

BRIGHTER THAN EVER . . . "THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL" . . . GOT YOURS YET?

The Magnet^{2D}

*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper*

**ONE IN THE
EYE FOR QUELCH!**

INTERESTING NEW FEATURE



IT'S a great compliment to be given a whole page to do as I like with. In his letter, the Editor wrote: "There are no conditions. You may write whatever you like, but readers would be glad to hear something about yourself and your work as Skipper of Greyfriars." Right-ho, Mr. Editor! Here goes for:

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A SCHOOL CAPTAIN.

7 a.m.—Awakened by my fag, Tubb of the Third. Look at my watch and find it's nearly 7.15 a.m. Sling a boot at Tubb and promise to flay him alive unless he calls me promptly in future. Like all Sixth Formers, I have a study-bed-room of my own, and do not share a dormitory, as in other Forms. Wash, dress, and go for a sharp sprint around Big Side with Pat Gwynne.

7.30 a.m.—Chapel. My job to keep order in the porch and prevent skylarking by thoughtless fags.

After brekker in Hall, there's a short meeting in the Prefects' Room. There the Duty Roster is made up—a book showing the duties of each prefect for that day—and we discuss any special points of school discipline. The Prefects' Room fag—young Myers of the Second—is supposed to have the room spick and span. If it isn't, he gets a reminder with the ash!

9 a.m.—Morning school. Greek with the Head, followed by Maths with Lascelles. Fellows working on special exams are allowed to study by themselves in the Library.

12 noon.—Coker of the Fifth is waiting for me in my study. He wants a place in the team v. Rookwood. Tell Coker for the 123,456th time that we're playing Soccer, not tiddley-winks. Coker goes red with wrath, and has to be ejected on his neck. Blundell drops in to help me complete the team, with valuable advice on the necessity of playing more Fifth Formers. Make a hasty excuse and fly for my life.

After dinner, Loder comes into the Prefects' Room as black as a nigger. He has caught a bag of wet tar with the back of his neck. Make inquiries and fasten the crime on Vernon-Smith of the Remove. Tell the young rascal to drop into the Prefects' Room at four. Have to give Todd 100 lines for sliding down the banisters, and Cherry a couple of whops for whistling in the passages.

2 p.m.—Mr. Wiggins, the Third Form beak, is in the Sanny with a cold, so I have the pleasure (?) of taking the young sweeps in class. Keep them quiet and orderly, but don't get much learning into their thick skulls—that's Wiggins' job, which I don't envy!

4 p.m.—Lessons over. Prefects' Meeting to deal with Vernon-Smith. He gets a beating—one whop from each prefect. Takes it without yelping, though Loder's whop nearly cuts him in halves. Shall have to talk pretty plainly to Loder—he asks for trouble.

4.10 p.m.—Coker comes along for a last word before I put up the team. Eject him again. Getting fed-up with it.

4.30 p.m.—Team is chosen. Eleven Greyfriars fellows satisfied with it. All the rest are grumbling. Coker offers to fight me. I leave 'em to argue and go to my study, where I have to interview the sinful youths who have been ordered to bring me lines "before tea." Bunter, as usual, turns

up with 100 excuses instead of 100 lines. He goes away with "six."

4.45 p.m. (approximately).—Tubb arrives to get my tea. Brings in with him a long, rambling excuse for being late. Heard it so many times now that I know it better than he does. However, I give him the usual glare and a warning to mend his ways. Gwynne and Faulkner drop in to tea. And then—oh, ye heavens!—there is a heavy tread outside and in comes Prout,

the master of the Fifth. Prout has decided to drop in "for a chat"—that means a two-hours' lecture. Gwynne and Faulkner fade away. I have Prout all on my own. Oh, Death, where is thy sting?

5.30 p.m.—Tubb comes in to clear away—i.e., to gather up the remnants of the feast and bear them off to the fags' Common Room for consumption. To-day there are no remnants. Prout has politely sampled the foodstuffs in between his sentences. Tubb gives Prout a bitter glare and goes away empty-handed. Wish I could follow him, but Prout holds me with his glittering eyes and tells me how he used to play Soccer in the days of Queen Anne.

7.15 p.m.—On duty in Hall for call-over. Young Nugent minor of the Second is looking pretty miserable; speak to the kid on the quiet and ask him if anything's wrong. It's part of my job to spot bullying in the lower Forms. Says he owes a fellow money and can't pay. Begin to catch on. Send for Wharton and tell him I've an idea that moneylending is going on in Lower School, and he'd better wash it out. He goes away grimly, and later on I notice that young Fish of the Remove is wearing an extra-large-sized nose.

George Bulkeley, of Rookwood, rings me up on the phone in the Prefects' Room. Says his team will be over to-morrow at 2.30 sharp. Good! Send my fag round to members of the rowing eight and tell them to parade at the boathouse at 7 a.m. promptly for a trial spin before brekker. Result—bitter moans by all and sundry, especially Tubb, who's cox of the boat.

7.30 p.m.—On duty in the Remove passage for Preparation. Find the passage full of fellows. A few sweeps with the ash sends them into their studies.

8 p.m.—Get a chance to do a bit of Prep myself.

9 p.m.—See the Remove to their dorm and turn the light out. Bunter pleads that he is dying of starvation, and asks

if I have a piece of cold pudding in my pocket. Tell him no, but I have something else under my arm, and if he doesn't hop into bed at once! He hops in!

9.30 p.m.—Settle down in my study with a Greek lexicon for half-hour's study. After about ten minutes, Gwynne drops in and persuades me to accompany him to the Prefects' Room. Can I refuse? What a hope!

10.30 p.m.—After a social hour in the Prefects' Room, and a cup of coffee made by Walker on an explosive-looking spirit-stove, I say "good-night" and seek the arms of dear old Morpheus. Another day over. Wonder if we shall beat Rookwood to-morrow? Hope so! Good job that ass Coker isn't playing! Yaw-aw-aw! And so to sleep!

TRY THIS—IT'S GOOD!



Sorry! Can't draw pictures, but here's a little optical illusion for you. Hold Coker's bike about two feet away from your eyes and then slightly revolve the page. The wheels will seem to spin round in an amazing manner.—
GEORGE WINGATE.

Well, Mr. Editor, and Readers All, that's an average day in my life as Skipper. A lot of responsibility and plenty to do. But I wouldn't be without my job for a pension. I like every minute of it. My great aim is to keep Greyfriars in the very front rank for sport, discipline, and fair play. If I have done anything towards that, however little, the work has been worth while.

STOP PRESS.

Football Result.

GREYFRIARS 3 ROOKWOOD 1
(Wingate 2, Sykes.) (Lumsden.)

Wingate, Greyfriars captain, was loudly cheered for sparkling display at centre-forward. Coker attributes result of the match to a fluke.

GEORGE WINGATE
SIXTH FORM

Captain of the School

Greyfriars owes much to her skipper. George Wingate is typical of the best traditions of school captains. He is a brilliant sportsman, and hardly less brilliant in class. At cricket, football, boxing, and rowing he is without a rival in the school. But his finest quality is his good sense. He is never blinded by any sort of prejudice; his love of justice makes him get at the root of every trouble. Perhaps his chief fault is that he is a shade too kind-hearted. Wingate loathes thrashings—though when he has to give one, he does it soundly. But his tact and wisdom often smooths the troubled waters before it is too late. He has a keen sense of humour, and is usually very witty. His home is at Chester, beside the River Dee. He intends to go to Cambridge on leaving Greyfriars, and no doubt he will eventually row against Oxford at Putney. May we be there to cheer him!

George Wingate

Gilbert Tracy, the one-time rebel and mutineer of the Remove, has been trying hard to make good and thus remove the bad impression he has made on Mr. Quelch—but all in vain. Now he's determined to give his Form-master all the trouble he wants—and some over!

TRACKING DOWN TRACY!



"Like a feed, Bunter?" "Rather!" said the Owl of the Remove. "Why, had a remittance, Tracy? You're usually hard up!" "I've got a few pounds!" drawled Gilbert carelessly. Mr. Quelch was all ears!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter Gets A Goal!

BILLY BUNTER did it! Nobody, of course, could have supposed that Bunter did it.

Nobody could have supposed, imagined, or dreamed that Billy Bunter possibly could do it, if Bunter wanted to, ever so much.

Least of all did Mr. Quelch suppose, or imagine so. Billy Bunter was about the last fellow in the Greyfriars Remove that Quelch was likely to think of.

Yet it was Bunter. Like Coriolanus of old, alone he did it. But, unlike Coriolanus, he did not tell the world.

It was raining that afternoon, and it was a half-holiday. It was a cold December day, and there had been snow, which had turned to sleet and drizzle.

The old quad at Greyfriars was weeping. Even Bob Cherry did not think football a practical proposition—out of doors. Indoors was another matter. "Passage football" was strictly against the rules; but on a rainy half-holiday, fellows had to do something.

Billy Bunter was content to frowst and snooze in an armchair before the fire in Study No. 7. Skinner and Snoop consoled themselves with a cigarette or two. Mark Linley dug deep into Thucydides. None of these things appealed to Bob. Having proposed a walk in the rain, which his comrades unanimously and emphatically turned down, Bob next proposed passage football. This was carried by a majority. After which the Remove passage,

never a quiet or reposeful spot, resounded with din and hilarity.

It was known that Mr. Quelch was going out that afternoon. It was possible that the rain might have kept him in, but the juniors hoped that it hadn't so far as they thought about it at all. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh joined up at once, and where the Famous Five led, most of the Remove followed. Strange to relate, it was Gilbert Tracy, reputed the

Amusing and Amazing School Adventure Yarn of HARRY WHARTON & CO., the Cheery Chums of GREY-FRIARS.

most reckless and rebellious fellow in the Form, who raised the only objection.

"It's against the rules," said Tracy. "Fat lot you care for rules!" said Bob, in astonishment. "Trying to be funny?"

"Quelch mayn't be gone out," said Gilbert.

"Fat lot you care for Quelch!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Well, rules are rules," said Gilbert.

"And that," said Bob, "is the chap who sawed through the legs of Quelch's chair in the Form-room. That's the chap who stuffed up his chimney and

smoked him out of his study. That's the chap who screwed him up in his room. That's the chap who's just come out of punny. Listen to him!"

"Pack it up, Tracy!" said Vernon-Smith.

"But—" said Gilbert.

"Chuck it!" rapped the Bounder. "Now then, line up, you men?"

Bob sorted out an old footer. The "men" lined up. One goal was the landing at the staircase end of the passage, the other, the box-room stair at the other end. The Remove passage, regarded as a football field, had plenty of length, but was rather short of breadth. But it was not a scientific game. It was chiefly barge and butt, kick and rush.

Squiff kept goal on the landing; Hazeldene on the box-room stair. There were more than eleven men aside, and whether they were forwards, halves, or backs, seemed rather uncertain.

When the ball whizzed in at a study door, something like a Rugby scrum happened in that study. There was some damage to furniture, and more to crockery that happened to be about. There was damage to Billy Bunter who, reposing placidly in his armchair, suddenly stopped the football with a fat ear, and uttered a yell that woke nearly all the echoes of Greyfriars School.

But a little damage passed unheeded. And, as was natural in the circumstances, the noise waxed noisier. The Remove fellows did not really intend to kick up a shindy that would be

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heard all over the school. They did it without intending it.

The din became terrific. From Study No. 7 came a series of protesting squeaks. Billy Bunter wanted to go to sleep in the armchair—there was nothing for Bunter to eat till tea-time, so naturally he wanted to sleep. But even for Bunter slumber was impossible in that terrific din.

"I say, you fellows, stop it!" squeaked Bunter, again and again; but the Remove fellows, if they heard, heeded not.

Nearly all the Form by that time were playing Soccer, though it would not perhaps have been easily recognised as Soccer. It was as much like Rugger as Soccer, and as much like a dog-fight as either. Still, they were enjoying life, which was the chief thing.

Only Gilbert Tracy stood out.

For whatever mysterious reason, the bad hat of the Remove, the rebel and mutineer, who had seemed to live only to break rules and give trouble ever since he had come to Greyfriars, declined to join up on this occasion.

He was barged out of the way, and sat on the box-room stair, behind Hazel in goal, watching. It was surprising, for Gilbert, besides being the most lawless member of the Remove, was very keen on football, and was, in fact, the very best man at Soccer in the Form, or in the whole Lower School. He had an almost uncanny skill with a Soccer ball. He could knock off a fellow's hat with one at amazing distances. Any kind of a game, even passage football, appealed strongly to Gilbert, and his looks showed that he would have liked to join in. Yet there he sat, looking on, idle and inactive.

"I say, you fellows!" It was no longer a squeak, but a wrathful yell from Billy Bunter. "I say, stop that row! Can't you let a fellow get forty winks? Shut up! Stop it! You'll have the prefects up here soon! Chuck it!"

Nobody heeded Bunter.

But suddenly, from Squiff on the landing, came a call:

"Cave! Quelch!"

Below, on the staircase, appeared a mortar-board.

Quelch had not, after all, gone out. The din from the Remove studies had reached him. Indeed, it would have been rather surprising if it hadn't. He was coming up to investigate. Thoughtfully he had put a cane under his arm.

"Oh!"

"Hook it!"

"Cut!"

The juniors realised suddenly that they had been making rather a row. Nobody wanted to meet Quelch.

They scuttled into studies, right and left, every fellow into the nearest study. Doors were hurriedly shut. Gilbert, being far from study doors, scuttled up the box-room stair. True, he had taken no part in the disturbance; but he was on the spot, and it was wiser not to remain on the spot.

Almost in an instant the Remove passage, lately so thickly populated, was utterly deserted. Quelch's mortar-board was still below the landing, when sudden silence fell.

Billy Bunter stepped into his doorway, and blinked up and down the passage.

Unaware that Quelch was coming, he was surprised at the sudden desertion of that passage.

The football, forgotten in the sudden flight, lay unheeded on the floor.

Bunter blinked at it; then he rolled out of his study. Why the fellows had rushed off and left it, Bunter did not know; but he knew that they were not going to find it there when they came back. Bunter had had more than enough of passage football when he wanted a nap.

He kicked that football down the passage to the stairs.

He put all his beef into that kick.

Where it went Bunter did not care. So long as it rolled down the stairs and was lost to sight, that was good enough for Bunter.

The footer flew. It whizzed across the landing, and dropped out of sight on the Remove staircase.

Bunter, grinning, rolled back into his study and shut the door.

They could hunt for that football when they wanted it, the beasts! Bunter rolled back to his armchair to enjoy drowsy, frowsy comfort.

And he did not even hear a loud bump and a startled yell from the direction of the Remove staircase. Billy Bunter closed his eyes behind his spectacles, utterly and happily unaware of what had happened on that staircase.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

On Tracy's Track!

BANG!

Bump!

Never, in all his long career as a schoolmaster, had Mr. Quelch met with such a surprise.

He hardly knew what was happening. Something—he did not know what—smote him full in his majestic features. It banged on his nose. It hurled him backwards.

He sat down at the foot of the Remove staircase, with a heavy concussion and a loud, startled howl.

Mr. Quelch had come up to stop the football! He had stopped the football—not in the least as he had intended!

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Ah! Oh! Oooh! What—ah—oh—ooooh!"

His remarks were quite incoherent.

He sat and spluttered.

He was hurt! No middle-aged schoolmaster could descend even a short flight of stairs backwards and sit down without getting a little hurt. He was breathless. He had a pain in his nose. His nose felt as if it had been driven through his head, like a nail. It hadn't been; but it felt like it.

"Oh! Ah! Ow! Oooh!"

For several long moments the dazed and dizzy Form-master sat there, gasping and spluttering, trying to gather his scattered wits.

He gathered them—and started to his feet! He picked up the cane he had dropped. He glared at the football, which had rolled on the lower landing. He realised what had happened.

That football had been kicked at him from the Remove passage—it had knocked him backwards!

Mr. Quelch almost trembled with wrath.

On a rainy half-

holiday, with the juniors at a loose end, he could make allowances for a little noise and disorder. He had come up to stop the noise and disorder, of course—it was getting altogether too noisy and disorderly! But he had no doubt that his appearance would stop it at once—as, indeed, had been the case! That any Remove man would venture to greet him with a whizzing football, he had never even dreamed!

What disrespectful young rascal had done this?

Tracy!

That name leaped into his mind at once.

Only one boy in the Remove was capable of this! Only one boy was reckless enough, disrespectful enough, unscrupulous enough, ruffianly enough, to bang a football in a master's face and knock him spinning! And only one boy in the Form was skilful enough, if it came to that—for the shot was a tremendously difficult one—hardly a fellow could have brought it off!

Only Tracy could have done it, probably! Quelch knew his weird skill with a footer only too well! He had seen him at it!

He had actually been knocked over, at his study window, by a footer kicked by Tracy in the quad—so distant and difficult a shot that it must have passed for an accident, in the case of any other boy. This was a still more difficult shot! Only Gilbert Tracy could have done it!

That it was an accidental shot Mr. Quelch was not likely to guess. It had been a hundred to one, or a thousand to one, that the football would fly down the staircase, when Bunter booted it, without hitting anything but walls and banisters and steps. It was the thousandth chance that had happened. Naturally, that did not occur to Quelch, in the circumstances. It looked like a very difficult shot, brought off successfully—and he did not doubt for a moment that that was what it was!

He gripped his cane and restarted up the Remove staircase after the interval.

His brows were knitted, his eyes glinted under them; his lips were hard set. The young rascal should regret this!

He strode into the Remove passage. It was silent and deserted. Every study door was closed!

The footballers had vanished like ghosts at cock-crow, or like Roderick Dhu's clansmen on the dark Highland hillside.

Mr. Quelch's fiery glance swept up the passage. It was as solitary as the beach of Robinson Crusoe's island—more so, in fact, for there was not even a foot-print to be seen!

Mr. Quelch stopped at the door of Study No. 1, which belonged to Wharton, Nugent, and Tracy. He hurled open the door.

Wharton and Nugent were in the study. They were standing at the window, looking out at streaming rain—perhaps interested in the weather! Their interest in the weather was so deep—perhaps!—that they did not notice the study door open, for they did not turn their heads.

"Wharton!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

The two juniors turned at their Form-master's voice. They knew why Quelch had come up, and could hardly suppose that he would not guess that they had been playing passage football! Still, they hoped for the best! Every fellow in every study was hoping for the best!

But they started as they saw Quelch's nose!



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It was red! It was raw! There was a thin trickle of crimson from it!

They stared at that nose. It was striking to the view! Obviously, Quelch had had what some of the juniors would have called a bing on the bezer!

They realised that it was not merely the noise and din of passage football that had brought that thundercloud to Quelch's brow! Something much more serious had happened!

"Where is Tracy?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Tracy?" stammered Harry.

"He is not here! This is his study. Where is he?"

"I—I don't know!" stammered the captain of the Remove. "I—I haven't seen him for some time—"

"There has been a disturbance here, Wharton! I came up to put a stop to it. I was struck in the face by a football—"

"Oh!" gasped Harry.

"I was knocked backwards down the stairs!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!" gasped Wharton and Nugent together, horrified.

"Tracy was taking part, as I have no doubt—"

"Oh, no, sir! He wouldn't join up. The—the fact is, sir, Tracy was almost the only fellow who didn't—"

"Where was he?"

"The last I saw of him, sir, he was sitting on the box-room stairs, looking on. I assure you, sir," said Wharton earnestly, "Tracy was not joining in the row—we're all to blame, except Tracy—Tracy said he wouldn't, because it was against the rules—"

Mr. Quelch gave a savage snort.

That the rebel of the Remove, the mutineer of the Form, was more particular about breaking rules than any other fellow was an extremely surprising piece of information.

"You are talking nonsense, Wharton!" he snapped.

"It's true, sir," said Nugent.

"Who kicked that football in my face?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"I—I can't imagine, sir! It was left in the passage when we cut into the studies—I thought it was there still—"

"I have told you that it was kicked in my face, Wharton! It was kicked from the passage across the landing, and it caught me in the face as I came up the Remove staircase! It knocked me back to the lower landing. Is there more than one boy in the Remove who could do such a thing with a football?"

Wharton and Nugent were silent. Such a shot was too unerring to have been brought off by any fellow but one in the Remove, or in all Greyfriars for that matter. Even Tracy, wizard as he was with a Soccer ball, must have had luck to bring it off so successfully.

"You do not know where Tracy is?"

"I haven't seen him since we—we cut in, sir! I—I suppose he's in one of the studies—"

With another snort, Mr. Quelch turned away.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent exchanged an eloquent glance.

"The utter ass!" breathed Wharton.

"The howling idiot!" muttered Nugent.

"After saying he wouldn't join up because it was against the rules—"

"Lot he cares for rules!"

"He's been toeing the line ever since he had his term in punny. This is the first time he's broken out. It must have been Tracy!"

"Who else could have done it—or would?"

"The awful ass!"

