney had just given. The whole Form could see there was something amiss with Marjorie's brother; and Browney was not the only fellow who had seen the gimlet eye in

the Form-room linger on him. Hazel was no adept at hiding his feelings—in fact, he was a fellow to wear his heart on his sleeve.

Harry Wharton had very little patience to waste on him. He could hardly remember the number of times Hazel had landed himself in scrapes—always making new resolves, after a fright; and always forgetting them again when the effect of the fright had worn off.

But he was concerned for Marjorie's brother, if not for Hazel personally; and he had a strong suspicion, too, that it was Tracy who had had a leading hand in Hazel's present scrape.

He made up his mind at last, and stepped into the study.

Hazel had thrown himself into the armchair, after driving away his study-mate with his angry and hysterical temper. But he did not look as if he found any comfort in solitude. His face was pale and harassed, and clouded as if most of the troubles in the universe had descended upon him.

But that he did not want visitors was evident from the black look he gave the captain of the Remove as he came in.

"What the thump do you want?" he snarled. "Can't you leave a fellow in peace?"

Wharton shut the door. He was determined not to get angry; he had not come there for a quarrel. It was necessary to exercise a good deal of self-control in dealing with a fellow like Hazeldene.

"I heard what Browney said to you just now, Hazel!" he said, turning from the door. "It was good advice. Quelch—"

"Hang Quelch!"

"Well, never mind that," said Harry. "Look here, Hazel, every man in the Form can see that you're in a scrape—"

"I'm not!"

"Well, you look it—"

"No business of yours!"

"I'd like to help, if I can!" said Harry patiently. "You've got mixed up with that cur—that rascal—that rotter—"

"Are you speaking of Tracy, you fool?"

"You know I am! If that rotten rascal has led you into playing the fool, as it looks—"

"You dummy!"

"Isn't it so?" asked Harry quietly. "Tracy as good as admitted it when I had a row with him yesterday—"

"You fool!" snarled Hazel. "You dolt! You dummy! I heard that you had a scrap with him yesterday in the study. Was it about that?"

"Yes—"

"Oh, you fool! You can't mind your own business? If you were as decent as Tracy, you'd be a better fellow than you are!" snarled Hazel. "Don't call him rotten names to me. I won't stand it! Get out of my study!"

Harry Wharton looked at him in sheer amazement. Hazel sat staring at him with angry hostility.

"Look here, Hazel," said Harry at last, "if you're not mixed up with that rotter, what were you scared about? You were afraid of what he might say to Quelch or the Head. I'm not the only fellow who could see that! You were scared out of your wits—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"He hasn't given you away!" went on Harry. "You were afraid that he would—but I suppose he's got that much decency—he hasn't! After he'd led you—"

"Oh, you fool!"

"He's said nothing," said Harry. "If he was going to give you away,

he'd have done it before now! You're safe there!"

"I know that!"

"Well, then—what's the trouble now?"

"Find out!"

"I'm asking you as a friend, Hazel," said Harry Wharton quietly. "You're landed somehow—and it's not only because you were afraid Tracy would give you away—you know now that he hasn't! That's over—but you're still up against something. If it's money you—"

"It isn't!"

"Oh!" said Harry, quite puzzled.

Hazel's troubles generally boiled down to want of cash! He was the fellow to owe money he could not pay, and sink into the deepest depths of despondency in consequence.

"You've been playing the goat," said Harry at last. "That's plain enough, and Tracy was mixed up in it—"

"Fool!"

"If you owe money to some rotten rascal—some racing man at the Three Fishers—"

"I don't!"

Harry Wharton stood looking at him in silence. He had felt fairly sure that it was that! But it appeared that it was not.

"Well, if a fellow could help—" he said at last.

"You can shut up and mind your own business!" growled Hazel. "If you want to slang Tracy, don't slang him to me, or I'll punch your cheeky head! If you want to know, I was afraid he would give me away—almost any fellow would have—but he stood it out—goodness knows why. He's got grit—more than I ever had!"

"It wouldn't have done him much good to give you away!" said Wharton contemptuously. "Quelch would have known that he was more to blame than you were, whatever it was—"

"Oh, you fool, shut up!" almost shouted Hazel. "Haven't you any sense? Tracy never had anything to do with it. I've never been mixed up with him, as you call it, never had anything to do with him, never liked him, and hardly spoken to him! You dummy!"

"Then—then what—"

"Do you want to know?" snarled Hazel. "Well, I'll tell you, then you can tell Quelch, if you like! It was I who was out of bounds on Wednesday night, not Tracy! Do you understand, you fool? He took it on himself to save my bacon—and I let him do it. Now you know!"

"You—you're mad!" exclaimed Wharton. "You were there; I saw your head on your pillow when Quelch came up and found that Tracy was missing—"

"You saw Tracy's head on my pillow, you fool! He knew I was out, and heard Quelch coming and took my place to see me through."

"Oh!" gasped Harry Wharton. "But—but—I don't see— Look here, Quelch caught Tracy coming in at the box-room window—"

"Can't you understand, you dummy? He got out later to warn me. I got in by the Sixth Form lobby, and he got in at the box-room window, to keep up the game. He let Quelch snaffle him, to see me through. And I—I let him do it. And do you think it's not on my mind that I did?"

"Oh!" gasped Wharton again.

"It would have been the sack for me. It's not the sack for him; he would be glad if it was. That's why I let him do it! That's why! I never knew he'd be packed in punny for a week, as well

as flogged, or—or—" Hazel broke off, panting. "Oh, what's the good of gammon? I should have let him do it, all the same. I daren't face the sack! But—but—look what I let him in for! Do you think I can ever forget all about it?"

"But why?" gasped Harry, utterly taken aback and amazed. "Why? You've never been friends. Why should he—"

"Why?" sneered Hazel. "What are you bothering your own silly head about me for? Because you don't want my sister Marjorie to get the shock of her life, hearing I'm up for the sack! Think I don't know that? Well, that was Tracy's reason, too. He said that Marjorie had done him a good turn—I never knew anything about it, but that's how it was. And so he did that for me, and now he's sticking it out, and I haven't even nerve enough to go and give him a word! And you come here slanging him—to me! When I ought to be where he is now. You fool! You rotter! Get out of my study, before I chuck you out!"

"But—" stammered Wharton, "but—"

"Get out, will you?" Hazel leapt up from the armchair, his fists clenched. "Get out, and leave me alone! Another word against Tracy, and I'll knock it back down your throat. Get out!"

Harry Wharton stepped quietly from the study. Hazel, with a snarl, slammed the door after him.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Safe!

MR. QUELCH saw lights out for his Form that night.

That duty generally fell to a Sixth Form prefect. But on this particular night the Remove had the benefit of their Form-master's own special attention. Quelch had a reason, as they learned before he left them.

His face was very grim.

No fellow was specially keen on meeting the gimlet eyes that gleamed from bed to bed before Quelch put out the light.

One fellow there, the Remove master could not possibly doubt, was the unknown ragger who had gone down the night before, wrecked his study, and played tricks in the Form-room. But which?

It was impossible to tell!

And it was intensely exasperating to Quelch to think that the culprit was there, right under his eyes, probably laughing in his sleeve, and not to be spotted.

Quelch was grim, and his Form was not in a happy frame of mind. The morrow was Saturday, which was a half-holiday; and that half-holiday was to be spent in detention by the whole Form.

Nobody liked the prospect, least of all the Remove footballers. There was a match with the Shell fixed for Saturday afternoon, which now, of course, had to be scratched, unless Quelch relented in time.

Of that, there was no possibility whatever. Throughout the day Quelch had been growing grimmer and grimmer, and he was now at his grimmest. Unless the mysterious ragger was discovered there were no more holidays for the Remove that term! It was likely to play ducks and drakes with the Form games. But there was no help for it.

Before turning off the light Mr. Quelch took the key from the door—a

proceeding that caused the juniors, who all had their eyes on him, to stare. But they understood when he put the key in the outside of the lock. Then they knew why Quelch had come up for lights out.

Harry Wharton sat up in bed.

"Are we to be locked in, sir?" he asked quietly.

Mr. Quelch gave him an icy glance. Even his head boy was out of favour. The whole Form were in Quelch's black books.

"Yes, Wharton!" he answered with a snap. "As I cannot trust my Form, I have no alternative but to lock the dormitory door at night. I cannot run the risk of any repetition of last night's occurrences."

"I do not believe, sir, that the fellow who went down last night is here at all," said Harry. "I feel sure that he is not in the Remove."

Mr. Quelch stared at him.

"That is nonsense, Wharton!" he snapped.

"A lot of us think so, sir," ventured Bob Cherry.

"Nonsense!"

"None of us knows who it was, sir," said Vernon-Smith. "If it was a Remove man, some of us would know."

Mr. Quelch gave him a hard look. His suspicions were the strongest of the Bounder, who seemed the likeliest man in the Remove to be guilty of such wild recklessness. His lips shut in a bitter line.

"You may be silent, Vernon-Smith!" he said.

"I—I say, sir—" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I—I say, if we're going to be locked in, suppose there's a fire, sir, and—"

"Be silent, Bunter!"

"Yes, sir; but suppose the House catches fire, and—"

"Do not be absurd, Bunter!"

"Yes, sir! I mean no, sir! But I don't want to be locked in when the House might catch fire, sir, if—if—if you don't mind—"

"Take fifty lines, Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter said no more.

Mr. Quelch switched off the light and stepped out. The door closed and the juniors heard the click of the key outside. Then Mr. Quelch departed, taking the key with him.

"I say, you fellows, suppose the House catches fire—" wailed Bunter.

"Fathead!"

"Beast!"

"Well, we're safe for the night," chuckled Vernon-Smith. "But I'm dashed if I believe the jolly old ragger is here, all the same. If it was a Remove man, somebody would know by this time."

"But if it wasn't, who the dickens was it?" asked Nugent. "Why should a fellow in another Form rag our beak?"

"Quelch might have trod on some-

body's corns," answered the Bounder. "Might be anybody. But if it was any man here, he won't get going again to-night, that's a cert!"

There was no doubt on that point, at all events. The Remove were safe for the night, with the dormitory door locked and the key in their Form-master's keeping. Whoever the mysterious ragger was, Mr. Quelch was assured that he would not get going again that night, though there were some fellows in the Remove who did not feel so sure of it.

The Remove settled down to sleep, though there were two fellows who were busy with their thoughts for a long time before they closed their eyes. Hazel was one—thinking of the fellow in the punishment-room, who was facing the music for him. Harry Wharton was the other—thinking of what Hazel had told him and feeling far from comfortable in his mind.

His cheeks burned as he remembered the scene in Study No. 1—what he had said to the bad hat of the Remove, and what had followed.

He had judged by appearances, and by his bad opinion of Gilbert—a bad opinion that was certainly fully justified. But he had been mistaken, though he could hardly blame himself for it. He could never have guessed, never have dreamed, of the truth, had he not learned it from Hazel.

Who would have guessed that Gilbert Tracy, the bad hat, the rebel, the mutineer, the pub-haunter, the disgrace of his Form, had taken another fellow's sins on his own shoulders and faced hard and heavy punishment—and all for a schoolgirl's sake? Certainly Harry Wharton could never have guessed it.

Now that he knew, he would have been glad of a friendly word with the fellow he had distrusted and suspected, and whose nose was still swollen from his angry punches.

But for the fact that the dormitory was locked, he would have taken the risk of getting out and speaking a word to the prisoner at the door of the punishment-room. But that was impossible now.

He slept at last, and his eyes did not open till the rising-bell was clanging out in the wintry morning.

Bob Cherry, as usual, was first out of bed with a bound.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob. "Turn out, you slackers! Have you been down in the night, Bunter?"

"You silly ass, you know the door's locked!" squeaked Bunter.

"You're the only fellow slim enough to squeeze through the keyhole!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!" snorted Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! The door's still locked!" exclaimed Bob, rattling at the handle. "Quelch might have come up early to let his birds out of the cage. Doesn't he know that some of us cut along for a shower? Bunter, old fat man, you look like having to cut the bath this morning!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter was not likely to cut along for a shower that morning, or any morning. Bunter was not keen on it, even in the summer, and in the winter wild horses would not have dragged him under the shower. But there were more energetic and vigorous fellows in the Remove, and Bob Cherry was one of them.

Bob proceeded to thump on the door. "Better stop that!" said Harry Wharton. "If Quelch comes up he won't come up in a good temper."

