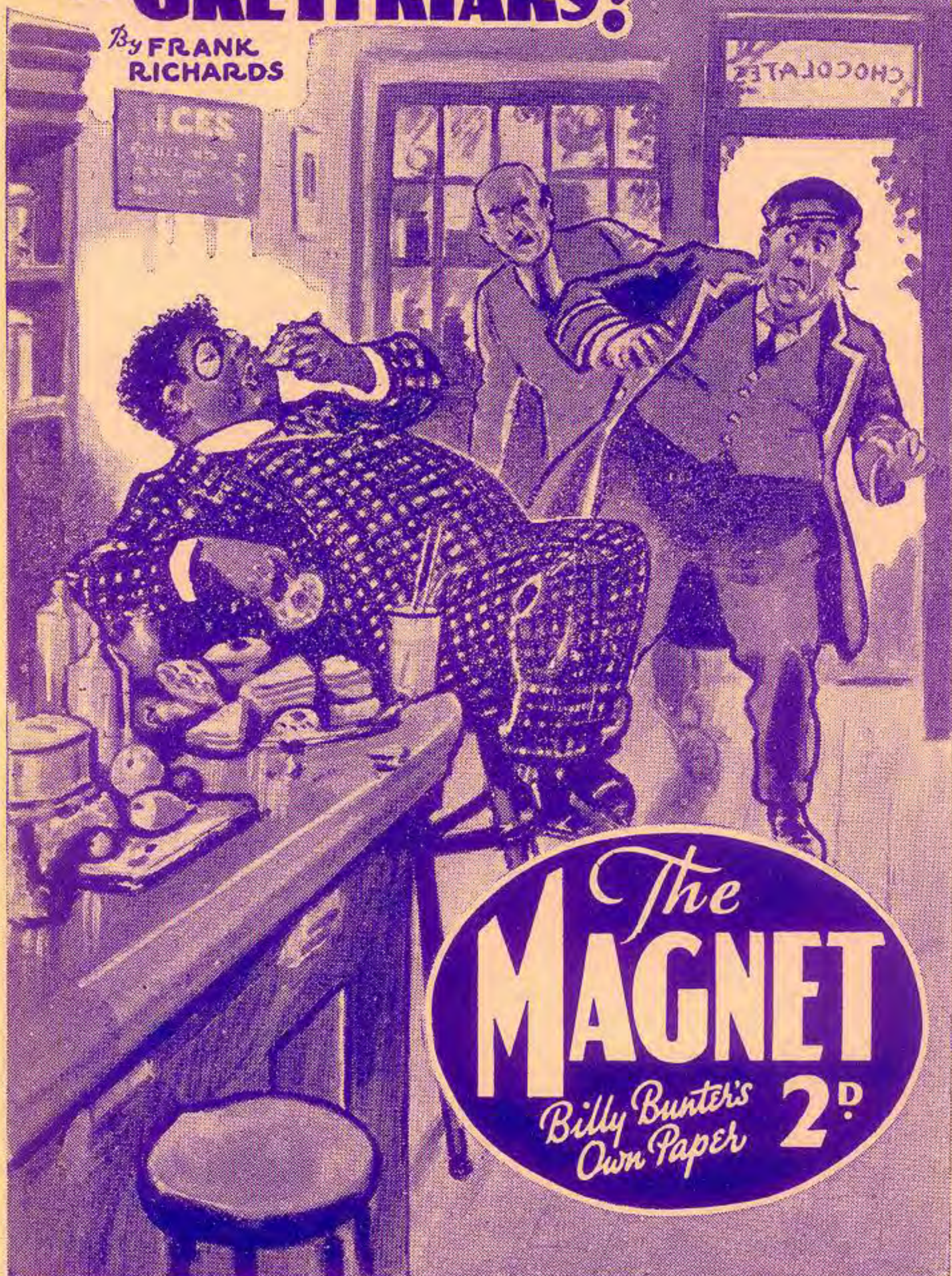


THE
MAGNET

FUN and ADVENTURE with HARRY WHARTON & Co., Inside!

The BLACK PRINCE OF GREYFRIARS!

By FRANK
RICHARDS



The
MAGNET

*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper*

2^D



The GREYFRIARS HERALD

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BRAWN versus BRAIN!

By THE EDITOR

One of the most interesting footer events of the season is the annual local match, Courtfield County School versus Friardale Village. Frank Nugent and I strolled along to Courtfield Common to watch the game last Saturday.

Dick Trumper's men are small, but plucky. Most of them are smaller than the Remove fellows, but they always give us a good game because they have the brains. They are clever footballers. The villagers, on the other hand, are burly farm-labourers, market gardeners, caddies at the golf club, and so on. They towered above the schoolboys, and in weight each villager was equal to about three boys.

It should have been a one-sided match. It was. The villagers were outplayed from the start. Dick Trumper's men nipped about like red-and-yellow flies, while the villagers lumbered after them slowly. When a villager got the ball he could not be charged off it—the boys simply bounced off him—but he was artfully manoeuvred into a position from which he could do nothing but kick the ball wildly. Then Courtfield began dribbling, passing and weaving patterns, while the villagers were left helpless.

The school won by four goals to one. It was an object lesson in the victory of brains over brawn. Have you ever wondered how mankind survived from those early ages when fierce great beasts like the dinosaurs were loose on the earth? Simply because men, small and puny though they were in comparison, had brains. They could lay traps for the great killers. They could make barbed arrows of stone. They could build defences.

So don't worry if you happen to be small. Remember it is always brain that counts. History has proved that time and time again. Cultivate your grey matter, and you'll always win. That's all, chums, for another week.

HARRY WHARTON.

Peter Todd's Account of— TEMPLE the TOXOPHILITE!

We heard the awful news from Fry. "Temple is a toxophilite," he said. "He's just told us so."

Our faces turned pale. We knew that Temple of the Fourth was every kind of ass and dummy, but this was terrible. We had never imagined he was a toxophilite. It made us shudder.

"When did he feel it coming on?" we asked, in hushed tones.

"In the hols, I believe," said Fry. "And apparently it's been growing worse ever since."

"Has he seen the doctor about it?"

"Don't think so. I fancy he wants to keep it secret. He sneaked away by himself a few minutes ago. I think we ought to find him and see if there's anything we can do to cure him."

"What is the cure?" inquired Bob Cherry. "Does anyone know? Perhaps we'd better look it up in the dic."

We did so at once, and we were relieved to find that the disease was not dangerous—at least, not dangerous to Temple. For a toxophilite is merely a fellow who goes in for archery. However, knowing Temple as we did, we were anxious to cure him, for our own sakes. We didn't want to try King Harold's experience of getting an arrow in the eye.

Temple was on Little Side. He had a bow and a quiverful of arrows. He was shooting at a rush target a hundred yards distant. The only safe spot on Little Side at that moment was the target, and we dared not get too near. We watched him anxiously as he drew his bow and let fly. The arrow sang through the air—and hit Horace.

No, not Horace Coker—luckily for Coker. Mr. Prout was sitting on a bench under the elms, reading a pocket volume of Q. Horatius Flaccus. There was a sudden Splat! and an arrow was quivering in the volume of Horace between his hands. It had been a near thing.

Having broken the Olympic record for the sitting high-jump, Prout stalked towards Temple, booming fiercely. A moment later, still booming, he was leading Temple into the House.

Last time I passed the dustbin I saw it was full of bows and arrows. Temple had been cured at last. He is a toxophilite no longer.

The Money Market A FISHY DEAL!

The Fish Insurance Company's new Punishment Policy has proved very popular. For a premium of two shillings per quarter, the policy insures a fellow against lines or lick-

ings, paying 1s. per licking and 6d. per 100 lines every time a fellow is punished. The idea has been taken up with enthusiasm by the fags, who have even tried to bag lines and lickings in order to make money.

But the public is warned to read the policies, which are full of "clauses." Our representative's own experience proves that. He took out a full policy for 2s., and on the first day was licked by Loder, had six from Quelch, and 100 lines from Wingate. He went to see Mr. Fish about it.

"I guess I can't admit these claims," said Mr. Fish curtly. "Under clause 16, lickings from Loder only count when they're sheer bullying for no reason. I don't pay out on Loder when he's got cause to lick a guy."

"Well, this was sheer bullying. I was leaning on the gate when Loder came up in a bad temper and told me to get out of it. I've a right to lean on the gate, haven't I? So I said 'Rats!' and he waded in."

"If that's so, it's O.K., sonny. But under clause 18a you have to produce a signed statement by Loder that he whopped you for sheer bullying."

"How can I do that, you ass? He'd take the hide off me if I suggested it."

"That cuts no ice. I gotta have that statement. What did he lick you with?"

"A beastly cricket stump."

"Waal, that's out, anyway. Under clause 29a, all lickings must be administered with a cane or birch."

"Well, Quelch licked me with a cane."

"Yeah! But he only gave you six. Under clause 22, the first six strokes from Quelch are not insured. I only pay out on seven or more."

"But he never gives a chap more than six."

"Can't help that. They're the terms, I guess. If he gives you seven you come right along hyer and I'll pay you out. But not six—nope!"

"Anyway, you owe me sixpence for lines from Wingate."

"I guess not. Under clause 18c, Loder is treated exactly the same as the other prefects. That means you can't claim on Wingate unless he punished you unjustly. Waal, I guess you got those lines for sliding down banisters, and that ain't unjust. You got no claim for that, big boy."

"So I get nothing at all?"



THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER! ALL SORTS OF FELLOWS COME TO GREYFRIARS, BUT PRINCE BOMOMBO, FROM BONGOLAND—WHO DOESN'T SPEAK ENGLISH—IS THE WEIRDEST NEW KID OF ALL!

The **BLACK PRINCE of GREYFRIARS!**

By **FRANK RICHARDS**



ONE IN THE EYE!

"HE, he, he!" Billy Bunter couldn't help it.

It was not respectful. Neither was Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell at Greyfriars School, a man to be laughed at with impunity. But it was really enough to make a cat laugh.

It happened suddenly. Billy Bunter did not know where the tomato came from. Mr. Hacker did not know. But both of them knew where it landed. It landed in Mr. Hacker's eye.

Billy Bunter, at the moment, was adorning the school gateway with his podgy person. He was watching there, like Sister Anne. If Harry Wharton & Co. were coming in to tea it was time they came. Bunter was ready for tea—more than ready.

But Harry Wharton & Co. were not yet in sight, and Billy Bunter was still lying in wait for them, when Hacker came down from the House to go out.

Billy Bunter gave him a careless blink through his big spectacles. He was not interested in the Acid Drop—at the moment. But the next moment he was deeply interested and fearfully amused, as an over-ripe tomato whizzed suddenly from parts unknown, and caught Hacker in the eye.

"Meet the esteemed Prince Bomombo, sir," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with cheerful coolness. **"A very old acquaintance of mine!"**

Mr. Hacker gave a howl, and staggered.

Bunter cachinnated.

How could Bunter help it? It was jolly funny, in Bunter's opinion.

Bunter did not like Hacker. Remove fellows had little to do with the master of the Shell; still, there had been an occasion when Hacker had pulled Bunter's fat ear. But even if he hadn't disliked Hacker, Bunter would have been amused all the same.

But if Billy Bunter was amused, Mr. Hacker was not.

Hacker staggered and almost fell, his hat tipping off the back of his head. He clawed squashy tomato

off his face, and gazed at it on his fingers. He could hardly believe his eyes—especially the one that was full of tomato.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Hacker.