Wharton and Nugent came out of the study with worried faces. They had no more doubt than Mr. Quelch that Tracy had done it. Ever since he had had a term in the punishment-room, Tracy, once the rebel of the Form, had been toeing the line in the most careful way to such an extent that Quelch had several times commended him in the Form-room and seemed to be forgetting that he had regarded Gilbert as the "worst boy in the school." Now, it seemed, he was tired of good behaviour, and had broken out again—as most of the fellows, in truth, had fully expected him to do, sooner or later. And this time it was really the limit!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Found Gilty!

"IS Tracy here?"

Hazeldene and Tom Brown stared round as the door of Study No. 2 was hurled open.

Like Wharton and Nugent, they stared at their Form-master's nose!

"No, sir!" gasped Browney.

Mr. Quelch swept on. He looked into study after study—in search of the bad hat of the Form, but Gilbert was not to be found.

Mr. Quelch turned, and his glinting glance swept over the crowd of startled faces in the passage.

"Where is Tracy?" he thundered.

Nobody knew.

"He was here!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Where—Wharton, where did you see him last?"

"I told you, sir—he was sitting on the box-room stair."

Mr. Quelch revolved once more and started up the box-room stair. All the other fellows had been in the studies, or had dodged into them. Gilbert, it seemed, had dodged up to the box-room.

"Tracy," thundered Mr. Quelch on the stair, "come out of that box-room at once!"

The door above opened, and Gilbert Tracy appeared.

His manner was quite cool. He had, in fact, so far as he knew, nothing to fear. It was rather a new experience for the mutineer of the Remove to have a perfectly clear conscience; but he was, for once, in that happy state.

"Did you call me, sir?" he drawled.

"Descend at once!"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Quelch stepped off the stair, and Gilbert came down into the Remove passage. His glance rested on Quelch's nose, and his eyes glimmered. That glimmer did not escape Mr. Quelch.

Then Gilbert glanced at the breathless crowd. All the Remove were in the passage except Bunter, who was still asleep in Study No. 7, and Fisher T. Fish, who was still deep in financial accounts in Study No. 14.

All of them looked fearfully serious: Gilbert did not quite know why. There had been a row—it was likely that there would be a shower of lines; but that was hardly a cause for such fearfully serious looks. Gilbert was perplexed.

From the looks of the juniors he could see that the whole Form believed that he was for it. Why, he had yet to discover. He had bolted into the box-room as quickly as the other fellows had bolted into the studies, and he was, as yet, unaware of what had happened—utterly unconscious of the cause of Quelch's crimson beak!

"Tracy," said the Remove master, in a deep, grinding voice, "you kicked a football in my face as I came up the stairs."

Gilbert fairly jumped.

"I—I—I did?" he stuttered.

"You did! Do you dare to deny it?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"I certainly didn't!" gasped Gilbert. "Did anybody?"

"Why were you hiding in the box-room, Tracy?"

"I wasn't exactly hiding, sir. We all cleared when you were coming, and I ran up to the box-room because it was nearest."

"After kicking the football in my face?"

"I never touched the football."

Mr. Quelch set his lips! His eyes gleamed at Tracy, and then gleamed round at the alarmed crowd of juniors.

"Did any boy here see the football kicked?" he demanded.

Silence. As a matter of fact, not a fellow present had seen the football kicked, though no fellow present had the slightest doubt who had kicked it.

"You heard my question!" rumbled Mr. Quelch. "Wharton—"

"I never saw it, sir!" answered Harry. "I don't think anybody did! We were all in the studies—"

"Where were you, Tracy?"

"In the box-room, sir."

"Did any boy present see Tracy go up to the box-room, while the football still lay here?"

No answer.

No fellow, in that hurried flight, had been looking at any other fellow! The juniors had simply bolted for the studies like rabbits for their burrows. Nobody had noticed anybody else.

"This outrage," said Mr. Quelch, "was perpetrated by one boy, after all the other boys had gone into the studies. You must have remained for some moments after the others, Tracy—"

"I did not, sir!"

"Only a boy extremely skilful in such things could have done what was done," said Mr. Quelch. "The ball had to travel some distance, to pass across the landing, and drop precisely where I was coming up the stairs—and the crown of my head could hardly have been seen for taking aim. How many boys in this Form could do such a thing, even if disrespectful and insolent enough to think of such an action?"

Tracy stood silent.

There was one fellow, and only one fellow, in the Greyfriars Remove, who could have brought off that shot, if it had been done intentionally! Gilbert Tracy was that fellow!

"Now, Tracy, tell me the truth!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "Any other boy here would be expelled for such an action—an outrageous assault upon a Form-master! You are aware of that! You are aware that you will not be expelled, because it is your desire to leave the school, and you have been guilty of one disrespectful and mutinous action after another, simply in order to obtain your ends. You will receive a severe flogging—"

Gilbert's face became set and sullen.

"I've done nothing, sir!" he muttered.

"You kicked that football at me—"

"I did not!"

"Do you expect me to believe that statement, Tracy?"

"No, sir!" said Gilbert savagely. "I don't! You let me off the punishment-room, and ever since I've been trying to play up, but I can see it's no use—and I'm not going to try any longer! You can send me to the Head for a flogging if you like—and I'll jolly well get even with you somehow!"

"Silence!" almost roared Mr. Quelch. Gilbert gave a snarl and stood silent.

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He stared at his Form-master with sulky defiance.

Good behaviour was a thing of the past now. Gilbert was the old Gilbert again—sullen, mutinous, disrespectful, defiant! He was a dog with a bad name, and it was futile to think of pulling up and turning over a new leaf—that was the bitter thought in his mind.

He had not the faintest idea who had kicked that footer at Quelch. But he was found guilty, as a matter of course; and he did not reflect that a whole term's misdeeds could not be washed out by a few days of good behaviour; and that a fellow who, hitherto, had not scrupled to tell barefaced falsehoods could hardly expect his word to be taken!

"I have not the slightest doubt, Tracy!" said Mr. Quelch. "You have done such a thing before—a very similar action, at my study window! No other boy in the Form would venture to commit such an act! I have no doubt—and it is obvious to me that the boys here have no doubt, either."

"I can see that!" sneered Gilbert. "Let them think what they like—I don't care what they think, any more than I do what you think!"

"Upon my word! Tracy, follow me! I shall take you to your headmaster at once! You will be severely flogged! Follow me this instant!"

Mr. Quelch stalked down the passage to the stairs.

Gilbert slouched after him, scowling; and the Remove were left in a buzz of excitement.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Quite A Surprise For Bunter!

"Ow! Beast!" roared Billy Bunter.

He rolled as he roared.

Bunter's happy nap had not lasted a quarter of an hour. He had just dropped into happy slumber when Mr. Quelch looked in. Now he dropped out of happy slumber, and out of the armchair at the same time, when Peter Todd came in.

Toddy did not approve of afternoon naps! He revealed his disapproval by taking hold of the back of the armchair and tilting Billy Bunter out on the carpet.

It was frightfully annoying to Bunter.

He had been happily dreaming of a spread in Lord Mauleverer's study at which there had been two kinds of cake, and three kinds of jam. From that beatific vision, the fat Owl of the Remove was suddenly brought back to reality by bumping on the study floor.

"Ow! Rotter! I'll jolly well punch your nose, Toddy!" roared Bunter. "Wharrer you waking me up for, you beast! 'Tain't tea-time. Blow you! Why, I've hardly been asleep ten minutes!" Bunter blinked at the study clock through his big spectacles and breathed wrath. "I couldn't go to sleep while you were kicking up that fearful row in the passage! I jolly well wish Quelch had come up and copped you!"

Then Bunter grinned as he remembered his exploit with the football!

"I say, did you get that footer back? He, he, he!"

"No, ass; Quelch bagged it!" answered Peter. "I expect it will be confiscated!"

"Quelch!" repeated Bunter. "Has Quelch been up, then?"

"I suppose you were snoring when he came up, you fat ass! Yes, he's been up all right!" grunted Peter.

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"Oh! Then I suppose he spotted the footer on the stairs," said Bunter, grinning. "Serve you right if he bagged it—kicking up that shindy when a fellow wanted to go to sleep! Did he find it on the stairs when he came up?"

"Of course he did, ass, when it hit him on the nose—"

"Eh?"

"Think he could miss it, ass? It didn't miss him! He got it right on the boko when it was kicked out of the passage!"

Billy Bunter ceased to grin.

His fat face registered alarm and horror. His little round eyes almost bulged through his big spectacles.

"I—I say, are you pip-pip-pulling my leg?" he gasped. "W-w-when did Quelch get that ball on his bob-bob-boko?"

"When it was kicked at him, fat-head—about a quarter of an hour ago!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped the fat Owl. "But—Oh, I—I say—w-w-was it because Quelch was coming up that all the fellows cleared out of the passage so suddenly?"

"Of course it was, ass! Everybody bolted when Squiff saw him coming up the stairs—everybody but one, that is—the silly ass who kicked the footer at Quelch's chivvy—"

"Oh crumbs! I—I never knew he was coming up!" stuttered Bunter. "He—he—he was kik-kik-coming up when the fellows cleared out of the passage, and I—I— Oh jiminy! And I—I—I— Oh lor'! Fuf-fuf-fancy Quelch coming up just then! Oh gum! I—I—I say, are you sure the—the footer got Quelch, Peter?"

"You should have seen his nose!" answered Peter. "Looked as if a mule had kicked it!"

"Oh crikey! Did—did anybody see who—who—who kicked the fuf-fuf-footer, Peter? Did Quelch—"

"Everybody knows who did—"

"Oh lor'!"

"That mad ass, Tracy, stayed behind to buzz the footer at Quelch—"

"Tut-tut—"

"What do you mean by tut, tut, ass?"

"Tut-tut-tut-Tracy!" stuttered Bunter. "Tut-tut-Tracy stayed behind to—to—to buzz the fuf-fuf-footer at Quick—Quick—Quelch! Oh crikey! I—I—I say, Peter, what made you think it was Tracy?"

"I don't think—I know!"

"You know? Oh crumbs!"

Bunter realised that, by the wildest chance, the football had landed where neither he nor any other Remove man could possibly have landed it intentionally!

He had not known that Quelch was coming up. If the tip of his mortar-board had been in view, it had not been visible to the short-sighted Owl! Bunter had kicked that ball to the staircase to send it rolling down—that was all he had thought of doing, and all he supposed that he had done—until now he learned the awful truth!

And Quelch had been coming up! Quelch had got it on the boko! It was awful—it was terrifying—it was unnerving!

Bunter, after getting Quelch all unconsciously with the footer, had dropped into his armchair and gone to sleep! He would not have been likely to sleep had he known!

"Nobody but Tracy could have done it," said Peter, while Bunter goggled at him through his spectacles. "I couldn't—Smithy couldn't—Wharton couldn't! Tracy's such a blessed wizard with the ball, he can do anything with

it—but it was a jolly good shot, even for Tracy—"

"Oh crikey!"

"The mad ass!" said Peter. "He might have known Quelch would guess! Nobody else in the Form would do such a thing, if he could—and nobody else could! It was a wonderful shot—"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I say, has—has he got Tracy?"

"Yes; he's taken him down to go to the Head."

"Oh crumbs! I—I say, a—a fellow might be sacked—"

"Tracy won't be sacked! He wants to be sacked—I dare say that's why he did it! Any other fellow would be, of course."

"D-d-do you think so?" gasped Bunter.

"Fathead! A fellow who buzzed a footer in a master's face would be sacked so quick it would make his head swim!"

"Oh lor'!"

"Flogged first, very likely, and then bunked—"

"By gum!"

"But Tracy won't be sacked! I don't envy him what he will get—but it won't be the long jump!" said Peter. "He would like that—so he won't get it! Any other fellow—"

"But—but suppose it was an accident!" gasped the terrified fat Owl. "Suppose a fellow just kicked the ball down the stairs without knowing that Quelch was there, and it happened to catch him on the boko—"

Peter Todd chuckled.

"I hardly fancy Quelch would believe it was an accident, if any fellow told him that, old fat man! He got the ball fair and square—his nose was like a tomato—it tapped the claret—"

"Oh crikey!"

"No good Tracy telling him it was an accident. Besides, he's told him he never kicked the footer at all."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Has—has—has he?"

"Of course, Quelch knew—"

"He—he knew?"

"So did we all, as soon as we heard what had happened—"

"Oh dear! I—I say, Peter, I—I don't think it—it was Tracy—"

"You don't know anything about it, fathead, as you were snoring at the time."

"I wasn't. I couldn't get to sleep till you stopped that row in the passage, and—and—and then—"

"Then what?"

"Oh, nothing! I mean to say, I was fast asleep at the time," said Bunter hastily. "But I—I say, where's Tracy now?"

"Gone to the Head!"

"Oh crumbs! Then—then he's had it already!" gasped Bunter.

"Hot and strong!" said Peter. "Swipes! You can bet that the old bean would lay it on, after seeing Quelch's nose!"

"Oh lor'! If—if Tracy's had it already, there's nothing that a fellow can do, is there, Peter?"

"What could a fellow do, anyway, fathead?"

"Oh, nothing—nothing, of course! I—I say, I'm sus-sus-sorry for pip-pip-poor old Tracy!"

"Well, I'm sorry, too; but he asked for it—begged for it!"

"Did—did he?"

"Well, didn't he?"

"Oh, yes! Of—of course! Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of the study. He rolled in a state of utter dismay. He had never dreamed of this—never dreamed that anybody had got that

(Continued on page 3.)

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whizzing footer, least of all Quelch; never dreamed that another fellow would be bagged for it; never dreamed of anything at all, in fact, except that spread in Manly's study, the happy dream from which Toddy had awakened him.

He was glad, at least, that he had not been awakened till it was all over. Had he known in time, it would have been up to him to reveal the facts. Whether he would have revealed them was perhaps doubtful. But it was too late now, anyhow. If one fellow had been whopped, it was useless for two fellows to be whopped!

It would be no comfort to Tracy for Bunter to be whopped, too. Still less would it be a comfort to Bunter. He was sorry that Quelch had bagged Tracy; nevertheless, matters might have been worse. Quelch might have bagged Bunter! And Bunter felt deeply thankful that the worst had not happened.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Wisdom Of The Head!

DR. LOCKE fixed his eyes on Gilbert Tracy, standing before him in his study with a sullenly clouded face and defiant eyes.

Then he glanced at Mr. Quelch, his glance lingering on a nose that was red and a little swollen.

His eyes returned to Tracy.

Mr. Quelch was calm, with a deadly calmness. He expected, as a matter of course, the birch to be featured in this scene. Having reported to the headmaster what had happened, he did not quite understand why Dr. Locke did not proceed to business at once.

During the past few days Quelch had begun to entertain a rather better opinion of Tracy. He could not be blind to the fact that, in many respects, Gilbert seemed to have turned over a new leaf.

But that was past now. The "worst boy in the school" was clearly, to Quelch, still the worst boy in the school. His recent apparent amendment only meant that he had been "lying low" for a time. His term in the punishment-room had been a lesson to him, but that lesson had now worn off. So it seemed to Mr. Quelch—so it could hardly fail to seem to him, after a term of trouble with the worst boy in his Form.

"There is no doubt in this matter, Mr. Quelch?" asked the Head, at length.

"None whatever, sir."

"No one actually saw this boy—"

"I am absolutely convinced, sir, that no other boy in my Form could, or would, be guilty of such an action. Neither do I believe that any other Remove boy could have done what this boy has done. He has a skill in such matters that the other boys do not possess. This is far from the first time that he has played such tricks with a football."

"No doubt," said the Head slowly, "the matter certainly seems clear. But the boy persists in denying it."

"His word is nothing, sir!" said Mr. Quelch bitterly.

"You have nothing to say, Tracy?" asked the headmaster.

Gilbert's lip curled.

"Only that I never did it, sir. I know I've done such things before—I'm not denying that. But—Mr. Quelch can believe me or not, but I'd made up my mind not to do anything of the kind again—never to kick over the traces at all. I've got a reason, and it's not because I'm afraid of a flogging."

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added Gilbert savagely. "I've been licked often enough since I've been here, and I'm not afraid of one more."

"Has this boy's conduct improved of late, Mr. Quelch?"

"It has certainly seemed to improve, sir, since he was locked in the punishment-room. But now—"

"You spoke of a reason, Tracy. What did you mean?"

Gilbert hesitated a moment.

"It's my father, sir," he said, at length.

"Your father?" repeated Dr. Locke, raising his eyebrows. "A regard for your father, Tracy, would have caused you to amend your conduct much earlier than this."

"It's different now, sir," muttered Gilbert. "I—I've been looking at a lot of things differently since I heard from my father. I know I was a lot of trouble to my uncle at Oakwood Place, and I've written to him, too, to tell him that I'm sorry for it. I know he had a reason for getting rid of me—I know that. And—and I never thought a lot about my father—I know I didn't. But—but—"

"But what?" asked the Head, kindly enough.

"It's different, sir. I suppose you know that my father has been an invalid for a long time, through an old wound breaking out? I've not seen him for a year. That's why I was at my uncle's place. But—but now he's getting better; he may be able to leave the nursing-home, and—and—and he will be going abroad for his health and taking me with him, if—if he doesn't think me a troublesome brute like my uncle did—"

Gilbert broke off, his face crimson.

But he went on haltingly:

"My father hasn't been told about me. Uncle Giles wouldn't worry him with it while he was so ill. He doesn't know that I've been in disgrace here, and I—I thought he needn't know if—if I chucked up playing the fool and—toed the line, sir. I made up my mind to it, and I've stuck it! Even this afternoon I wouldn't join in the passage football because I wouldn't risk getting into another row—"

Gilbert broke off at a perceptible sniff from his Form-master.

His face set doggedly again.

"I know it's no use," he muttered. "I might have known it wasn't. I—I don't care!"

Dr. Locke gave him a very steady and penetrating look.

"I shall consult with your Form-master on this subject, Tracy," he said. "For the present you may leave my study."

Mr. Quelch set his lips very hard.

Gilbert left the study in silence.

Mr. Quelch opened his lips—and shut them again, harder than before. He was too angry to speak.

There was a brief silence in the Head's study. But Dr. Locke broke it at last.

"This matter, sir, is in your hands," he said. "It was your desire to help an old friend with an unmanageable boy that caused me to accede to your request to admit the boy here, and leave the management of him in your hands. But for that I should certainly not have allowed him to remain at Greyfriars, after his conduct here. But—"

He paused, but Mr. Quelch did not speak.

"But I hoped that under the influence of better boys Tracy might learn to amend his ways," went on the Head, "and it appears that he has, at least, given some signs of doing so."

"More subterfuge, I am afraid, sir."

"Possibly! Probably!" assented the Head. "Yet, in the circumstances,

Mr. Quelch, I should be disposed to give this boy another chance. If he is, on this occasion, speaking the truth—"

"I do not think so, sir."

"Admitting the possibility—"

"I can hardly do so, sir!"

Dr. Locke breathed rather hard.

"Mr. Quelch, I have left the boy in your hands—that remains unchanged. If it is your unalterable opinion that a flogging should be administered in this case, I must bow to your judgment as his Form-master. I merely offer a word of advice, and that is, that in this instance Tracy should be given the benefit of the doubt, such doubt as may exist, and given a chance to prove, by his conduct, whether his desire to reform is genuine."

"If that is your opinion, sir—" Mr. Quelch seemed to choke a little.

"That is my opinion, Mr. Quelch!"

"In that case, sir, I shall, of course, accede to it!" said the Remove master.

He left the Head's study. He passed his hand over his damaged nose as he went down the corridor. Tracy had damaged that nose—he had not the slightest doubt of it!

Mr. Quelch had great respect for his chief's judgment. But he rather regretted, now, that he had taken Gilbert to the Head at all, and had not dealt with him personally. It was too late now—the Head's advice had to be regarded as a command.

With deep feelings, Mr. Quelch went back to his study—where he anointed his nose with ointment, and breathed wrath while he anointed it!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Out Of The Frying-pan!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here he is!"

"Licked?"

"Had it bad?"

Harry Wharton & Co. came down to the Rag—and found Gilbert there.

It was still raining—but no fellow in the Remove was disposed, now, to while away the time with passage football! All the fellows agreed that they had seen enough of Quelch for one afternoon.

Really, it was rather fortunate for the footballers that Quelch had concentrated on Tracy. He had quite overlooked the offences of the rest—the terrific din that had brought him up to the Remove passage in time to receive that whizzing footer on his features. It was, so to speak, Gilbert first, and the rest nowhere.

The Famous Five looked at Gilbert very curiously as they came into the Rag. It was some time since he had gone to the Head, but hardly time enough for him to have recovered from what he was expected to receive from the Big Beak. But he showed no signs of having been through it.

He was seated at the table, writing a letter. Apparently he had just finished, for he slipped it into an envelope as the chums of the Remove came in, and rose, glancing round at them.