"Blow his temper!" retorted Bob.

"Does he think that none of us wants any more washing than Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Thump, thump, thump! Bang!

Bob wanted to cut along to the bathroom at the end of the dormitory for his usual shower. Likewise, he wanted to kick up a row, which was one of his little failings. So he thumped and banged, and banged and thumped.

"Look here, Quelch ought to come up!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "Let's make a dooce of a row till he does!"

"He will bring a cane with him!" grinned Skinner. "I'm keeping quiet."

"Blow his cane! He must have forgotten that he locked us in. I'm jolly well going to fetch him up!"

And Smithy joined Bob at the door and gave vigorous aid in thumping and banging. But he paused suddenly.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed. "Is that an echo? Listen!"

The thumping ceased, but from a distance, like an echo, came a sound of heavy knocking.

Knock, knock, knock, knock!

"Well, my only hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Is somebody else locked in and can't get out?"

"Sounds like it."

"But what—and who—"

"Oh, go it!" said Smithy. "We'll bring the whole school up if Quelch doesn't come and let us out! The old ass must have forgotten!"

Thump! Bang! Thump! Bang!

Five or six more fellows joined the two at the door, and the din was terrific.

Obviously it must have been heard all over the House, and must have reached Mr. Quelch's ears, wherever he was. It was really extraordinary that the Remove master did not arrive, even if he had forgotten turning the key on his Form. But there was a footstep and a voice at last.

"Stop that row in there, you young sweeps!" It was the voice of Wingate of the Sixth.

"We're locked in, Wingate!" roared Bob.

"I know that. Keep quiet, will you?"

"But we want to get out!" yelled Smithy.

"You can't till Quelch comes with the key."

"Well, why doesn't he come?"

"He can't get out of his room."

"Why not?"

"Somebody screwed his door in the night. Now keep quiet!"

Wingate tramped away, and there was no more knocking and thumping in the Remove dormitory. The juniors stared at one another blankly. Wingate's news had taken their breath away.

"Oh gad!" gasped the Bounder at last, his eyes dancing. "Quelch screwed up in his room! The jolly old ragger again! Ha, ha, ha!"

"And he locked us in!" yelled Bob. "Locked us in to keep that naughty boy off the warpath! He will have to own up now that it wasn't a Remove man! Screwed up in his room! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared all the Remove.

Quelch, probably, was not enjoying the novel experience of being screwed up in his room. But it had quite a hilarious effect on Quelch's Form, and they roared.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

No Exit!

KNOCK, knock!

Mr. Quelch tapped savagely on the inner side of his door.

Really it was unnecessary. His knocking had long ago drawn attention to his plight.

CLUB FOR FOOTBALL FANS!

Boys, here's your chance! Clifford Bastin (yes, the Clifford Bastin you all know) has formed a club, and on joining, every member receives an exciting book all about the big clubs and the League, called: "The Inside Story of Football." It has been specially written by George Allison, the famous Radio commentator. It's thrilling and packed with exciting incidents and lots of grand pictures of star players in action. This book also tells you how all Bastin Club members can get lots of splendid free gifts. If you want a copy, turn to page 23, where you will find full details for joining the club and also illustrations of some of the free gifts.

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First-aid was being rendered. Trotter, the page, was at work with a screwdriver outside. Wingate of the Sixth had found another screwdriver, and was helping. Several masters had gathered round—Prout and Capper and Hacker—and several Sixth Form prefects. The masters looked amazed and shocked, and the prefects tried to do so, though there were suppressed grins on some faces.

Knock, knock! Rap, rap!
"Cannot you open this door?" came Mr. Quelch's voice, in tones of concentrated bitterness and anger.

"We're doing our best, sir!"
"My Form are locked in their dormitory. They cannot come out till I unlock the door, and I have the key here."

"I've told them, sir," said Wingate.
"Please unfasten this door at once!"
"There's a dozen screws, at least—"
"Pah!"

Wingate breathed rather hard.
Quelch, inside, could not see how securely his bed-room door was fastened. The fellows outside could. Quelch, when he had at first tried to open that door, had supposed that it was jammed in some inexplicable way. He had knocked for assistance, and learned, with amazement and fury, that he was screwed in.

The screwing had been done well—very well indeed! As the door, like most doors, opened inwards, it was not easy to screw fast from outside. But the screwdriver had accomplished the task quite well.

A gimlet—a big gimlet in a strong hand—must have been used to pierce the thick old oak. All round, slanting holes had been bored through the edges of the door into the door-frame, and every hole had a long screw driven into it well up to the head. And that was not all. Along the bottom of the door a row of screw-eyes had been driven into the floor, and through each screw-eye was a screw, driven into the door.

It was not surprising that Quelch had not been able to pull that door open. A powerful horse could not have pulled it open!

Not until the last screw was out would that door open, and the extraction of long, strong screws, well driven in, was a lengthy and laborious task.

Inside, Quelch fairly raged. Outside, two screwdrivers laboured wearily, unwinding obstinate screws.

Quelch had heard no sound in the night. The fell work had been done silently. It must have taken more than an hour—probably much more. It had been hard and patient work. Quelch was a prisoner in his room—as safe as the prisoner in the punishment-room; indeed safer, if he had only known it. He breathed wrath; he breathed fury.

"Amazing!" said Mr. Prout. "Unprecedented! A member of Dr. Locke's staff screwed—actually screwed—in his room! Astounding! Unparalleled!"

"Extraordinary!" said Mr. Capper. "Very surprising indeed!"

"I am surprised at nothing—nothing in the Remove!" said Mr. Hacker, shrugging his thin shoulders. "At nothing! That unruly Form—"

"I can hear your words, sir!" came a savage bark from Quelch's room. "I can hear your remarks, Mr. Hacker!"

"I have no objection to your hearing my remarks, sir!" retorted the Acid Drop. "You will hardly maintain, sir, that this is proper conduct for the boys of your Form—"

"Of your Form, more probably, Mr. Hacker!" came an angry roar. "This is not the work of Remove boys."

"Really, sir—"

"My dear Quelch," boomed Prout, "obviously boys of your own Form!"

"Obviously nothing of the kind!"



Mr. Quelch put a heated face out of the window and gasped for breath. Smoke eddied past him at the window and rolled out into the quad. "Goodness gracious, Quelch," stuttered Mr. Prout, staring up from the quad below, "how—how—how did a pail get on your chimney-pot?"

roared the imprisoned Form-master. "My Form, sir, were locked in their dormitory last night, on suspicion, sir, that one of them was the young rascal who wrecked my study—a suspicion, sir, which I see now to be unfounded, for this is evidently the work of the same hand. Whoever has done this, sir, it was not a Remove boy."

"My dear sir—"
"I repeat, sir, that the Remove were, and are, at this moment locked in their dormitory!" bawled Mr. Quelch. "Are any of my Form out of their dormitory yet, Wingate?"

"No, sir. They were banging to be let out, and I went to stop them," answered the Greyfriars captain.

"I am glad of it!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "I am very glad of it! It is proof—proof positive—that the young scoundrel who has done this is not a Remove boy! It was not a Remove boy,

because it cannot have been! Do you hear me, Mr. Hacker? Do you hear me, Mr. Capper?"

"Extraordinary!" said Mr. Capper.

"Um!" said Mr. Hacker. "Are you sure, Wingate, that the Remove are locked in their dormitory?"

"Quite, sir! Mr. Quelch locked them in last night, and he has the key in his room. They cannot be let out till we get this door open!"

"I can hardly believe that any boy of any other Form—"

"You may believe it, sir!" came Quelch's angry roar. "You may certainly believe it, sir, as it is obviously the case! I desire you, Mr. Hacker, to question the boys of your Form—"

"What?"

"Probably the young rascal who has screwed my door is a Shell boy—"

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"Absurd!" said Mr. Hacker, and he walked away.

"My dear Quelch——" exclaimed Mr. Capper.

"Mr. Capper I desire you also to question the Fourth Form! Probably it was a Fourth Form boy——"

"Impossible, sir!" said Mr. Capper, and he walked away after Hacker.

"Come, come, my dear Quelch!" boomed Mr. Prout. "No doubt some Remove boy, in some manner, contrived to get out of his dormitory——"

"No Remove boy contrived, in any manner, to perform an impossibility, Mr. Prout! Kindly question the boys of the Fifth Form——"

"What?" gasped Prout.

"Possibly——indeed——probably——the young rascal is a Fifth Form boy——"

"Sir! I decline to entertain any such suggestion for one moment!" exclaimed Mr. Prout indignantly. "My Form, sir, is a senior Form, and certainly not given to playing absurd pranks like Remove boys—no boy in my Form is capable——"

"Nonsense!"

"What did you say, Mr. Quelch?"

"I said nonsense, Mr. Prout!"

"Upon my word!"

Prout, as red as a turkey-cock, rolled away after Capper and Hacker. Prout did not like hearing his remarks described as nonsense! He had no use whatever for these painful truths.

"Wingate! Can you get this door open?" came a concentrated hiss through the keyhole.

"We're doing our best, sir——"

"I cannot remain here! My Form cannot remain in their dormitory! Do you not understand that, Wingate?"

Wingate breathed harder. Quelch, really, was a little unreasonable. Wingate was doing his best—neither was it a duty of a Sixth Form prefect to handle a screwdriver at all.

"How long are you going to be, Wingate?"

"At least another half-hour, sir——"

"What?" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"More than that, I'm afraid, sir."

"Upon my word!"

"Oh, my eye!" gasped Trotter. "These 'ere screws is tough! They've been drove in 'ard, and no mistake! My 'ands is aching"

"Trotter! Make an effort—do not be lazy——"

"Oh! Yessir! They're 'ard, sir! P'r'aps you'd like me to go and tell Gosling to put up his ladder to the winder, sir——"

"What?"

"You could get out at the winder, sir——"

"Silence, you stupid boy!" roared Mr. Quelch. The Remove master could not quite see himself clambering out of a bed-room window and slithering down a long ladder!

"Oh! Yessir!"

"Wingate! My boys must be released from their dormitory. Send someone out of the House, and I will drop the dormitory key from the window."

"I'll go, sir!" said Wingate, glad to get a rest. "You take a turn on the screwdriver, Loder."

Loder of the Sixth took the screwdriver—and grinned. He had no fancy for screw-driving, and had no intention of using it.

"Oh, certainly," he said, in a loud voice for Quelch to hear. And he stood with the screwdriver in his hand, and winked at Walker of the Sixth, who suppressed a chuckle.

Wingate went out of the House and held the dormitory key, which Quelch

dropped from the window. Key in hand, he repaired to the Remove dormitory, and the Remove door, at long last, was unlocked. All the Remove were dressed by that time; it was long past their usual time for coming down.

"Quelch still screwed up, Wingate?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes!" grunted Wingate. "You kids cut down—the bell's just going for prayers."

Wingate tramped away to resume his weary task at Mr. Quelch's door. A hilarious Remove trooped down the stairs.

Two places were vacant at prayers that morning. Wingate was still wearily unscrewing screws, and Mr. Quelch was still a prisoner in his room. Neither did the Remove master appear at the breakfast table. At that table, there were many smiling faces—but one, that certainly would not have been smiling, was absent. While the Remove ate a cheery breakfast, Quelch was still in his room, raging—less like a Form-master, in those infuriated moments, than a tiger in a cage!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Smoked Out!

"ALL right for us!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!"

"I say, you fellows, Quelch will have to let us off now!" declared Billy Bunter. "He can't make out that it was a Remove man now."

"No fear!" grinned the Bounder.

The Remove fellows were feeling quite bucked when they gathered at their Form-room door that morning.

The mystery of the mysterious ragger was deeper than ever. For, if he was not a Remove man, it was utterly inexplicable why he should have chosen the Remove master as his especial victim.

But that did not alter the fact that, now that it was demonstrated beyond doubt that he was not a member of the Remove, the sentence of detention on that Form would have to be lifted.

Quelch's own precaution, in locking the Form in their dormitory overnight, had proved that no member of that Form was the ragger! Nobody could have got out of the locked dormitory to carry on with the rag.

The deepening of that strange mystery did not worry the Removites. They discussed it, they wondered and surmised, but chiefly they looked forward to getting off detention.

Eager eyes were turned on Mr. Quelch when he came to the Form-room. His face was set; it was clear that his temper had not recovered from the effects of being screwed up in his room.