"He, he, he!" gurgled Bunter.

Mr. Hacker, gasping, grabbed out a handkerchief and dabbed his eye. That eye was smarting. It was as red as the tomato. Tomato-juice in the eye was neither grateful nor comforting.

Juice, the squashy sections of tomato, streamed over his face. It had been a very over-ripe tomato. It had hardly held together before it hit Hacker. After hitting Hacker, it did not hold together at all. Like the happy family in the poem, it scattered far and wide. It was nearly all over the Acid Drop.

Hacker dabbed and dabbed and dabbed at his juicy eye. The other fixed on Billy Bunter's grinning face with a deadly gleam in it.

Nobody else was in sight. Nobody was coming in or going out. Not even Gosling, the porter, was to be seen at his lodge, though door and window were both open. There was

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nobody on the spot but William George Bunter of the Remove.

So Mr. Hacker, of course, had no doubt who had buzzed that tomato at him. Billy Bunter had—Hacker could not doubt it.

Tomatoes did not produce themselves from nowhere, and fly through the air of their own volition. Somebody had buzzed that fruity fruit at Hacker. Only Bunter was there! So Bunter had buzzed it. It was as clear as Euclid.

Hacker dabbed—and dabbed—and dabbed—and then he strode at the grinning Owl of the Remove.

"You young rascal!" thundered Mr. Hacker. "How dare you?"

Billy Bunter did not cackle any more! He ceased to grin. He backed away promptly from the master of the Shell.

"I—I—I say, I—I wasn't laughing!" gasped Bunter, in alarm. "I—I—I was—was only coughing."

"You threw that tomato at me!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, in still greater alarm.

He had fancied at first that Hacker was offended by his fat chortle. Now he realised that Hacker supposed that he had buzzed the tomato.

Bunter hadn't. He did not know who had. But he knew that he hadn't.

"I—I—I never!" gasped Bunter. "Oh, no, sir! Nothing of the kind! I was only laughing because it bunged in your eye—I mean, I wasn't laughing—I was coughing—I've got a bit of a cough—"

"You did!" hooted Hacker.

"I didn't!" howled Bunter.

"Then who did, if you did not?"

Billy Bunter could not answer that one. He had not the faintest idea who had buzzed that tomato. There were some trees near the gate—perhaps there had been a fellow behind a tree. Bunter could see nobody—any more than Hacker could.

"Come!" hooted Hacker.

He picked up his hat and jammed it on his head. Then he grabbed Bunter by the collar.

"I—I say—" spluttered the dismayed fat Owl.

"Come!" snapped the Acid Drop. "I shall take you to your headmaster. I shall demand a flogging—"

"Oh crikey!"

"Come!"

"But—I—I—I say—" howled Bunter. "I never—"

"Silence! Come!"

"Leggo! I tell you I never—" yelled Bunter.

Billy Bunter did not want to see his headmaster. Dr. Locke was quite a benevolent old gentleman; still, Bunter did not want to see him. He wriggled and howled in Hacker's grip, as the master of the Shell marched him across the quad towards the House.

Dozens of fellows in the quad stared at the unusual sight of the master of the Shell leading a Remove fellow along by the collar.

Bunter wriggled in that grip in vain. That grip was like iron.

"Will you leggo?" howled Bunter.

"I never did it. I never had a

tomato. I don't want to go to the Head! Ow! Leggo!"

Hacker marched grimly on.

Hacker was called the Acid Drop because his temper was not sweet. Now it was less sweet than usual.

His reddened eye winked and blinked and smarted. Even a sweet-tempered man might have been annoyed by what had happened. Hacker was in the very worst temper ever.

He was not going to take Bunter to his Form-master, Quelch! This was too serious a matter for a Form-master to deal with. This was an assault upon a member of the staff—a personal attack—an outrage of the deepest dye. It was a matter for flogging—if not for expulsion. It was a matter for the headmaster to deal with. To the Head Bunter was going.

"What on earth's up?" called out Vernon-Smith, as that peculiar procession passed him in the quad.

"I say, Smithy, make him leggo!" howled Bunter.

Smithy grinned. He was rather a reckless fellow; but he was not likely to make Hacker let go of Bunter.

"I say, Mauly!" Billy Bunter howled to Lord Mauleverer. "I say, old chap, will you make him leggo?"

"Oh gad!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Silence, Bunter!" thundered Mr. Hacker. "How dare you? Silence!"

"Ow! Leggo my neck! I never—"

"Silence!"

"Excuse me, sir!" Lord Mauleverer of the Remove interposed politely. "May I point out that Bunter is a Remove man, sir, and that you—"

"Oh gad!"

Hacker, with his free hand, pushed Mauleverer out of the way.

His lordship staggered and almost sat down.

"Come!" hooted Hacker.

And with that unrelaxing grip on Billy Bunter's collar he hooked him into the House and marched him to the Head's study.

THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER!

"OH!" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

"Oh!" repeated Frank Nugent in astonishment.

The two juniors were entering their study—No. 1 in the Remove.

What they beheld there surprised them.

Harry Wharton & Co. had come in at last, late for tea. Billy Bunter had missed them at the gates after all, the Acid Drop having marched him off to the Head a few minutes before the Famous Five came in.

Harry Wharton had rather expected to find a fellow in the study—William Wibley, of the Remove.

Wibley, the President of the Remove Dramatic Society, had some new theatrical stunt on hand, which he was going to explain to the other members of the R.D.S. after tea. But the captain of the Remove certainly had not expected to see the fellow who met his eyes as he stepped into Study No. 1, and he stared at him in blank astonishment.

In the study armchair sat a youth as black as the ace of spades, with a thick, woolly mop on his head, and a wide grin on his ebon-complexioned face.

He rose to his feet as the two Removes came in, and made them a bow—his woolly head almost touching the floor, so deep was the bow.

They blinked at him.

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Who the dickens—" ejaculated Frank Nugent.

If this was some new boy who had blown in, he was a rather remarkable new boy for Greyfriars.

There was one fellow in the school—Hurree Jamset Ram Singh of the Remove—whose complexion was deeply dusky. But Hurree Singh might have looked almost pale beside this fellow. He did not look like a native of India's coral strand. He looked as if he had jumped off the banks of the Congo.

"Who are you?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Osh!" answered the black boy.

"Wosh!"

"Eh?"

"Orrish koosh!"

"My only hat!"

The black youth made another deep bow.

"Are you a new kid, or what?" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"Wishy wop koo!" answered the black boy.

"Don't you speak English?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in utter amazement.

"Terroo koosh!"

"Well, this takes the cake!" said the captain of the Remove. "We get all sorts at Greyfriars—but a chap who doesn't speak English is a new one on the Remove! I suppose he must be a new kid."

"Blessed if I know what he's doing here, if he isn't!" said Nugent. "Quelch must have sent him to this study."

The black boy made them another deep bow. Whoever he was, and whatever he was, he seemed to have elaborately courteous manners.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry appeared in the doorway, with Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Who's this sportsman?" He blinked at the black boy.

"Ask me another!" answered Harry Wharton. "We've just found him! I suppose he must be a new kid in the Remove, or he wouldn't be here! He doesn't seem to speak a word of English."

"Oh crumbs! Don't you speak English, old bean?" asked Bob.

"Osh!"

"What on earth does 'osh' mean?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Something in his own language, I suppose!" said Harry Wharton, in wonder. "Lot of good his coming here if he doesn't speak the language. I suppose Quelch isn't going to take him through the A.B.C."

"Koosh!" said the black boy, making another deep bow to the three newcomers. "Osh woodle kosh."

"Can you guess that one, Inky?" asked Bob Cherry. "Anything like

that nutcracker language you speak in India?"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh shook his dusky head.

"The guessfulness is not terrific," he answered. "There is no resemblance to the esteemed speech of my idiotic native land."

"Well, this is a go!" said Bob. "Your English made me jump, Inky, when I first heard it—but this chap doesn't seem able to speak it at all. What's your name?" he added, addressing the black boy.

"Koody-woosh."

"Oh crumbs! Is that your name?"

"Ooh woogle ish!"

"We shall want an interpreter for this chap!" said Bob. "But look here, he can't be coming into the Remove. Must be some sort of a giddy visitor who's strayed into the wrong quarter."

"Orrish—woosh! Ish!" said the black boy.

The Famous Five could only blink at him.

Other Remove fellows gathered round the doorway, astonished and interested.

"Who on earth's that?" asked Peter Todd.

"The wild man from Borneo?" asked Skinner.

"Where the thump did you dig him up?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

"Who is he?"

"What's his name?"

"Did you win him in a raffle?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The black boy bowed again and again, as each new face appeared in the doorway, which was getting crammed.

"What are you going to do with him, Wharton?" asked Bob. "Better take him down to Quelch, I should think, and see what the old bean says. He simply can't be a new man for the Remove."

"I suppose I'd better," said Harry. "Quelch must know who he is, I suppose."

He made the black boy a sign to follow him from the study. But the woolly head was shaken in response.

"Osh! Ish! Woogley!" said the black boy.

"Oh crikey! Is that a language?" ejaculated Skinner.

"It must be his language!" said Hazeldene. "But where on earth does he come from?"

"Africa, from his jolly old complexion," said Tom Brown. "He puts you in the shade, Inky."

Harry Wharton stepped across to the black boy and took him by the arm, to lead him from the study. But the mysterious stranger shook off his hand. Apparently he did not want to leave the study.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was watching him with very keen eyes. In Inky's own dark eyes there was a glimmer.

"My esteemed chums," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur, "I thinkfully opine that the esteemed black person would not care to go to Quelch! I think he has terrifically good reasons for not seeing the esteemed Quelch."

"But—" began Harry.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh stepped towards the black boy. To the surprise of his friends, he made a sudden grasp at the woolly mop of hair.

"Inky!" exclaimed Nugent. "What the—"

Nugent broke off, with a howl of surprise, as that woolly mop came off in the nabob's dusky hand.

There was a yell of astonishment from the crowd of Removites. That sudden grab removed the woolly mop—revealing a close crop of tallow-coloured hair underneath. And as the woolly wig went the black boy suddenly spoke English in a voice familiar to the ears of the Remove fellows.

"Oh! You silly ass, Inky! How the thump did you guess, blow you?"

"What!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Who?" stuttered Frank Nugent.

"Wibley!" roared Harry Wharton.

"Oh!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh chuckled.

"The esteemed and idiotic Wibley!" he remarked. "This is his new and fatheaded theatrical stunt."

The crowd of juniors gazed at the black boy—not quite so African in appearance now that his tallow-coloured crop was revealed! His face was still quite unrecognisable, but they knew now who it was—William Wibley, President of the Remove Dramatic Society, in a new role!

"Wibley!" gasped Bob.

"That fathead Wibley!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Pulling our leg, as usual!" said Harry Wharton. "Bump him!"

The black boy made a backward jump.

"Here, hold on!" he exclaimed. "Don't play the goat! This is my new part for the new play—Prince Bomombo from Bongoland. I say—Yarooooooop! Leggo! Will you leggo! Yaroooop!"

Bump!

"Oh, scissors!" gasped Wibley, as he sat on the floor of Study No. 1. "I tell you—Leggo! I—Ow!"

Bump!

"Yurrooop!"

Bump, bump!

"You silly asses!" roared Wibley.

"Can't you take a joke? Can't you see—Yaroooh!"

Bump, bump!