"You don't look whopped!" said Frank Nugent.

"Quelch didn't get by with it this time!" said Gilbert sarcastically. "The Head put paid to him!"

"The Head let you off!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in astonishment.

"He told me to clear and I haven't heard from Quelch since! Looks all right, doesn't it?"

"Well, I'm glad!" said Harry. "But—but—but—I can't make it out! After



Tracy stepped to the little table by the window, folded the currency notes, and then placed them under the telephone. The master of the Remove was not likely to see the notes there, until he used the instrument!

banging a footer right on Quelch's nose—

"And knocking him down the stairs!" said Johnny Bull. "Any other man would be sacked for it!"

"Who did it?" asked Gilbert.

"Eh? You did!"

"You heard me tell Quelch that I did not!" said Gilbert, with a smouldering gleam in his eyes.

"We've heard you tell Quelch the tale before, old bean! You're not going to make out to us that you never did it!" exclaimed Bob.

"I was up in the box-room—"

"Hem!"

"I never knew it had happened till Quelch told me—"

"Um!"

"And I want to know," said Gilbert between his teeth, "who did it! I don't care a straw for Quelch—he can think what he likes, and if I'd got it from the Big Beak, I'd jolly well have got back on him somehow. But though I don't care twopence for Quelch or what he thinks, I've got to keep on his right side—or else get a rotten bad report from him—"

The Famous Five fairly blinked at Gilbert.

"Mean to say you care a boiled bean what sort of a report Quelch gives you for the term?" exclaimed Bob blankly.

"Yes, I do."

"You should have started earlier, then!" grinned Bob. "Why, you've had a feud on with Quelch ever since you came—you ran away once and had to be hiked back; you locked the door of punny on Quelch another time and shut him in there—you've ragged his study, screwed him up in his room—did you do all those things with an eye to a good report?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've got reasons now that I don't choose to explain," grunted Gilbert.

"I've been trying hard, and Quelch was beginning to come round. Now it's all knocked on the head by this happening. I want to find out who buzzed that footer at Quelch, and make him own up to it."

"But you did it—"

"I did not!" roared Gilbert savagely.

"I want to know who did!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Do you want to know who got him with a footer at his study window a few weeks ago?" he asked. "Same chap who got him to-day."

"It wasn't one of you, I suppose!" said Gilbert slowly, eyeing the Famous Five. "You'd be decent enough to own up when he got me, I think."

"Oh, quite!" said Harry Wharton. "We're hardly likely to ask for it like that—we're not so keen on leaving Greyfriars as you are, Tracy. And I don't think any one of us could have brought off that shot, if he'd tried."

"Might have been luck!" said Gilbert.

"Um!"

"It must have been one of the fellows in the passage," said Gilbert. "All the Form were there, except Bunter and Skinner and Snoop and Linley. One of them hung back when the rest bolted, and let Quelch have the ball."

"Yes, you did—"

"Smithy, perhaps," said Gilbert, unheeding. "He's about the only fellow in the Form mad enough—"

"Except the fellow who did it!" remarked Johnny Bull. "What's the good of gammon, Tracy? We all know you did it! Nobody else could have done it!"

"Or would have done it!" said Bob.

"No need to gammon us!" said Nugent. "We shan't give you away, you ass! Besides, you seem to have got off, anyhow."

"I haven't seen Quelch yet!" sneered

Gilbert. "The old ass thinks I did it, and if the Head makes him let me off, he will be as mad as a hatter. He will take it out of me somehow."

"Well, what the dickens do you expect?" asked Wharton. "He's got a nose that will be a picture for days! I can't understand the Head letting you off—but you can't expect Quelch to like it."

"I want Quelch to know who did it!" snarled Gilbert. "If the fellow had a rag of decency, he would own up!"

"Hem!"

"The hemfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh solemnly.

Herbert Vernon-Smith came into the Rag with Tom Redwing. Both of them came over to Gilbert at once. Like most of the fellows, they were curious to know how he had fared with the Head.

"Did you get—?" began the Bounder.

"Not yet! And before I do, I want Quelch to know who buzzed that footer at his beak! Did you, Smithy?"

The Bounder stared.

"I! No—you!"

"Tracy says he didn't!" grinned Bob Cherry. "He says he wants to find out who did! You the man, Smithy?"

"Hardly!" grinned Smithy. "Keep your whoppers for Quelch, Tracy—they're no use to us, you know!"

"Did you buzz that footer at Quelch?" snarled Gilbert. "You're a pretty good shot with a footer and you might have had luck. If it wasn't you, I can't guess who it was."

"I can tell you!" said the Bounder.

"Who then?" asked Gilbert eagerly.

"You!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky fool!" roared Gilbert.

"I'm going to find out! That old ass

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Quelch has got it into his silly head—"

Gilbert broke off suddenly. In the open doorway appeared a figure in cap and gown.

The juniors gazed in horror at Mr. Quelch. Evidently he had heard Gilbert's angry roar.

"Oh crumbs!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"Tracy!" Mr. Quelch's voice was like the grinding of a saw. "I came here to speak to you and to tell you that as there may possibly be a doubt in the matter—a very slight doubt—you will not be called to account for what occurred in the Remove passage a short time ago. But I have heard, Tracy, the epithet you applied to me, your Form-master."

"I—" stammered Gilbert. "I—"

"The matter of the assault with the football will, for the present, remain in abeyance. But no boy in the Remove will be allowed to speak as you have just spoken, Tracy! Follow me to my study."

Gilbert, in silence, followed him.

"Some fellows ask for it, and no mistake!" murmured the Bounder. "Quelch was just yearning for a chance—He got off with the Head, but he won't get off with Quelch!"

"Out of the frying-pan, into the cracked pitcher that goes longest to the well, as the English proverb remarks!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Gilbert was not seen again in the Rag. He went to his study after his visit to Mr. Quelch. He went with a set, savage face, wriggling.

A Form-master who had heard himself described as an "old ass" could hardly be expected to lay it on gently. Quelch had laid it on uncommonly hard! And in doing so, he had no doubt that the recipient was the young rascal who had "got" him with the footer. Gilbert had asked for trouble all through the term, and made himself a "dog with a bad name"—and that, it seemed, he was destined to remain.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Quick Work For Quelch!

B UZZZZZ!

Mr. Quelch made a movement of irritation.

He was seated in his study, after morning classes on Monday. And he was busy, when the telephone bell suddenly buzzed.

He had just written a letter to his nephew, Roger. Now he was addressing a registered envelope.

At his elbow lay a little pile of currency notes; seven one-pound notes, in a heap, with a paper-weight on them.

Roger had once been at Greyfriars; now he was at another school. Mr. Quelch sometimes heard from Roger—generally when Roger was in need of avuncular assistance of a financial nature.

His latest news from Roger was that that lively youth had had a spill on his bicycle. Roger had not been much damaged, but the bike had gone west.

Roger artlessly told his uncle Quelch all about it. Reading between the lines, Mr. Quelch had considered the matter very seriously, and finally resolved to weigh in with the sum of seven pounds, for the purchase of a new jigger for Roger.

Having written a rather long letter, enjoining Roger to be much, much more careful in the future, Mr. Quelch was about to pick up the seven pound notes to put in the registered envelope when the telephone bell rang.

Leaving the table, he stepped to the telephone and took the receiver.

"Is that Quelch?" came a voice from the instrument—a husky voice.

"Speaking!"

"You old ass!" said the husky voice.

"Wha-a-at?"

"You silly old ass!"

Mr. Quelch almost dropped the receiver.

He could scarcely believe his ears! Someone—who?—had rung him up, specially to tell him that!

There were Remove fellows who regarded their Form-master in that light! Indeed, on Saturday afternoon Quelch had heard one of them say so—and rewarded Gilbert Tracy with six of the best! But certainly he had never expected to hear anything of the kind over the phone.

"Who—who—who is it speaking?" he articulated at last.

One name, of course, leaped into his mind—Tracy! This was no call from outside the school! Obviously, no member of the general public could or would have rung up a Form-master at Greyfriars to call him an ass, and then a silly ass! That call came from one of the numerous school telephones! Some of the masters were out, and that young rascal was using an unwatched telephone!

"Don't you guess, you old goat?" continued the voice. "Might be any man in your Form—what? They all know you!"

Mr. Quelch listened, with deadly intentness, striving to recognise the voice. But it was husky—an assumed huskiness, he had no doubt, whatever, to disguise it. He could not recognise the voice, and had to admit it!

Still, he had little doubt! This was in keeping with the conduct of the rebel of the Remove—the worst boy in the school!

"Every man in the Form thinks you an old ass, Quelch!" went on the husky tones. "The fact is, you're the limit in that line! It's time you retired."

"Who is speaking?" almost shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"Guess, old bean!"

"If that is Tracy—"

"You'd be bound to think that, wouldn't you? Guess again!"

"You—you insolent young rascal—"

"You insolent old rascal!"

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Time you retired, old scout! You're getting past your work! Why doesn't the Head sack you?"

"Oh!" repeated Mr. Quelch, in gasping tones.

"Isn't there a home for idiots you can wedge into? That's the place for you, Quelch, you old chump!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Old chump! Old ass! Old—"

The voice broke off suddenly. "Oh, my hat! Gosling—"

There was sudden silence.

Mr. Quelch almost grinned with fierce satisfaction as he heard that.

He knew now the telephone that the impertinent young rascal was using. At all events, he had no doubt that he did!

There was a telephone in the porter's lodge at the gates. No doubt Gosling had stepped out of his lodge, and that young rascal had cut in to use the telephone while he was out.

Now he was alarmed by the sight of Gosling coming back, and had cut off sharply!

So, at all events, it appeared to Mr. Quelch! He could scarcely suppose otherwise, from what he had heard.

He hardly waited to jam the receiver back on the phone before he swept across to the door.

He almost flew out of the study.

There was not a second to waste! He guessed—he was sure—that it was the rebel of the Remove who had called him up on Gosling's phone. But he had to establish the fact before he could deal with him. That he was going to do, if only he was in time!

Whether Gosling would spot the young rascal or not, he could not tell. But he—Henry Samuel Quelch—was going to spot him! In a few seconds he was out of the House, and almost scudding down to the lodge, at the gates. He was going to catch Gilbert before he could get clear!

Fellows in the quad stared at Quelch as he swept past. It was very unusual to see the Remove master going like a fire-engine!

"I say, you fellows, look at Quelch!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's up with Quelch?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Foot race, or what?"

"The whatfulness is terrific!"

"Put it on, Quelch!" grinned the Bounder—not loudly enough for his Form-master to hear him, however.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Quelch swept on. He did not heed staring eyes in the quad. His own eyes were fixed before him, in the direction of Gosling's lodge. He fully expected to see a Remove fellow—undoubtedly Tracy—coming away from the porter's lodge.

But no one was coming away! Quelch arrived breathless at the lodge, leaving fifty fellows, at least, staring after him.

The door was shut! Quelch's eyes almost gloated at it. The young rascal, evidently, was still within! Had he left, Quelch must have seen him. He could not have gone out, as the gates were not open; and had he gone in any other direction Quelch must have seen him! He had not seen him—therefore he was still inside the building! That seemed to Quelch as clear as anything in Euclid!

He rapped sharply on the door.

It was opened by Gosling.

The ancient Greyfriars porter stared at the Remove master. He had not expected a visit from Mr. Quelch; still less had he expected to see him with a flushed face, panting for breath.

"What boy is here, Gosling?" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"'Ere, sir!" repeated Gosling, astonished.

"I have just been rung up on your telephone by a disrespectful junior. He must be still here—"

Gosling blinked.

"There ain't no boy 'ere, sir," he answered. "They ain't allowed in my lodge, sir, and there ain't—"

"Hardly more than a minute ago, Gosling, I was rung up on your telephone."

"I ain't been out of my lodge, sir, for 'arf an hour."

"What? Are you sure, Gosling?" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"I s'pose I knows, sir!" said Gosling, staring at the Form-master. "Wot I says is this 'ere—I ain't been out of this 'ere lodge for 'arf an hour."

"Upon my word! Then you must have seen the boy using your telephone and—"

"Nobody ain't used my telephone, sir. I been sitting only a yard off of it, reading the noos—"

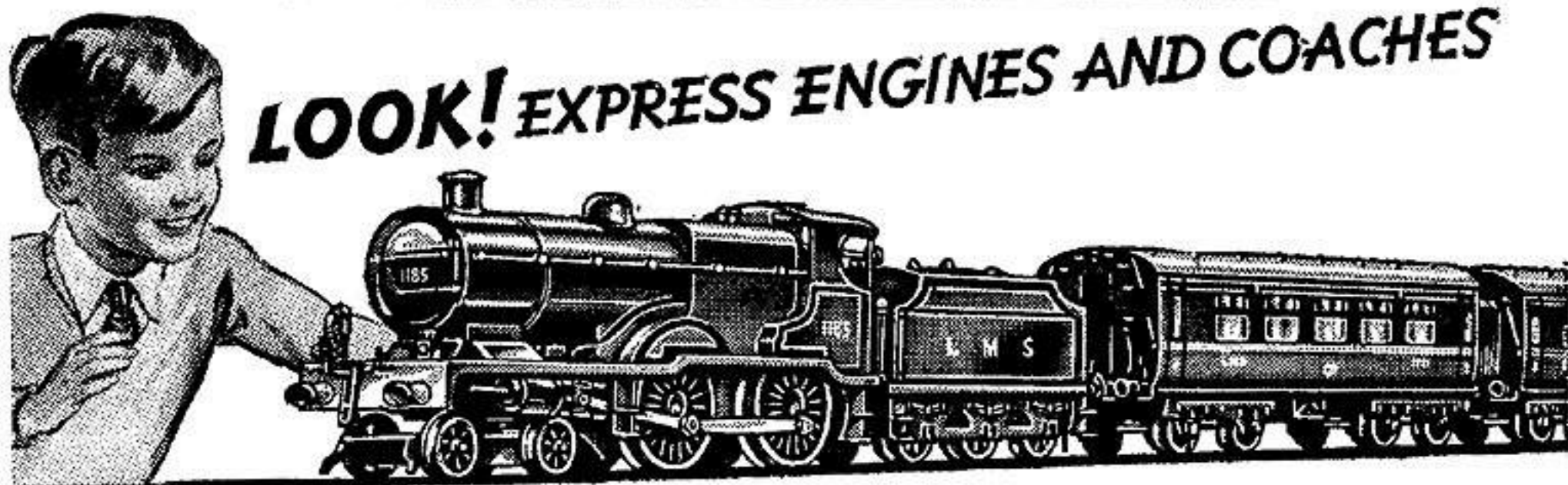
"Gosling!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Some boy was using your telephone only a few minutes ago! I heard him utter your name distinctly, and concluded that you were coming back to your lodge—"

"Which I ain't been out of it, sir!" said Gosling stolidly.

(Continued on page 12.)

HORNBY TRAINS

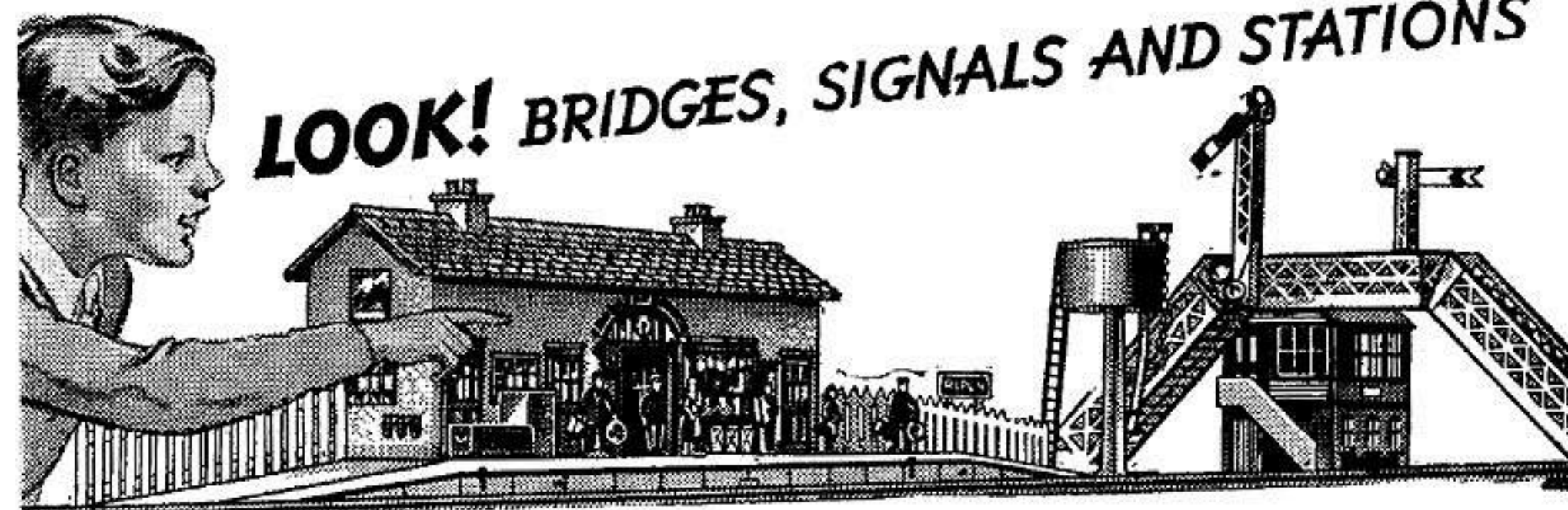
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Quelch's gimlet eyes almost bored into Gosling. A suspicion came into his mind that Gosling might have been "tipped" to screen that young rascal!

Perhaps Gosling read that suspicion in his speaking countenance, for he gave an emphatic snort.

"P'raps you'd like to look through this 'ere lodge, sir," he suggested sarcastically. "Wot I says is this 'ere—"

"You—you—you are sure that no boy has used your telephone, Gosling?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Course I ham!" grunted Gosling. Mr. Quelch's lips set in a tight line. He realised that Gosling was stating the facts—and, at the same moment, realised that his leg had been pulled.

That exclamation he had heard—"Oh, my hat! Gosling!"—had not been caused by the young rascal seeing Gosling coming. It had been uttered intentionally, to put him on the wrong track.

It had been uttered to send him hot-foot down to the porter's lodge on a false scent—while the young rascal got away in safety from the telephone he had actually been using!

Quelch had fallen blindly into the trap! He realised it—too late!

That young rascal had been using a telephone in the House—in the study of some master who had gone out that frosty morning. It was only too clear to Quelch now. By cutting down to the porter's lodge so swiftly, he had simply left the coast clear for the young rascal to escape undetected—and that was exactly what the young rascal had planned!

Mr. Quelch turned away—with feelings too deep for words. He had been cheeked, fooled, given a run across the quad, and there was no chance whatever now of bringing the delinquent to book!

He walked back to the House—at a much more moderate pace. And if the fellows in the quad felt inclined to smile, they were careful not to do so till Quelch had passed them. His expression did not encourage smiling!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

While The Cat's Away!

GILBERT TRACY stepped softly from Mr. Prout's study, grinning.

Prout was out, and it was the Fifth Form master's telephone that the young rascal had been using.

With the door an inch open he had heard Quelch's door fly wide, and the Remove master hurry away, almost at a run!

Grinning, he stepped out into the passage, and cut along to the study Mr. Quelch had left so suddenly.

His trick had been a perfect success. That apparently startled ejaculation over the phone had given Quelch the desired impression, and he had rushed off for the porter's lodge.

Gilbert counted on at least five minutes while he was gone—and he was going to make the most active use of those minutes.

He whipped into Mr. Quelch's vacant study, and shut the door.

From the window he had a glimpse of Quelch hurrying down to Gosling's lodge. One glimpse was enough!

He turned to the study table.

Gilbert was a practised ragger. A few minutes were enough for him when he set to work. His intention was to

up-end the study table, scatter the ink over the books and papers, and vanish.

He grasped the table with the intention of tilting it over. But he paused as he saw the money there.

Quelch had rushed out of the study, without giving a thought to what he had left lying on the table. Seven pound notes lay there in a little heap under the paper-weight.

Gilbert was reckless, or rather, ruthless; but even Gilbert did not want to cause money to be lost. He picked up the little heap of currency notes to place them on the mantelpiece in safety before he wrecked the books and papers that lay on the table.

Then again he paused.

The letter lying on the blotting-pad, the registered envelope addressed beside it, showed that Quelch had been going to send that money away by post—but the buzz of the telephone had interrupted him.

Gilbert gave a soft chuckle. He had thought of a better idea than ragging Quelch's books and papers.

If that money was missing when Quelch came back, what would he think? What could he think?

Gilbert's eyes glared. If Quelch fancied that there had been a theft in his study—if he announced a theft all over the school—and then the money turned up in his own study—

The young rascal looked quickly round for a safe hiding-place. It was not a difficult matter, for when Quelch missed the currency notes, he was certainly not likely to guess that they were still in the room!