At the same time, Quelch was undoubtedly relieved in his mind. He was glad that the mysterious night ragger was not one of his own boys.

It was not pleasant for any Form-master to have to admit to the other beaks that a member of his Form had the audacity to rag him, in the most outrageous way, and that he was unable to deal with the offender, or even detect him.

Many sarcastic remarks had been made in Common-room on the subject of the Remove and Mr. Quelch's management of that Form since the wrecking of his study, and the escape with impunity of the wrecker.

Now, however, the other beaks had nothing more to say—indeed, Capper and Hacker and Wiggins were wondering uneasily whether that rascally

ragger might not be in the Fourth, or the Shell, or the Third.

Quelch had requested them, grimly, to make investigations in their Forms—now that it was made perfectly clear that the culprit was not a Remove man!

This was a consolation to Mr. Quelch, a relief and a comfort. So, though his feelings towards that mysterious ragger were very bitter, he was no longer embittered towards his own Form.

In the Remove room, he found all eyes fixed on him expectantly; and he quite understood what was in all minds. He smiled faintly, though he was not, that morning, in a smiling mood.

"My boys," he said quietly, "it is now clear—happily clear—that no one here was concerned in the late outrages. I am glad of this—very glad indeed! I am glad that there is no such disrespectful and lawless boy in the Remove. The fact is beyond dispute, as another outrage occurred last night, while my Form was locked in the dormitory. I shall therefore——"

The Remove hung on his words, as they seldom did when he was imparting the most valuable instruction!

"I shall, therefore," continued Mr. Quelch, "rescind the sentence of detention passed on this Form. No holidays will be cancelled. I am satisfied that no boy here knows anything about the matter. There will be no detention for the Remove."

At which, the Remove nearly gave a cheer!

It was, of course, the least Quelch could do, and no doubt he was pleased to do it! At all events, his Form were pleased. Every face in the Remove was brighter after that announcement.

It was quite a cheery Form that was dismissed for break that morning. Mr. Quelch—not so cheery as his Form—went to his study.

That study had been newly swept and garnished, so to speak, since the late ragging. It presented its wonted aspect. A bright fire glowed in the grate, very grateful and comforting on a cold and frosty morning.

Mr. Quelch sat down, with a grim wrinkle in his brow. He was trying to think out that mysterious problem. Some Greyfriars boy—not, he was now satisfied, a member of his own Form—had set out to rag him unmercifully. How was that young rascal to be discovered?

Until he was discovered, Quelch was at his mercy—for he could hardly suspect that the ragger, encouraged, too, by impunity, was done with him yet! On Thursday night he had wrecked Quelch's study—on Friday night he had screwed up his door and left him a prisoner in his bed-room—what was he planning to do on Saturday night, Quelch wondered.

There was nothing to stop him! He had locked his own Form in their dormitory, and thus, incidentally, proved their innocence! But he could not lock other Forms in their dormitories!

The ragger might be in the Fourth or the Shell, possibly in the Third, or even in the Second. He might be a senior—scornfully as Prout repudiated the suggestion that such a character might be found in the Fifth! But which—and who—and why?

Why? That was the deepest mystery! A Remove fellow might think of avenging lines, or detentions, or whoppings. But a Form-master, of course, never gave lines, or detentions, or whoppings, outside his own Form!

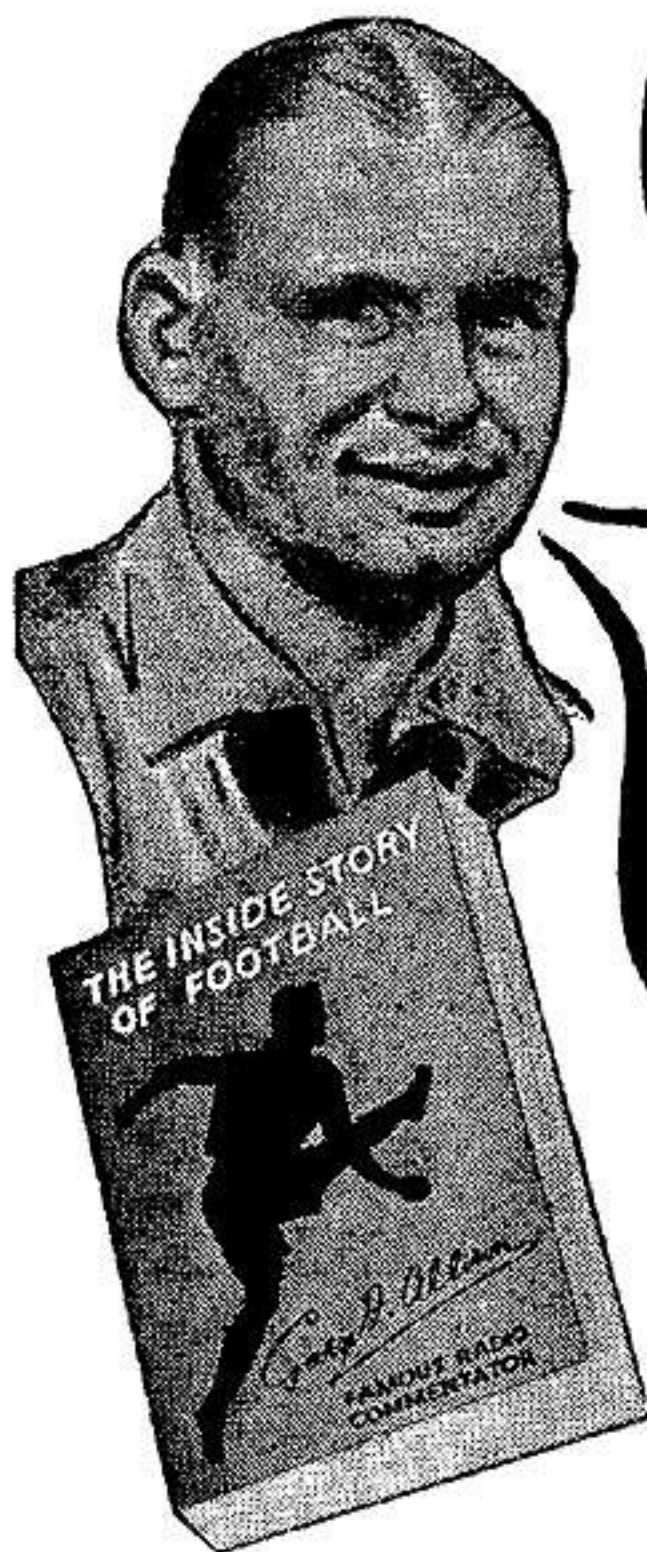
The Bounder had suggested that Quelch might have trodden on some fellow's corns! But Quelch, pondering

(Continued on page 24)

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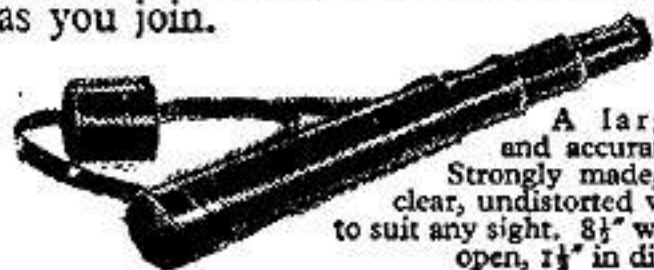
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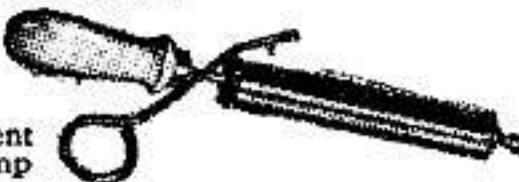
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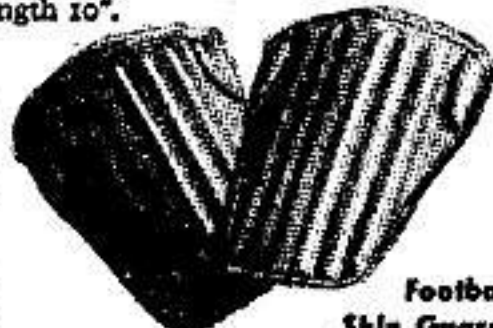


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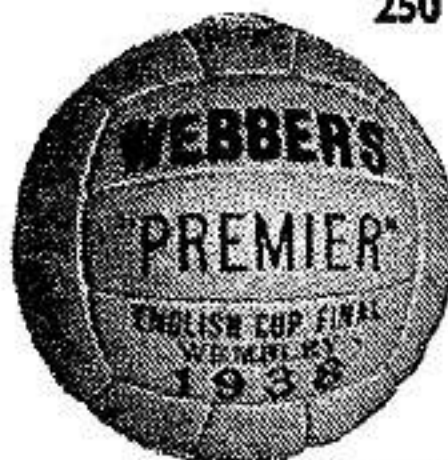


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over the strange affair, could not think of any fellow, in any Form, who had any cause for this malicious persecution.

Only one fellow at Greyfriars had cause, or fancied cause; and that fellow was under lock and key in the punishment-room.

Quelch was an acute man, an experienced schoolmaster, and generally equal to any occasion; but he had to confess himself utterly perplexed by this strange mystery.

Deep in thought, he did not notice, for some time, that the study was becoming smoky.

But he noticed it at last, as he gave an irritated cough. He reached for the poker and stirred the fire.

That, however, did not improve matters. Rather it seemed to make them worse. A heavy volume of smoke rolled out into the room, and Mr. Quelch gasped and coughed and spluttered as he caught it.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, starting to his feet in intense annoyance. "Really—Grooogh! Upon my—urrgh—word—gurrgh!"

He backed away from the fire-grate, coughing, turned to the window, and threw it wide open.

Something seemed wrong with the chimney. What had gone wrong with it was a mystery; nothing had been wrong when Quelch sat down in the study. But, only too clearly, something was wrong now.

Smoke, blacker and blacker, rolled out. It rolled in dense volumes. The study reeked and eddied with it.

Mr. Quelch put a heated face out of the window, and gasped for breath. Smoke eddied past him at the window, and rolled out into the quad. Naturally, it attracted attention there!

It was quite uncommon to see a Form-master, with a red face, leaning out of a window and coughing, with eddies of smoke rolling out round him!

"I say, you fellows, Quelch's chimney is on fire!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I say, his study's full of smoke! He, he, he!"

A dozen fellows stared up.

"It's not on fire, fathead!" said Bob

Cherry. "But—what the thump—" "What on earth—" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Bounder. "Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter in the quad. Fellows came racing up from all sides, joining the crowd staring upward and yelling.

Mr. Quelch glared at them, from his window. He was being smoked out of his study—he could not see across the room now. Smoke rolled out of the window in black volumes. It was no laughing matter to Quelch!

"Bless my soul!" Mr. Prout, who was walking in the quad, rolled up, portly and astonished. "Quelch! What is the matter? A fire—"

"Nothing is the matter, except that the chimney appears to be choked!" gasped the Remove master. "I cannot understand why—"

Prout stared up! His eyes almost popped from his portly face! He, and the fellows in the quad, could see what Mr. Quelch could not see from the study—the summit of a chimney high above! And what he saw astonished Prout.

"Goodness gracious, Quelch, how—how—how did a pail get on that chimney-pot?" he stuttered.

Quelch jumped.

"A what—" he howled.

"A pail—apparently a tin pail—"

"Nonsense!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"How could there be a tin pail on a chimney-pot? Do not be absurd, Mr. Prout!"

"I repeat, sir, that there is a tin pail on that chimney-pot—inverted, sir, over the top of the chimney!" snorted Prout. "That, no doubt, is the cause of the smoke in your study—"

"Impossible! How—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, somebody's got out of the garret window, and bonnetted Quelch's chimney with a pail!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quelch, there is certainly a pail! Probably Trotter could remove it, if you requested him! But there certainly is a pail!" boomed Prout.

Mr. Quelch did not say that it was

nonsense, or that it was absurd, now! He realised what had happened!

It was the ragger again!

Hitherto, he had ventured to carry on only by night, under cover of darkness. Now, for the first time, he had ventured on a rag in the daylight!

Some fellow, high up in the building, had clambered out of a garret window, and jammed a pail over Quelch's chimney, to smoke him out of his study!

No one was likely to see him at it! No one, of course, was likely to be looking up at a high roof—till the smoke drew attention! He had nipped out and bonnetted the chimney, and nipped in again! Who? Why?