"Oh crikey! Leggo!" shrieked Wibley. "Will you leggo?"

"Osh koosh!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ish woosh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!"

Bump!

It was a breathless Wibley that hurtled out of Study No. 1, amid roars of laughter—rather regretting that he had called in his new role of Prince Bomombo of Bongoland.

ROUGH LUCK FOR BUNTER!

"NO doubt whatever!" said Mr. Hacker sourly.

"I—I say—" gasped Billy Bunter.

"Absolutely no doubt!" said Mr. Hacker, caressing a smarting eye.

Dr. Locke pursed his lips.

Mr. Quelch frowned.

Billy Bunter stood before his headmaster's writing-table in deep trepidation.

Bunter was for it!

The fat Owl of the Remove realised that only too clearly. Hacker was not merely an Acid Drop now—he was the quintessence of acid. Hacker demanded justice on the offender. The Head could not refuse to grant it. He had sent for Mr. Quelch as the junior concerned was in Quelch's Form. But the Remove master had little to say for this member of his Form.

Mr. Quelch did not like complaints about his Form. He would willingly have stood up for Bunter. He was not quite sure that Hacker had it right. Unfortunately, Billy Bunter's denial counted for nothing.

Billy Bunter, if he was in a row, would affirm anything, or deny anything, with an absolute disregard for the facts. Quelch, as his Form-master, knew that only too well.

"I never did it, sir!" wailed Bunter. "I never had a tomato at all. I was waiting at the gate for some chaps to come in. I never even saw Mr. Hacker, sir."

"Tell the truth, Bunter!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, really, sir—"

"This boy," said Mr. Hacker, "burst out laughing when the tomato struck me in the eye. He states that he never even saw me! Such reckless untruthfulness—"

"I—I mean I never buzzed the tomato!" wailed Bunter. "Very likely it was a chap in Mr. Hacker's Form, sir. They would all like to buzz something at him, sir—"

"Silence, Bunter!" rapped the Head.

"I mean to say, sir, they all loathe him. That's why they call him the Acid Drop—"

"This insolence—" gasped Mr. Hacker.

"Be silent, Bunter! You are sure, Mr. Hacker, that no other person was anywhere near at hand when the—the missile struck you?" asked Dr. Locke.

"I am absolutely sure of that, sir!" said Mr. Hacker. "And if any other person was at hand, Bunter must have seen him. Let him say so."

"Did you see any other person at hand, Bunter?" asked Mr. Quelch, encouragingly.

"Oh, yes, sir—dozens!"

"Their names?" rapped the Head.

"Oh, I—I mean, I didn't exactly see anybody, but there might have been lots of fellows about!" groaned Bunter.

"You foolish, untruthful boy," said the Head sternly. "Can you give the name of any person who was near enough to throw the—the article at Mr. Hacker?"

"N-n-n-no, sir!"

"That seems conclusive," Mr. Quelch, said the Head.

"I do not feel sure, sir, that Bunter is guilty of this action," said the Remove master. "Certainly the evidence seems to be conclusive, but

such an act is quite out of keeping with Bunter's character. He is, I am sorry to say, the most untruthful boy in my Form, or in the whole school; but he is not by any means wildly reckless."

"You do not suggest, sir, that no one threw the tomato?" demanded Mr. Hacker acidly.

"Naturally I do not!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Then who did so, sir, if Bunter did not, as there was no other person anywhere near the spot, on the boy's own statement?"

Mr. Quelch made no answer to that. It was not an easy one to answer.

"I—I say, sir," gasped Bunter, "perhaps—perhaps Gosling did it."

"Gosling!" exclaimed the Head.

"The porter, sir," said Bunter. "If he was in his lodge, perhaps he shied that tomato at Hacker. I mean to say, I expect he dislikes him—"

"What?"

"I mean, everybody does, sir, so very likely Gosling does," explained Bunter. "So he might have shied that tomato at him, sir."

Mr. Hacker's face was a study as he heard this.

Mr. Quelch passed his hand over his mouth to hide a smile.

"Dr. Locke," exclaimed Mr. Hacker, "is this boy to be allowed to utter such insolence?"

"Certainly not!" said the Head.

"Bunter, be silent! Your suggestion that the school porter may have thrown a tomato at a Form-master is a suggestion worthy of your extraordinary stupidity. There can be no doubt, Bunter, that you were guilty of this act—"

"I—I didn't, sir!" wailed Bunter. "I wasn't—I mean, I wouldn't! I didn't laugh when it got Mr. Hacker in the eye, sir. I—I didn't think it was funny at all! I—I was sneezing—I mean, coughing—"

"One reckless falsehood after another!" snorted Mr. Hacker, with a glare at the hapless Owl of the Remove.

"The matter is settled," said Dr. Locke. "Bunter, you will be flogged for this action, which amounts to an assault upon a member of my staff."

"But I never—"

"I trust, Mr. Quelch, that you agree?" added the Head courteously. Mr. Quelch paused a moment.

"I confess, sir, that I can see little room for doubt," he said slowly. "At the same time, I do not feel wholly convinced. May I suggest a delay while some inquiry is made? I should certainly like to look into the matter, sir, before a boy in my Form is flogged."

Snort from Mr. Hacker.

Dr. Locke paused dubiously.

"If Bunter was guilty of this reckless act, sir, he deserves the most severe punishment," said Mr. Quelch. "But a delay of twenty-four hours will make no difference, as the boy protests his innocence—"

"What is that boy's word worth, sir?" snapped Mr. Hacker.

"Nothing, I am sorry to say," answered Mr. Quelch. "But I desire

to avoid even the possibility of injustice."

Another snort from Hacker.

"Very well," said the Head at last. "The point shall be conceded, Mr. Quelch. Certainly the perpetrator of this act will be severely flogged. Please bring Bunter to this study at this hour to-morrow. By that time you will have ascertained whether any doubt can possibly exist."

"That is all I ask, sir," said Mr. Quelch.

Dr. Locke made Bunter a sign to leave the study.

The fat Owl of the Remove rolled to the door. At the door he turned and blinked back at the headmaster through his big spectacles.

"It wasn't me, sir!" he wailed.

"If Mr. Quelch doesn't find out who did it, it wasn't me, sir!"

"You may go, Bunter!"

"Yes, sir. But there's such a lot of fellows who loathe Hacker, sir, and every chap in the school would be jolly glad to give him one in the eye."

"Leave my study, Bunter!"

"Yes, sir. Especially in the Shell, sir. I've heard Shell fellows say that they'd like to boil him in oil, sir!"

"If you utter another word, Bunter, I shall administer a flogging here and now!" thundered the Head.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

He bounded out of the Head's study.

YES AND NO!

"HACKER!" exclaimed James Hobson of the Shell.

"Yes."

"In the eye?"

"Yes."

"With a tomato?"

"Yes."

"Oh, good!" said Hobson. "Splendid! Who was the sportsman that did it?"

Hobson, Stewart, and Hoskins, of the Shell, were in their study when the captain of the Remove looked in before prep that evening.

By that time the sad case of William George Bunter was known all over the Remove. Billy Bunter had told his tale of woe in the Rag in the Remove passage, and in every study where he could find a listener.

And—strange to relate—Billy Bunter found believers. Seldom, or never, did Remove fellows believe a word uttered by William George Bunter. They knew him too well for that. It was said in the Remove that if Bunter remarked that it was foggy, a fellow had to look out of the window before he could believe him.

But this time there were a lot of circumstances in Bunter's favour.

Smithy pointed out that Bunter hadn't the nerve to buzz a tomato at a beak. Bob Cherry pointed out that if Bunter did buzz a tomato at a beak, that tomato was likely to land on anything but the beak at whom Bunter aimed it. Peter Todd remarked that only one thing could make Bunter hate a beak enough to take such awful risks, and that was

the beak making him work. Quelch made Bunter work, so if Quelch had got the tomato, it might have been a clear case. But Hacker, of course, never made Bunter work, and so had done nothing to earn such undying hatred.

Johnny Bull observed that the only real evidence that Bunter had done it was Bunter's statement that he hadn't done it. That was pretty good evidence, in Bunter's case, but not enough to flog a fellow on.

The fact was, that if any fellow had deliberately got Hacker in the eye with a mouldy tomato, that fellow had to be looked for in Hacker's Form, the Shell.

Shell fellows loathed Hacker. The fact that Shell fellows had no objection, in principle, to getting Hacker in the eye with a tomato was proved by the reception of the news in Hobby's study when Wharton looked in to tell him.

Hobson of the Shell looked quite bucked. Stewart smiled genially. Claude Hoskins, who was talking music to his long-suffering pals, left off talking music—a thing he seldom did! All three seemed to feel that life had suddenly become a much happier experience.

Harry Wharton regarded them dubiously. He had no doubt that that tomato had been buzzed by a Shell fellow; and his view was that a Remove man having been nailed for it, the Shell man ought to own up before Bunter got his spot of the birch. But he could see that the culprit was not, at all events, in James Hobson's study.

"Who was it?" repeated Hobson, with glistening eyes. "I say, did it really get the Acid Drop right in the eye? Honest Injun?"

"Bang in the optic, from what I hear!" said Harry.

"Fine!" said Hobson heartily.

"Some sportsman!" said Stewart. "A Remove man, was it? I'd be jolly glad to stand him a ginger."

"Splendid fellow!" said Hoskins. "Genuine sportsman! I hope they won't cop him! Know who it was?"

"We think in the Remove that it must have been a Shell man!" said Harry.

Hobson shook his head.

"No fear!" he answered. "We'd all like to, of course—but Hacker's too jolly dangerous. It wants some nerve to get a beak in the eye with a tomato. Man might be sacked for it. Blessed if I know any man at Greyfriars who'd do such a thing, except Smithy of your Form."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It wasn't Vernon-Smith, anyhow," he said. "The fact is, Hacker thinks that it was Bunter."

"Bunter!" repeated Hobson. "That fat ass! He couldn't hit the side of a house with a brick, let alone a beak's eye with a tomato. It wasn't Bunter."

"That's what we all think," said Harry. "But they've got Bunter—and he's up for a flogging to-morrow, if they don't get somebody else."

"Man ought to own up, in that case," said Stewart. "If it was a Shell man, he would."



"I'm not going to be flogged!" snorted Billy Bunter. "If you fellows will lend me all the money you've got, I'll run away from school!"

"Well, look here," said Harry Wharton bluntly, "we all know exactly how much you love the Acid Drop in the Shell, and we think it was a Shell man did it! It's up to you, Hobby, to see that he comes forward, before poor old Bunter gets it in the neck."

"Rot!" said Hobson. "It wasn't a Shell man—I should have heard of it, if it had been. That's rot! Why do they think it was Bunter?"

"Nobody else was in sight when it happened."

"Oh! That sort of settles it, I should think!" said the captain of the Shell. "Where did it happen?"

"At the gates! Bunter was there when Hacker blew along, and nobody else was in the offing. Bunter thinks somebody was parked out of sight, and let Hacker have it from cover—"

"There's no cover near enough to the gates!" said Hobson, after a moment's thought. "Not unless the chap was parked in Gosling's lodge—and he couldn't have been."

"That's so!" admitted Wharton. "I don't quite see how any fellow could have been hidden at the gateway, near enough to get Hacker, without being seen. I don't make it all out—but I can't believe that it was Bunter! He's got no reason for ragging Hacker, for one thing."

"Well, nobody likes the Acid Drop!" said Stewart. "From what you say, it must have been Bunter. Hacker's as sharp as a razor, and if there had been anybody else on the spot, he would have spotted him."