He wanted to find a spot that was quite safe from observation, but that was certain to be discovered sooner or later by Mr. Quelch. He stepped to the telephone, which stood on a small table by the window.

Swiftly he folded the currency notes, and placed them under the telephone.

That instrument completely concealed them from sight.

The next time Mr. Quelch picked up the telephone, he would be startled by the sudden sight of seven folded pound notes. But until he picked up the telephone, he was not likely to dream that they were there!

Gilbert cut across to the door.

He was not going to rag now. He had done enough! And the sooner he was safe away, the better.

He stepped out of the study, leaving the door open as Mr. Quelch had left it in his haste. He had not been two minutes in the study.

In about a second, he was out of Masters' Passage. Once out of that dangerous quarter, however, he dropped into an easy walk, with no sign of haste or excitement in his looks.

He strolled to the doorway of the House, his manner quite easy and unconcerned, and went out into the quad.

Dozens of fellows were there, in the winter sunshine;

That Quelch would guess, or suspect, that he had done the telephoning, Gilbert did not need telling. But Quelch could guess, or suspect, exactly what he liked!

He could suspect that Gilbert had pinched the currency notes, if he liked. He could, if he liked, accuse him of having pinched them. Gilbert would rather have enjoyed that, considering that proof would turn up, sooner or later, that they had not been pinched at all!

Harry Wharton & Co. were punting a footer about before dinner. Gilbert cheerfully joined them.

In the distance he could see Mr. Quelch coming away from Gosling's lodge—with a very expressive expression on his face.

Fellows whom Mr. Quelch passed smiled after he had passed them—rather amused by the speed with which he had gone down to the lodge, and by the Gorgon-like look on his face as he came back.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's jolly old Quelch again!" murmured Bob Cherry. "None of your stunts with that ball, Tracy!"

"Like to see me land it on his beezers?" asked Gilbert.

"Chuck it, you ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You did enough in that line on Saturday, you fathead!"

"I've told you I didn't!"

"Oh, yes! But keep clear of that ball!" And the captain of the Remove hooked it away from Gilbert's foot.

"Tracy!" Mr. Quelch spotted Gilbert among the juniors, and came across to them, his eyes glinting.

"Yes, sir! Did you call me?" asked Gilbert meekly.

"Where were you ten minutes ago, Tracy?"

"I've been punting a footer with these fellows for some time, sir—I can't say exactly how long!"

"Wharton! Has Tracy been in your company for ten minutes?"

"I—I didn't notice exactly when he joined up, sir!" stammered Harry. That was quite true, but he was aware that it was not so long as ten minutes ago.

"Ten minutes ago!" said Mr. Quelch. "I was rung up on the telephone by an insolent boy—I believe Tracy! Can you tell me, Wharton, that you actually saw him outside the House ten minutes ago?"

"Oh! No, sir—not—not exactly—but he may have been in the quad," stammered Wharton. "He's been with us some minutes, sir!"

"Did you think, sir, that I telephoned to you?" exclaimed Gilbert, with an air of great astonishment.

"I have no doubt of it whatever, Tracy!"

"But if I did, sir, surely you would have recognised my voice!" said Gilbert. "You know my voice, I suppose, sir?"

The Famous Five looked at their Form-master. It seemed to them that Tracy had him there!

"The voice on the telephone, Tracy, was deliberately disguised, as I have no doubt that you know perfectly well!" said Mr. Quelch, through his closed lips.

"Then you don't know who it was, sir?" asked Gilbert innocently. "Am I to be supposed to have done everything, when you don't know who it was?"

Again it seemed to the Famous Five that Gilbert had his Form-master. And, indeed, he had; for though Mr. Quelch had no doubt, obviously he could not proceed to action without a jot or tittle of evidence of any kind.

"I have no doubt, Tracy, that it was you, and I shall endeavour to ascertain!" said Mr. Quelch; and he turned away, and resumed his progress to the House.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at Tracy.

"Was it——" began Bob.

"I wonder!" yawned Gilbert.

"Of course it was!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Tracy doesn't care how many crammers he rolls out! Look how he was rolling them out on Saturday!"

"May as well have the game as the

name!" sneered Gilbert. "If Quelch has no use for the truth, he can have the other thing!"

And Gilbert shrugged his shoulders and walked away, leaving the Famous Five exchanging glances.

"He did it, of course," said Bob. "That chap can't help asking for trouble. Quelch can't pin him down, though."

"I—I suppose it isn't possible that he was telling the truth on Saturday?" said Harry Wharton slowly. "He seems to be sticking to his tale. If he never buzzed that footer at Quelch, as he says—"

"If he didn't, who did?"

"Um!"

The Famous Five resumed punting the footer.

Gilbert, strolling in the quad, was waiting for news from Quelch's study, wondering, with sarcastic amusement, what Quelch would do when he missed the currency notes, and what sort of a fool he would make of himself.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Shock!

MR. QUELCH strode into the study and shut the door with almost a bang.

He was deeply disturbed and annoyed and irritated.

Once more—for the umpteenth time, in fact—that disrespectful and rebellious young rascal Tracy had scored over him and got by with it.

He was almost sorry that he had not ordered the young rascal into his study and given him six, proof or no proof.

But that, really, was impossible. There were other ragers in the Remove as well as Tracy. There were several, at least, who might have played that cheeky trick on the telephone. Some, indeed, might have been emboldened to do so by the knowledge that suspicion would fall automatically on the worst boy in the Form. He was practically certain that it was Tracy, but a practical certainty was not enough for the infliction of punishment.

After a few minutes' bitter reflection on the subject, Mr. Quelch remembered the letter to Roger.

He sat down at his table, to slip the letter into the registered envelope, and the currency notes after it.

Then he gave a jump—or, rather, a bound.

The paper-weight was there where he had left it, but the little pile of currency notes was no longer under the paper-weight.

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Quelch. The money was gone!

He sat staring at the paper-weight. Then he lifted it and looked under it. Then he looked round, all over the table.

He moved books and papers, and looked under them. But he knew that search was useless. He knew exactly where he had left those currency notes, and he knew that they must have been taken away from where he had left them during his absence from the study.

He rose to his feet, his face startled, dismayed, horrified. He was angry, but he was more horrified than angry.

Seven pounds had been taken from his study. Inadvertently, owing to that trick on the telephone, he had left the study, leaving the money on the table—quite contrary to his usual careful habits. And it was gone!

Tracy!

Had he come to this? The worst boy in the Form, the pub-haunter, the

breaker of bounds, the rebel and mutineer—had he fallen to theft?

It seemed only too clear to Mr. Quelch. He was already certain that it was Tracy who had tricked him on the telephone. That trick had caused him to rush down to Gosling's lodge, leaving the money in full view of anyone who entered. Someone had entered, seen the money, and taken it. Who but Tracy?

Immediately a dozen circumstances crowded into Mr. Quelch's mind. Tracy had had plenty of money when he first came to the school; his uncle, Sir Giles Oakwood, was carelessly indulgent in that matter. But when Mr. Quelch had discovered Tracy's racing stunts he had put it very plainly to the old baronet at Oakwood Place, and the supply of cash had been cut off. Since that time Tracy had had an allowance of half-a-crown a week, on which the most reckless young rascal could hardly have done much in the way of backing geese. Short of cash for his rascalities, he had taken the opportunity of helping himself. What could be clearer?

It was a terrible shock to Mr. Quelch.

The boy had been a thorn in his side ever since he had come unwillingly to the school. More than once Quelch had had reason to regret that he had ever taken that unmanageable boy off Sir Giles' hands. But he had never even dreamed of anything like this. Rebellious insolence, disrespectful, monkey-like trickery, even breaking bounds and consorting with racing men, paled into insignificance beside this! This was crime!

Mr. Quelch had been determined that Tracy should never carry out his mutinous scheme of getting away from the school by persistent bad conduct. But if he had done this he could not remain. A thief could not stay at Greyfriars for any reason whatsoever. If the wretched boy had added theft to the long list of his misdeeds, he had to go, and go at once!

He had supposed when he cut short Gilbert's supply of cash that it would put an end to his sporting speculations, and, instead of that, it had led—to this!

For several long minutes Mr. Quelch stood in deep and painful thought. But he realised the need for action—prompt action.

If the boy had the money—and there could be little doubt that he had—he could not have parted with it yet. He had not gone out of gates immediately; Quelch had seen him in the quad. If he had gone out since it was as good as proof.

Mr. Quelch stepped to his window and threw it up. He waved his hand, and called to his head boy in sight in the distance.

Harry Wharton glanced round, and then, leaving his friends, ran across to his Form-master's window.

"You called, sir?"

"Is Tracy within gates, Wharton?"

"He must be, sir. The gates aren't open."

"That does not follow!" said Mr. Quelch bitterly. "Wharton, find Tracy at once, if he is within gates, and bring him to my study!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" said the astonished captain of the Remove. He looked round. "There he is, sir!"

"What?"

"Over by the elms, sir. He hasn't gone out."

"Oh! Bring him in at once, Wharton! Accompany him to my study, and see that he does not throw anything away before he arrives here!"

"Oh, my hat—I mean, yes, sir!" gasped Harry.

He cut across to Tracy, who was loafing under one of the old elms with his hands in his pockets.

Gilbert gave him a cheery grin.

"Anything up?" he asked.

"Yes, I'm afraid so. Quelch wants you at once, and I'm to go with you," answered Harry. "Have you been bagging any of his Form papers or anything, you fathead?"

"Hardly."

"He seems to think you may have something about you," said Harry. "Come on! Quelch didn't look as if he would like to wait."

"Any old thing!" yawned Gilbert.

Under a minute Wharton was tapping at the study door and opening it.

"Here's Tracy, sir!"

"Come into the study, Tracy! Wharton, are you sure that Tracy has parted with nothing on his way here?"

"Quite sure, sir," answered Harry.

"Very well; you may go!"

Harry Wharton drew the study door shut, and went, in a state of great astonishment.

Mr. Quelch fixed his gimlet eyes on Gilbert.

"Tracy!" he barked.

"Yes, sir!"

"You entered my study during my absence a few minutes ago."

"Did I, sir?"

"Do you deny it, Tracy?"

"What's the use if I did?" asked Gilbert coolly. "You won't believe a word I say when I tell you the truth!"

"I warn you not to be insolent, Tracy! This is a terribly serious matter! Money has been taken from this study!"

"Has it?" drawled Tracy. "Am I a thief now along with the rest?"

"I fear so, Tracy—I greatly fear so! Turn out your pockets on my study table!"

Gilbert's face flushed crimson. He had hardly doubted that Quelch would suspect him, and he had been amused at the idea. But it gave him a very unpleasant jolt to be treated as a suspected thief.

"No money has been taken out of this study, sir, that I know of!" he muttered sullenly.

"Turn out your pockets at once!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

In sullen, savage silence, Gilbert obeyed. Every pocket was emptied to the lining. Cash to the extent of a half-crown, a shilling, and a few coppers was turned out, but certainly nothing like a currency note.

"Tracy, where is the money you have taken from this study?"

"I've taken no money, or anything else, from this study!"

"I cannot believe you, Tracy! The money is gone, and it is you, I am assured, who have taken it!"

"Then it's no good my saying anything, is it, sir?" asked Gilbert, with sarcastic coolness. "I'm willing to go to the Head, and I don't think that he will believe that I'm a thief, without any evidence."

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Gilbert stood silent, but there was a mocking gleam in his eyes. The Head had let him off on Saturday, for want of evidence, and on this occasion there was still less in that line. There was nothing, but Mr. Quelch's deeply grounded suspicion and distrust of him.

There was a long minute of silence, during which Mr. Quelch stood looking

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(Continued from page 13.)

at the worst boy in his Form, with grim face and glinting eyes. Then at last he made a gesture of dismissal.

"For the present, you may go," he said.

And Gilbert went, grinning.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bumps For Bunter!

"WHAT about me?" asked Billy Bunter.

"Fathead!"

That seemed to Harry Wharton an appropriate reply to Bunter's question—the matter in hand being the selection of the Remove eleven for a football match at the end of the week.

Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, were coming over on Saturday afternoon to play Soccer, and on such an occasion the Remove had, so to speak, to put their best foot foremost. Only the very best men were wanted in the side on that great occasion, if fellows like Tom Merry, and Figgins, and Blake, and Fatty Wynn were to be sent bootless home.

The captain of the Remove was going over his list in the Rag after class, and his friends were giving him first-aid, as it were. One name was in all their minds—Gilbert Tracy. But it was a knotty point.

Gilbert was far and away the best Soccer player in the Lower School at Greyfriars. There were good men in the Remove. Wharton, and Smithy, and Bob were not only good, but first-class. Nevertheless, they all admitted that Gilbert could play their heads off if he liked. His goal-getting was not only wonderful, but positively uncanny.

But—As Hurree Janset Ram Singh would have said, the butfulness was terrific!

Gilbert had played for the Remove early in the term. He had been kicked out for foul play. He had been tried again, and had let down the team by rotten play, owing to worry over some of his dingy sporting speculations. That barred him off definitely.

Nevertheless, there had been such a change in Gilbert of late that Harry Wharton was driven to revising his opinion. He seemed as keen as ever on ragging Quelch; but that was his own business, and had nothing to do with football. He had started all Greyfriars by playing one unscrupulous trick after another. He had made enemies right and left; he had been sent to Coventry by his Form. But it had to be admitted that, apart from ragging Quelch, he had not offended for a good long time, and he had done some things that were not only decent, but kind and generous. Wharton had tried him in several of the Form pick-ups, and he had played a good clean game.

It was known that he no longer haunted the Three Fishers up the river.

He had chucked breaking out at night. Wharton, in whose study he was, knew that he had given up smoking cigarettes. Indeed, Gilbert was so changed in many ways that the captain of the Remove hardly knew him as the sullen, discontented, suspicious, malicious fellow who had come to the school that term.

He was on friendly terms now with his studymates, Wharton and Nugent. He no longer had any enemies in his Form. Even Mr. Quelch had been coming round, and had begun to look upon him with a more benignant eye, when that unfortunate affair in the Remove passage restarted trouble.

Altogether, Harry Wharton was disposed to think that Gilbert might be given a chance in a match—the last big fixture before the school broke up for the Christmas holidays. But it was a knotty point, and the captain of the Remove had not yet put his name down. He was consulting with his chums on the subject, when Billy Bunter weighed in with a valuable suggestion.

"Fathead" as the reply did not seem to satisfy Bunter. The fat Owl of the Remove proceeded with an indignant blink through his big spectacles.

"I said what about me, Wharton. And what I mean is—what about me—see? The fact is, I should like to play. My pal D'Arcy will be coming over with the St. Jim's lot, and I'd really like to meet him on the footer field. Besides, you want to win, I suppose?"

"Chump!"

"Chump" satisfied Bunter no more than "fathead." His claims to distinction as a Soccer champion were not to be disposed of like that.

"You can't expect to keep on getting away with this sort of thing, Wharton, he said.

"What sort of thing, ass?"

"Leaving good men out of the team, because you're afraid of being put in the shade—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"You leave out Tracy," went on Bunter. "He can play your head off! So can I, and you leave me out. I can tell you, it won't do! You can't expect to get by with it. When my people at home ask me what I've done in games, I hate to have to keep on saying that I'm always left out owing to jealousy."

"Oh crikey!"

"Put me in as centre-forward, and then you'll see what you will see," declared Bunter. "You can take some other place, Wharton. After all, you ought to be willing to stand down for a better man. Play the game, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—" gasped Bunter. "That's the way you talk to a chap that can land a footer anywhere he jolly well likes! Talk about Tracy! Look what I can do with a footer!"

"Well, what can you do, besides fall over it?" asked Johnny Bull.

"I've a jolly good mind to tell you!" said Bunter. "You'd be jolly surprised, if you knew. I'd like to see any of you chaps get Quelch—"

"Quelch?" ejaculated the Famous Five together.

"Yes, Quelch!" declared Bunter. "Now it's all over, and they ain't making a row about it, I don't mind telling you that it was I who got Quelch with that footer on Saturday."

"You!" yelled the Famous Five, in chorus.

"Me!" said Bunter. "And if you fellows could make a shot like that, I'd jolly well like to see you do it!"

They gazed at him.

They did not, of course, believe his statement. Billy Bunter was the last fellow in the Remove who could possibly have brought off that shot.

Wharton had begun to doubt whether Tracy had done it, in view of his repeated denials, and in view also of the fact that Gilbert did not seem such a fearful fibber as he had once been. But if it was not Gilbert, it was some fellow who had a wonderful kick, and even then he had been lucky with the shot. As for Billy Bunter, he could not have brought it off if he had tried regularly a hundred times a day for a hundred years.

"Well, that takes the cake!" said Bob Cherry, at last. "I suppose Bunter can't help telling crammers. But why such whopping ones, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"So it was you!" gasped Harry Wharton. "You brought off a shot that I couldn't have done in a month of Sundays!"

"Exactly, old chap! So you can see that I should be jolly useful in the front line next Saturday. A shot like that, you know—"

"Oh crumbs!"

Had Bunter stated the facts, that he had kicked that footer down the stairs simply to get shut of it, and that it had landed on Quelch by blind chance as he came up, he might have been believed. That was a thing that might have happened—and, in fact, had happened.

But Billy Bunter had no use for facts.

Every fellow in the Remove, while wondering at Tracy's nerve, had expressed admiration for that wonderful shot with the footer. Bunter had made the shot, and he was going to get the credit of his wonderful skill—if he could!

Now that the matter had been dropped by the beaks he considered it safe to admit that he had done it; and if he admitted that he had done it he was not going to admit, also, that it was an accident—not Bunter!

"Well, as I said—what about me?" asked Bunter briskly. "Mind, I don't want to have this jawed about, in case Quelch hears—"

"You needn't worry about that!" chuckled Bob. "If Quelch heard, he would believe it about as much as we do!"

"I did it, you know!" declared Bunter. "It was like this—all you fellows bunked when you heard Quelch coming, not having my nerve—"

"Oh!"

"I just waited, as cool as you please, and got him right on the chivvy with that footer—"

"Go it! I can see you doing it!" chuckled Bob.

"Well, I did! I've got nerve. I was as cool as a cucumber—I mean, as cool as a cucumber—that is, I mean, as cool as a cucumber. Taking aim right at Quelch's boko, I let him have it. See?"

"Oh scissors!"

"And a fellow who can make a shot like that ain't a fellow to be left out when you're looking for good players, Wharton. You see that?" urged Bunter. "You couldn't have done it—"

"No more than you could," agreed Harry.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen," said Bob Cherry, "Bunter can't help telling whoppers, because he's built that way. Nobody ever expects him to tell the truth. But there ought to be a limit. A fellow who tells whoppers

that size ought to tell them in Brobdingnag, not at Greyfriars. Bunter's getting past the limit. Bump him!"

"Good egg!"

"I say, you fellows, don't you play the goat!" roared Bunter in alarm. "I say, I really did—Yarooooooop!"

Bump!

"Leggo, you beasts!"

Bump!

"Ow! Wow! Leggo! I tell you—"

"Now, did you get Quelch with that footer?" grinned Bob.

"Ow! Yes—"

Bump!

"Ow! I mean, no!" yelled Bunter. "Not at all! Nothing of the kind! Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter sat and roared. The Famous Five, grinning, resumed football discussion. The fat Owl clambered to his feet.

"I say, you fellows," he gasped, "I really did—"

"My hat! Is he beginning again?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Collar him and give him a few more!"

"Bag him!"

Billy Bunter did not wait to be bagged; he departed from the Rag in haste, and slammed the door after him. He left the Famous Five chuckling—and not in the least disposed to believe that Billy Bunter really had buzzed that footer at Quelch. Bunter, for once, had told the truth—but nobody could be expected to guess that. It was not a thing that often happened.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

What Quelch Heard!

"LIKE a feed, Bunter?"

"Eh? What? Yes!" said Billy Bunter promptly.

Bunter was not likely to answer "No" to such a question.

But he blinked at Gilbert Tracy in surprise.

Tracy, who had once had plenty of money, had hardly any now—as all the Remove knew. And a feed cost money.

Bunter answered "Yes" as a matter of course, but he was not at all sure that Gilbert was not pulling his fat leg.

"Had a remittance?" he asked.

"You're usually jolly hard up!"

"I've got some pounds," answered Gilbert carelessly.

"Pounds!" ejaculated Bunter. "I say, is your uncle sending you tips again? Bet you Quelch doesn't know!" And Bunter grinned.

"Even our beloved Form-master doesn't know everything," drawled Gilbert.

"He, he, he!"

Three or four fellows looked at Gilbert curiously as he conversed with Bunter; and Mr. Quelch looked at him very sharply.

Quelch, whether Gilbert knew it or not, was right on the spot. He heard every word.

Mr. Quelch was walking in the quad after class; he was pacing in deep and troubled thought.

So far, he had said nothing in public on the subject of the money missing from his study.