Quelch gasped—between fury and smoke! He turned from the window, leaving a volume of smoke eddying out there. He had to grope his way to the table—the interior of the study was like a thick fog! He groped, and found a cane—and with that cane in his grip, he groped to the door, and tore it open.

Smoke followed him out of the study—smoke rolling in dense volumes. Quelch did not heed it. He made for the staircase—and he went up the stairs two at a time.

He fairly flew! He had a faint, but attractive, hope of catching that ragger before he could escape—no one was allowed up in the garrets, no one was allowed up in the dormitories, in the daytime. Any boy found above the studies had to give an account of himself! Unless he had dodged down very swiftly, Quelch had a chance of cornering him!

But it seemed that he had!

For a quarter of an hour Quelch rooted in garrets, and drew passages and box-rooms. But he found no one—no sign of anyone! He descended, at last, with set lips, almost pale with anger. The mystery ragger had smoked him out of his study—and got away with it!

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Watchers Of The Night!

"YOU fellows game?"

Bob Cherry sat up in bed, after lights-out in the Remove that night.

Some of the fellows were asleep; Billy Bunter's snore woke the echoes. But several voices answered.

"Which and what?" asked the Bounder.

"The gamefulness is terrific, my esteemed Bob! But what—" yawned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"We're not locked in to-night!" said Bob. "Who's game to come out and snaffle the jolly old mystery man?"

"Oh!"

"Bet you he'll be on the warpath again to-night!" continued Bob. "He's making a jolly old habit of it. I'd like to snaffle him! I don't see letting any man outside the Remove rag our beak!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned Johnny Bull. "Goodness knows who he is," went on Bob. "But he's set out to make Quelch tired of life, and I don't see it! What has Quelch done to him?"

"Goodness knows," said Frank Nugent. "But he must have trodden on the chap's corns pretty hard, some time, to set him going like this."

"Well, we're not standing for it," said Bob. "Quelch is our beak, and we ain't going to have a fellow in another Form turning his hair grey—what he's got left! Look here, whatever dorin he comes from, he has to pass the big landing to go downstairs—and a fellow keeping watch there could snaffle him as easy as falling off a form."

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"Good egg!" said the Bounder at once. "I'm on!"

"Rot!" said Skinner. "A chap out of his dorm might be taken for the ragger—if he was copped."

"Not a party of us," said Bob. "Besides, they know the man ain't in the Remove now. What about it, Wharton?"

Harry Wharton did not reply for a moment. He had, as a matter of fact, been thinking of getting out of the dormitory, to pay a surreptitious visit to the punishment-room, and have a word with Tracy through the door. Now that he knew the real cause of the bad hat's punishment, he was anxious to set matters right, as much as he could. Still, that could wait.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "I'd like to get hold of that ragging ass, as much as anybody. We can't give him away to the beaks, if we get him—but we can give him a jolly good hiding, as a tip to leave Quelch alone."

"That's the idea!" agreed Bob. "Whether he's in the Shell, or the Fourth, or the Fifth, he ain't going to rag our beak! Besides, to tell the frozen truth, I'm jolly curious to know who the chap is."

"Same here!" agreed Harry.

"The samefulness is terrific."

"No good going yet," said Vernon-Smith. "The blighter won't get going before everybody's gone to bed. Eleven at the earliest—"

"I'll call you at eleven!" said Bob.

"I'll call you, more likely!" chuckled Smithy.

"Well, you're more used to late hours than I am!" said Bob cheerily. "If Tracy was here, we could rely on having a chap awake to hear the chimes at midnight—he's a regular night-bird—"

"Oh, shut up!" came from Hazel's bed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's biting you, Hazel?" asked Bob, in surprise. "Want me to turn out and cosh you with a pillow?"

"Oh, go and eat coke! Tracy's a better chap than you'll ever be!" snarled Hazel.

"Is he?" ejaculated Bob. "Then I must be a much badder chap than I've ever suspected! I think I'll turn out with that pillow—"

"Chuck it, old man!" said Harry Wharton hastily. He could understand why Hazel spoke up for the absent bad hat if Bob could not. "Better get some sleep, if you're turning out at eleven."

"Right-ho!" Bob laid his head on the pillow. "Sharp at eleven, Smithy—call me if I don't call you."

It was, as a matter of fact, Vernon-Smith who did the calling when the chime of eleven boomed from the clock-tower. Smithy, as Bob had remarked, was more used to late hours than the other fellows. He turned out as the last stroke of eleven died away, and moved from bed to bed, shaking shoulders.

Seven fellows were turning out—the Famous Five, Vernon-Smith, and Peter Todd. They yawned, rubbed their eyes, turned out, and half-dressed in the dark. Some of them, perhaps, rather wished that Bob had not thought of that bright idea, when it came to turning out of warm beds on a cold winter's night. However, they all turned out.

"It's kik-kik-cold!" remarked Peter, with a shiver.

"Quelch will make it hik-hik-hot for us if he catches us out of the dorm!" said Bob comfortingly.

"Fathead!"

"Not too much jaw!" said the Bounder. "We don't want the blighter to know we're up. Come out quietly—"

mind how you barge about with those feet of yours, Cherry."

"You silly ass—"

"Quiet!" said Harry Wharton.

"Come on!" said the Bounder.

He opened the dormitory door softly, almost without a sound. Smithy was more used to proceedings of this sort than the other fellows! Six juniors followed him in silence, and the Bounder shut the door again noiselessly.

In file, on tiptoe, they trod down the passage to the big landing at the end. All was in dense darkness there.

There was no doubt that Bob's plan was a good one. Many passages opened off that extensive landing—one of them leading to a back staircase at the top of which was the corridor to the punishment-room; most leading to dormitories for the various Forms. Any fellow who went down in the night had to cross that landing to the stairs; and with seven fellows on the watch he could hardly cross it unheard, if unseen.

It was probable, if not certain, that the mysterious ragger would be up again that night. On two successive nights he had carried on successfully; and success would encourage him. Moreover, it was obvious that he was determined to make Quelch "sit up" and keep on sitting up! The seven had hardly a doubt that he would be up that night—and less doubt that they would snaffle him if he was.

They groped silently across the landing, and stopped in a row against the banisters. There they waited. The darkness was like the inside of a hat—and it was cold; there was no mistake about that!

But they did not expect to have to wait long. In point of fact, they had to wait much less time than they expected. It was more than a quarter past eleven when they took up their post, to watch and wait: and the half-hour had not yet struck when a sound came to their ears in the darkness.

Every fellow heard it—a soft and stealthy step; so soft that it would have been inaudible had they not been keenly listening!

From what direction it came they could not detect. Harry Wharton had an impression that it came from the staircase—but he dismissed that idea, for it was improbable that the ragger had been downstairs yet!

There was, at all events, no doubt about the sound—a light, cautious foot-fall, and a faint brushing as of some garment.

The watchers touched one another's elbows in the darkness. But they made no sound—listening intently.

Some figure, unseen, was on the landing. It did not seem to be going towards the stairs. Judging by the sounds, the unseen one was passing along in front of the row of juniors leaning on the banister, heading for a corner of the big landing. In that corner there was a settee; but they could hardly suppose that the ragger intended to sit down there in the dark!

In the darkness, the juniors waited and watched. That it was the mysterious night raider, they had not the slightest doubt.

Whatever he was up to, he was passing just in front of them—they could not see him, but the faint sounds indicated plainly where he was.

Harry Wharton gave the signal!

"Come on!" he breathed.

And he leaped forward, grasping at a dark shadow in the dark, and the other fellows followed him instantly. And there came a startled, gurgling gasp as an unseen figure was grasped in many hands, and came down with a bump on the landing.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Startling!

BUMP!

"Grooooooogh!"

"Got him!" breathed Bob.

"Pin him down!"

"Don't make a row—we don't want Quelch here!"

"Sit on him!"

"Keep him quiet!"

"Don't let him yell!"

Hurried whispers were exchanged among the juniors as they grasped the unseen one and pinned him down on the landing.

It was necessary to keep quiet, and to keep the ragger quiet! An alarm in the House at half-past eleven would have had altogether too serious a result for the fellows who were out of their dormitory!

Vernon-Smith groped for a face, and clapped a hand over a mouth, and jammed it hard there to keep back any startled yell that the surprised ragger might have uttered. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull got hold of a pair of legs—unexpectedly long—that were thrashing about, and held them fast. Nugent and Peter Todd had an arm each. Harry Wharton had a neck, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had an ear. The prisoner was safely held—and safely silent—that was all right!

He was gurgling horribly. But if he wanted to yell he could not! Smithy was taking care of that.

"Got him all right!" breathed Bob.

"Now keep quiet, you ass, whoever you are—it will be worse for you than for us if you make a row and bring a beak here."

"Gurrgh!"

"Who are you, you cheeky rotter?" asked Harry Wharton. "We've got you, and we're going to know! Who are you, you rotter?"

"He can't tell you while I'm jamming his jaw shut!" chuckled the Bounder. "I'm keeping him mum!"

"Wurrrrrgh!"

"It's a senior," breathed Bob. "He's got jolly long legs! It ain't a junior at all—it's a senior! Might be that ass Coker of the Fifth—he's got long spindleshanks—"

"Shouldn't wonder—Coker's ass enough!"

"Woogh!" came a gurgle.

"Pin him!" said Harry, as the unseen figure struggled convulsively. "The silly ass doesn't seem to care whether he makes a row or not. He would care fast enough if a beak got him!"

"Quelch would like to get him!" chuckled Bob. "Quelch would give a term's salary to get him, I believe! Sorry for him if Quelch got him."

"Keep still, you thumping fathead!" whispered Harry, as the prisoner heaved frantically. "Do you want to bring Quelch here?"

"Urrrrgh!"

"Keep the silly idiot quiet—"

"I've got him!" said the Bounder grimly. "He can gurgle, but he won't yell while I've got his jaws! The mad ass would be sorry if he brought Quelch here—keep quiet, you fool!"

With combined efforts, the juniors clamped the struggling figure down to the landing. Smithy held his jaws as in a vice.

He could only utter a faint, mumbling gurgle. He was striving to speak or to yell, apparently regardless of the fact that it would have led to alarm and discovery. For his own sake, as well as their own, the Remove fellows had to keep him quiet. They were going to deal with that ragger; but they

did not want to give him away to official punishment.

"Like a blessed eel!" murmured Bob. "Well, we've got him all right! Keep quiet, fathead!"

"You blithering ass!" said Harry Wharton. "Can't you understand that if you make a row you'll bring the beaks here and get teco? We're jolly well going to stop your ragging our Form-master, but we don't want you to get sacked! Get that into your silly head!"

"Wurrrgh!"

"Somebody get a match," said Harry. "We're going to know who he is. Do you hear, you cheeky rotter? We're going to stop you ragging our beak! We jolly well knew you'd be up again to-night, and we've been watching for you, and we've got you! You're going to be hiked into our dorm, and given six of the best on your bags——"

"Grooogh!"

"And once we know who you are, we'll jolly well keep an eye on you afterwards!" continued the captain of the Remove. "And every time you rag Quelch, we'll jolly well rag you—see?"

"Wurrrgh!"

"Here's a match," said Bob.

There was a scratch in the darkness, and the flame of a match flickered. It glimmered on the sprawling, wriggling, gurgling prisoner in the hands of the seven Removites.

They gave him eager, curious looks, extremely keen to know who he was. But as they saw, in the glimmer of the match, there was a gasp of horror—seven gasps of horror blended into one.

What they saw was neither a senior nor a junior. What they saw was a figure in a tangled gown, with a bare head from which a mortar-board had rolled! And the familiar face was that of Henry Samuel Quelch!

Smithy's hand jerked from the jaw. Other hands dropped away from the prisoner.

The match went out. Seven Removites would have been glad to go out like the match. They gasped in sheer horrified amazement.

"Quelch!"

Mr. Quelch sat up. He gasped wildly, but he was able to speak now.

"You—you—you— How dare you! I repeat, how dare you! What are you doing out of your dormitory? Wharton—Cherry—Vernon-Smith——"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Quelch!"

"You—you—you roun' rascals!" gasped Quelch. He staggered to his feet, spluttering. "You—you——"

"Quelch!" gasped Harry Wharton, like a fellow in a dream.