James Hobson rose from his chair. "I'm going to see Bunter," he said. "If Bunter got Hacker in the eye with a tomato, I've got a tin of toffees he can have."

"I'd like you to ask up and down the Shell who did it!" said the captain of the Remove. "The man will own up, as soon as he knows that Bunter's got it coming."

"Nobody in the Shell!" answered Hobson. "Getting Hacker in the eye is the sort of thing we dream about, but never do. It was Bunter all right—even a cack-handed ass like Bunter needn't always miss. Does he say he didn't do it?"

"Yes, rather."

"Well, he would!" said Hobson. "That chap couldn't tell the truth if he tried. I don't see why he can't own up in the Remove—they wouldn't give him away."

Hobson went to the study cupboard and picked up a tin of toffees. He left the study with that tin under his arm, and Harry Wharton followed him.

The head boy's visit to the Shell did not seem to have produced much in the way of results—except a tin of toffees for Bunter, as a reward for what the fat Owl of the Remove declared that he hadn't done.

Billy Bunter was found on the study landing, in the midst of a crowd of more or less sympathetic fellows. His dolorous voice was heard, as Hobson and Wharton arrived there.

"I say, you fellows, it wasn't me!" wailed Bunter. "I told Hacker it wasn't—and I told the Head, and

they didn't believe me. Quelch did, though."

"Is Quelch growing soft?" asked Skinner.

"Beast! But if Quelch doesn't find out who did it, I'm going to be flogged! I don't want to be flogged!" wailed the fat Owl.

"It's not nice!" agreed the Bounder. "I've been there!"

"Being perfectly innocent, you know—"

"Bunter here?" asked Hobson, barging through the crowd of Removites. "I say, Bunter, old man, gratters! Did you get him right in the eye? Accident, I suppose—you can't hit a house if you try! Like some toffees?"

"Eh? Oh, yes!" said Bunter.

At the sight of a tin of toffees, Billy Bunter almost forgot, for the moment, the awful fate impending over him. He stretched out an eager fat hand.

"Take the lot!" said Hobson heartily. "I'd stand the fellow who got Hacker in the eye a ton of toffee, if I had it!"

"Bunter says he didn't!" grinned Skinner.

"Did you or not?" asked Hobson.

"Oh! No! I—I—I mean, yes!" gasped Bunter, with his eyes and spectacles on the toffee-tin. "The fact is, Hobby, old chap, I—I got him right in the eye! Slap-bang in the eye, old fellow."

"Good man!" said Hobson. "More power to your elbow! Never knew you were such a sportsman!"

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And Hobson, grinning cheerily, walked back to his study in the Shell, leaving the toffee-tin under Bunter's fat arm, and Bunter's fat paw grabbing out toffees, and transferring the same to a capacious mouth.

"You fat villain!" roared Harry Wharton. "I've just been jawing Hobby to make him find out the Shell man who did it—and now you own up that you did!"

"Eh? Oh, no! I didn't!" gurgled Bunter, through a barrage of toffee. "I never did it, you know!"

"You've just told Hobby you did!" howled Bob Cherry.

"Oh! That—that was only a figure of speech, you know!" gasped Bunter. "What I really meant was, that I—I hadn't!"

"Oh crikey!"

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter's voice came muffled through toffee. "I never did it! The trouble is that the Head won't take my word! I don't know why——"

"He doesn't know why!" gurgled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! 'Tain't as if I was an untruthful fellow—like some fellows I could name. If Wharton told the Head that he never did it, the old bean would believe it like a shot! But he doesn't believe me! That's what I can't make out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter was the only fellow who could not make out why the Head did not take his word! But it seemed to puzzle and distress the fat Owl! Still, he found comfort in Hobson's toffees!

TOUGH!

TWENTY-FOUR hours may seem a long or a short time, according to circumstances.

Had Billy Bunter been waiting for a meal, such a length of time would have seemed absolutely endless.

Every second would have seemed a minute—every minute an hour, or more. Every hour would have seemed a year, if not a century or two.

But waiting for a flogging was quite a different proposition.

With the Head's birch in prospect, that twenty-four hours seemed to pass by William George Bunter in a flash.

Even the time spent in class seemed to pass quickly—together a new experience for Billy Bunter.

From minute to minute, from hour to hour, the fat Owl hoped that Quelch would discover who had tomatoed Hacker, or alternatively, as the lawyers say, that the guilty man would own up to the deed.

But neither hoped-for event materialised. Quelch made no discovery—and nobody owned up!

It was on a Monday that Hacker had got the tomato. Tuesday was the shortest day Bunter had ever known.

The hours did not merely fly—they whizzed, bringing Bunter nearer and nearer to that dreaded interview with his headmaster.

It was an awful prospect.

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Bunter, as he declared pathetically, not once, but many times, did not want to be flogged.

Very much indeed Bunter did not want to be flogged.

Indeed, he told the Remove fellows that he jolly well wasn't going to be flogged.

Why should a fellow be flogged when he hadn't done anything? Bunter wanted to know. He had a jolly good mind to run away from school, he declared. He stated, in the Rag, that he had a jolly good mind to borrow a false moustache from Wibley's property-box, and go along to the nearest recruiting office and enlist! And the Remove fellows agreed that, if he did, it would make the enemy think twice!

Bob Cherry remarked that if it came to Billy Bunter falling on the enemy, that enemy would be crushed. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh declared that the crushfulness would be terrific!

Billy Bunter declared that, if he was turned down at the recruiting office, he would go along to Wapshot Camp, and wedge into the Air Force somehow. But all the Remove pointed out to him that that was no good, as no plane had yet been designed that would lift him off the earth!

Skinner suggested, however, that he could offer himself as an unlimited supply of fat, in case of a shortage of fats—a suggestion that found no favour whatever in Bunter's eyes.

It was probable that, when it came to the pinch, Billy Bunter would not adopt any of these rather desperate resources.

But he was determined that he was not going to be flogged.

That was fixed in Billy Bunter's fat mind, as immutable as the laws of the Medes and Persians.

He hadn't done anything. Often and often had Billy Bunter escaped a deserved flogging. But that did not console him for the prospect of an undeserved one. He wouldn't, he couldn't, and he shouldn't be flogged.

Other Remove fellows did not take it so seriously as Bunter. But they all sympathised. Hardly a fellow in the Form believed that Bunter had done it, though they could not guess who had.

They knew, too, that Mr. Quelch was doubtful on the point.

The trouble was that Hacker had no doubt; and that the headmaster had to go by evidence—being unable to take Bunter's word, for reasons unknown to Bunter.

After school that day, before dismissing the Remove, Mr. Quelch called to Bunter—who was eyeing him uneasily and apprehensively through his big spectacles.

"Bunter!"

"Yes, sir!" groaned Bunter.

"You will come to my study at six o'clock, to be taken to your headmaster," said Mr. Quelch.

"I never did it, sir!" moaned Bunter. "I haven't the faintest idea who got Hacker, sir."

"That is a matter for your headmaster to decide, Bunter!" said Mr.

Quelch. "The matter is not in my hands."

"Oh lor'!"

Bunter rolled disconsolately out with the Remove. He blinked dolorously at the fellows in the quad.

He seemed to have forgotten his desperate intention of calling at recruiting offices and air camps. He was the picture of woe.

"I say, you fellows, what am I going to do?" groaned Bunter.

"That's an easy one," answered Skinner. "You're going to bend over in the Head's study, old fat man."

"Beast!" moaned Bunter.

"It's tough, old man!" said Bob Cherry sympathetically. "I don't believe you did it! It's tough!"

"That beast Hobson ought to spot the chap in his Form who did it, and make him own up!" groaned Bunter.

"After you told him you had?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle!" said Bunter bitterly. "Talk about Pontius Pilate playing the piano while Constantinople was burning!"

"Oh crikey! Do you mean Nero fiddling while Rome was burning?"

"No, I don't!" snorted Bunter. "You can't teach me history, Bob Cherry! But look here, I'm not going to be flogged. I say, you fellows, will you lend me all the money you've got?"

"Eh?"

"And I'll clear off!" said Bunter. "I'd rather run away from school! See? I can't run away without any money, and my postal order hasn't come, after all. Lend me all the money you've got, and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were sympathetic. But they did not seem keen on transferring all their financial resources to Bunter, so that he could run away from school! They seemed rather entertained by the idea.

"I tell you I'm not going to be flogged!" howled Bunter. "I never got old Hacker with that tomato, and I jolly well won't be flogged for it, see? I say, you fellows, if Quelch asks after me, tell him you saw me go out at gates, will you? Then he may not look for me in the Remove studies."

"Oh, my hat!"

Billy Bunter rolled into the House, and disappeared up the stairs. It seemed that enlisting, or joining the Air Force, had been dismissed as resources, and that Bunter was going to rely on dodging.

The Remove fellows wished him luck! But they had no doubt that when Mr. Quelch looked for Bunter, he would find Bunter; and that the hapless fat Owl would be marched off to the Head to take his flogging.

BUNTER KNOWS HOW!

WILLIAM WIBLEY jumped almost clear of the floor.

He had never been so astonished.

Wibley had come up to his study in the Remove. With Wibley were several members of the Remove

Dramatic Society, the Famous Five, and Tom Brown and Squiff and Ogilvy.

Quite a remarkable sight met their gaze as they entered the study.

Wibley's property-box, in which he kept the theatrical gadgets used by the R.D.S., was wide open. Beside it stood an astonishing figure.

The form was Bunter's. There was no mistaking the rotund figure of the fat Owl of the Remove.

But the face was nothing like Bunter's.

It was adorned by a large red beard, a straggling black moustache, and a pair of artificial eyebrows, of grizzled grey.

It looked about fifty years old—quite a startling contrast to the rest of the remarkable figure.

"What—" gasped Wibley.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What—"

The bearded, moustached figure blinked at the juniors through Billy Bunter's big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, this ain't me!" squeaked a fat voice.

"What?"

"Tain't me at all! It's somebody else!" explained the bearded fat Owl.

"My name is Johnson, not Bunter!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"I don't know where Bunter is! I haven't seen him. I don't remember even hearing the name!"

"Oh crikey!"

"I don't think he came up to the studies at all! He's not here now, at any rate! I'm Thomas Johnson!"

"Tut-tut—Thomas Jo-Jo-Johnson!" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"Yes! I'm the man from Courtfield to see about the gas."

The juniors gazed at Billy Bunter. They really wondered whether his dread of the flogging had caused the fat junior to wander in his mind.

Bunter blinked at them.

"If Quelch looks for that chap Bunter, to take him to the Head, you can tell him he's not here," he continued. "I'm the man from Courtfield to see about the electric meters—I mean the gas. Don't you fellows come into the study now. There's an escape of electricity—I mean, gas—and I've got to see to it."

"Is he potty?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Mad as a hatter!" said Ogilvy.

"Oh, really, Oggy—"

"Stark, staring, raving mad!" said Tom Brown. "Poor old Bunter! The Head may send him to a lunatic asylum instead of whopping him."

"Oh, really, Brown—"

"What do you mean by dragging all my props out of the box?" roared Wibley. "If you weren't going to be flogged, Bunter, I'd mop up the study with you, for meddling with my props."

"I keep on telling you I'm not Bunter! Don't keep on howling it out, or Quelch may think Bunter is here, when he looks for me—I mean him. My name is Robinson—"

"Robinson!" gurgled Harry Wharton.