The matter was an extremely difficult one.

He was morally certain that Gilbert Tracy was the guilty party. He had gone as far as making Gilbert turn out his pockets. Further than that he could not go. So terrible an accusation could not be made without something in the way of evidence—and there was none.

Mr. Quelch naturally shrank from making a sensation in the school by the announcement of a theft in his study. Neither would such an announcement have been of any use if Gilbert had taken the money and either parted with it, or stowed it away in some inaccessible spot till he had a chance of parting with it.

Unless the money was recovered, the matter had, of course, to be made public. But the Remove master was in no haste to take such a step; and in the meantime he was pondering over the matter with a concentrated mind.

The interest with which he heard Gilbert mention that he had pounds may be imagined, in the circumstances.

Gilbert, as he knew very well, had half-a-crown a week by way of pocket-money. If he had pounds, it was not difficult to guess where he had obtained them.

Gilbert, as he talked to Bunter, had his back to Mr. Quelch, and certainly did not see him—whether he had spotted him there earlier or not. Quelch was pacing under the leafless old elms, deep in thought, till Gilbert's words reached his ears and caused him to stare round sharply.

The short-sighted Owl of the Remove did not observe Quelch, but two or three other Remove fellows were at hand, and they did. Peter Todd made a sign to Gilbert to shut up, as a good-natured warning, but Gilbert did not seem to notice it.

Bunter was beaming. He had rolled out of the Rag in a very bad temper; now he was very good-tempered indeed. A fellow who had pounds and asked Bunter to a feed was a fellow Bunter felt that he could really like. Tracy might be a bad hat and the worst fellow in the school, but if he had pounds and was going to feed Bunter, Tracy was all right.

"I say, old chap, I'm jolly glad your uncle is playing up again!" said the fat junior cordially. "I was going to lend you something while you were hard up, you know, only I've been disappointed about a postal order. But, I say, have you really got pounds?"

"I don't mind telling you," drawled Gilbert, "I've got seven pounds."

"Seven pounds!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, come along to the tuckshop, old chap! This way, old fellow!"

"Tracy!"

It was a sharp, sudden bark from Mr. Quelch.

The Remove master came sweeping towards the bad hat of the Remove; and Gilbert spun round and stared at him.

"Oh!" he ejaculated. "I—I didn't see you, sir!"

"Probably not," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "Doubtless not, or you would not have spoken as you have done in my hearing. I heard your statement to Bunter, Tracy, that you have seven pounds."

"Did you, sir?"

"I did!" barked Mr. Quelch.

"Well, is there any harm in it, sir?" asked Gilbert calmly.

"Tracy, you do not dare to tell me that your uncle—Sir Giles Oakwood—has sent a remittance, against my express wishes—and such a large sum as seven pounds!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"No, sir."

"Nor your father, I presume?"

"No, sir."

"Yet you have seven pounds in your possession!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir. But not the seven pounds that you left on your study table this morning," said Gilbert coolly. "Nothing of the kind."

There was a general movement of interest among the fellows who heard—a number that was increasing, for a good many fellows were coming up to see what was on. This was the first any of them had heard of seven pounds having been left on Quelch's study table that morning.

Mr. Quelch shut his lips in a tight line.

Now that the missing money was tracked down to Gilbert, it was unnecessary for the disgraceful and painful affair to be made public at all. But Gilbert did not seem to care whether it was made public or not.

Indeed, he seemed to want to drag it out into the light!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter, his eyes growing round behind his spectacles. "I—I say, Tracy, did you—Oh crikey!"

"Tracy! You need say nothing on that subject!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "I should have thought that a sense of shame would keep you silent!"

"Oh! I haven't any, sir!" said Gilbert. "I'm the worst boy in the school, and a regular bad egg; and I don't care a boiled bean if all the fellows know that you think I pinched seven pounds from your study this morning."

Sensation!

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Such doubt as might have been in my mind, Tracy, has been quite dispelled now. Proof will now be forthcoming. I have a note of the numbers of the currency notes that were taken from my study."

"Indeed, sir!"

"Hand me the seven pounds you have spoken of immediately!" rapped Mr. Quelch, extending his hand.

"I can't, sir!"

"What! I order you to do so at once!"

"But I haven't got them on me, sir," said Gilbert. "I left them in my study."

"Indeed! In that case, we shall proceed together, immediately, to your study!" said Mr. Quelch. "Come with me, Tracy!"

"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Quelch walked off to the House with Gilbert.

A dozen fellows, in a breathless buzz of excitement, followed.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Seven Pounds!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter, pink with excitement, fairly yelled into the Rag. A dozen fellows there looked round at him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Come back to tell us some more whoppers?" asked Bob Cherry. "Bump him!"

"I say, Tracy—" yelled Bunter.

"What about Tracy?"

"Quelch has got him!" gasped Bunter. "I say, he pinched seven pounds from Quelch's study this morning—"

"What?" yelled the Famous Five.

"He's got it in his study, and Quelch is going up for it!" squeaked the excited fat Owl. "Pinched seven pounds—"

"Rubbish!" said Harry Wharton.

"Rot!" said Nugent.

"The rotfulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows, it's true!" shrieked Bunter. "Tracy told me in the quad he had seven pounds, and Quelch heard him—"

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"Queleh heard him!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

"Yes—old Queleh was only a few yards away, as it turned out—I never saw him, and, of course, Tracy didn't—"

"Didn't he?" chuckled the Bounder. "Tracy isn't a blind owl like you, old fat man! Bet you he knew Queleh was there."

"He jolly well didn't, or he wouldn't have mentioned that he had seven pounds for Queleh to hear! I say, you fellows, come—they're going up to the studies!"

Billy Bunter rolled off, in great excitement. There was a rush of the fellows from the Rag, after him.

"It must be rot!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Tracy wouldn't—"

"He's hard-up!" grinned Skinner. "Queleh stopped his tips from home!"

"Rubbish! There's some mistake—"

"It's a leg-pull!" grinned the Bounder. "I can't see that man Tracy telling Queleh—if he really had seven pounds."

"Come on!"

The juniors fairly scudded up the stairs. On the Remove landing they overtook another party, at the heels of Mr. Queleh. Every fellow was buzzing with keen excitement.

Mr. Queleh marched on, frowning and grim. Gilbert Tracy walked by his side, perfectly cool and collected.

Certainly he did not look like a pincher about to be compelled to hand over his plunder and to take the consequences of such an act. Indeed, he glanced round and winked at the Bounder behind Mr. Queleh's back, and Smithy burst into an involuntary chuckle.

Then Queleh glanced round, and Smithy's chuckle was shut off very suddenly.

"This is not a laughing matter, Vernon-Smith!" snapped the Remove master.

"Oh! No, sir!"

"This is a terribly serious matter," said Mr. Queleh, addressing the crowd of Removites. "This morning, a sum of money—seven pounds—was taken from my study! It now transpires, on Tracy's own statement, that he has precisely that sum in his possession. The inference is clear; and the matter is a terribly serious one."

Serious or not, the juniors looked serious enough, under Queleh's glinting eye!

"I should have preferred," continued Mr. Queleh, "to deal with this matter in private; but Tracy, who appears to have absolutely no sense of shame, has chosen to make it public. He will leave Greyfriars in disgrace, and, I have no doubt, will be sent to an institution of a very different character."

"Borstal!" murmured Skinner.

"Oh!" gasped the juniors.

"Tracy, come into the study."

"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Queleh rustled into Study No. 1, and Gilbert followed him in.

The juniors crowded, or rather crammed round the doorway. Nearly all the Remove had gathered by this time, and it was quite a crush. Billy Bunter squeaked painfully, as he was squeezed and almost squashed. But nobody heeded Bunter's squeaks.

"Now, Tracy—" rumbled Mr. Queleh.

"Yes, sir!"

"You will hand over the money immediately."

"What money, sir?"

"What! Do not bandy words with me, Tracy! On your own statement, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,608.

you have seven pounds in this study! Produce it at once!"

"Oh! That!" said Tracy. "On the table, sir."

"On the table!" repeated Mr. Queleh. He had himself inadvertently left seven pounds on his study table that morning. But assuredly he would not have expected a dishonest young rascal to leave a pinched seven pounds on a study table!

"Yes, sir—there!" said Gilbert.

Mr. Queleh stared at the table in Study No. 1! He glared at it! Nothing was on the table except a cake! It was a rather large cake—a rather nice cake—but it bore no resemblance whatever to cash!

"Tracy! This impertinence will not benefit you!" snapped Mr. Queleh. "I command you to hand me, immediately, the seven pounds you took from my study table this morning."

"I've already told you, sir, that I never took anything from your study this morning!"

"What—what! You have the impudence, the audacity, to repeat that statement, after admitting that you have seven pounds in your possession at this moment."

"Certainly, sir."

"Then where did you obtain this seven pounds, Tracy, which you have already admitted was not sent you by a relative?"

"At the tuckshop, sir."

"The—the tuckshop! You cannot mean, Tracy, that you have pilfered in the school shop as well as in my study!" exclaimed Mr. Queleh, aghast.

"Oh, no, sir! Mrs. Mimble saw me take the seven pounds—"

"She saw you take the seven pounds!" repeated Mr. Queleh.

"Yes, sir. She gave them to me."

"She—she—she gave you seven pounds?" gasped Mr. Queleh.

"Yes, sir, and I paid her five shillings."

"I will not listen to this impudent nonsense, Tracy! How dare you talk such utter absurdity!" thundered Mr. Queleh. "I command you to hand me the seven pounds at once."

"There they are, sir!" Gilbert pointed to the table.

"Where?" shrieked Mr. Queleh.

"There, sir! Seven pounds of cake—"

"What?"

"Seven pounds of cake—"

"Sus-sus-seven pip-pip-pounds of kik-kik-cake!" Mr. Queleh seemed afflicted with stuttering. "D-d-d-did you say seven pounds of kik-kik-cake, Tracy?"

"Yes, sir! You heard what I said to Bunter in the quad!" said Gilbert, with an air of mild surprise. "I asked him to a feed, and told him that I had seven pounds! I wasn't asking him to eat currency notes, sir! I was asking him to eat cake!"

"Kik-kik-cake!"

"Cake, sir!"

Mr. Queleh stared at Gilbert. The cram of juniors at the door gazed at him. For a moment or two there was a spellbound silence. Then from the crammed passage came an irrepressible yell:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did I say it was a leg-pull?" grinned the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't quite understand you, sir," went on Gilbert, as Mr. Queleh gazed at him, dumbfounded. "I haven't any money in the study—I never said I had. I had to borrow a bob to be able to pay for the seven pounds—"

"Tracy!" gasped Mr. Queleh.

"I did, really, sir! I had only four

bob, sir—you saw it when you made me turn out my pockets in your study this morning! I borrowed a bob from Ogilvy, as Mrs. Mimble charges five for her seven-pound cakes—"

"Tracy!"

"I thought I'd ask Bunter, as he's fond of cake, sir—and seven pounds is a good lot! I can't understand why you supposed that I had any money in the study."

"You—you—you have no—no money here, Tracy?"

"Certainly not, sir!"

"Do you dare to say that your remarks in the quadrangle referred only to the weight of this cake?"

"Of course, sir! What else could they refer to?"

Mr. Queleh gasped.

He gave a glance at the crammed faces in the doorway, and the Removites tried to suppress their merriment. But it was not easy! It was clear to all the juniors that Queleh's leg had been most gorgeously pulled! Gilbert had asked Bunter to a feed, because he had seven pounds—of cake! There was nothing really remarkable in that—Mrs. Mimble's special seven-pound cakes were well known and very popular. But Queleh, of course, had not been thinking of cake! He had been thinking of anything but cake!

"Tracy!" gasped Mr. Queleh, at last. "You have deliberately deluded and deceived me! You intended me to misunderstand your reference to seven pounds."

"Do you think I knew you were listening, sir?" asked Gilbert coolly.

"What—what! How dare you, Tracy!"

"I had my back to you, sir, and, of course, I couldn't be expected to guess that—"

"Silence! Silence!" Mr. Queleh breathed deep wrath. "This impertinent jesting will not benefit you, Tracy! I shall place the matter before the headmaster, and you will be called to account for your act in my study this morning! I shall hesitate no longer to deal with you, Tracy! The facts are sufficiently clear—and you will take the consequences of what you have done!"

And with that, Mr. Queleh swept out of the study—leaving Gilbert grinning cheerfully, and the crowd of Removites, as soon as his mortar-board had disappeared down the staircase, yelling with laughter.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Queleh Makes A Discovery!

MR QUELEH gave almost a bark as a tap came at his study door.

Queleh was pacing that study—in a mood that really resembled that of a lion stalking to and fro in a cage.

Never had he been so bitterly exasperated.

He had been deluded—made an utter fool of; the more he reflected on the matter, the more he realised how coolly, how deliberately, that young rascal Tracy had pulled his leg, and led him on.

Gilbert had, of course, intentionally spoken in his hearing—having first spent his last available cash on that seven-pound cake, wholly and solely to lead him on, and make a fool of him—in which he had succeeded perfectly!

But Queleh's mind was made up now. As soon as the Head returned to his study, after tea, the matter should be placed before him. Gilbert should go!

He wanted to go—he had planned and schemed to go; but he should not go as



"Tracy!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "I command you to hand over the seven pounds at once!" "There they are, sir!" said Gilbert, pointing to the table. "Seven pounds of cake——" "Sus-sus-seven pip-pip-pounds of kik-kik-cake!" The Remove master seemed afflicted with stuttering.

he had wanted! Not back to Oakwood Place, to a life of idleness and slacking and blackguardly associations. There were certain institutions—not quite so agreeable as Greyfriars—where young thieves were taken in hand and taught better ways! He could not remain at Greyfriars—but some such school was open to him—and Sir Giles Oakwood could hardly demur. That was going to be Gilbert's fate—Quelch's decision was fixed, and it remained only to see the Head and explain to him.

The study door opened after the tap, and Harry Wharton looked in.

Wharton had joined in the laughter up in the Remove passage. But his face was grave enough now. It was very grave indeed.

"What is it, Wharton?" snapped Mr. Quelch. "I cannot attend to you now—another time——"

"Please allow me to speak, sir," said Harry. "It's about Tracy——"

"You need say nothing on the subject of that unruly, rascally, and dishonest boy, Wharton!"

"I think I ought to speak, sir, if you'll give me permission. I heard what you said to him in my study, of course; and I think I ought to say, sir, that I feel sure that some mistake has been made—whatever became of the money from your study, Tracy did not take it."

"Enough! You know nothing whatever about the matter, Wharton—I am surprised that my head boy should utter one word in favour of so unscrupulous a young rascal—a boy who has, now, actually descended to stealing."

"I am sure not!" said Harry steadily. "I don't know what's happened to the money, of course; but I'm absolutely convinced, sir, that Tracy never had it. Even when he was at his worst, he would never have done such a thing; I am certain of it!"

"The money is missing, Wharton!"

"I know, sir, as you've said so. But I——"

"Tracy was in my study at the time! He denies it, but there is not the slightest doubt in my mind!"

Harry Wharton did not answer that. On that point, there was little more doubt in his own mind than in his Form-master's.

"You must not suppose, Wharton, that I have come to a conclusion hastily," said Mr. Quelch more gently. "But you are aware that Tracy was given to sporting and racing transactions, for which reason I stepped in and stopped his supply of money. Some reason of that kind accounts for this act."

"It's a long time, sir, since Tracy has done anything of that kind!" said the captain of the Remove earnestly. "I know that he has not broken out at night, sir; and, of course, I see a good deal of him as he's in my study. It's no secret what he was like when he came here; I couldn't stand him any more than any other fellows! But he has changed a lot, sir!"

"Outwardly, perhaps," said Mr. Quelch. "But——"

"I'm certain it's a real change, sir, and ever since you let him off the punishment-room to give him a chance, he has played up—I'm not the only fellow that's seen it."

"You are talking nonsense, Wharton! I had some such impression myself till Saturday, when he was guilty of a reckless, disrespectful, brutal assault—actually causing me to fall down the Remove staircase! And since then——"

"Tracy says he never did it, sir."

"Nonsense!"

"I can't make it out, sir, but he seems so earnest about it, that I really think that very likely he was telling the truth about what happened on Saturday."

"Absurd!"

"I'm sure you'll let me speak, sir, as the head boy of your Form!" said Wharton quietly. "I can't help thinking that Tracy told the truth about what happened on Saturday; and being disbelieved, as usual, he feels that it's no good trying to pull up——"

"If I thought so, Wharton, I should take a different view of the matter. But I do not, and cannot think so! You have done your duty in coming here to say what was in your mind; but say no more! Money is missing from this study, and there is no doubt as to the guilty party——"

Buzzzzzzzzzz!

Snort!

The buzz of the telephone-bell interrupted Mr. Quelch. He turned away from Wharton, and stepped impatiently to the instrument.

Since that cheeky call in the morning, which he believed to have come from Tracy, Mr. Quelch had not had occasion to use the telephone, and he had given that instrument no attention.

Now, as the bell buzzed, he had to attend to it! He grabbed it in his right hand, the receiver in his left, and barked into it:

"What? Who is speaking?"

No reply!

"Who is there?" rapped Mr. Quelch.

But no answer came over the phone! Whoever had rung up Mr. Quelch had simply rung him up and left it at that; a trick, apparently, to call him to the telephone for nothing!

Mr. Quelch breathed hard! Was this another trick of Tracy's—in the very moments when his fate hung in the balance?

He was about to speak again, when there was a sudden, startled exclamation from Harry Wharton.

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Wharton's eyes were fixed in amazement on a little folded heap of currency notes, revealed when Mr. Quelch lifted the telephone.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton. Mr. Quelch glared round at him. "What—"

He broke off as he saw what Wharton had seen!

With quite an extraordinary expression on his face, Mr. Quelch replaced the telephone—not exactly where it had stood before! Then he picked up that little heap of currency notes!

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

He stared like a man in a dream at the seven one-pound notes!

"Is—is—is that the money that was—was missing, sir?" stuttered the captain of the Remove.

Mr. Quelch gasped.

"I—I—I think—yes—it would appear so—yes—certainly—I—I think, undoubtedly—"

"Then it was not taken from the study at all, sir! Someone must have placed it out of sight under the telephone!"

Harry Wharton suppressed a grin.

He knew now why the telephone-bell had rung! The japper who had hidden the notes under the instrument considered that the joke had gone far enough—Tracy did not want to be taken before the Head and charged with theft! It was time for the hidden currency notes to be discovered—by Mr. Quelch personally! A ring on the telephone was sufficient for that purpose.

Mr. Quelch stood with the notes in his hand, gazing at them! Mingled with his deep anger was a feeling of relief!

There had been no theft. He had been deliberately led to believe so—but there had been nothing of the kind. It was Tracy, of course—he had no doubt about that. But Tracy had not pinched those notes—he had hidden them under the telephone. They had obviously never been outside Quelch's study at all.

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch at last.

"Then—then there hasn't been any theft, sir!" exclaimed Harry.

"Oh, no! Obviously not! A trick—a wretched, rascally trick to give me a false impression—but—but certainly not a theft. Wharton, you—you may explain to—to the Form that the missing notes have been found hidden in my study, and—and there is no suspicion of—of theft, or—or anything of the kind!"

"Yes, sir!"

Harry Wharton left the study, trying hard not to smile till he had closed the door.

Mr. Quelch was left with the currency notes in his hand, and mingled relief and exasperation in his speaking countenance.

And when, a few minutes later, Harry Wharton told the fellows in the Remove passage, there was a roar of laughter louder than that which had greeted the discovery of the seven pounds of cake!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Unexpected!

GILBERT TRACY took a letter from the rack in break on Tuesday morning.

He read it through, and read it through again with a thoughtful look on his face. Then he went out into the quad and looked for the captain of the Remove.

He found Harry Wharton with a

pencilled paper in his hand, running through a list of names. It was the football list for the St. Jim's match—a matter which was still in an undecided state.

"St. Jim's list?" asked Gilbert.

"Yes," answered Harry, slipping it into his pocket.

"I want to speak to you about that!"

"Oh!" said Wharton, rather uncomfortably. He had not been able to make up his mind yet whether "G. Tracy" was to be written in that list: and he did not want to discuss the matter with the fellow concerned.

"I've had a letter from my father," said Gilbert. "It's got some jolly good news in it. He's on his pins again now."

"I'm glad of that!" said Harry, with a rather curious look at Gilbert. He had not supposed that Gilbert was very deeply concerned about Captain Tracy.

Probably Gilbert read his thought, for his face flushed.

"I don't want to bother you with my affairs," he said gruffly, "but things might have been very different if my father hadn't been laid on his beam-ends last year. He had to go into a nursing-home, and he passed me on to Uncle Giles—who gave me my head in everything—and I dare say I was a selfish brute, and made the most of it. Never mind that! The point is that my father hasn't been told anything about my troubles with old Giles—or my troubles here—and I dare say you can guess that I'd rather he didn't hear."