It was long past the hour when Quelch went to bed. Not for a moment had any of the juniors dreamed that their Form-master was still up. Even had they guessed as much, they could never have supposed that he would be stepping about in the dark on the dormitory landing. But it was Quelch.

"Wharton!" almost hissed Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!" stuttered Harry. "Sorry, sir! We—we—we took you for—for the ragger, sir! We were after him!"

"You utterly stupid boy!"

"Oh!"

"You reckless, unthinking young rascals!"

"Um!"

The juniors stood still. It was useless to cut; Quelch had seen them in the light of the match, as they had seen him. The awfulness of what they had done almost overcame them.

They had had no doubt that the

creeper in the dark was the mysterious ragger. How could they have doubted? Even yet they could not imagine what Quelch was doing there at that hour in the dark. But it was Quelch, and they had collared their Form-master, bumped him down on the landing, grabbed him and pinned him, clamped his jaws shut! It was awful to think of.

They could not see Quelch now; they heard him gasping for breath in the darkness. Then suddenly there was a gleam of light as the Remove master turned on a flashlamp. It gleamed from horrified face to face.

They waited in dismay for the thunderstorm. It was a long minute before Mr. Quelch spoke again. But he was calming down.

The juniors did not think of it in that moment of horror, but what they had said to the supposed ragger had a placating effect on Quelch.

"You utterly foolish boys!" said the Remove master at last. "I can find some excuse for you, as I realise that your intentions were good——"

"Oh!"

It dawned on the juniors that Quelch, after all, oughtn't to be fearfully wild with them for standing up for him against the mysterious night ragger. That was a comforting reflection.

"But if anything of this kind should occur again, you will be reported to your headmaster for a flogging——"

"Oh!"

"Now go back to your dormitory, and take care that you do not leave it again!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"And make no noise!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "If that young rascal is abroad to-night he may hear you and take the alarm. Probably he has done so already."

"Oh!" gasped Harry. "You—you—you were going to keep watch for him, sir— Oh, my hat!"

They understood at last why Quelch was there in the dark.

"Go to your dormitory, and be silent!"

"Yes, sir!"

Seven crestfallen juniors crept back to the Remove dormitory as Quelch shut off the light. They went in in silence.

Vernon-Smith closed the door. Then he addressed Bob.

"Cherry, you idiot——"

"Who'd have thought it?" gasped Bob.

"You dummy!"

"Well, I had the idea of keeping watch for the swab, but how was I to know that Quelch had the same idea?"

"You blithering cuckoo!"

"Look here, Smithy——"

"You burbling dunderhead!"

"Well, we're well out of that!" said Harry Wharton, with a deep breath. "Might have been a flogging all round! Turn in!"

And the seven turned in, far from bucked at the result of their night watch, but greatly relieved at the way Quelch had taken it.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER

Not The Ragger!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Trot out that pineapple, fat-head!"

"I say, I fancy that ragger's been here!"

"What?"

"It's gone!" said Bunter.

It was after class on Monday. Frank Nugent, being the happy possessor of a pineapple, had asked his chums to join

him in the disposal of the same—which they were quite prepared to do. The mere word "pineapple" had caused Billy Bunter to roll up to Study No. 1 with the Famous Five.

That pineapple was—or should have been—in the study cupboard. Billy Bunter rolled first into the study, rolled over to the cupboard, opened it, and blinked in through his big spectacles. He blinked, and he groped, and then he made that surprising announcement.

"Rot!" said Harry Wharton. "It's right under your nose, you blind owl!"

"Well, I can't see it!" answered Bunter. "Look! That ragger's been here, you fellows! Must have cut in just after class."

The Famous Five came across to the study cupboard.

They eyed Billy Bunter before they eyed the interior of the cupboard. If that pineapple was missing, they would not have been surprised to see a bulge under Billy Bunter's jacket.

But there was no such suspicious bulge. And as Bunter had only just entered the study with them, evidently he could not have disposed of that pineapple in the way he would have liked to dispose of it. They stared into the cupboard.

A good many things were there—odds and ends of all sorts. There were various articles of crockery ware. But there was no pineapple to be seen.

"I say, you fellows, this is getting thick!" said Bunter. "That ragger's taking to raiding the studies now! He's had that pineapple all right. Cut in and snaffled it!"

The pineapple was conspicuous by its absence. Somebody, assuredly, had shifted it from the plate on which Nugent had left it. But it did not seem probable to the Famous Five that it was the mysterious night ragger.

That mystery ragger was, so to speak, no longer in the front-page news. For two nights and days nothing had been heard of him.

If he had been up on Saturday night it was very probable that he had heard the night watchers handling Quelch and taken the alarm, as the Remove master had feared might be the case. At all events, it was certain that Quelch had watched in vain, and no discovery had been made.

The juniors suspected that Quelch had watched the next night, too; but, if so, it had been equally in vain. If the mysterious night ragger was "wise" to it that watch was being kept, as seemed likely, no doubt he had sagely made up his mind to lie low for a time, if not to chuck up his mysterious ragging altogether.

That he had taken to daylight raiding and had snooped a pineapple from a Remove study did not seem probable to the Famous Five. But that pineapple, certainly, was not to be seen; clearly it was not parked anywhere about Bunter's fat person; and they knew that the fat grub-raider had not been up to the studies since class till he came up with them. So where was that pineapple?

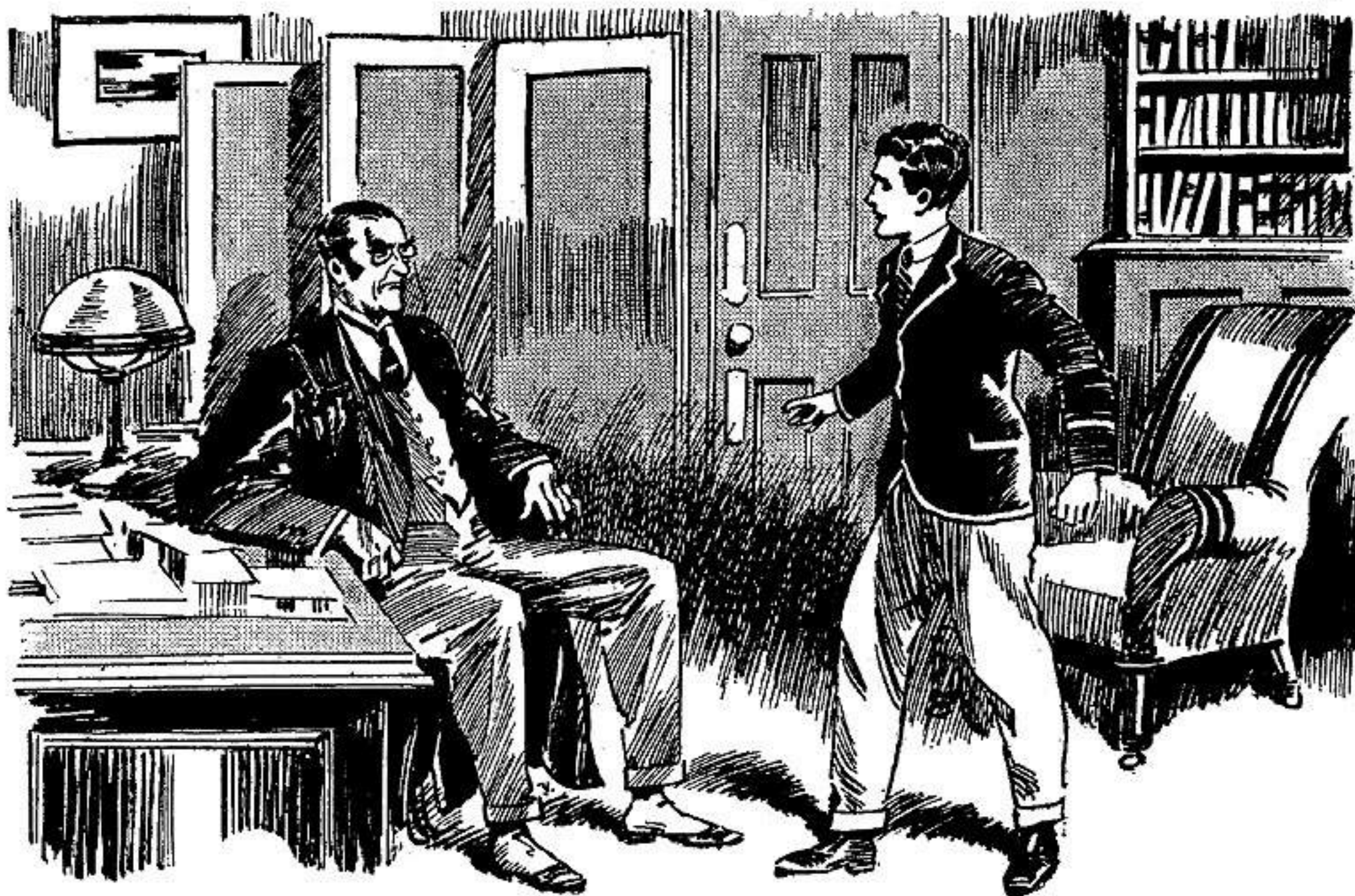
"Look here, it was jolly well there on that plate!" said Frank Nugent. "You saw it there, Harry—when I put it in the cupboard."

"I did!" agreed Wharton. "It's gone——"

"That ragger!" said Bunter. "Couldn't have been anybody else! I mean to say, nobody in the Remove would take a fellow's pineapple——"

"You jolly well would if you had a chance, you bloated brigand!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull——"



"You are telling me, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch, "that Tracy was innocent of what was put to his charge—that his only fault was a thoughtless, but generous, desire to shield another boy—impossible!" "It's the truth, sir!" said Wharton.

"Well, the podgy pirate hasn't got it!" remarked Bob. "But somebody's jolly well had it—"

"That ragger!" declared Bunter. "I shouldn't wonder if it was a Fifth Form man! What about going along and looking in the Fifth Form studies—"

"And getting chucked out on our necks?" grinned Bob.

"I mean to say, I shouldn't wonder if a Fourth Form chap had it!" amended Bunter. "What about going along and looking in the Fourth Form studies?"

"I—I suppose it's possible that that ragger has been here!" said Harry Wharton slowly. "He's only been going for Quelch so far—but he may be giving Quelch's Form a turn—"

"Oh, it's him, right enough!" said Bunter positively. "I haven't the slightest doubt about that! I say, he mayn't be far off yet—what about cutting off and looking for him?"

The Famous Five eyed Bunter. His eagerness to send them in search of the pineapple-pincher was obvious. It was clear, in fact, that he wanted to get them out of the study!

"Might be only just up the passage!" urged Bunter. "Might catch him with the pineapple under his arm! I say, you fellows, don't waste time—cut after him, and—and see if he's about—"

"He hasn't got it under his jacket!" said Bob Cherry meditatively. "And he can't have hidden it in his mouth—even Bunter's mouth ain't big enough! So what does he want to scoot us off for?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinned, a dusky grin.

"Come onfully, my esteemed chums!" he exclaimed. "I think we have a terrific chance of getting that absurd pineapple back—"

"Yes, do!" urged Bunter. "Don't lose a minute! Don't lose a moment! You may get that ragger, you know,

and—and—the pineapple! Do buck up!"

The Co. followed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh from the study—doubtfully. The dusky junior drew the door half-shut. Then he winked at his surprised chums.

"Walk loudly, and come back tip-toefully!" he whispered. "Perhaps—possibly we shall then spot the ridiculous pineapple."

"Oh!" murmured Bob.

Grinning, the Famous Five tramped loudly up the passage. Then they turned, and walked back to Study No. 1 on tiptoe. Five heads were put round the half-open door looking into the study.

They beheld quite an interesting sight!

In the study cupboard was a biscuit tin. It had once contained biscuits, which had gone the way of all biscuits! It was supposed to be empty! At the present moment, however, it was not!

Bunter, standing at the study cupboard with a fat grin irradiating his podgy countenance, had taken the lid off that tin with his left hand, and with his right he was extracting a pineapple from the interior of the tin!

They gazed at him!

They knew now!

The astute fat Owl, when he went to the cupboard for the pineapple had found it there. He had coolly hidden it inside the biscuit-tin and announced that it was not there!

Now, having got shut of the Famous Five, he was taking it out of that biscuit-tin, with intentions that were only too easy to guess.

"He, he, he!" came a subdued chuckle from the fat Owl.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came like an echo in a roar from the doorway.