"Yes, William Robinson, and I've come about the rates—I mean the

electricity—that is, the gas! Do I look anything like Bunter?"

Then it dawned on the astounded juniors! This was Bunter's dodge for eluding that flogging! He had disguised himself. He was going to escape discovery in this disguise!

He did not even realise that the juniors knew him at a glance. He hoped that they would take him for a man who had come from Courtfield about the gas! Quelch, when he saw him, was to do the same!

"Oh!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh crumbs!" gurgled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors yelled.

Bunter's flogging was a serious matter—for Bunter! But his extraordinary dodge for getting out of it was too much for the Removites.

They yelled and shrieked and almost wept.

Billy Bunter blinked at them anxiously.

"I say, you fellows, do you know I'm Bunter?" he asked. "I ain't really, you know—I'm George Thompson, the man from Courtfield—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Think Quelch will know me if he looks in?" asked Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The knowfulness will be terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"You burbling bloater!" gasped Squiff. "You'd better take off Wibley's props, before Quelch comes after you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I say, you fellows, do you really know me in this get-up?" asked the fat Owl. "No larks, you know—tell a chap the truth. It's getting on for six now!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Do we know him, you men?" sobbed Bob Cherry. "Do we? Is there something just slightly familiar about him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, look here, think Quelch will know me?" asked Bunter. "That's the important point."

"Will he?" gurgled Bob Cherry.

"If Quelch doesn't recognise me, it's all right!" explained Bunter. "He can hunt for me all over the school, see? I don't mind how long he hunts for me, so long as he doesn't find me, you know! I say, you fellows, do you think Quelch will believe I'm the man about the gas, if he sees me got up like this?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tain't a laughing matter!" howled Bunter. "I tell you I'm jolly well not going to be flogged. If they can't find me, they can't whop me, see?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take those things off, you blithering owl!" gasped Wibley. "You can't make up for toffee, you burbling bandersnatch!"

"Well, look here, you lend a hand!" urged Bunter. "You make me up as a man from the gasworks, or—or an income-tax inspector! What about that? Suppose I make up as an income-tax inspector, dunning old Quelch for his income

tax? He would want to get rid of me quick, see?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You couldn't make up as anything but a porpoise," said Tom Brown, "and you wouldn't need any make-up for that!"

"Beast!"

"Nothing in it, Bunter, old man!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You can't act like Wib, poor old porpoise. It can't be done."

"Oh, really, Wharton! Look here, really and truly, did you know it was me when you came into this study?" demanded Bunter. "Mind, I ain't admitting that it's me—but did you know it was?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Just a few!"

"Don't try it on Quelch!" gurgled Bob. "Don't!"

"Look here, if Wibley helped me—" urged Bunter. "I say, Wib, old man, you're simply wonderful at this game. I don't really think I could act your head off, old chap! If I've ever said so, it was only a joke. You're the cleverest chap that ever was, at this sort of thing!"

"Thanks!" grinned Wibley.

"Mind, I ain't just saying this to pull your leg and get you to help me," said Bunter. "Nothing of the kind, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You just pile in and make me up so that Quelch won't know me!" said Bunter. "They may find out in a day or two who tomatoed Hacker! I've got to keep clear till they do, see? Suppose you make me up as, say, an officer in the Guards, and say I'm your uncle come to see you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or you can fix me up with white whiskers and say I'm your grandfather," suggested Bunter. "Say I've come down here to keep away from the bombs, see?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you fellows can do nothing but cackle—" howled the indignant fat Owl.

"By gum!" exclaimed Wibley suddenly. "I've got it!"

WIBLEY'S WEIRD WHEEZE!

"I've got it!" Wibley's eyes were dancing. Some great thought, evidently, had flashed into the fertile brain of William Wibley!

The other fellows looked at him curiously—Bunter hopefully.

"By gum! What a wheeze!" Wibley chortled. "Shut that door! Look here, we're all agreed that that fat chump never tomatoed Hacker, and that he oughtn't to be flogged for it."

"Hear, hear!" agreed Bob Cherry. "But he can't get out of it by plastering all your props over his fat mug."

"Leave it to me!" said Wibley. "If Bunter can lie low for a day or two, it will give them a chance to get the right man. And I tell you, it's a stunning wheeze—if that fat ass can play up."

"But what—" exclaimed Wharton.

"Let me think it out! Did you fellows know me, when you saw me in your study yesterday? Of course you didn't! Would you know Bunter if I fixed him up in the same way? Of course you wouldn't! All he's got to do is to keep his mouth shut—and there you are!"

"Bunter can't keep his mouth shut!" said Johnny Bull. "He never has, at any rate!"

"Beast!"

"Prince Bomombo, from Bongoland!" said Wibley. "He was staying in London, but was advised to leave under the evacuation scheme. Being acquainted with Inky, he drops in at Greyfriars—"

"Oh, my esteemed hat!" ejaculated Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Inky asks Quelch if Bomombo may stay in the school a few days, until other arrangements are made," pursued Wibley.

"But, my esteemed and idiotic Wibley—" gasped the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Quelch will say yes like a shot! Bomombo can't speak English, so Bunter won't have to talk to Quelch!"

"Oh crikey!" said Bunter.

"But—" gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Bunter ceases to exist!" said Wibley. "Bomombo from Bongoland takes his place! They can hunt all over Greyfriars for Bunter—but he stays Bomombo till they give up the idea of flogging him, see?"

"Oh! Good!" exclaimed Bunter.

"Inky can tell Quelch the exact truth, of course—" continued Wibley.

"The what?" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

"The truth!"

"I—I say, mind what you tell Quelch, Inky!" exclaimed Bunter anxiously. The word truth seemed to alarm him a little.

"The truth," repeated Wibley firmly. "You will say that the chap can't stay in London—that's the truth, isn't it? Think Quelch would give Bunter leave to stay in London in the middle of the term?"

"Oh! No! But—"

"You will say you've known him for a long time—ain't that true?"

"Oh! Yes! But—" stuttered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"And that you expected to see him here this term! You did, didn't you?"

"Oh! Yes!"

"Well, that's all right!" said Wibley. "That will get Bomombo leave to hang on here for a few days. And when I've made Bunter up as Bomombo, his loving parents wouldn't know him. Leave that to me."

"I—I—I say, I—I'd rather not be made up as a black man!" objected Bunter. "I don't want to look like Inky."

"My esteemed, fatheaded Bunter, you—"

"That's Bunter's way of rendering

thanks for being helped out of a scrape," remarked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"Well, I mean, why not make me up as somebody a bit good-looking?" urged Bunter.

"I can't work miracles!" snorted Wibley.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you cheeky beast—"

"With a black complexion, you won't have to wash!" said Wibley. "Chance of a lifetime for you, Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's that or nothing!" declared William Wibley. "You're not an easy subject to handle, Bunter! 'Tain't so jolly easy to disguise a barrel, I can tell you."

"Look here!" roared Bunter indignantly.

Wibley looked at his watch.

"It's a quarter to six! Quelch will expect to see Bunter at six! If he doesn't, he will come after him. No time to lose!"

"But—" exclaimed the Famous Five, all together.

"Don't you think it a ripping stunt?" exclaimed Wibley.

"No—rotten!" answered Johnny Bull.

"The rottenfulness seems to me terrific!"

"Potty!" said Nugent.

"Pottier than usual—which is saying a lot, Wib!" declared Bob Cherry. "You're just batchy on your theatrical stunts! Forget all about it, old bean!"

Snort, from Wibley.

Probably it was Wib's keenness to get away with an amazing theatrical stunt, quite as much as concern for Bunter, that had inspired him with this extraordinary idea. But, having got his teeth into it, as it were, William Wibley was not the man to let go.

"Look here, did Bunter tomato Hacker?" he demanded.

"I don't think so!" said Harry Wharton. "But—"

"Is a Remove man going to be flogged for nothing?" demanded Wibley. "Ain't it up to us?"

"Yes; but—"

"Then don't jaw! Are you ready, Bunter? Get that collar and tie off! I shall have to give you a black complexion right down your neck! There won't be much black make-up wanted on the neck, though."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you cheeky beast!" roared Bunter.

"Get ready—no time to lose."

"I jolly well don't want to be made up as a nigger!" hooted Bunter. "I want to keep clear of the Head, but I don't want to be a nigger! You ain't going to put your putrid black on me."

Wibley looked at him. He was keen on this wheeze, as he was keen on all theatrical wheezes. Still, it was rather a risky game—for if it came out there was certain to be drastic punishment all round. And it was to save Bunter from a flogging!

"You—you—you burbling bloater!" said Wibley, in measured tones. "All

right—wash it out! Now get out of my study!"

"Oh, really, Wibley—"

"Boot him out, you men—we've wasted enough time on Bunter!" said Wibley. "Open that door and kick him out!"

"Keep that door shut!" howled Bunter, in alarm. "Quelch may come up for me any minute. I—I—I say, Wibley, old chap, what I—I really meant to say was, that I—I want you to make me up as a nigger! You—you can make me up as a Red Indian if you like—anything so long as I don't see the Head!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, Wib, old fellow, I'm waiting," urged Bunter. "Make me as black as the ace of spades, if you like."

"I've a jolly good mind—" snorted Wibley.

"You're wasting time, old chap!" said Bunter anxiously. "I'm waiting for you, and you keep on jawing!"

"Well, shut up, and I'll see you through!" growled Wibley. "Not that it matters much whether you're flogged or not! In fact, I think it would very likely do you good."

"Beast! I—I—I mean, do get going, old chap, when a fellow's waiting for you!" urged Bunter.

And William Wibley got going.

The other fellows in the study looked on. They grouped round the door to keep it shut—nobody was wanted to look in while the transformation scene was going on.

Wibley was a quick worker.

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at him while he transformed the fat Owl into a black man.

Bunter's aspect when his fat face was darkened to an African hue was really extraordinary. There was no doubt that it was a good disguise. With the complexion of a negro, the fat Owl was unrecognisable.

But Wibley did not leave it at that. The woolly wig he had worn in Study No. 1 was fastened over Bunter's own mop with fixing-gum. Then Wibley sorted out clothes from among his props.

Billy Bunter changed into a check suit with a rather conspicuous pattern, tan shoes, and a green neck-tie.

The juniors could only stare at him. Not one of them would have dreamed that this fat black fellow was Billy Bunter, had they not seen him transformed.

"There!" said Wibley, at last. "What do you think of that?"

"Oh crumbs!" said Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter put his spectacles on his black nose and blinked into the glass.

He almost bounded from the floor at what he saw reflected there.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I say, you fellows, is—is—is that me? Oh crikey!"

"What do you fellows think?" demanded Wibley, surveying his handiwork with pardonable pride.

"I think you're a mad ass!" gasped Harry Wharton. "I think there'll be a fearful row over this!"



"You verree bad boy, Skinnair!" said Monsieur Charpentier. "You raise ze hand to zat pauvre garcon noir—zat poor black boy! How is it zat you dare?"

"The rowfulness will be preposterous!"

"Rot!" said Wibley. "Who's going to know Bunter? He isn't Bunter now—he's Bomombo from Bongoland. He can't speak English—remember that, Bunter."

"Oh! Yes!" gasped Bunter. "As soon as I see Quelch I'll tell him at once that I don't know a word of English."

"Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're to keep your mouth shut!" roared Wibley. "I'll teach you a few words of the Bongo language, see?"

"Oh, really, Wib! I'm jolly well not going to swot at learning languages!" protested Bunter. "Why, I'd just as soon be flogged!"