"If that's the idea, for goodness' sake give Quelch a rest!" said Harry. "Why keep on hunting for trouble?"

"Didn't I try?" growled Gilbert. "It was no use, as you jolly well know. Wasn't I toeing the line? Didn't I refuse to join in the passage football on Saturday—though every other fellow did? What was the use—as soon as somebody bunged that footer at Quelch, he settled that I had done it—he didn't want any evidence!"

"Um! Yes! But—"

"If the Head hadn't had more sense than Quelch I should have been flogged for what I never did! What was the use of trying, after that?"

"That's all very well," said Harry quietly. "But if Quelch misjudged you that time, it was your own fault! You've been playing tricks as bad as that all through the term—how's he to know you've changed your mind and started on a fresh tack?"

"Well, I had—but it's no use! I've got back on him, anyhow," said Gilbert. "I fancy no man ever looked a bigger fool than I made Quelch look yesterday."

"You can't expect him to like it, Tracy!"

"Oh, bother him!" said Tracy irritably. "Look here, about Saturday and the St. Jim's game. My father says he's well enough to travel now, and he's coming down to the school on Saturday afternoon."

"Then he will see Quelch!" said Harry, with a whistle.

"That can't be helped! It's no good my trying to get on Quelch's right side when he puts everything down to me, whether I've done it or not. I've tried it, and it was no good. Look here, can't you put me in the team for Saturday? My father will see the game, and I'd like—"

"Oh!"

"I know I've got your back up about the Soccer!" grunted Gilbert. "I know I did some rotten things! But you might give a fellow a chance. I'll promise to be careful—you shan't have anything to complain of. And you

know jolly well that I'm worth a place in the eleven."

"I know that, of course," assented Wharton. "I'd have been glad to play you in every big fixture, if—if—"

"Well, can't you take my word for it that it will be all right?" said Gilbert.

Wharton paused a moment. Then he nodded.

"I was already thinking of it," he answered. "I'll trust you! Your name goes down, Tracy!"

He took the football list from his pocket, and wrote down the name "G. Tracy."

"That's that!" he said.

"Thanks," said Gilbert quietly. "I won't let you down—and I'll play as clean a game as any man in the Remove! You won't be sorry for this, Wharton! My father will be glad to see me in the game, and he will see, at least, that I'm not an outsider in my Form, whatever Quelch may tell him."

"Look here, Tracy," said Harry, "I believe that you told the truth on Saturday, and that you never buzzed that ball at Quelch—I've told him so."

"Bet you he didn't believe you!" sneered Gilbert.

"You can't wonder at that! But look here, if you didn't do it—and I believe now that you didn't—it could be found out who did—"

"The rotter ought to have owned up," said Gilbert. "But he won't now—that's pretty certain."

"We'd jolly well make him, if he could be spotted," said Harry. "If Quelch found out the truth about that, he would come round. Haven't you any idea who it could have been?"

"Not the foggiest," answered Gilbert. "It was some fellow mighty handy with a Soccer ball—that's all I know. Unless it was Smithy—"

"It couldn't have been—Smithy wouldn't keep his mouth shut and leave another fellow in the soup. I can hardly think of any fellow in the Form who would—and not one footballing fellow! Skinner, or Snoop, or Fishy, might be mean enough to leave it on another man—but they couldn't have brought off that kick to save their lives. Who the dickens—"

"It beats me hollow—but I know that I was up in the box-room and never did it! Quelch can think what he likes!" grunted Gilbert. "If he wants trouble, I can give him as much as he can give me."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" exclaimed Harry. "If your father's coming here on Saturday, you don't want a row with Quelch going on. Instead of ragging Quelch, you'd better try to find out who ragged him last Saturday, and see whether the matter can be put right."

Gilbert gave an angry grunt. Apparently he was more disposed to carry on with retaliation than to make an attempt to set the matter right.

"Do have a little sense!" urged Wharton. "What's the good of asking for more trouble, when you've got too much on hand already? You made Quelch as mad as a hatter yesterday; but he would come round if he found out that he really was mistaken that time—"

"Well, I dare say that's good advice," admitted Gilbert. "But I'm blessed if I see how I'm going to spot the silly ass who buzzed that footer at Quelch."

The bell for third school interrupted them, and they joined the Remove going back to the Form-room.

It was observed by all the Form that Mr. Quelch's eyes fixed grimly on Gilbert Tracy while the juniors were

(Continued on page 22.)

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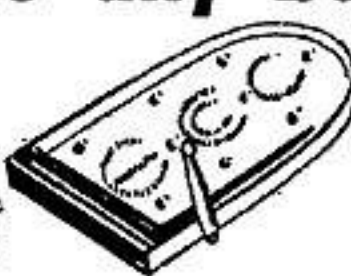
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taking their places. He rapped out Gilbert's name like a bullet.

"Tracy!"

"Yes, sir!" muttered Gilbert sullenly.

"You are probably aware, Tracy, that I have been making very careful inquiries on the subject of yesterday's occurrences in my study!" said Mr. Quelch. "I have now succeeded in obtaining information. You have denied that you used a telephone yesterday morning."

Gilbert was silent.

"I have now learned," continued Mr. Quelch, "that you were seen to enter Mr. Prout's study at a time when Mr. Prout was absent and at the very time that the telephone-call was put through."

Gilbert set his lips.

"As it happens," said Mr. Quelch, in the same grim tone, "Monsieur Charpentier was in his study, and his door was ajar. He saw you pass, and heard you enter Mr. Prout's study."

Gilbert did not speak.

"Supposing at the time that you had gone to take some message to Mr. Prout, and, unaware that Mr. Prout was then absent, Monsieur Charpentier thought nothing of the matter," continued Mr. Quelch. "It would never have been mentioned, but for my very searching inquiries since the occurrence."

Evidently Mr. Quelch had left no stone unturned in his searching inquiries.

"It is therefore quite clear," said Mr. Quelch, "that you used Mr. Prout's telephone on that occasion, Tracy. If you have the audacity to deny it, you will explain to me for what reason you entered Mr. Prout's study at all."

Gilbert said nothing. There was nothing for him to say. He had had to take the risk of being spotted in playing that trick on the telephone, and the risk had materialised. That was all there was about it.

"It was you, Tracy, who rang me up

on Mr. Prout's telephone, and uttered a series of disrespectful remarks."

Silence!

"Have you anything to say, Tracy?"

Gilbert spoke at last.

"Yes, I have," he said, between his teeth. "You took me to the Head last Saturday to be flogged for something I never did. I was getting my own back, that's all!"

"I have not the slightest doubt of your guilt last Saturday, Tracy," said Mr. Quelch icily. "If there were a doubt I should certainly take it into consideration. To my mind there is none. For your offence yesterday, Tracy, you will be placed under detention for all the remaining holidays this term."

"I don't care!"

"Silence, or I shall cane you in addition!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Gilbert was sullenly silent.

Third school proceeded, and Harry Wharton, who had put Tracy's name in the list for the football match on Saturday, realised that he would have to take it out again. While the St. Jim's match was being played on Saturday afternoon, Gilbert Tracy would be sitting in the Form-room with a detention task. He had asked for it and got it, and that was that!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Knows Nothing!

"BUNTER, old fat bean!"

"Yes, Tracy, old chap?" said the fat Owl affably.

It was the following day, Wednesday—a half-holiday for all Greyfriars except Tracy of the Remove.

After dinner there was a crowd of fellows in the quad. Snow had been falling that morning, and Greyfriars School looked like an old-fashioned Christmas-card. Roofs and chimneys gleamed white; the old elms were ridged with snow; window-sills were banked with it. And in the quad a merry crowd were hurling snowballs, and, judging by the hilarious voices, enjoying life.

Billy Bunter, however, had no taste for snow or snowballing. Bunter sprawled in a deep armchair before the fire in the Rag. His fat thoughts dwelt pleasantly on the steak-and-kidney pie the Remove had had for dinner, and of which Bunter had secured almost as many helpings as he wanted.

But he came out of that happy contemplation to bestow an affable blink on Tracy, as that youth came into the Rag and spoke to him.

"I say, old chap, you pulled old Quelch's leg a treat about that seven pounds!" grinned Bunter. "Made him look a fearful ass! He, he, he! I say, have you got another cake?"

"No!"

"Oh!" Bunter settled down in the armchair again losing his interest in Tracy to a very considerable extent. If there was no cake, it was rather irritating to be roused out of his ecstatic meditations on the steak-and-kidney pie.

"Look here, Bunter," said Tracy, his eyes on the fat and fatuous face, "I made a fool of Quelch on Monday, and I was a bigger fool than Quelch for my pains. I didn't know then that my pater was coming down this week. But never mind that. Look here, I think you might be able to help me out."

"Sorry!" said Bunter. "I'd lend you anything like a shot, of course; but my postal order hasn't come—"

"You fat ass!"

"Oh, really, Tracy—"

"You know everything that goes on in the Form," went on Tracy. "You spot everything and hear everything."

Bunter nodded complacently.

"Not much that goes on that I don't get to hear of," he assented. "I'm pretty well up in the news."

"Well, have you spotted anything about what happened in the Remove passage last Saturday?"

"Eh?"

"You know what happened," said Tracy irritably. "Some rotten cad buzzed that footer at Quelch's silly nose."

"Some what?"

Billy Bunter sat up and blinked at him.

As Bunter was the fellow in question he naturally did not see it in that light at all.

"It's got Quelch down on me," went on Tracy. "He fancies I did it, and he's down on me more than ever. You see that?"

"Fat lot you care whether Quelch is down on you or not!" said Bunter, staring. "You've been driving him wild all the term. Think you could saw the legs of his chair in the Form-room without getting him down on you?"

"All that is over and done with, fathead! It was all right for me, if the trouble hadn't started again through that rotten affair on Saturday. Now, look here, if you know who did it, or if you can nose it out, I want to know. The rotter's keeping it dark because he will get flogged—"

"Flogged?"

"Or sacked—"

"Sacked?"

"Or both, very likely," said Gilbert. "Serve him right, too!"

"Oh crikey!"

"But never mind him. He's asked for it, hasn't he?" said Gilbert. "He knew what he was doing when he knocked a Form-master down the stairs with a football. If I could spot him I'd make him own up somehow."

"Oh, would you?" gasped Bunter.

"Yes, I jolly well would! The whole Form would be down on him till he owned up, once they knew—"

"W-w-would they?"

"Of course they would! Think the Remove would stand for a fellow keeping his mouth shut, and leaving another fellow to take his gruel? He would get ragged right and left till he did the decent thing."

"Oh!"

"Now, look here, old chap," said Tracy persuasively, "you're always nosing things out; nobody can ever keep anything dark from you. If the fellow's told any other chap, very likely you heard him. Have you got any idea who buzzed that footer at Quelch?"

Bunter blinked at him.

Tracy eyed him hopefully. He had taken Harry Wharton's advice, and was making an attempt to elucidate the strange mystery of that happening on Saturday.

Naturally he thought of Bunter. Bunter, the Peeping Tom and Paul Pry of the Form, was just the fellow to know, if anybody knew.

He was just the fellow to whom to apply, in fact. It was quite probable that the Nosy Parker of Greyfriars had nosed something out.

As a matter of fact, Billy Bunter knew more of the matter than Tracy had dreamed.

He had lots of information on that mysterious subject, but he had very powerful reasons for not imparting that information.

"Oh crikey!" gurgled Bunter, as he blinked at Tracy.

In the delusive hope of squeezing into the Remove eleven for the St. Jim's match, on the strength of that wonderful shot, Bunter had told the famous

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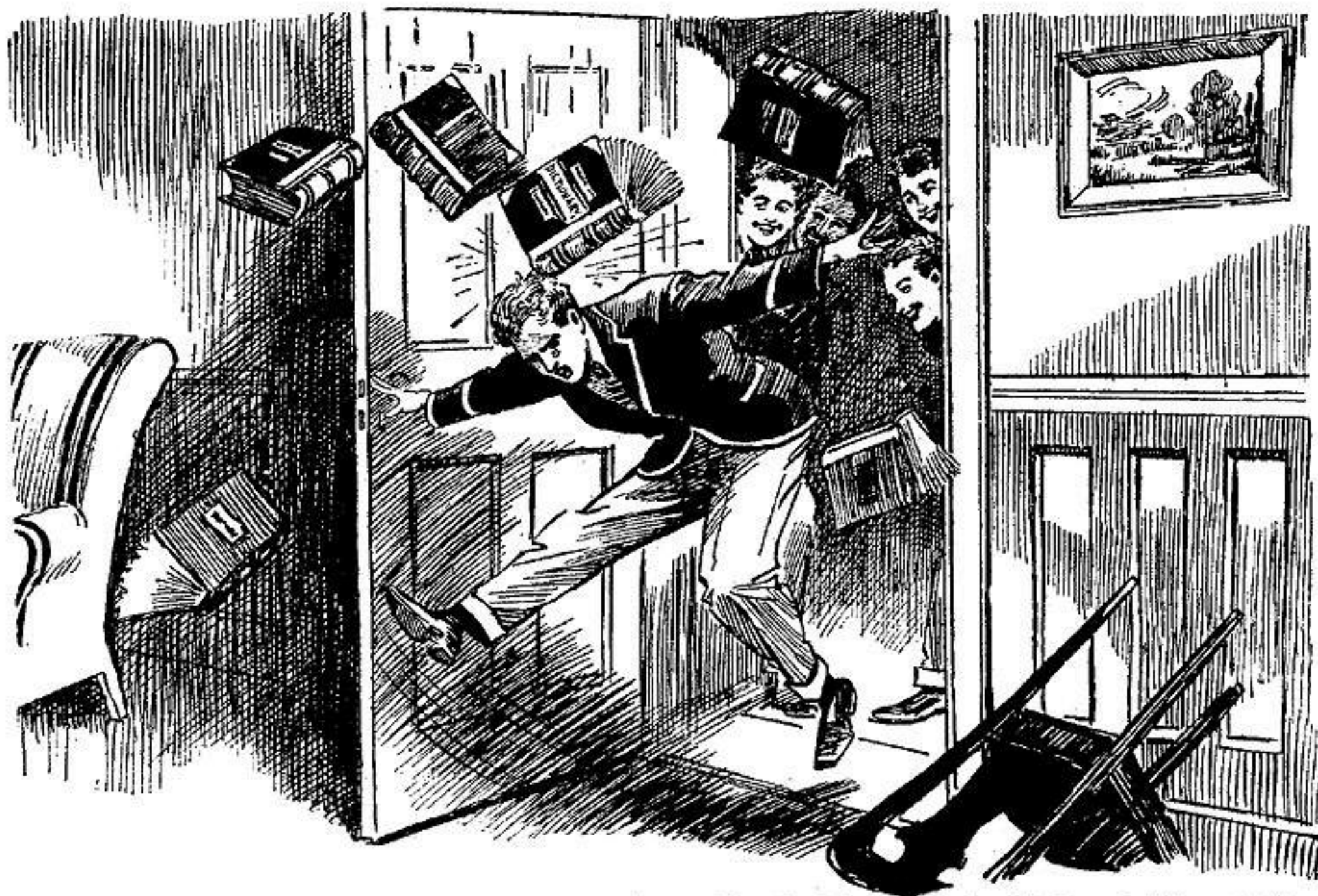
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Bob Cherry pushed open the door of Mr. Quelch's study, and stepped in. Crash! Bang! Crash! Bang! "Yaroooh!" roared Bob, as one hefty volume after another rained down on his hapless head. "What—how—why—oh crikey! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the onlookers in the passage.

Five that he had "done it." They had not thought of believing him!

And, though Bunter would have been pleased and glad to roll his fat person on the football field when Tom Merry & Co. came over, he was rather glad now that they hadn't believed him!

The prospect outlined by Tracy—of being ragged by the whole Form till he owned up and took a flogging, was not attractive to Billy Bunter!

Tracy, in fact, had unconsciously topped up the source of information by making that prospect clear to Bunter's fat mind.

"Oh crikey!" repeated Bunter. "Why, you silly ass—think a fellow wants to be flogged, or sacked, or both?"

"Why not, when he did it?" snapped Tracy. "Think it's decent of a fellow to leave it on me?"

"Well, you weren't licked, after all—" argued Bunter.

"I've got Quelch down on me—"

"He's always down on you! You ragged his study—"

"Never mind that—"

"You've been on his track all the term! Of course, he thought it was you," said Bunter. "That's your fault, and nobody else's."

"Look here—"

"Your own fault entirely!" said Bunter. "He wouldn't have fancied it was any other chap, without evidence. If he fancied it was you, it's because you've been at the same game all through the term. What else was he to think?"

"Oh, don't jaw!" snapped Tracy. "He will think differently when he finds out that it was another chap, anyhow. Look here, if anybody knows anything about it, you do. Do you?"

"How could I know anything about

it?" argued Bunter. "I was fast asleep in my study at the time. I never looked out of the study when all the fellows cleared off so suddenly, and never wondered why they did. I never knew Quelch was coming up—"

Tracy started.

"You looked out of your study, at that very time!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, no! I've just said I didn't!"

"Idiot! Look here, if you looked out while all the fellows were bolting into the studies and I was scudding up to the box-room, didn't you see who buzzed the footer?" exclaimed Tracy.

"Oh, no! I never saw the footer at all! It wasn't lying anywhere near my study!" said Bunter hastily. "I was asleep—fast asleep—in the armchair in Study No. 7 at the time—"

"At the time you looked out of the doorway?" yelled Tracy.

"Yes, exactly—I mean, no! Not at all! I never looked out! Why should I, when I was fast asleep?"

"You fat rotter," roared Gilbert. "I believe you jolly well know who did it, and you've been keeping it dark all this time."

"Oh, no! I haven't the faintest idea!" gasped Bunter. "If you think I did it, Tracy—"

"You! You ass! You couldn't have done it to save your life!" snapped Tracy. "But I believe you know who did."

"Not at all, old fellow! Perhaps it was you, and—and you've forgotten it!" suggested Bunter brightly.

"Did you see who did it?" howled Gilbert.

"How could I, when I was fast asleep? I'd been asleep for hours, when I looked out of the study—I mean, when I didn't look out of the study. Being asleep, of course, I couldn't."

Tracy's jaw set hard. He had hoped that the Peeping Tom of Greyfriars had nosed something out. Now it looked to him as if Bunter had been actually an eye-witness. Clearly, he had looked out of his study at the very time that the happening happened.

"You fat villain, you know who did it!" said Gilbert.

"Oh, no! Not—not unless you did, old chap!" stammered Bunter. "I—I expect it was you, as—as Quelch thinks so, you know."

"Will you tell me who did it?"

"How can I, when I know nothing whatever about it? I say, was that Wharton calling you, Tracy?"

Gilbert Tracy grasped the armchair, tilted it over, and rolled the fat Owl out on the floor.

"Now tell me who did it!" yelled Gilbert.

"Beast!"

"Will you tell me—"

"You did!" yelled Bunter. "See? You jolly well did, and I—I jolly well saw you! Yah!"

"Why, you—you—you—" gasped Gilbert.

The next few minutes were quite exciting, indeed hectic, to Billy Bunter. Gilbert got in four, before the fat Owl escaped, yelling, from the Rag! After which, the Owl of the Remove was less disposed than ever to reveal who had buzzed that footer at Quelch's boko!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Gilbert Getting Back!

GILBERT TRACY stood, about an hour later, at the Form-room window, staring out with a sullen face into the snowy quad. His eyes fixed on an angular figure, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,608.

in hat and overcoat, progressing towards the gates.

Mr. Quelch was going out. And Gilbert was strongly tempted to open the window, gather snow from the sill, and whiz a snowball after him as he went.

Unconscious of a narrow escape, Mr. Quelch walked on, and disappeared from view.

Gilbert, with an angry grunt, turned back to his desk and to his detention task.

He had a Latin paper to complete, and he knew what to expect if it was not completed when Quelch came to release him from detention. Sullenly and savagely he settled down to work.

But his thoughts wandered. He was thinking of his father's coming visit, and of what Captain Tracy would inevitably hear from Quelch.

He had done his best. The path of reform was not an easy one for a fellow like Gilbert—but he had been determined to tread it, and it was all in vain! His thoughts and his feelings were bitter.

He laid down his pen at last and rose to his feet.

If he could not placate Quelch, if he could not keep his father from learning that he was reputed the "worst boy in the school," he could, at least, hit back—and there was consolation in that for Gilbert! He moved across to the Form-room door, opened it, and looked out.

The coast was clear. Quelch had gone out, regardless of snow; he would not be back yet. There was ample time for a visit to his study—to prepare a surprise for him when he came in! Gilbert had changed a good deal of late—but the vengeful strain in his nature did not seem to have changed much!

He slipped out of the Form-room and walked away to Masters' Passage. In a few minutes he had let himself into Mr. Quelch's study.