"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter jumped—in fact, he bounded! The pineapple dropped back into the biscuit-tin; the lid dropped

from the fat hand, and Bunter spun round in alarm.

"Oh!" he gasped. "I—I say, you fellows, you—you startled me! I—I say, wharrer you come back for? I—I say, that ragger will get away—with the pineapple, you know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, you fellows, do get after that ragger—a chap in the Shell, I fancy—he's got the pineapple—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry stepped to the cupboard, picked up the biscuit-tin and turned out the pineapple.

Billy Bunter eyed that proceeding in great dismay.

"Oh! Oh crumbs! There—there it is all the time!" he gasped. "I—I—I say, you fellows, I—I—I wonder how it got in that tin!"

"The wonderfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Inky sort of guessed it!" chortled Bob. "Well, here it is—it wasn't that ragger after all—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Big slice for Bunter!" said Bob, taking up a knife. "You'd like a big slice, Bunter?"

"Oh, yes, rather!" gasped Bunter, his fat face brightening. After the discovery of the pineapple—in such very suspicious circumstances—the fat Owl had rather feared that he was not going to get any.

"Mind if I give Bunter an extra big slice, Franky?"

"Not at all!" grinned Nugent.

"Here you are, Bunter!"

"I say—oh! Leggo my neck, you fat-head! I say, leggo! If you stick that pineapple down the back of my neck, I'll—groooogh! Oooogh! Oh, you beast, it's all wet and clammy—yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gerrogh! Beast!" shrieked Bunter, wriggling as the slice of pineapple slid down his fat back. "It's all clammy—gurggh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have another?" asked Bob, wielding the knife. "Mind if Bunter has another, Franky? Hold on a minute, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter made one bound to the door! He did not, apparently, want another slice of that pineapple! One—down his back—was enough for Bunter, if not one too many! That pineapple

was disposed of, without further assistance from Bunter!

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Light At Last!

HARRY WHARTON slipped quietly from his bed as eleven chimed out that night.

No one else was awake in the Remove dormitory; and he was careful to make no sound to awaken any of the other fellows.

But as he dressed quietly in the dark there was a stirring in one of the beds and a head lifted from a pillow.

"What — who's that?" came a muttering voice.

Hazel had awakened. He had not been sleeping soundly. He peered through the shadows at the captain of the Remove.

"Quiet!" whispered Harry. "I'm going to have a word with Tracy—the coast's clear to-night, I think—"

"Oh!" muttered Hazel. "I—I say, I—I'd come, but—but—I say, it's jolly risky—If Quelch should—"

"That's all right! Don't wake the fellows!"

Hazel muttered something and laid his head on the pillow again. He was not, in point of fact, so unmindful of what Tracy had done for him as the prisoner of the punishment-room supposed. But he lacked the nerve to go anywhere near the punishment-room; or even to get out of the dormitory at all after the fright he had had.

Harry Wharton trod softly to the door in his socks and opened it. All was dark and silent, and he stepped out and closed the door after him without a sound.

Almost on tiptoe he crept down the passage to the landing.

Whether Quelch was on the watch again he doubted, but he could not feel sure. For two nights the Remove master had watched in vain, and it did not seem probable that he would sit up a third night for the mysterious night ragger. But if, by chance,

he was up, the captain of the Remove was taking a good deal of risk. He hardly breathed as he reached the landing and trod softly along the passage which led to the back staircase up to the secluded punishment-room.

Once in that passage, he stopped to listen.

There was no sound! Quelch, probably, was not up; but if he was up, he had heard nothing.

Wharton moved on at last, groping silently up the dark passage.

At that hour, of course, he supposed that Tracy would be asleep in his solitary quarters. But a knock on the door would awaken him—and the room was secluded enough for a knock not to be heard elsewhere.

That the imprisoned junior would be glad of a word, from friend or foe, there was no doubt. But it was as a friend that Wharton was going.

Ever since he had learned the truth from Hazel he had been anxious to speak to Gilbert. His last words to him had been of angry scorn—his last action, a blow! He could hardly blame himself for his mistake, for such generous devotion in a fellow who was called the worst boy in the school, could never have been guessed. Even now, Wharton could hardly understand it; it was so out of keeping with Gilbert's character, as he had known him.

But there it was—Tracy had faced hard and heavy punishment, to save a weak and pusillanimous fellow who was not even his friend, and he had done it for Marjorie's sake. And Harry was keen to make what amends he could.

During the day, it was impossible to get near the punishment-room undetected. And for the last two nights, Quelch had been on the watch for the ragger. This was Wharton's first chance—and at the risk of the Remove master being on the watch again, he was not going to lose it.

He groped up the dark passage, and reached the narrow, winding stair at the end, which led up to the secluded corridor at the top of the building, at the end of which the punishment-room was situated.

The darkness was intense. And the silence was deep—till, as Wharton groped for the banisters, to guide his way up, he was startled by a sudden sound on the dark staircase in front of him.

He stood with beating heart, listening!

It was the sound of someone descending.

The captain of the Remove was not the only fellow up that night!

Up to that moment, he had been thinking only of Gilbert Tracy, and getting word with him through the locked door. But at that sound, he forgot Tracy!

Someone was up—groping about in the dark! Wharton did not need telling who it was! It was—and could only be—the mysterious ragger, the night prowler, up, and bent on mischief again!

Harry Wharton stood quite still!

He could see nothing. But he could hear—and what he heard was the sound of some fellow cautiously descending the stair in front of him.

It was—and could only be—the mysterious night ragger! Quelch, if he was up, would be keeping watch on the dormitory landing, as before. There was no imaginable reason why he should be on this spot. That back staircase led only up to the punishment-room, and nowhere else.

What the ragger was doing there was rather a puzzle! He must—Wharton

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supposed at least—have come out of one of the dormitories.

Possibly he had heard some faint sound from Wharton himself, cautious as he was, and had backed up that staircase out of the way.

Whatever the explanation, there he was—there was no doubt about that! He was coming cautiously down—and, when he reached the foot of the stair, he would be right in Wharton's grasp.

Wharton's face set grimly in the darkness.

He was out of bed to speak to Tracy—but Tracy could wait! This was a chance—an unexpected and lucky chance—of bagging the mysterious ragger, and discovering his identity!

A sound, or a movement, would have scared him back. Wharton made no sound, and no movement! He stood like a statue, suppressing his breathing, waiting for the descending fellow to run into him! He was ready to grasp him, the instant he did!

Closer came the soft footfalls, as the unseen figure picked its way down the dark stair! Harry Wharton caught a sound of breathing.

Then, suddenly, something unseen brushed against him. He heard a startled gasp, and, at the same moment, he threw out both arms, grasped the invisible figure, and bore it back bumping on the stairs.

"Oh!" came a gasping splutter. "Who—oh!"

"Got you this time!" said Harry Wharton. "Now I'm going to know who you are, you sneaking rotter!"

There was no reply from the unseen ragger. But he began to struggle, with savage and desperate energy.

But he struggled in vain. Wharton was the stronger of the two, and he had the fellow, whoever he was, at a disadvantage, down on his back on the stairs. That it was not a senior, was clear enough—a senior would have been able to throw him off. It was a junior, and Wharton was going to know which junior it was! For several long minutes, there was a scuffling struggle in the dark, but the captain of the Remove kept his grip unbroken.

The unseen junior relaxed his efforts at last, gasping. Wharton panted.

"I've got you!" he breathed. "Don't kick up a row, you dummy—Quelch may be up, for all I know! But I'm going to know who you are, and put a stop to your tricks! I—"

He broke off, with a sudden yelp. The fellow had kicked out, catching him on the shin.

For a moment, his grasp relaxed. That moment was enough for the mystery ragger. He wrenched himself away, and, as Wharton grasped at him again, scuttled up the staircase.

The captain of the Remove was after him like a shot. He tore in pursuit, up the narrow stair, and his hand touched an object, for a moment, but he missed his grasp. Then running footfalls sounded along the corridor that led to the punishment-room.

Wharton rushed on up the corridor. He had the fellow now—for the end of that corridor was blocked by the door of the punishment-room—locked on Tracy; and there was no escape!

The footfalls fled before him, but he was close behind. Then, suddenly, amazingly, a door was shutting in his face.

It was the door of the punishment-room—not locked, as he had supposed, but open—and it was into punny that the unseen one had fled, and he was shutting the door after him.

Harry Wharton staggered back in utter amazement.

Had he been a moment later he would have found that door shut, and could only have concluded that the mysterious night ragger had escaped in the dark. But he was so close at the fellow's heels that the door struck him as it shut, and flung him back! But only for a moment—then he was springing forward again, hurling the door wide open, before it could latch.

"Tracy!" he panted.

He plunged into the room. Panting, he peered in the darkness. He knew now—though what he knew utterly bewildered him.

"Tracy!" he repeated. "You—"

"Hang you!" Gilbert's voice came snarling from the dark. "Is that Wharton?"

"Yes, yes! I—"

"You fool!"

"It—it—it was you—you were the ragger!" stammered Harry. "How did you get out—have you got a key, or what? Oh crumbs! Nobody ever dreamed—"

There was a low chuckle.

"Keep it dark! Look here. Wharton, keep it dark! I've got a key—you can guess that now—I had it made weeks ago, at the time I had hold of the punishment-room key—you remember that—"

"Oh!" gasped Harry.

"Keep it dark!"

"You've got to chuck up ragging, then! You—"

Harry Wharton broke off. There was a gleam of light in the dark corridor. Footsteps came up to the open doorway. "Quelch!" breathed Harry.

"Then the game's up! You fool—"

A flash-lamp gleamed in at the open door.

Mr. Quelch stood there, light in hand!

Evidently the Remove master had been on the watch, after all, on the landing; evidently, also, he had heard some sound of the struggle and the chase, and had come along to investigate. His face was almost terrifying in its expression.

The two juniors looked at him—in silence—Harry Wharton in utter dismay, and even Gilbert a little daunted.

"Tracy!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"I presume that you have a key to this door!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Had such a suspicion occurred to me, I should not have needed telling who was guilty of the series of outrages that have taken place!" said Mr. Quelch bitterly. "Hand me that key at once."

Gilbert, in silence, handed over the duplicate key.

"Wharton! I shall deal with you in the morning! Come to my study after prayers! Now go back to your dormitory!"

Harry Wharton left the punishment-room in silence.

Mr. Quelch's eyes glinted at Gilbert.

"I understand now, Tracy!" he said.

"I understand all! To-morrow, you will be punished—most severely! Very severely indeed. That is all. Now go to bed."

Mr. Quelch stepped out, and shut and locked the door once more—safe now from unlocking from within. There was a grim satisfaction in his face as he went. The mysterious night ragger was mysterious no longer—and on the morrow he was to suffer for his sins! Harry Wharton, never dreaming of the truth, had run down the mysterious ragger—and landed Gilbert in the soup!

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

Giving Gilbert A Chance!

"COME in!" rapped Mr. Quelch. There was a gleam of wintry sunshine in the frosty morning. But it was not reflected in the face of the Remove master as he sat in his study after prayers—and rapped out "Come in," as a tap came at his door.

Quelch's face was set and grim as Harry Wharton entered—he gave his head boy his very grimmest look!

Wharton's face was not bright. Quite unintentionally he had landed Gilbert in worse trouble than ever—and he was wondering, with a worried mind, whether it might be possible to help him out. He had had a talk with Hazel before coming to Quelch's study, and he was going to do his best.

"Now, Wharton—" began Mr. Quelch, in his acidest tones. "I require an explanation—"

"I left my dormitory last night, sir, to speak to Tracy at the door of the punishment-room!" said Harry, colouring. "I am not excusing myself, sir, for breaking a rule; but I think I ought to tell you why I went to speak a friendly word to him."

"I was not aware that you were friends with the worst boy in the school, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch, with grim sarcasm.

"Tracy isn't that, sir! I thought so only a few days ago, but since I found out something, I was anxious to tell him that I was sorry—and that he would have friends in the Form when he came out—"

"Indeed! And what is it you have learned, Wharton, that is so much in favour of that bad and unscrupulous boy? I should certainly be glad to hear anything in his favour," said Mr. Quelch—still grimly sarcastic.

"I'm going to tell you, sir—but you will allow me not to mention names! I think, sir, that you can trust me, as your head boy!" said Wharton quietly.