"Idiot! I'm going to make up a Bongo language for you!" howled Wibley. "You'll remember a few words—like ish, and osh, and koosh, and wang-bang, see?"

"Oh, I see! I can do that! But I'm jolly well not going to swot! You can't expect it!"

"Shut up! This is going to be a winner, you fellows!" said Wibley. "Fancy spoofing the whole school, what?" Wibley chuckled. "This is going to be the joke of the term—the catch of the season. We're just going to walk through this!"

Wibley of the Remove had that opinion entirely to himself. To the other fellows it seemed the wildest, weirdest wheeze ever put up even by the president of the Remove Dramatic Society. But they were all going to play up and see it through if they

could! And they could only wonder how on earth it was going to turn out!

THE BLACK BOY FROM BONGOLAND!

COKER of the Fifth stared.

"Who on earth's that?" he asked.

"Ask me another!" said Potter. Greene shook his head.

The three Fifth-Formers were in the quad when they sighted the stranger within the gates.

A good many other fellows were looking at him.

Greyfriars fellows did not stare! It was bad form! But, really, they could not help taking an interest in that stranger. Nobody quite like that had ever been seen in the old Greyfriars quad before.

He was walking with Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhani-pur. That dusky youth was, apparently, showing him round the school.

"A nigger!" said Coker. "By gum, what a Day & Martin complexion! He's as fat as Bunter! Who the dickens is he?"

"Some relation of that young ducky, perhaps!" said Potter. "He's a good few shades darker, though."

"Here, Hurree Singh, what have you got there?" called out Coker.

The nabob glanced round.

The plump black youth blinked at Coker of the Fifth through a big pair of spectacles.

"An esteemed visitor to the school," answered Hurree Jamset

Ram Singh. "Prince Bomombo of Bongoland."

"Some prince!" grinned Coker. "Does he speak English?"

"At present he speaks only the language of Bongoland!" answered the nabob. "But laterfully, probably, he will speak esteemed English."

"They grow fat in Bongoland, wherever that is!" remarked Coker. "I've never seen such a porpoise before, except Bunter of the Remove."

"Beast!" said Prince Bomombo of Bongoland.

Coker jumped.

Coker's manners were not polished. But even Coker would not have made such a remark had not Hurree Singh told him that the Bongolander did not speak English. But Prince Bomombo's rejoinder seemed to indicate that he understood Coker's remark.

"What!" ejaculated Coker. "He speaks English all right! What the dickens do you mean by saying he didn't, Hurree Singh!"

The nabob gave his fat companion a warning glance. It was like Billy Bunter to give the game away, first shot.

But the fat Owl caught on. And he continued:

"Beast—weast—koosh—ish!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Coker, as he heard those remarkable words. "I see! It's a word in his own language. Is that Bongo?"

"That is the esteemed Bongo tongue," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with great gravity. "Beast—weast" means 'Good-afternoon.'

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"What a language!" said Coker. "What does 'koosh ish' mean?"

"'Koosh ish' is to say that he is glad to see you."

Bunter grinned.

There was not the remotest spot of doubt or suspicion in the faces of Coker & Co. Evidently Bomombo, from Bongoland, was a complete stranger to them.

The fat Owl realised that he was getting by with this.

"Koosh ish!" repeated Bunter cheerfully. "Osh!"

"Well," said Coker, "if that's a language, I'm glad we don't have to learn it in Form! Latin's bad enough! What does 'osh' mean?"

"'Osh' means that it is fine weather for the time of year!" explained Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Osh!" repeated Bunter. "Koosh ish! Wishy-wop!"

"Mean to say you understand a language like that, Hurree Singh?" exclaimed Potter of the Fifth.

"The understandfulness is terrific."

"I dare say it's like the weird lingo you speak in India!" remarked Coker. "What are you grinning at, you young ass? Isn't it?"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh chuckled.

"The likefulness is not terrific," he answered. "There is no resemblance between the esteemed language of Bhanipur and the absurd lingo of Bongoland."

"Wishy-wop!" repeated Bunter. "Hokey-pokey!"

Mr. Quelch came out of the House, and glanced round him. It was now a good deal past six o'clock, and as Bunter had not arrived in Quelch's study, the Remove master was looking for him.

Dr. Locke was waiting to deal with Bunter. It was unheard-of for the Head to have to wait for a Remove junior. But the Head was waiting!

But Mr. Quelch, as he caught sight of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's companion, forgot Bunter for the moment. He blinked at the black youth, and hurried across.

"Who is this, Hurree Singh?" he exclaimed. "What is this negro boy doing here?"

Billy Bunter did not speak.

His fat heart was palpitating. His parade in the quadrangle proved that he would pass muster in his remarkable disguise. But he dreaded the gimlet eyes of his Form-master. The fat Owl stood petrified as Mr. Quelch eyed him with astonishing inquiry.

"It is the esteemed Prince Bomombo, sir!" answered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with cheerful coolness.

"A friend of yours?" asked the puzzled Remove master.

"A very old acquaintance, sir," said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"You should have asked permission, Hurree Singh, before inviting a friend to the school!" said Mr. Quelch.

"I was unaware that he was coming, esteemed sir, till he appeared," explained the nabob. "It was terrifically sudden."

"Oh! In that case, I excuse you!"

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said Mr. Quelch. "The boy is welcome to visit the school, of course. Does he speak English?"

"At present, sir, he speaks no language but his own," answered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh—an answer that was perfectly truthful, but which savoured rather more of the wisdom of the serpent than of the innocence of the dove! Still, it was a fact that Billy Bunter spoke no language but his own!

"Dear me!" said Mr. Quelch. "I suppose you understand him, Hurree Singh?"

"Quitefully, sir!"

"However, at present, I am looking for Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch. "The foolish boy seems to have disappeared somewhere, instead of coming to my study as directed. Have you seen Bunter, Hurree Singh?"

"I saw him in the Remove passage, sir, an hour ago!" answered the Nabob of Bhanipur. "I think he went out of the House."

Mr. Quelch grunted. He was anxious to find Bunter and take him to the Head and get that disagreeable matter over.

Billy Bunter did not share that desire in the least!

Those gimlet eyes failed to penetrate his disguise. Mr. Quelch's eyes were very keen, and they scanned Prince Bomombo curiously; but Wibley's handiwork was a masterpiece. Not for an instant did Quelch dream that he was looking at the fat junior he sought.

"If you please, esteemed sir," went on the nabob meekly, "in the present absurd circumstances, it is impossible for my esteemed friend to remain in London—"

"What?"

"Owing to the presentfulness of the situation, it is considered that the danger may be terrific!" said Hurree Singh. "In these absurd circumstances, Prince Bomombo desires to remain in country places."

"Well?"

"Perhapsfully, sir, it might be permitted for my esteemed friend to remain at Greyfriars for a few days until other arrangements are made?" said Hurree Singh.

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch.

"It would be a boonful blessing, sir, if you would give your august and gracious permission," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur meekly.

"Oh!" repeated Mr. Quelch. "I will consider the matter, Hurree Singh. You may take the boy—What did you say he was called?"

"Bomombo, sir."

"Very good! Take him to my study, and wait there till I am disengaged," said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Quelch hurried away in search of Bunter. As he was leaving that fat and fatuous youth behind him as he departed, he was not likely to find him.

Billy Bunter grinned.

He had passed through that ordeal successfully! Mr. Quelch had no more suspicion than Coker & Co. or the dozens of other fellows who were eyeing Prince Bomombo of Bongoland.

Black Bunter rolled cheerfully into the House with Hurree Jamset Ram Singh to Mr. Quelch's study.

In that study, the fat Owl chuckled. He was to wait there till Mr. Quelch had time to deal with the matter. Quelch was occupied now in hunting for Bunter!

"I say, Inky," chortled Bunter, "fancy old Quelch hunting for me all over the shop, while I'm sitting in his study! He, he, he!"

And Billy Bunter sat in Mr. Quelch's armchair and waited cheerfully, every now and then emitting a fat giggle.

WHERE IS BUNTER?

"WHERE'S Bunter?"

"Anybody seen Bunter?"

"Seen a porpoise rolling about, you fellows?"

"Where the dickens is Bunter?"

Dozens of fellows were asking those questions. No fellow seemed able to supply an answer.

Bunter, as Skinner remarked, was big enough to be seen—sideways, at least. But he was not to be seen. It had happened before that William George Bunter, when required for bending over, had disappeared from sight, and had had to be rooted out. But on this occasion it seemed impossible to root him out.

Almost every fellow in the Remove was asked by his Form-master if he had seen Bunter. A number of them replied that they had seen him in the Remove passage after class; and two or three thought they had seen him in the quadrangle afterwards; but since then they had not seen him.

Which seemed surprising, but was not really surprising, as Billy Bunter was sitting in Mr. Quelch's study, waiting till the Remove master was at leisure to see Prince Bomombo of Bongoland.

Mr. Quelch was puzzled. He was annoyed. He was irritated. Yet, at the same time, he was not wholly displeased that Bunter was not available for the Head's birch, for Mr. Quelch, at the bottom of his heart, did not believe that Bunter had tomatoed Hacker.

Having that doubt in his mind, the Remove master, naturally, was not anxious for a member of his Form to be flogged.

It was, of course, fearfully impertinent on Bunter's part to disappear like this when his headmaster was waiting for him, with the birch on the table all ready for use. Quelch, who had his duty to do, whatever his opinion, made a thorough search for him. As he did not look in his own study, he failed to find the missing Owl!

It was rather inexplicable how Bunter could have disappeared so completely.

Gosling, the porter, knew that he had not gone out of gates. Gosling would have seen him, had he gone.

Certainly there were spots where a fellow could clamber out unseen. But Billy Bunter was not much of a clamberer; moreover, if he had intended to leave the school, why should he not have walked out of gates?

Bunter was somewhere within the precincts of Greyfriars.

Where, was a mystery.

Mr. Quelch could only report to the Head that Bunter could not be found. Which naturally annoyed the Head very much, and caused him to issue immediate orders for the Sixth Form prefects to find Bunter without delay and bring him to the majestic presence.

But Wingate, Gwynne, Loder, Sykes, Walker, and the rest had no more luck than Mr. Quelch. In every possible and impossible spot they sought the fat Owl, but they found him not.

They gave it up at last.

The birch on the Head's table remained unused—though it was likely to be used with additional vim when Bunter did turn up.

The Head was annoyed. Mr. Quelch was irritated. But Mr. Hacker's feeling was one of absolute exasperation.

The Acid Drop had had a tomato in his eye. He had recovered from the tomato, though the eye was still red, and had a deadly glint in it. The tomato hurler had been sentenced to a just punishment—and was eluding it. Mr. Hacker was a man to remember and nurse small offences—and this was a big offence—an unheard-of offence, and the offender was adding to it by keeping out of the way of the birch. Mr. Hacker was not satisfied to leave the matter where it was. He was very far from satisfied.

Mr. Hacker had not the slightest doubt that other Remove fellows were concerned in this; that some of them, in fact, were helping Bunter to keep out of sight, and that if a careful search was made in the Remove studies, the missing Owl would be found.

Bunter was hidden somewhere—perhaps behind an armchair, or behind a screen. Even Hacker did not suspect that he was hidden behind a black complexion. But he had a suspicion that Quelch was not very keen on the search, and that the Remove master could have unearthed the fat junior, had he been very keen to do so.