In that apartment, however, he paused.

Was there, after all, a chance of setting himself right with Quelch before his father came on Saturday? He was assured that Bunter knew something of that mysterious happening with the footer—if only it had been possible to extract the truth from the fat Owl. If the facts came out—if Quelch learned that he had not done it—

But his face set doggedly again. He was a dog with a bad name—Quelch was down on him, and that was that! If Quelch was not going to give him a chance, Quelch could take what was coming to him!

He placed the study door a few inches ajar, and placed a chair inside. Then he balanced a large Greek lexicon on top of the door, resting against the lintel.

On the Greek lexicon, which was a bulky volume, he placed a Latin dictionary, almost as bulky. On top of that, he added a pile of other books of weighty learning!

Six hefty volumes were piled there, on top of the door—all ready to come down with a rush, when the door was pushed open from outside. Gilbert took the chair away, grinning sourly.

Quelch was going to get a startling surprise when he came in!

He had given Gilbert detention—he was going to get the booby-trap in return!

He would, of course, suspect Gilbert at once—Gilbert did not care if he did! He was sure this time that he had not been seen coming to the study. And he was not going to leave by the door—

that was impossible, with the booby-trap in position.

He crossed to the window, and raised the lower sash.

The snow was thick in the old quad, but a good many fellows were out of the House. Over by the elms, a snow fight was raging, between a crowd of Removites and Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth. No master was in sight—and only two juniors were anywhere near—Billy Bunter and Lord Mauleverer.

Lord Mauleverer was walking rather quickly—no doubt because Billy Bunter was in the offing. Of late, Bunter had been very keen to discuss the subject of the Christmas holidays with Mauly—and Mauly was anxious to dodge both the subject and Bunter!

"I say, Mauly, old chap!" Gilbert heard Bunter squeak, as he looked out at the open window.

Lord Mauleverer accelerated.

"Mauly!" howled Bunter.

Mauly put on still more speed! He disappeared round an angle of the building, and Bunter came to a halt, gasping for breath and pink with wrath.

Bunter had to give up the elusive Mauly. Once more the important subject of the Christmas holidays had to be postponed. The fat Owl was about to roll away, when his eyes and his spectacles fell on Gilbert at the study window!

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter.

He stared at Gilbert, who scowled in return. Gilbert was supposed to be in the Form-room, in detention! Evidently he was not where he was supposed to be!

Bunter rolled up to the window, grinning. Bunter was tall sideways; perpendicularly, he was not tall enough to look into the study. But he was very curious to know what Gilbert was up to there.

"I say, what are you up to in Quelch's study?" grinned the fat Owl.

"Shut up and clear off!" grunted Gilbert.

"He, he, he! You make out that you don't want Quelch down on you—and there you are, ragging in his study—"

Gilbert clutched up a double handful of snow from the window-sill.

Billy Bunter blinked at that proceeding, with interest.

"I say, are you going to chuck that about Quelch's study?" he asked.

"No!"

"What are you going to do with it, then?"

"This!"

Whiz!

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as he suddenly discovered what Gilbert was going to do with the snow—unfortunately not making the discovery till it squashed on his fat features in the form of a snowball.

The fat Owl tottered back and sat down—in snow! He spluttered wildly as he sat.

"Urrgh! Ow! Beast! Wow!"

Gilbert chuckled.

He clambered swiftly out of the window, shut down the sash, and dropped to the ground. Bunter was scrambling up—and Gilbert stayed a moment to give him a shove and send him rolling in the snow again. Then he cut away to the door.

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "Grooogh! Rotter! Urrgh!"

The fat Owl floundered in snow, gasping and spluttering.

Leaving him to gasp and splutter, Tracy went into the House and lost no

time in getting back to the Form-room.

There he sat down to his task again. His Latin task was going to be ready when Quelch came; that was all the more necessary, as Quelch was not likely to be in a good temper after going to his study!

Gilbert grinned over the Latin. In his present frame of mind, it was a consolation to think of Quelch getting that pile of books on his majestic napper when he went to his study. That happy prospect quite bucked the rebel of the Remove, and anyone glancing into the Form-room might have supposed that he found something quite amusing in a Latin exercise!

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise For Bob Cherry!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

There were baked chestnuts in the Rag; so there, of course, was Bunter!

Harry Wharton & Co., having defeated the heroes of the Fourth in a strenuous pitched battle in the snow, had tramped in with ruddy, cheerful faces, and were gathered round the fire, where Squiff was baking chestnuts, and everybody happily disposing of the same—especially Bunter.

"You fat slacker!" said Bob Cherry. "Why didn't you join us in mopping-up the Fourth?"

"Well, I was going to," said Bunter, "but I had to speak to Mauly rather specially. I believe Mauly's getting deaf—he didn't hear me call to him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I fairly yelled, and he never even turned his head!" said Bunter. "Bit rotten for poor old Mauly, if he's getting deaf, like Dutton! But, I say, you fellows—Tracy. He, he, he!"

"What about Tracy?" asked Harry Wharton.

"In Quelch's study—He, he, he!"

"Tracy's in the Form-room," said Bob, staring. "What do you mean, you fat ass?"

"He, he, he! I saw him get out of Quelch's study window half an hour ago!" chuckled Bunter. "He's been ragging Quelch again! I don't know what he's done—the beast chucked a snowball at me when I asked him—but you can bet he's ragged the study! He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter was amused. But the Famous Five did not look amused. They looked serious.

"Is that silly ass asking for more?" grunted Johnny Bull. "He's got detentions for the rest of the term already."

"The askfulness seems to be terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Quelch will be preposterously infuriated."

"Oh, Quelch won't be able to fix it on him!" said the Bounder, laughing. "He will know who did it—but he won't be able to pin him down."

"Quelch doesn't want much evidence in dealing with Tracy," said Bob. "He never saw anybody buzz that footer at him last Saturday, but he knew it was Tracy—knew it at once—What are you sniggering at, you fat Owl?" added Bob, as Billy Bunter emitted an involuntary chuckle.

"Eh? Oh, nothing!" said Bunter. "I don't know who buzzed that footer at Quelch any more than you do, old chap! Haven't the foggiest!"

"You fat chump, you know it was Tracy, the same as we do!"

"Oh! Yes! I—I mean of—of course! It was Tracy all right!" said Bunter. "I couldn't possibly have done it, could I?"

"You! Not in a hundred years! You told us the other day that you did—"

"Oh, that was only—only—only a jig-jig-joke! What I really meant was that I—I—I didn't—"

"Well, we know you didn't, fathead! Stop talking rot—that is, stop talking, as you can't help talking rot when you do talk! Look here, you men, if that silly fathead Tracy has been ragging in Quelch's study—"

Bob glanced round at his friends. "Quelch won't be in just yet. What about going along and putting things right again? The fellow's been in rows enough, goodness knows."

"Let's!" said Nugent.

And the Famous Five, leaving the chestnuts unfinished, quitted the Rag and proceeded to Masters' Studies.

Good as their intentions were, however, the chums of the Remove approached their Form-master's study rather cautiously.

Tracy's rags were sometimes of a rather thoroughgoing description—and it might not be possible to undo whatever it was that he had done, in which case they did not want to be seen on the spot.

Although willing to keep Tracy out of a row, they did not want to land in one themselves!

Mr. Prout was seen rolling into Masters' Passage. They waited till the Fifth Form master's study door had shut, and then walked quietly along to Mr. Quelch's door.

That door was a few inches ajar, and Bob Cherry glanced in without opening it. He was relieved to see that the interior presented its normal aspect.

"Can't see much wrong!" he whispered. "He can't have done much this time! We'll set it right, you bet, whatever it is. Come on!"

And Bob pushed the door open and stepped in.

The next moment there was a fearful yell in Mr. Quelch's study.

Crash! Bang! Crash! Bang! Bump!

"Yaroooooh!"

"What the thump—" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Yoo-hoop!" roared Bob. "What—how—why— Oh crikey! Ow! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled the four in the passage.

A Greek lexicon, a Latin dictionary, and four other hefty volumes rained down on Bob Cherry's hapless head! Only one of them missed him. The rest crashed hard, and Bob's head felt, for the moment, like a nut in the nut-crackers. He staggered and roared.

Quelch, had he walked into that booby-trap, would certainly have been startled, but he would not have been much hurt, for the volumes had not far to fall on his tall head! They had, of course, a good deal farther to fall, on a junior's head—and the extra distance emphasised the impact! Quelch might not have been much damaged; but Bob was, and he made the fact known at the top of a powerful voice.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Nugent. "It was a booby-trap this time—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling asses!" gasped Bob, rubbing his head. "Anything funny in a chap getting a heap of books on his napper— Wow!"

"No, old chap— Ha, ha! Of course not! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You sniggering chump—"

"It's all right, old chap!" grinned Johnny Bull. "Quelch won't get it now! You've got it—ha, ha!"

"You gurgling dummy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll jolly well punch that silly idiot Tracy's head!" gasped Bob, rubbing his own. "My nut's jolly nearly cracked— Ow!"

"Well, it's all right!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "We came here to set right whatever Tracy had done—and you've set it right."

"You silly cuckoo!"

"We've only got to pick up those books, and it's all serene! Jolly good idea of yours, Bob."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You sniggering, cackling chumps!"

"What is this noise?" Mr. Prout's door opened, and the Fifth Form master rolled out. "What are you juniors doing here? What—"

"Only picking up some of Mr. Quelch's books, sir!" said Harry Wharton meekly. "They—they seem to have

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fallen down from—from somewhere. We're picking them up, sir."

Prout stared into the study. It was clear that books had fallen down from somewhere, for there they were, scattered on the floor! The Removites picked them up industriously.

"Extraordinary!" said Prout. "Very extraordinary that a pile of books should have toppled over—very odd, indeed! They can scarcely have been left in a safe place! Place them safely on the table, my boys—take care that they are not left so that they will topple over again."

"Oh! Certainly, sir!"

The volumes were placed in safety. They were not likely to topple over again! The Famous Five retired from the spot, having carried out their kind intentions successfully, though in an unexpected way. Four members of the Co. were quite satisfied with the result—and the other member was rubbing his head, and feeling a strong desire to punch Gilbert Tracy's!

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Last Chance!

"FOOL!"

Gilbert Tracy addressed that remark to himself.

He had finished his Latin task; the paper lay ready on his desk

for Mr. Quelch's inspection when he came. Having finished it, Gilbert was reflecting—and the outcome of his reflections was his remark to himself.

Harry Wharton had given him good advice, and he knew it. If only he could establish the truth about last Saturday's mysterious happening, it would set him right with his Form-master. And his interview with Bunter had convinced him that Bunter knew something about it that he could reveal if he liked.

Instead of concentrating on that, he had allowed his sullen and resentful temper to lead him astray again. What sort of a temper was Quelch going to be in after getting a stack of heavy volumes on his head? What was the sense in "getting back" on Quelch—and spoiling his only chance of setting matters right before his father came?

"Fool!" repeated Gilbert. "Ass!"

Had it been possible, he would have cut off to Quelch's study, and undone his handiwork there. But reflection—and repentance—had come too late for that!

The winter dusk had fallen, and there was no doubt that Quelch had already returned. No doubt, indeed, that those volumes packed on top of the door had already fallen on his head.

Quelch might have forgiven Monday's happenings, if he had been convinced somehow that injustice had been done on Saturday. But offence added to offence—one disrespectful trick after another—what could be the effect, but to convince him that Tracy, even if innocent on one occasion, was in fact incorrigible—the same old Gilbert he had always been.

"Fool!" said Tracy, for the third time. "Idiot!"

There was a footstep at last, and the Form-room door opened.

Mr. Quelch came in, and Gilbert faced him with a sullen, troubled face. From the bottom of his heart he wished that he had never laid that booby-trap in the Remove master's study.

It was not a matter of punishment. Quelch could not punish him without some sort of proof. But he would know perfectly well who had done it, and would be all the more bitterly exasperated because the culprit could not be punished. Revenge is said to be sweet, but Gilbert was finding that it had an unpleasant flavour.

To his surprise, there was no trace of anger in his Form-master's face. Mr. Quelch picked up the Latin paper, glanced at it, and gave a nod of approval.

Gilbert had done his work well; that was only prudent, considering what else he had done. His Form-master looked pleased.

"This is quite good, Tracy!" he said.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" stammered Gilbert.

"I am glad to see that you have not wasted your time, Tracy!"

Gilbert wondered, dizzily, whether Quelch had not been to his study yet. But he was in cap and gown—surely he had been to his study, after coming in. Did he, for once, fail to guess that Gilbert had played tricks—or what did it mean? Certainly he did not look like a master facing a boy who had piled heavy volumes on his door to crash on his head.

Whatever it meant, clearly he was not down on Gilbert at the moment.

And it suddenly flashed into Gilbert's mind that he could not have been caught in that booby-trap after all. Someone else might have gone to the study before he came in, and got it instead.

Gilbert drew a breath of relief.

"You may go now, Tracy!" added Mr. Quelch quite kindly.

Gilbert paused. Quelch had come in

from his walk in a good temper—and had not, by some miraculous stroke of good luck, walked into the booby-trap! Was this a chance?

"May I speak before I go, sir?" asked Gilbert respectfully.

"Certainly," said Mr. Quelch, glancing at him. "What is it?"

"My father's written that he's coming here on Saturday, sir—"

"Indeed!"

"Wharton's asked me to play in the St. Jim's match that day—and I—I hoped that my father might see me playing footer when he came, sir—"

"Oh!" Mr. Quelch pursed his lips. "In those circumstances, Tracy, I shall consider whether you may be excused detention on Saturday—I certainly do not desire Captain Tracy to find you in detention when he comes. I will consider the matter. You may go."

"There's something else, sir," muttered Gilbert.

"Well?"

"I—I—I don't want my father to hear about my bad name here, sir," said Gilbert desperately. "He's heard nothing so far—he's been too ill to be told things, and now—now he's up, I—I'd like—"

"If that is sincere, Tracy, I am glad to hear it!" said Mr. Quelch coldly. "But after your conduct all through the term, and particularly of late—"

"I own up to what I did on Monday, sir!" said Gilbert. He was going the whole hog now. "I think you might excuse that, sir, because I never did what you thought I had done on Saturday."

"I cannot believe you, Tracy!"

"If I could prove it, sir—" exclaimed Gilbert eagerly.

Mr. Quelch gave him a penetrating look.

"In that case, Tracy, I should certainly take a lenient view of your conduct since," he said, "I had hoped, and thought I had reason to believe, that you had seen your errors, and resolved

to improve your conduct. But what happened on Saturday—"

"I never did it, sir."

"It is useless to make such statements, Tracy! I cannot believe you—and if, by any remote chance, you are telling the truth, you have only yourself to blame for it."

"I know that, sir!" said Gilbert. "I've been a fool, and—and I suppose, rather a rotter! But—but I do really want my father to hear nothing about it, sir—he's only lately up, after an illness lasting over a year—and it would be a shock to him, and—and I—I—I want to please him if I can, sir! But I'm not asking you to take my word! I believe it can be proved that I never did buzz that football on Saturday."

"I am perfectly willing to hear anything that can be said on that subject, Tracy! I presume you know that it is my desire to be just!" said Mr. Quelch. "What is the proof you speak of?"

"There's one fellow in the Form, sir, who knows who did it—I'm quite sure of that! Bunter knows."

"Bunter!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"I believe he knows, sir! I'm sure he knows!"

"I fail to see how Bunter can know anything about the matter," said Mr. Quelch. "I remember that when I looked into the Remove studies on that occasion, Bunter was asleep in his study."

"He wasn't asleep while the row was going on, sir—he was yelling to the fellows to keep quiet. I heard him. He may have gone to sleep afterwards. But he has admitted that he looked out of his study when the fellows cleared off so suddenly. If he did, he must have seen who kicked that footer."

Mr. Quelch stood looking at Gilbert in silence. He was puzzled, but he was a little impressed.

"If the fellows found out who did it, sir, they'd make him own up—after he left it on me," said Gilbert. "I'm sure that Bunter knows—"

"Very well, Tracy," said Mr. Quelch

at last. "I shall question Bunter and ascertain whether he knows anything of the matter. I can hardly believe it possible; but certainly if an injustice has been done, I am very anxious to set it right. Now you may go."

And Gilbert left the Form-room, Mr. Quelch followed him more slowly with an extremely thoughtful expression on his face.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

The Cat Out Of The Bag!

"I SAY, you fellows, think it's tea?" asked Billy Bunter.

"The thinkfulness is not terrific," grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, it can't be a row," argued Bunter. "I've done nothing, have I?"

Bunter had received from Trotter a message that his presence was desired in his Form-master's study.

It was tea-time. Bunter was unaware of any recent sins of omission or commission; so it seemed probable to Bunter that Quelch was going to ask him to tea.

Quelch did ask fellows to tea sometimes. It was rather a distinction. Bunter did not value the distinction highly, but he valued the tea; on such occasions there was always a cake.

"It can't be about the pie," said Bunter. "It's more than a week since I had the pie from the pantry. They can't be nosing after a pie after a week, can they? Besides, I never had the pie."

"Oh crikey!"

"I thought Quelch was after that before, but he wasn't," said Bunter. "That must have blown over long ago; I'd really forgotten it."

"Let's hope Quelch has, too!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"I don't think it's a row," said Bunter; "and if it isn't a row, it must be tea."

(Continued on next page.)

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And Billy Bunter rolled out of the Rag, to make his way to Mr. Quelch's study.

He arrived quite cheerfully at the Remove master's study and rolled in with a cheery, anticipative fat face.

To his surprise and disappointment, there was no sign of tea in the study; and Mr. Quelch greeted him with a fixed and penetrating look.

Bunter wondered uneasily whether Quelch was noticing specially that his collar was soiled and that his wash that morning had been hasty, and not repeated since. He realised that a fellow asked to tea by his Form-master might have shoved in a bit of a wash and put on a clean collar; but he had not thought of it in time, owing to his concern about the cake.

"Tut-Tut-Trotter told me you wanted me, sir," stammered Bunter, disconcerted by the steady stare of the gimlet eyes.

"Quite so, Bunter."

"I haven't had my tea yet, sir," said Bunter, as a gentle hint to his Form-master to come down to brass tacks, as it were.

"Will you listen to me, Bunter? On Saturday afternoon the juniors were playing passage football, and I came up—"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Did—did you, sir?"

"And some boy kicked a football out of the passage, Bunter—"

"Did—did—did he, sir? Oh crikey!"

"Which struck me and knocked me down the Remove staircase. I had no doubt that it was Tracy—" Mr. Quelch scanned the fat, dismayed face. "But if you can tell me anything on the subject, Bunter—"

"Oh, no, sir! I—I wasn't there—"

"You were not there?"

"No, sir; I was in the tuckshop at the time—"

"You were in your study, Bunter! I saw you asleep in the armchair when I looked in to see whether Tracy was there!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! I—I mean, I—I was fast asleep all the time, sir—snoring! I—I couldn't have seen anything when I was fast asleep, sir, could I?" groaned Bunter.

"Did you look out of the study, Bunter, when the boys ran off on hearing that I was coming?"

"Oh, no, sir! Being fast asleep in the tuckshop—I mean, the armchair—I—I couldn't. I—I never wondered why the fellows chuckled it so suddenly, sir, and I—I never looked out into the passage. Being fast asleep—"

"You looked out into the passage, Bunter!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Bunter jumped.

He could see that Quelch knew that now. How Quelch knew he did not know, unless Quelch had seen him looking out.

"Oh, if—if you saw me, sir," he stammered, "I never saw you, sir; never knew you were coming up at all. But if you saw me, sir, I—I— Now I come to think of it, sir, I—I did look out of the study. I—I was just going to say that I looked out, sir, to see why the fellows had cleared off like that; they stopped that awful row so suddenly—"

"Who was in the passage when you looked out, Bunter?"

"Nobody, sir."

"I warn you to be truthful, Bunter! Some boy must have remained there after the rest had gone, or the football could not have been kicked at me."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Yes, of—of course! Oh crikey!"

"Now, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch quite kindly, "it is necessary for me to know

the truth of this matter. It is clear to me now that you must be aware of the identity of the boy who kicked the football."

"Oh, no, n-n-not at all, sir!"

"I quite understand," continued Mr. Quelch, "that you are unwilling to give the boy's name—"

"Oh, yes, sir!" groaned Bunter. He was unwilling, there was no doubt about that—more unwilling than Mr. Quelch guessed.

"In ordinary circumstances," went on Mr. Quelch, "I should certainly not ask a boy of my Form to give the name of another boy; I should, indeed, punish any boy who offered such information. But in the present circumstances, the matter is entirely different. A Remove boy has been adjudged guilty. Although he has not actually been punished for the offence, the consequences to him are very serious. You will realise, Bunter, that I cannot run the slightest risk of an act of injustice being committed."