"Last Wednesday night, sir, Tracy was not out of bounds, as you believed—as we all believed at the time."

"Wharton!"

"He had taken the place of another fellow, sir, who was out of bounds, and was in the dormitory all the time. The other fellow was out."

"Impossible!"

"It is true, sir! He has told you that he never went out of School bounds—only out of the House! That was true! He went out purposely to warn the—the fellow I'm speaking of, let him in by the Sixth Form lobby, and then climbed in at the box-room window—"

"Wharton!"

"Where you caught him, sir! He hadn't been out of the House more than a quarter of an hour. He never went out of the school. I know, sir, that as a master, you will blame him for standing between another fellow and being found out—but he had a reason—a good reason—he was grateful for a good turn that had been done him. He never went out of the school—and he allowed you to believe so, to see the other fellow through."

"Impossible!"

"That's the truth, sir!" said Harry. "I've had it from the other fellow, and he would have owned up, too, only he dare not. He knows I'm telling you—without mentioning his name."

Mr. Quelch sat staring at his head boy.

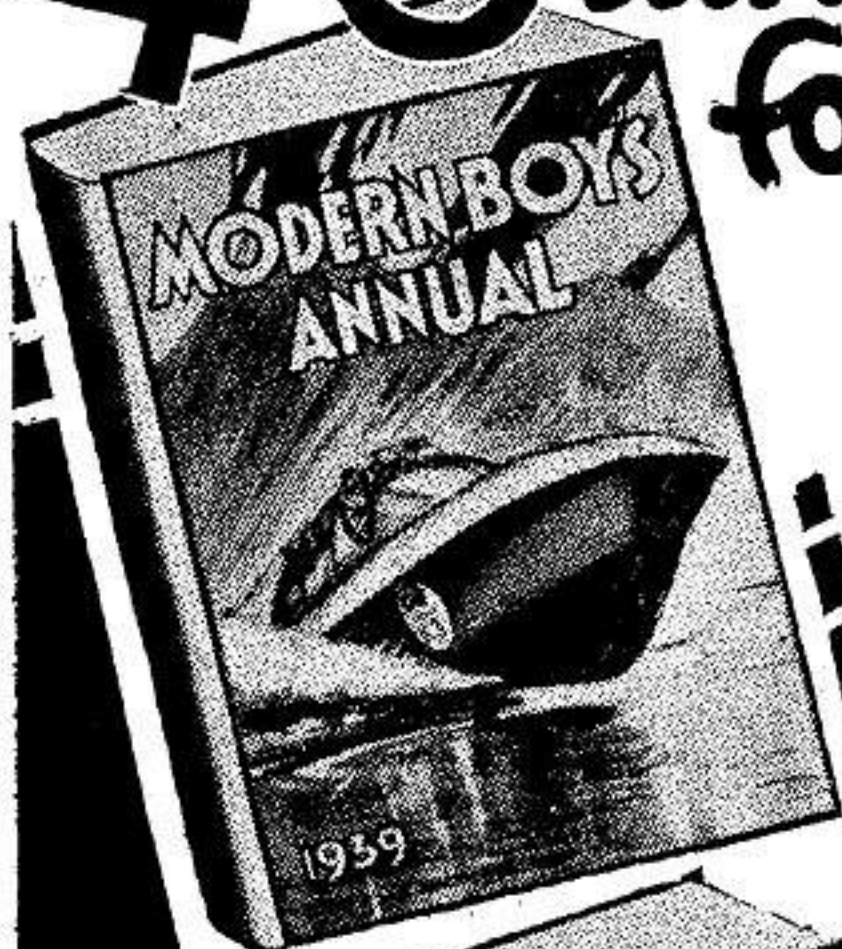
There was a long silence in the study.

"Impossible—impossible!" said Mr. Quelch at last. "That thoroughly un—"

(Continued on page 31.)

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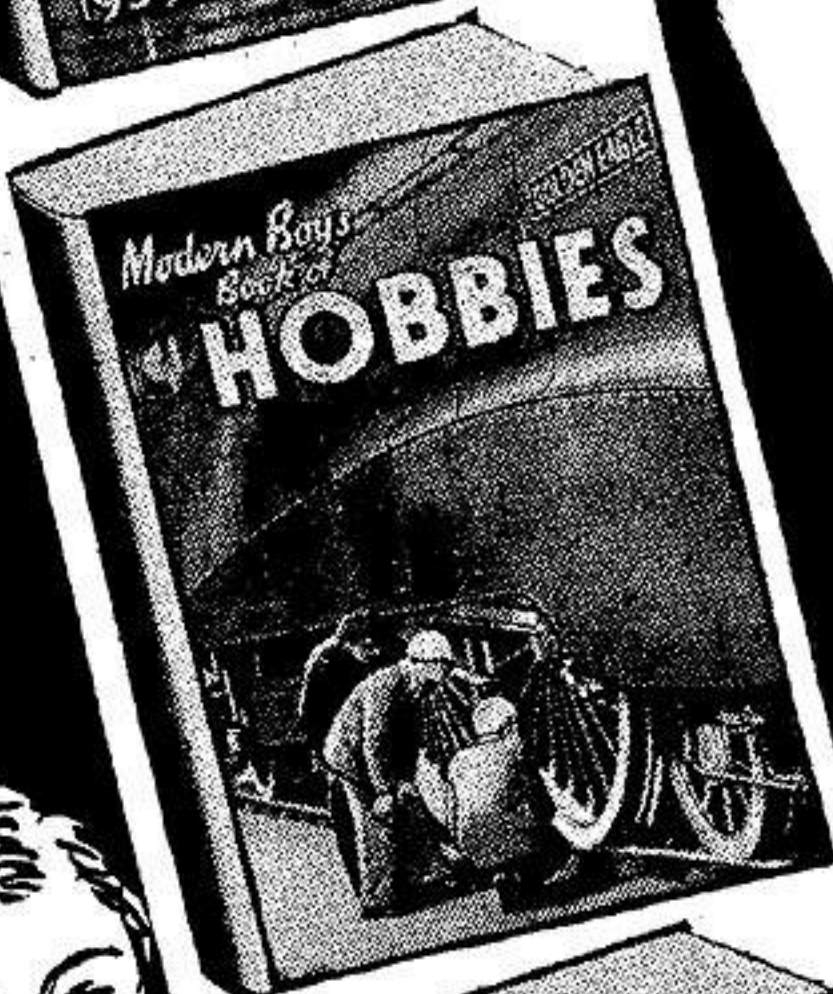
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scrupulous boy—the worst boy in the school—you are telling me, Wharton, that he was innocent of what was put to his charge—that his only fault was a thoughtless, but generous desire to shield another boy—impossible!"

"It's the truth, sir!"

Another long silence.

But Mr. Quelch's face was clearing.

"Wharton! I trust you, as my head boy—I know that you would not speak idly! But this is—extraordinary! If it is true, it gives me hope of the boy—but are you sure of its truth?"

"Quite sure, sir! It's the truth!" said Harry. "That's why I wanted to speak to him—to tell him I knew, and that I'd stand by him."

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch. "If this is true, it shows that the boy, however blameworthy, is capable of courageous and generous actions—it changes my opinion of him very considerably. I shall consider the matter very carefully before I deal with him further! I am glad that you have told me this, Wharton—very glad indeed! You may go!"

Harry Wharton went—with a lighter heart.

Mr. Quelch was left in deep, in very deep reflection. When, at last, he left his study, it was to go to the punishment-room. But he did not take a cane with him!

"Tracy!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Out of quod, old bean!"

"Tracy, by gum!"

The Remove were at their Form-room door, when there was a regular howl of astonishment at the sight of Gilbert Tracy. Gilbert, with a grin on his face, joined the crowd of juniors.

"I say, you fellows, he's got out!" gasped Billy Bunter. "I say, how did you get out, Tracy?"

"Did Quelch—" began Harry Wharton.

Gilbert nodded and grinned.

"I'm let off!" he drawled. "Let out of quod—not even whopped for all those giddy rags! Somebody's been telling Quelch what a nice boy I am—he says he has hopes of me—he must have a hopeful nature, what? Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen, I apologise for inflicting my improving society on you before you expected it—but it's Quelch's doing!"

"I'm jolly glad!" said Harry.

"The gladfulness is terrific!"

"And I'm glad, old chap!" breathed Hazel.

"Gratters, old bean!" said Bob Cherry.

Gilbert was in his old place in the Remove that morning. It was noticed—with considerable surprise—that he

was respectful and attentive in class. With still more surprise, the Remove heard Mr. Quelch give him a word of commendation—the first since he had come to Greyfriars! The worst boy in the school was being given a chance—and he seemed, for the present, at least, bent on making the most of it!

THE END.

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

ALTHOUGH my Chat has been unfortunately crowded out of the paper lately, I continue to receive a large number of letters from readers every week—a fact that gives me the greatest pleasure. The general opinion seems to be that the good old MAGNET was never better than now, and the Tracy series is meeting with universal approval.

Our new feature—"My Own Page"—will, I feel sure, satisfy the many readers who have been asking for a new sort of Portrait Gallery. I hope you will like the novel way I am "putting it over." This special Gallery is going to be the most complete one ever compiled.

"THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL."

This bumper feast of fun and fiction is better than ever. A word or two to those chums who have not yet purchased a "Holiday Annual." You don't want to miss this great treat, do you? Of course not! Then the only way to avoid disappointment is to order a copy RIGHT NOW!

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Talking about Christmas reminds me that I have some

EXTRA SPECIAL NEWS

for you. The week after next will see the GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER of the

MAGNET. Space will not permit me to say much about it now, but I am certain you will all vote it the finest CHRISTMAS number of the MAGNET you've ever seen—and that's saying something, what?

Make a note of the date now—December 17th. Issue—on sale Saturday, December 10th.

Among the many letters I have received this week is one from Jock Duncan, of Dundee, who signs himself "A Friend of Bunter, and a Lover of Fair Play." My correspondent thinks we have been dealing too harshly with the fat Remove of late. He thinks that Bunter has

A VERY HARD LIFE.

Well, perhaps he does! But I venture to think that those who live with Bunter—his study mates especially—have rather hard times occasionally! I am not at all sure that the Owl of the Remove needs to be pitied, for really he is the absolute limit at times, isn't he?

I wonder what my Scots chum would think of Bunter if he had to "dig" with him? I am perfectly certain he would get just as exasperated as Harry Wharton & Co. do. If "Friend of Bunter" will just think of what the chums of Greyfriars have to put up with at times, it will surprise me if he fails to come to the conclusion that he deserves, at any rate, most of what he gets.

And now for next week's topping programme. First and foremost is

"TRACKING DOWN TRACY!"

By Frank Richards

which tells of the further exciting adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. and Gilbert Tracy, the latest addition to the Remove. Tracy has done his best after a very bad beginning, to get into the good graces of Mr. Quelch, but all in vain. Now he's determined to give his Form-master all the trouble he wants—and some over! You'll find this yarn packed with humour and thrills—just the kind of yarn you enjoy reading.

Then comes another topical issue of the "Greyfriars Herald." "My Page" is taken over by George Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, so you can expect something really good!

A final warning—order next Saturday's MAGNET early.

YOUR EDITOR.

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By VERNON-SMITH...

Our Live-Wire Reporter

When half-time came in the Bagshot game and we were one goal down, the Dismal Jimmies round the touchlines had the time of their lives.

I heard none of their wailings from our dressing-room in the pavilion, of course, but I am assured by fellows who did that never before in the history of Little Side have so many criticisms been uttered in the course of ten minutes.

This Bagshot game had been almost the sole topic of conversation in the Lower School for a week. The fact that a win for Bagshot would probably have taken them to the top of the table in our place made the whole school unusually anxious for a Greyfriars victory. The additional fact that we failed to beat Rookwood last week caused footer fans to turn a critical eye on the team that Wharton posted up on the notice-board two days before the game.

Howls of execration rent the air when it was seen that he had left the team unchanged. Excited would-be players waylaid Wharton and argued with him. Deputations waited on him. But Wharton stood his ground, and the team turned out on Little Side just as he had chosen it; and the critics indulged in "I told you so's" to their hearts' content when the half-time whistle went with the home team one

goal-down.