When Quelch at length returned to his study, he found the master of the Shell waiting for him near the door.

"Is Bunter found, sir?" asked Mr. Hacker acidly.

"No, sir; Bunter is not found!" answered Mr. Quelch.

"He is certainly in the school," said Mr. Hacker.

"I have no doubt of that," assented Mr. Quelch.

"He cannot be allowed to elude his just punishment by a further act of defiance of authority," said Mr. Hacker. "The boy must be found, sir."

"Undoubtedly!" said Mr. Quelch. "And you are welcome to take any measures you desire to that end, Mr. Hacker."

With that Mr. Quelch opened his study door and went into his study.

A fat, black youth bounded out of the armchair.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr.

Quelch. That worrying search for Billy Bunter had caused him to forget Prince Bomombo of Bongoland, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's request on behalf of his sooty-complexioned acquaintance.

Mr. Hacker stared in at the doorway at the black youth. It was his first sight of Prince Bomombo.

However, he gave him only one stare. Black youths did not interest Mr. Hacker. His interest was concentrated on Bunter.

"Mr. Quelch—" snapped Hacker. "Well?" Quelch's rejoinder was short and sharp.

"I have no doubt that Bunter is now in one of the Remove studies," said Mr. Hacker, "and as you have failed to find him, I propose to look for him myself."

"I have no objection, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "Please make any search

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you please in the studies of the boys of my Form. Now, Hurree Singh, you may explain to me the circumstances in connection with this boy Bomombo, to whom you desire that the hospitality of Greyfriars may be extended for a few days."

"Certainly, esteemed sir!" answered the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Mr. Hacker, with a snort, stalked away.

He made his way at once to the Remove passage.

On the landing there he encountered Harry Wharton & Co., and gave them a suspicious glare.

"Wharton!" he snapped.

"Yes, sir!" answered the captain of the Remove.

"Can you tell me where Bunter is at the present moment?"

"I'm afraid I can't tell you anything, sir!" answered Wharton politely.

"Give me a direct answer, Wharton. Is Bunter in your study?"

Harry Wharton smiled.

"No, sir!"

"Are you looking for Bunter, sir?" Vernon-Smith came out of the Remove passage. "He's been looked for up here already, sir."

Hacker's suspicious glare turned on the Bounder.

"It is my intention to find Bunter, if he is in a Remove study!" he snapped. "I intend to search every study in this passage. Is Bunter in your study, Vernon-Smith?"

"In—in—in my study, sir!" stammered Smithy. "Oh, no! Nothing of the kind, sir."

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at the Bounder. They knew perfectly well that Bunter was not in Smithy's study, as they knew that he was downstairs with Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. But the Bounder's manner was startled and confused—so startled and confused that it concentrated Hacker's suspicion on him at once.

"Vernon-Smith! I believe that Bunter is concealed in your study!" thundered the Acid Drop.

"Oh, no! Not at all, sir!" stammered Smithy. "I—I—I assure you, sir—"

"I shall certainly look for him there!"

"B-b-but, sir—"

"Enough!"

Mr. Hacker strode across the landing to march up the Remove passage.

Herbert Vernon-Smith closed one eye at the Co. Then he cut back up the Remove passage at a run, dashed into Study No. 4, slammed the door, and turned the key in the lock inside. There was a roar of wrath from Hacker as he rustled up the passage after him.

"What the thump is Smithy up to now?" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Bunter's not in his study."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Pulling the Acid Drop's leg, I expect!" he answered. "Hallo—here comes Inky and that blithering fat ass!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came up the Remove staircase. With him rolled a fat figure in a check suit, with a black, grinning face.

Harry Wharton & Co. blinked at Black Bunter. They knew that he was Bunter, having witnessed Wibley's transformation of the fat Owl. But they certainly would not have known him otherwise. Only in the ample outlines of his plump figure did he resemble the Owl of the Remove.

"All serene, Inky?" asked Bob.

"The serenity is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The estimable Quelch has given leave for my friend Bomombo to remain at Greyfriars for a temporary day or two, in view of the dangerousness in other places."

"He, he, he!" Black Bunter chortled. "I say, you fellows—He, he, he!"

"Shut up, you burbling bloater!" hissed Bob. "Hacker's in the offing!"

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"Oh crikey!"

Thump, thump, thump, came from the Remove passage.

An angry Acid Drop was thumping at Vernon-Smith's study door.

"What is the esteemed row?" asked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Hacker—after Bunter!" chuckled Bob.

"He, he, he!"

The Famous Five went into the Remove passage, quite interested in Hacker's search for Bunter.

With them rolled Prince Bomombo, equally interested, and greatly entertained. Other Remove men gathered round—many of them glancing curiously at the black youth, but chiefly interested in Hacker.

Hacker, regardless of a staring crowd, thumped on Smithy's study door.

Thump, thump, thump!

NO ADMITTANCE!

"**V**ERNON-SMITH!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Open this door at once!"

"It's locked, sir!"

"Unlock it immediately!"

"Is Coker about, sir?"

"Coker! What do you mean?" roared Mr. Hacker.

"I'm afraid Coker of the Fifth is after me, sir! I'd rather not open the door till I'm quite sure Coker isn't around."

"Nonsense! This is mere subterfuge, Vernon-Smith!" roared Mr. Hacker. "I command you to open this door immediately!"

"Has the Head made you master of the Remove, sir?"

"What?"

"I'm not in the Shell, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell along the passage.

More and more of the Remove were gathering there, greatly entertained by the dialogue going on through the locked door.

Mr. Hacker, in point of fact, had no right to come up to the Remove passage and issue commands to the inhabitants thereof. Herbert Vernon-Smith was just the fellow to make him understand that quite clearly. Smithy did not like toeing the line, even with his own Form-master, and he was quite ready to tell the master of any other Form exactly where he got off.

"Vernon-Smith! I am aware that Bunter is in that study!" thundered Mr. Hacker.

On that point, of course, the Acid Drop had not the slightest doubt by this time. The Bouncer's words and actions pointed inevitably to that conclusion. And it did not dawn on Hacker for a moment that the wily Bouncer was deliberately pulling his leg and encouraging him to make a fool of himself.

Smithy had stammered and shown confusion when questioned. He had rushed into his study and locked the door! What was Hacker to think?

Thump, thump, thump!

"Vernon-Smith! Open this door! I repeat that I know that Bunter is there!" raved Mr. Hacker.

"I've told you he isn't, sir!"

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"I do not believe you, Vernon-Smith."

"It's rather bad form to doubt a fellow's word, sir!"

"What?"

"I shall complain to Mr. Quelch, sir!"

"You impertinent young rascal!"

"You're getting rather personal, sir!" came the Bouncer's cheery voice through the door. "I hardly think that Mr. Quelch would approve of this language, sir, addressed to a fellow in his Form."

"Open this door!"

"I'm afraid to open the door, sir, if Coker of the Fifth is about!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came another yell in the passage.

Nobody in the Remove was likely to believe that Smithy was afraid of Coker of the Fifth. Obviously he was only fencing with Hacker.

Hacker was not his beak, still he was a beak, and even the Bouncer could hardly tell him to go and eat coke! But he was not going to open the door.

Mr. Hacker glared round at the yelling Removites.

"Silence!" he thundered.

"Mayn't we laugh in our own passage, sir?" asked Skinner.

"We jolly well may, if we like!" declared Bolsover major. And the burly Bolsover gave a roar that rang the length of the passage. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Vernon-Smith!" shrieked Hacker, transferring his attention to the study door again.

"Hallo! Are you still there?" asked Smithy.

"Bunter is in that study!"

"He isn't! At least, I can't see him, if he is!"

"You are lying, Vernon-Smith!"

"Oh, no, sir! I'm standing up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am perfectly aware that Bunter is in that study! His headmaster is waiting for him. Do you dare to make your headmaster wait, Vernon-Smith? You will answer for this to Dr. Locke."

"All right!"

"What did you say?" roared Hacker.

"I said all right!"

"Boy!" Hacker fairly yelled. "Open this door at once!"

"Is that an air-raid warning, or Hacker's voice, you fellows out there?" called out the Bouncer. "If it's the siren, I'd better come out."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Removites.

Thump, thump, thump!

The door remained locked and immovable.

"Is Bunter there, you fellows?" asked Skinner.

"I think not!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Well, he must be somewhere, and Hacker thinks he's there! Smithy will get into a fearful row if he's hiding him."

Black Bunter suppressed a giggle. He was standing only a few feet from Harold Skinner. But Skinner, after a stare at his black face, had taken no further heed of him. Skinner suspected that Bunter was in that study!

Many of the other fellows were of the same opinion.

Harry Wharton & Co., Squiff and Tom Brown, Ogilvy and William Wibley knew where Bunter was. But the other fellows did not know, and had no suspicion.

A fellow who hid another fellow, for whom the headmaster was wait-



"So you are teaching this negro boy the use of getting used to taking it off and p

ing, and for whom all the prefects had been in search, was booked for a royal row. It seemed to most of the Removites that the Bouncer was asking for it.

"For the last time, Vernon-Smith, will you open this door?" Hacker was almost foaming.

"I'm afraid of Coker, sir!"

"That is untrue, Vernon-Smith. It is mere subterfuge; but in any case, no Fifth Form boy is here."

"He might be just round the corner, sir."

"Will you open that door?"

"I'm afraid of Coker, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you do not open that door this instant, Vernon-Smith, I shall fetch your Form-master to the spot!" thundered Hacker.

"Oh! Please don't, sir!"
 "I shall certainly do so, Vernon-Smith!"
 "I don't want Mr. Quelch up here, sir!"
 "I shall fetch him at once, Vernon-Smith, if you do not unlock that door! Will you unlock it?"

"I'm afraid of Coker, sir!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Enough!" gasped Mr. Hacker.
 He turned from the door to stride away, and call the Remove master to the spot.

But he paused.
 It would take several minutes, at the very least, to bring Quelch on the scene! One minute would be enough for a hidden junior to scuttle out of

But by that time, the uproar in the Remove passage had drawn the attention of fellows of other Forms. Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers were looking up the passage from the landing.

Mr. Hacker waved an angry hand to Hobson of the Shell.

"Hobson!" he shouted.
 "Yes, sir!" called back Hobby.

"Go down to Mr. Quelch's study, and tell him that I request him to come here immediately."

"Oh! Yes, sir!"
 Hobson of the Shell went down the stairs.

A breathless crowd awaited the arrival of Mr. Quelch on the scene. What would happen then?

PUZZLE—FIND BUNTER!

MR. QUELCH rustled up the Remove passage, with a frowning brow.

He had come in response to Hacker's message; but he had not come in the best of tempers.

It was true that Bunter had to be found—if possible—and it was true that he had given his assent to Hacker's investigation in the Remove studies.

Nevertheless, he was not pleased by the Acid Drop butting in.

"Well?" inquired Mr. Quelch, in tones as acid as Hacker's own, as he arrived on the spot.

Mr. Hacker pointed to the door of Study No. 4.

"Bunter is there, sir!" he snapped.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch. "You have seen him?"

"I have not seen him."

"Then may I inquire, sir, why you suppose that Bunter is in that study?"

"I do not suppose, sir—I know it for a fact—a fact about which there is not the slightest doubt!" snapped Mr. Hacker. "Vernon-Smith refuses to admit me to that study, sir, because he is concealing Bunter there."

Mr. Quelch tapped at the door.
 "Are you here, Vernon-Smith?" he asked.