"Oh, no, sir! Yes, sir. M-m-may I go now, sir?"

"Listen to me, Bunter! I am trying to make you understand that in such a case as this the ordinary rules do not apply. I have no choice, Bunter, but to command you to give me the name of the boy who kicked the football."

"Oh crikey!"

"The name!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

It was clear to him now that Bunter knew. Bunter was going to state what he knew. It was going to be settled definitely whether there was any truth in Tracy's denial that he had kicked that footer.

Obviously there was doubt in the matter now. Bunter was an eye-witness, and it was through Tracy that Mr. Quelch had got hold of that eye-witness. It was hardly to be supposed that Tracy had produced an eye-witness against himself.

"The name!" repeated Mr. Quelch sternly.

"Oh dear!"

"Who was in the passage when you looked out of your study, Bunter?"

"N-nobody, sir!"

"For the last time, Bunter," thundered Mr. Quelch. "It is obvious to me that you know who kicked that football into my face on the Remove staircase, and unless you give me the name immediately I shall cane you—"

"Oh lor'!"

"Very severely—"

"Ow! It—it—it was an accident, sir!" howled Bunter. "Oh lor'! I never knew you were coming up— Oh crikey! I—I wish I hadn't kicked that beastly ball away at all! Oh lor'!"

"Wha-a-at?" Mr. Quelch almost stammered. "Wha-a-t did you say, Bunter? You—"

"I never did it!" gasped Bunter. "I mean, I never meant to! I never knew you were on the stairs! I kicked that beastly ball away down the staircase so that the fellows couldn't go on kicking up a row when a chap wanted to go to sleep!"

"Bless my soul!"

"I never knew you were there!" groaned Bunter. "I never knew the ball hit you on the conk—I mean, the beezee—that is, the boko, sir! I thought it had rolled down the stairs, and that the fellows wouldn't find it when they came back for it. I went to sleep in the study, sir. Think I should have gone to sleep if I'd known it had knocked you down the stairs? Oh crikey!"

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "No! Bless my soul!"

"I never knew till Toddy told me a quarter of an hour afterwards, and then

Tracy had gone to the Head!" gurgled Bunter. "I—I thought it was no use two fellows getting licked, sir!"

"Upon my word!"

Mr. Quelch gazed at the terrified fat Owl.

He understood now.

He—like all the Remove—had taken it for granted that only a fellow wonderfully skilful with a Soccer ball could have brought off that shot. That, certainly, was indubitable, if the shot had been intentional. But if it had not been intentional—if the footer had simply been flying down the stairs when Quelch came up, it was as likely to land on Quelch's nose as on anything else. It was just a happy chance.

"Upon my word!" repeated Mr. Quelch blankly.

Billy Bunter blinked at him, his fat knees knocking together, and the expression of an expiring codfish on his face.

"You should have told me this, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, at length.

"I—I was afraid you'd be shirty, sir—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, stuffy, sir. Toddy said you wouldn't be likely to think it was an accident, so I never told him, or—or anybody. I—I thought you—you'd forgotten all about it by this time, sir, as your boko—I mean, your beezee, sir—that is, I mean your nose, sir,—had got well!"

"You incredibly stupid boy—"

"Yes, sir. M-may I go now?"

"You inexpressibly obtuse and stupid boy—"

"T-t-thank you, sir! M-may I go—"

"I quite believe that it was an accident, as it is perfectly clear that you could have done no such thing intentionally. But your stupid thoughtlessness in kicking a ball down a staircase, where anyone might have been coming up—"

"They'd been making such a row, when a fellow wanted a nap—"

"You will take five hundred lines Bunter, for what you did—"

Bunter brightened up wonderfully. He had rather expected five hundred whops!

"Oh, yes, sir! If—if I'd known it was only lines I'd have told you—"

"You stupid boy, leave my study!"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Never had Billy Bunter been so glad to get out of a study. He fairly flew!

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

All Right for Gilbert!

"CAN you beat it?" asked Bob Cherry.

The Remove fellows admitted that it couldn't be beaten!

"Bunter—all the time!" said Harry Wharton.

"The absurd and idiotic Bunter!"

"Wonders will never cease!" said Frank Nugent. "That ass—that fat-head—that blithering bloater—he did it!"

It was amazing news to the Remove. Nobody, of course, had dreamed that Billy Bunter had done it.

That wonderful shot with the footer ceased, of course, to be wonderful, on the spot! As Bunter had done it, neither Mr. Quelch nor anyone else needed convincing that it was an accident. Only by the wildest accident could Bunter have done it.

There was general satisfaction. It was not shared by Bunter, who had five hundred lines to work through before

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the Christmas holidays. But everybody else was pleased.

Mr. Quelch, no doubt, was glad that the Head had so judiciously advised him to give Gilbert another chance—and that Gilbert, after all, was plainly on the path of reform; no longer the rebel and mutineer and bad hat! In view of this, Gilbert's later exploits were washed out, as it were—and his sentence of detention rescinded. Which was good news to Harry Wharton—who left the name of "G. Tracy" in the list, after all, for the St. Jim's match.

Quelch had hoped that Gilbert would improve at Greyfriars. It had to be admitted that he had! After all the troubles of that term. It looked as if his Form-master would be able to give him a good term's report, after all!

"Tracy, old bean, you're in the beak's good books!" Harry Wharton said to Gilbert, when the Remove came out in break the next morning.

Gilbert grinned.

"What-ho!" he agreed.

That morning, Mr. Quelch was quite kind to Gilbert. Convinced, at last, that the "worst boy in the school" was doing his best, Quelch was the man to encourage him.

On Saturday morning, he called Gilbert back when the Remove were dismissed.

Tracy stood rather uneasily before his Form-master's desk. But Mr. Quelch's look was reassuring—indeed, quite benignant.

"Tracy!" said Mr. Quelch. "I feel bound to say that I am pleased—very pleased—and very relieved, also. The report I shall be able to send to your uncle will, no doubt, surprise him; but I am sure it will please him also. With regard to your father's visit this afternoon—" Mr. Quelch paused.

"Yes, sir!" murmured Gilbert.

"I am satisfied—quite satisfied, that your desire to amend is sincere," said Mr. Quelch, "and in view of this, Tracy, and from consideration for your regard for your father's opinion, nothing will be said to Captain Tracy of your previous bad record here. It will be quite unnecessary to refer to it."

And Gilbert was dismissed with a bright and cheery face.

That afternoon, when Tom Merry & Co. arrived from St. Jim's, Gilbert Tracy lined up with the Remove footballers. A crowd of fellows came down to see the game, and among them, Mr. Quelch honoured his Form by appearing—and with Mr. Quelch was a tall military-looking gentleman, whom the juniors told one another was Tracy's pater.

Quelch remained only ten minutes or

so; but Captain Tracy saw the match through to the final whistle. It was worth seeing.

Never had even Gilbert been in better form—and never had the St. Jim's fellows encountered such a prize-packet on the football field. Tom Merry & Co. put up a good game, as they always did—but the result was six to two; and of the six, four belonged to the one-time bad hat of the Remove.

The name of Tracy was shouted on all sides, bringing a cheery grin to the face of the military-looking gentleman who was watching his son's exploits—and who did not know that that distinguished junior footballer had been distinguished, until quite recently, as the worst boy at Greyfriars!

"TRACY, old fellow!" said Billy Bunter affectionately.

It was a day or two later, when the fat Owl butted into Study No. 1, and addressed Gilbert Tracy in his most dulcet tones. It was tea-time, and the Famous Five and Tracy were about to get going on tea, when Bunter arrived. Bunter wanted to speak to Tracy on a very important subject; but he naturally paid his call at tea-time. Tea was always welcome.

But, affectionately as Bunter addressed Gilbert, he received no such affectionate regard in return.

"Hop it, you fat frog!" was Gilbert's unaffectionate reply.

"Oh, really, Tracy, old chap! I say, I hear that you're going to Cannes with your father for Christmas—"

"I dare say you've heard that!" agreed Gilbert. "As it's no business of yours, you'd naturally know all about it."

"And you're leaving before the end of the term, as he's starting this week—"

"What about it, ass?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five. Gilbert asked "What about it," but the other fellows thought they could guess.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at," said Bunter, blinking at them. "I wish you fellows wouldn't cackle when I'm talking to old Tracy. I say, Tracy, old chap, I'd ask my father to get me leave before the end of the term, if I—"

"What do you mean, you ass?"

"Well, I mean, we've been such friends," explained Bunter.

"Have we?" asked Gilbert, staring.

"Well, dash it all, look what I did for you!" said Bunter warmly. "You'd still have Quelch down on you like a ton of bricks, if I hadn't gone to him and owned up about buzzing that footer."

"Why, you fat fraud!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "You never owned up—you kept it dark—and Quelch screwed it out of you at the finish—you told us so."

"Oh, really, Cherry! I—I may have said something of the sort, but what I—I really meant was that I went to Quelch and—owned up, just to get old Tracy out of a row! It was the manly thing to do, and I did it!" said Bunter firmly. "Open and manly—that was always my way!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"You fellows wouldn't have done it," said Bunter, shaking his head. "I've got five hundred lines for it, and I don't care—I did it for old Tracy's sake, to get him out of a row. I always liked him, and I stood by him, like a—"

"a Briton! I say, Tracy—"

"Fathead!"

"A lot of fellows have been asking me for the Christmas vac," explained Bunter. "But it was always my way to stick to a pal. If you're going to Cannes, I should be quite willing to put in the vac in Italy."

"Italy?" gasped Gilbert.

"I—I mean Spain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or wherever it is," said Bunter hastily.

"What about France?" asked Bob.

"I mean France," said Bunter. "I was going to say France. I hear you're not coming back next term. Tracy, as your pater wants you to stop out there with him, and—and I'd like to see as much as possible of you, old chap, as—as you're not coming back! Say the word, and I'll turn down Mauly, and—and Smithy, and—and the rest, and come along to Cannes! What about it, old chap?"

Gilbert looked at him. Then he picked up the jam-pot from the table.

"Do you fellows mind if Bunter has the jam?" he asked. "He's so pally, and he's fond of jam—"

"I say, old chap—Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter, as Gilbert gave him the jam—all of it—with startling suddenness. "Groogh! Beast! Wharrer you chucking jam at me for, you rotter? Urrgh! I'm all sticky—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mind if he has the marmalade, too?" asked Gilbert.

Bunter did not wait for the marmalade! He fairly flew!

THE END.

(Special for next week: "HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS GUEST!"—opening yarn of our grand new series dealing with the exciting Christmas Holiday Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. Make a point of ordering your copy EARLY!)

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PETER TODD Asks . . .
IS THIS MENTAL TELEPATHY?

Can thoughts be sent through the ether from a chap's brain-box and picked up like wireless by someone else whose brain-box happens to be on the same wavelength?

This staggering possibility has struck me forcibly as a result of a very peculiar happening on Little Side.

Call it coincidence, if you like. I don't mind. I express no opinion myself. If I just put down the plain facts of the case, you can then draw your own conclusions. The facts are simple. Last week, when Greyfriars played Bagshot, it was a frosty afternoon with a cold wind blowing across the playing-fields. I felt jolly chilly, standing there watching the game.

"It's a pity," I remarked, "that they don't send round a man with a baked chestnut can. On a day like this he'd be doing a roaring trade."

Now, I want to make it clear that there was positively nobody within hearing of me who was either in the baked chestnut business himself or even knew anybody connected with the trade.

My only hearers, in fact, were Bunter, who offered to get me some baked chestnuts if I would give him half-a-crown, and Fisher T. Fish, who simply gave me a hard stare.

I said nothing more. In fact, I dismissed the idea from my mind completely until this week. Then we played Highcliffe. I turned up to watch the game. It was another raw afternoon. I thought longingly of hot chestnuts again.

Scarcely had the thought entered my head when, to my utter amazement, I saw a bearded and bespectacled stranger wheeling a baked chestnut can towards Little Side!

You can imagine my astonishment when he came to a stop right beside me.

"Baked chestnuts, boss?" he asked. "All hot from the can, sixpence a bag. I'll say they're the goods!"

Where had I heard that voice before? Somehow, it was vaguely familiar. Yet there was nothing fami-

GREYFRIARS LOSE LEAGUE LEADERSHIP!

Sensation in Sporting Circles—Reports H. Vernon-Smith

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now!

Figures, like the camera, cannot lie; and the figures I have just worked out for the Championship Table show that this week we have at last lost the lead!

The reason for this minor tragedy is that while St. Jim's won their match at Rylcombe Grammar School, we were able to do no better on Little Side than hold Highcliffe to a draw.

The blame should be laid at the door of Wharton, Cherry, Bull, and Hurree Singh. These prize chumps, being well aware that they were four of our best players, had to choose the day before the match to smash a window in the Remove passage during a game of indoor baseball. You can also blame Mr. Quelch, if you like, for being so unreasonable as to cancel their "halfer" for it.

Well, it's the luck of the game. and

we shall have to grin and bear it. Don't order your sackcloth and ashes yet, anyway. We are still the only unbeaten side; and St. Jim's are only one point ahead of us.

Our weakened team put up a good fight and we held the lead until twenty minutes from the end. Courtenay, however, then scored an equaliser for Highcliffe and, although we tried hard, we were unable to get through their defence again.

St. Jim's and ourselves are still well ahead of the rest at the top of the table. Rookwood, however, who have made great strides recently, have moved up one as a result of a 3-1 win at Redclyffe.

Note, too, the amazingly improved form of Abbotsford, who, after seven successive defeats, have scored five points in three games. Their 4-0 victory over the redoubtable Bagshot team this week is little short of sensational. Bagshot's unprofitable visit to Greyfriars last week must have given them an attack of the "jitters."

The fact that the four teams at the tail-end of the table each have 5 points seems to foreshadow a stern struggle at the end of the season to avoid the last place. Abbotsford, with 10 games played and a poor goal average, are badly placed; but their

improved form makes me doubt whether they will remain long at the bottom. St. Jude's, who have failed to gain a point out of their last six games, seem to me to be heading fast for that undesirable spot!

Unusual sporting event: Five of us from the Remove played hockey for a mixed team organised by Miss Ethel Cleveland. We won, 4-2; but don't ask me how we did it. Marjorie Hazeldene told me I played quite well; but it all seemed a frightful jumble to me!

In reply to your inquiries: Yes, these notes of mine will continue during the Christmas hols. The Championship Table, however, will naturally not appear while there is no footer.

CHAMPIONSHIP TABLE.

	P.	W.	D.	L.	F.	A.	Pts	Goals
1. St. Jim's	9	8	0	1	22	7	16	
2. Greyfriars	9	6	3	0	26	6	15	
3. Bagshot	10	6	1	3	18	12	13	
4. Rookwood	9	5	1	3	18	12	11	
5. Highcliffe	10	4	3	3	20	17	11	
6. Rylcombe, G. S.	9	2	2	5	13	20	6	
7. Redclyffe	9	2	1	6	9	16	5	
8. St. Jude's	9	2	1	6	9	20	5	
9. Claremont	8	1	3	4	7	18	5	
10. Abbotsford	10	2	1	7	11	25	5	

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF THE "HERALD" NEXT WEEK, BOYS!



The GREYFRIARS HERALD

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EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

December 10th, 1938.



STOP PRESS NEWS

ANOTHER CHIN-WAG WITH YOUR EDITOR . . . HARRY WHARTON

As Smithy refers to me and my chums as "prize chumps" in his sports notes this week, I suppose I ought to put up something to you in self-defence.

I don't blame him for slanging us, really. We deserve all the slanging we get for losing our "halfer" just when we were needed for the Highcliffe game. Still, we could hardly have been expected to foresee that a harmless game of passage baseball would have ended in such a dire calamity. It was just bad luck that it did—that's my defence!

I would like to impress on readers that the afternoon was a particularly foul one—fog, gloom, and drizzle everywhere. Merely to look out of the window was sufficient to give you the blues; so a chap had to grub about indoors in search of entertainment.

Some people, of course, can always find entertainment in quiet and harmless occupations like chess, dominoes, and reading. I can myself, very often. But you must remember that on this occasion we had just come out of afternoon classes—including a particularly sticky session of Latin with Quelch. Chess, dominoes, and reading didn't seem to meet the bill at all for Bob, Inky, Johnny, and myself, after the concentrated atmosphere of the Form-room. We wanted something that would relieve the tension and give our pent-up spirits an outlet. So, naturally, we had a game of "passage baseball."

"Passage baseball," I should mention, is one of those highly specialised games peculiar to the Remove passage. We have a pitcher and batsman, as in ordinary baseball, and the chief difference is that the bases are study doorways. A run consists of a complete round of the study doorways, and you're out if you're hit between doorways.

It's a great game for a wet afternoon. Ten minutes of it were sufficient to make us forget the weather and put us on our toes again.

The drawback was that we became a little too keen. Pitching and batting became more and more enthusiastic; and I suppose it was not really surprising when eventually Johnny Bull slogged a ball clean through the window at the end of the passage at the very moment when Mr. Quelch arrived to find out what was happening.

The rest you know. And it only remains for me to express deep regret at a happening which, if Smithy is to be believed, has cost us our place at the top of the championship table.

I still feel, however—and I think most of my readers will agree with me—that we were very unlucky.

Cheerio till next week, chums!

HARRY WHARTON.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENCE
CHRISTMAS QUERIES

"HOAPFUL FAG" (second).—"Do you think Santa Klaws will give me more presents if I hang up a pillow-case instead of a stocking?"

We cannot advise you to "bolster" up your hopes in such a way.

S. J. SNOOP (Remove).—"Does Christmas pudding give a man courage?"

Well, Bunter tells us that he recently ate a Christmas pudding into which some jasper had placed a handful of dirt; and by the time he had finished it, he felt simply full of grit!

THERE'S SOMETHING IN THE AIR!

There's something in the air at Greyfriars just lately. Things have not been quite as they usually are. For instance:

Lord Mauleverer, who spends practically every Wednesday afternoon snoozing on the sofa in his study, was seen this last Wednesday walking briskly across the quad.

Loder, who has not appeared in public without a scowl on his face since last Pancake Day, actually SMILED on his way to the tuckshop the other afternoon.

Vernon-Smith was heard to remark in the Rag last night that Quelch wasn't really a bad old stick when you got to understand him.

Mr. Quelch, on catching Skinner throwing an ink pellet across the Form-room, picked up his cane, then put it down again, coughed, and told Skinner not to do it any more.

Bolsover major expressed the opinion that it was up to fellows to be kind and considerate to fags.

Coker told Potter and Greene that he didn't claim to be always right; in fact, it was quite possible that he was sometimes wrong.

Fisher T. Fish put a penny in the hospital box.

We really began to wonder what on earth was happening until other more pointed symptoms began to appear. A big load of special groceries was delivered to the school kitchen.

Mrs. Mumble decorated the window of her tuckshop with strips of cotton wool.

Cripps, the carrier, was noticed driving a cartload of young fir trees to Courtfield.

Bunter was heard to say that Bunter Court was in the hands of decorators.

And then the explanation burst upon us in a blinding flash.

Of course!

Why hadn't we thought of it before?

CHRISTMAS IS COMING!

Strange what a difference the approach of Christmas makes, what?

WIBLEY LAYS DOCTOR BIRCHEMALL

Dicky's Stage Show Scores Big Hit!

Gratters to Wibley on winding up the year completing a splendid stage track!

When he began Christmas Term with his burlesque, there were many who said he never produced anything funnier than that hair-raising mess, "Beauty and the Bandit," in the opinion of some critics, on funnier than the circus. Now, week, he has given us a show for riotous fun knocks both his previous productions into a cocked hat.

"The Student of St. Sam's!" was the title of the making masterpiece which Wibley his biggest triumph date. It was written, we may say, by Dicky Nugent—the great schoolboy orther," as a drama put it. The leading Doctor Alfred Birchemall was by Wibley himself. The thing was a stupendous success from start to finish.

Dicky Nugent flocked to the Hall, where it was given, in anticipation of the term. They were appointed. The weird and wonderful adventures of the heroes of St. Sam's and their amazing headmaster have been funny in cold print, were still more funny on the stage.

Wibley, who, at home in soul-stirring of hilarious farce, had the time as the head-

Molly Birchemall deserves a paragraph to herself. No young lady being available, Dick Rake agreed to play the part, and we can only say that no girl could have done better. Rake's shrill falsetto voice and exaggerated femininity put just that final touch of inspired lunacy to the production that Dicky Nugent's play required.

At the fall of the curtain the audience rose to their feet and cheered themselves hoarse. In response to loud calls of "Author!" Dicky Nugent joined Wibley in front of the curtain, and both had to make speeches.



The entire company were afterwards entertained by the Sixth in Prefects' Common-room, and an evening that will be long remembered concluded with a tip-top spread.

The combination of William Wibley and Dicky Nugent has certainly added something worth adding to the lighter side of the history of Greyfriars. We give them our heartiest congratulations—and our heartiest thanks!