Wharton's judgment, however, was justified in the end, despite this initial setback. Bagshot, whose one-goal lead had been obtained only at the cost of almost superhuman efforts, found in the second half that they were unable to keep up the killing pace. They had kept us well on the defensive up to the interval; but on resuming, we found that their pressure had relaxed. The initiative had passed from the visitors to ourselves, and we were soon attacking strongly. After ten minutes, I equalised for Greyfriars; and five minutes later I had the pleasure of putting the home side one ahead.

Bagshot remained game to the last; but in the closing stages of the game I think it was pretty clear that we had worn them down completely, and when Wharton slammed in a third goal for Greyfriars five minutes from the end, we were getting, if anything, rather less than our due.

So much for the "key" game of the week, which leaves us still leading St. Jim's at the head of the table on



The GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 321.

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

December 3rd, 1938.



HARRY WHARTON CALLING ALL CHUMS

An anonymous reader, whom I assume to be a girl, has put me a poser this week. "Who is the best-looking boy in the Remove?" is her question. I must say that until the receipt of her letter I had never really thought of good looks in association with the Remove. An editor, however, must do his best to meet the requirements of his readers; and, as it was impracticable to hold a beauty contest to settle the matter, I made a few inquiries of

Most of them, like myself, had never considered it before. But most of them, too, after a few moments' reflection, were able to give most decided answers to the question.

Snoopy, for instance, whom I found in the process of being half-slaughtered by Bolsover major, made a very quick decision.

"The best-looking chap in the Remove?" he gasped. "Why, I should say Bolsover, every time!"

Bolsover, whose ferocious glare had given place to a slow grin on hearing Snoopy's choice, scratched his head when I put it to him.

"Dunno that I feel much like quarrelling with what Snoopy says," he remarked. "I suppose there is a sort of rugged, manly beauty about me. 'M yes, I fancy Snoopy's right!"

Proceeding a little breathlessly across the quad, I bumped into Hurree Singh. I asked him his opinion. Inky smiled a dusky smile.

"If I may remarkfully suggest it, my esteemed and ludicrous chum," he said, "the good-lookfulness of Wun Lung is terrific!"

"Wun Lung?" I yelled.

Inky nodded.

"The pale yellowfulness of his esteemed complexion, so muchfully like the honourable English sky at dawn, has no likeful equal at Greyfriars!" he explained.

Well, that was that! The odd thing about it was that when I ran into Wun Lung, he returned the compliment by naming Hurree Singh as the best-looking.

"Wun Lung like colour of Inky's face, what you tinkee?" he grinned. "Inky lookes best in Remove, plenty much!"

I asked Fisher T. Fish. His reply came back like a round from a machine-gun.

"Best-looker in the Form? I'll say it's the guy that uses this noo soap I'm handling. If you'll take five tablets from me for one dollar—five shillings in your weird coimage—I guess within a week you'll tell me—"

I hurriedly told him I wasn't buying soap and hopped it.

Ideas were plentiful among other fellows I met. Desmond chose Wibley, Peter Todd plumped for Frank Nugent, Squiff thought Russell walked away with it.

Then I asked Bunter. The Porpoise simply beamed.

"I say, Wharton, I wonder you trouble to ask me such a simple thing. Ask any judge of masculine beauty and he'll tell you there's only one fellow in the Remove with any real claims to good looks. The chap I mean has a fine, well-covered figure—nothing skinny about him, you know—a firm, resolute chin, a broad, intelligent forehead, artistic hands, deep, reflective eyes—"

"Cut the cackle, fathead!" I said impatiently. "Who is this Adonis?"

"Why, me, of course!" hooted Bunter.

I think we had better leave it there! If you want my own opinion, I should say Frank Nugent. But I don't claim to be any judge. And what's more, Nugent would only think that I was pulling his leg if I told him so.

Meet you again next week, chums!

lot of fellows limp.

He developed a warlike frown, a swaggering walk, and a sharp, peremptory tone of voice. Once or twice he told fellows to shut up or asked them if they were looking for thick ears.

Then one night Bunter went too far. He rolled up to Dick Russell, who was occupying the best seat in the Rag, just beside the fire, and told him to buzz. He,



Bunter, wanted Russell's seat!

"No cheek from you!" he warned Russell sternly. "I'll give you till I've counted ten. If you're not out of that chair by that time I'll sling you out—and I warn you, Dick Russell, that you'll probably find it painful!"

While a deeply interested crowd gathered round, the Porpoise proceeded to count ten. Having counted ten and found Russell still occupying the chair, he set about slinging Russell out of it.

The result was funny from the crowd's point of view, but decidedly disconcerting from Bunter's. For instead of slinging Russell half-way across the Rag, as he quite expected to do by the application of Professor Baloney's principles, Bunter felt himself slung half-way across the Rag instead!

He landed on the line with a bump that shook the House and a roar that awoke the echoes.

And that was the last incident in the brief career of Bunter, the wrestler.

THREW HIS WEIGHT ABOUT Then Fat Wrestler Lost His Bounce!

Fellows who had occasion to look into Study No. 7 in the Remove passage about a fortnight ago thought Bunter had gone goofy.

Several evenings running he was noticed in front of a mirror he had propped up against the wall, apparently engaged in tying himself in knots!

On one occasion he did it so well that he had to call in a couple of passers-by to unhook one of his legs, which had become tangled up with the particular part of his body out of which he usually talks—namely, the back of his neck.

It was on this occasion that Bunter let the cat out of the bag. When the two passers-by—who happened to be Smithy and Redwing—had disentangled his limbs, they asked Bunter what the thump he thought he was doing.

Bunter replied with a fat wink, the application of a fat finger to his lips, and a snigger.

"He, he, he! I say, you fellows, mum's the word, you know," he said. "I'm training to become a wrestler!"

"A WHATTER?" "A wrestler! Strongman stuff and jiu-jitsu and all that!" Bunter stopped grinning and gave Smithy and his pal a lofty blink. "You chaps'll have to mind your p's and q's when I get into trim. Won't do to get too cheeky, you know!"

Smithy and Redwing gaped at him.

"How on earth are you going to learn wrestling without having someone to wrestle with?" Redwing managed to ask.

"Bunter smiled—a superior smile.

"That's easy—when you know how! Most fellows don't, of course. I do. I've paid to be let into the secrets of the world's strongest man!"

many friendly matches are played which I have not space to report. These are described in the yarns dealing with our weekly adventures.

There is little to be in the way of outdoor sport to talk about just now. Long-distance runners continue to wade through mud in preparation for the Open Marathons, but as this event does not take place till next term, enthusiasm has not yet risen to fever-pitch.

Dick Rake undoubtedly won an unofficial Lower School Table-Tennis Championship in the Rag this week.

Dicky Nugent is reported to be making great strides at hopscotch this term.

And that's all for the present, I think.

CHAMPIONSHIP TABLE.

	P	V	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. GREYFRIARS	6	2	0	24	4	14	
2. ST. JIM'S	8	7	0	1	20	6	14
3. BAGSHOT	9	6	1	2	18	8	13
4. HIGHCLIFFE	10	4	2	3	18	15	10
5. ROOKWOOD	8	4	1	3	15	11	9
6. RYLCOMBE							
G.S.	8	2	2	4	12	18	6
7. REDCLYFFE	8	2	1	5	8	13	5
8. ST. JUDE'S	2	2	1	5	9	19	5
9. CLAREMONT	7	0	3	4	6	18	3
10. ABBOTSFORD	9	1	1	7	7	25	3

LAST WEEK AT GREYFRIARS—

The first frost of the season occurred and resulted in Loder slipping up and hitting one of the flagstones in the quad with his chin. The flagstone was undamaged. A celebration was held in the Second Form room.

Coker sang two ballads at an impromptu concert held in the Fifth Games Study. The audience returned when Blundell surded the "All clear."

Lord Mauleverer dished out ripe Gorgonzola cheese at a supper in Study No. 12. If a lucky chance, most of the guests had brought their gas-masks.

Billy Bunter actually told the truth, for once. Not a fellow in the Remove believed him.

NO WONDER!

When our reporter looked into the Fifth Form Gamble Study one evening last week it was to find Coker standing in the middle of the room looking puzzled, while the other occupants lay around motionless. They had all fainted!

On inquiry of the puzzled Coker, our reporter learned that there was nothing to explain it. All that happened was that someone trod on Coker's foot and apologised; and Coker said: "My fault!" The next moment they all swooned.

Extraordinary, wasn't it? OR WAS IT?

goal average only—St. Jim's having also won their match against Redclyffe.

Bagshot, who added two points to their total through beating Claremont 2—nil at home on Wednesday are still third. But if you want my opinion about the eleven that threatens to be well to the fore at a very early date, it's Rookwood. Jimmy Silver's team played twice in the last week, playing Rylcombe Grammar School away and Highcliff at home. The first match they won 4—nil and the second 1—nil, and my feeling is that these victories against formidable adversaries are the forerunners of many others. Watch Rookwood!

My recent forecast that Abbotsford would soon turn the corner seems to be coming true. Though still at the bottom of the table, they secured 3 points out of a possible 4 this week—their first points this season. Bravo, the wooden-spoonists!

Irrespective of championship games,

with withering scorn. "Look at them and ask yourselves if you've ever seen such despicable degenerates before! I am assuming, gentlemen, that they really are faces and not shop-soiled remnants from Guy Fawkes' Day!" (Loud laughter.)

"Don't bring your beastly bad manners into this meeting!" Brown added as Bolsover major rose to interrupt. "The best tip I can give you is to hop it—and hop it pronto at that!"

Bolsover major tried to speak, but deafening yells of "Buzz!" "Travel!" "Beat it!" "Down with the 'No Courtesy' League!" "Vanish!" and "Sling your hook!" from the refined members of the well-mannered brigade drowned his efforts. The chief of the "No Courtesy" League eventually gave it up and retired—encouraged in that process by a couple of ripe tomatoes and an upended inkwell from the Polite Young Things.

Judging by this meeting, it really does look as if old-world courtesy is in for a great revival in the Lower School at Greyfriars.

One or two fellows have expressed the opinion that for the leader of a movement favouring better manners Tom Brown doesn't strike them as really exquisitely polite. But you always get those Doubting Thomases, don't you?

Answer To Correspondent

"PUZZLED" (Remove).—"Do you think Mr. Quelch is getting short-sighted? When a stray goat wandered into the Form-room the other day he didn't even notice till we pointed it out to him."

No, "Puzzled," we have no reason to suppose that the beak's eyesight is defective. Probably it was just a misunderstanding—he thought it was Skinner!

"DOWN WITH THE 'NO-COURTESY' LEAGUE!"

Polite Young Things' Great Campaign

Bolsover major's "No Courtesy" League is not going to have things entirely its own way.

Founded with the idea of doing away with meaningless formalities, it gained many supporters at first. But the swing of the pendulum has carried public opinion right back to the idea that there is much to be said for old-fashioned politeness.

Tom Brown is the leader of the movement for better manners. At a public meeting in the Remove Form Room this week he told an enthusiastic audience that refinement was an ideal worthy of every intelligent Removeite.

"Why be ashamed of behaving like a gentleman?" he demanded. "I stand here as one who raises his hat to ladies, gives up his seat in buses to the aged and infirm, and treats his superiors with respect!" (Cheers.)

At this point, amid considerable excitement, Bolsover major entered the room with a small crowd of followers, and remarked: "Why not? So do we!"

"Rats!" was Tom Brown's swift retort. "You couldn't be polite if you tried. The only place where you'd ever feel really at home, in fact, is a pigsty!" (Laughter and cheers.)

Bolsover major was seen to shake his head, more in sorrow, it seemed, than in anger.

"This only shows what fatheaded ideas there are about our movement,"

he said. "The 'No Courtesy' League never stood for bad manners. What we're fighting against is fatuous and unnecessary remarks like: 'How are you, old bean?' and 'Nice day, isn't it?'"

Amid the loud jeers that this remark called forth from the Polite Young Things (that's what Brown's courtesy fans are being called), Tom Brown was observed to hurl an ink-pellet with deadly aim at Bolsover major, deposit-



ing a large blob of ink over the "No Courtesy" chief's nose. Roars of delighted laughter from the good manners enthusiasts greeted this feat.

While Bolsover major sat down and removed ink from his nose with a pocket-handkerchief, Tom Brown proceeded with his speech.

In a voice that quivered with indignation he denounced "no courtesy cads" as worms, insects and parasites—as measly, mingy, mouldy, moth-eaten mongrels, and many other things besides.

"Look at their faces!" he cried,