"Yes, sir!" came the Bounder's meekest tones in reply.

"Why have you locked your door, Vernon-Smith?"

"I thought that a Fifth Form man was after me, sir! I explained that to Mr. Hacker!" said the Bounder, in the same meek tone.

The Removites in the passage did not venture to laugh in the presence of their Form-master. But they grinned at one another. One face—a black one—had a wide grin on it, that extended almost from one black ear to the other.

"Nonsense, Vernon-Smith!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "Open your door immediately!"

"Certainly, sir, if you tell me to do so!" answered the Bounder, and the key clicked in the lock at once.

The door opened.
 Herbert Vernon-Smith stood there—apparently the only fellow in the study.

Mr. Quelch looked in. Hacker glared in. As many of the juniors as could get near stared in.

Bunter was not to be seen. Nobody but the Bounder was to be seen. But in a corner of the study, the hearthrug had been draped over something that was concealed from sight under it.

It was such a very unusual place for a hearthrug that it was noticed at once, and it could hardly be doubted that it had been placed there with the intention of concealing something or other. Although Bunter was not to be seen, fellows who looked into the study had no doubt that he was not far away.

"Is Bunter here, Vernon-Smith?" asked Mr. Quelch sternly.

"No, sir! I have already told Mr. Hacker so!" answered the Bounder meekly. "I have not seen Bunter for hours, and he is not in my study, as I have told Mr. Hacker."

"A palpably false statement!" snapped Mr. Hacker.

The Bounder's eyes glinted at him.
 "May I ask, sir, whether a Remove man may be accused of making false statements by the master of another Form?" he inquired.

"I shall be very glad, Mr. Hacker, if you will kindly moderate your expressions in addressing boys of my Form!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"I shall not hesitate, sir, to denounce a false statement, when it is uttered with such bare-faced impudence!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker. "It is perfectly plain that Bunter is hidden in this study."

"May I tell Mr. Hacker that he is making a palpably false statement, sir?" asked the Bounder respectfully.

"Certainly not, Vernon-Smith!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Very well, sir! I must, of course, obey my Form-master," said Smithy. "But if you gave me leave to say so, sir, I should certainly say that Mr. Hacker is making a palpably false statement."

There was a gurgle in the passage.
 "You unscrupulously untruthful boy!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker. "You dare to say that Bunter is not concealed in this study—"

"I will say so as often as you like, sir."

"Then what," thundered Hacker, pointing with his forefinger to the hearthrug draped over some hidden object in the corner—"then what is concealed under that rug, Vernon-Smith?"

The Bounder glanced at it carelessly.

"Only a chair, sir!" he answered.

"Only a chair!" repeated Mr. Hacker, as if he could hardly believe his ears—as perhaps he hardly could.

"That is all, sir!"
 "Oh, my hat!" murmured Skinner in the passage.

Except for the fellows in the secret, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,654.



"a gas-mask?" said Mr. Hacker. "Nothing like putting it on, sir!" said Bob Cherry.

the study, and seek a fresh hiding-place—after Hacker was gone! And as Hacker was absolutely convinced that Bunter was in that study, he naturally did not want to give the hunted Owl such a chance.

"Is he gone, you fellows?" came the Bounder's voice from inside Study No. 4.

"No fear!" called back Bolsover major.

"Look out, Smithy!" chortled Bob.

"Tell me when the coast's clear, you men!" called out the Bounder.

"We'll tell you all right."

Hacker breathed hard, and he breathed deep. He could have no doubt now that Vernon-Smith was waiting till the coast was clear, to let Bunter out of that study! And he did not leave the spot.

nobody doubted that the missing fat Owl was hidden in that corner! The fellows in the secret, however, knew that he was not, and that Smithy was only carrying on his jest on Hacker to the very limit.

"Will you listen to this boy's barefaced untruths, Mr. Quelch?" gasped the master of the Shell. "Upon my word!"

"Nothing's hidden under that hearthrug, sir!" said the Bounder cheerfully. "I just chucked it there across the chair, while I swept up some cinders that had got spilt out of the grate."

"Upon my word!" repeated Mr. Hacker. "This boy's impudent offrontery passes all belief! Such a statement—"

"Remove that rug, Vernon-Smith!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Very well, sir."

Vernon-Smith stepped to the corner of the study.

Bob Cherry gave his comrades a joyous wink! All the Famous Five knew that Smithy had draped that rug over a chair in the corner to pull Hacker's leg, as soon as he looked in. But most of the fellows in the passage fully expected Billy Bunter to be revealed, as soon as the rug was removed.

The Bounder took hold of it and jerked it out of the corner.

There was a gasp of astonishment from a lot of fellows as nothing but a chair was revealed. There was nobody sitting in the chair! There was nobody behind it! There was the chair in the corner—merely that, and nothing more!

Mr. Hacker stared at it with popping eyes. He had been sure—absolutely convinced—that Bunter was there! But Bunter was not there!

"Oh!" he gasped.

Mr. Quelch's lip curled sarcastically.

"Are you satisfied now, Mr. Hacker?" he asked.

"No, sir!" hooted Mr. Hacker. "I am not satisfied! I shall search this study, sir, in your presence."

"Then I beg you to lose no time, sir! My time is of value, if yours is not!" retorted Mr. Quelch.

The Acid Drop proceeded to search Study No. 4.

Mr. Quelch watched him impatiently; the Bounder with a sarcastic grin; the crowd in the passage mostly with breathless expectation of seeing Billy Bunter rooted out.

But Billy Bunter was not rooted out.

Hacker looked in the study cupboard—he peered behind the armchair—he even stooped and looked under the table. But there was no sign of a fat Owl.

"Well?" asked Mr. Quelch, with grim sarcasm. "Well, Mr. Hacker, are you satisfied now?"

"It—it certainly appears that the—the boy is not here!" stammered Mr. Hacker. "It—it certainly does appear—"

"I told you so, sir!" said Vernon-Smith blandly.

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"I—I certainly thought—stammered the discomfited Acid Drop. "I—I had good reason to—to think—"

"Are you now satisfied that Bunter is not in this study?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, yes! Undoubtedly."

"Then I need waste no further time here!" said Mr. Quelch.

The Remove master left the study, leaving Mr. Hacker to follow at his leisure.

Hacker gave a last stare round Study No. 4. But it was clear, even to Hacker, that Bunter was not there!

He stepped out into the passage at last—and walked away, with a crimson face—apparently tired of searching Remove studies, and giving up the quest.

A chuckle from the crowd of Removites followed him.

"Puzzle—find Bunter!" chortled Skinner.

"Got him in your waistcoat pocket, Smithy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did Hacker look in the inkpot?"

"Or in the coal-scuttle?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Hacker's ears burned as he departed with the cheery laughter of the Removites ringing in his ears.

"But where the dickens is Bunter?" asked Skinner. "The fat ass must be somewhere! Know where he is, Smithy?"

"Haven't the foggiest!" grinned the Bounder. "I knew that he wasn't in my study—and I thought I'd pull Hacker's leg! That's all."

"You pulled Hacker's leg all right!" said Bob Cherry, laughing. "He's gone off boiling!"

"But it's weird where Bunter can be!" remarked Lord Mauleverer. "Where the jolly old dooce is Bunter?"

"Where and O where can he be?" said Bob Cherry. "Poor old Hacker!"

"He, he, he!" came a familiar fat chortle.

A dozen fellows jumped! Everybody knew that gurgling giggle! It was Bunter, or his ghost! Fellows stared round blankly. Bunter was not to be seen! Bomombo of Bongoland was to be seen—but attracted no attention. Fellows stared round almost dazedly for Bunter.

"He's here!" gasped Skinner.

"Where?"

"Didn't you hear?"

"Yes—but where—"

"In one of the studies—"

"It sounded as if he was here in the passage—"

"But he isn't!"

"What the thump—"

"My only hat!" said the Bounder. "Are we haunted by Bunter's ghost?"

Really it seemed like it! Bunter's fat giggle had been heard—but Bunter was not visible. The Cheshire Cat, in Wonderland, vanished, leaving only his grin behind—and it really looked as if the Owl of the Remove had vanished, leaving only his fat giggle behind! It was quite a mystery—very entertaining to Prince Bomombo of Bongoland!

ALL RIGHT FOR BUNTER!

"THAT blooming nigger!" grunted Gosling.

"I wouldn't call him names!" said Mr. Mimble. "P'r'aps he understands."

"He don't!" said Gosling. "Not a word of Henglish!"

Billy Bunter grinned.

It was the following morning—and on that October morning, which was fine and sunny, Black Bunter was absolutely enjoying life.

Greyfriars were in Form—all except Bunter! There were no lessons for Billy Bunter that morning!

Bunter—in his proper person—was still in a vanished state! His bed in the Remove dormitory had remained unoccupied! The Owl of the Remove had not turned up for dorm—neither had he turned up for breakfast in the morning.

The mystery of Bunter's disappearance was growing deeper and deeper.

A good many fellows in the Remove knew, besides those originally in the secret. Some of them remembered Wibley's jape in Study No. 1 on Monday; and connected it up with the arrival of a black boy at the school on Tuesday—as fat as the missing fat Owl.

Many of the Remove, however, were still in the dark; and, outside that Form, nobody so far had a spot of suspicion.

Bomombo was an object of considerable interest—but the keenest eye could not have recognised him as Bunter.

An extra bed had been put up in the Remove dormitory for Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's coloured guest. Really, it was unnecessary; he might have had Bunter's bed, which remained empty.

Bunter had missed brekker in the morning—but Bomombo had not! Bomombo had breakfasted with the Remove, under the gimlet eye of Mr. Quelch, which, gimlet-like as it was, failed to penetrate the black complexion that hid a well-known member of his Form! Like Jack the Giant-Killer of old, Billy Bunter was hidden, literally, in a cloak of darkness!

It was simply to escape the flogging—till the genuine tomato hurler was discovered—that Billy Bunter had adopted this extraordinary device. But he soon found that there were many other advantages therein.

Wibley had warned him not to wash! Never had Billy Bunter taken a warning so thoroughly to heart! Bunter's ablutions were never extensive, and never took him long! Now he cut them out entirely.

But even that—agreeable as it was to Bunter—was not all! Bunter, had he been there, would have had to go into Form with the Remove! Bomombo did not have to go into Form.

He was a guest at Greyfriars—supposed to be there to keep out of the way of air-raids!

Bomombo was free to wander where he would while the other fellows were grinding Latin with Quelch, or maths with Lascelles, or French with Mon-

sieur Charpentier. The only thing in which he was expected to join was air-raid drill—to which Bunter did not object, placing a proper value upon his fat person, and being extremely unwilling to stop a bomb with his fat head!

Getting out of work was glorious! Bunter had never liked work!

Now there was no work for Bunter! And that pleasant October morning Billy Bunter loafed in the quad while the other fellows were in Form—and rolled into the school shop like a lion seeking what he might devour.

The tuckshop was not open officially until break. But the door was open—and Black Bunter rolled in.

Mrs. Mimble, not expecting customers out of hours, was not in the shop but occupied with domestic duties, the nature of which was indicated by a powerful smell of cooking from the rear of the premises. But Mr. Mimble, the Head's gardener, was there, leaning on the counter and talking to Gosling, the ancient porter. Both of them looked at Black Bunter as he rolled in, and Gosling referred to him as a blooming nigger.

Gosling was not in a good temper that morning. In that respect the morning was like the other three-hundred-and-sixty-four in the year. Gosling never was in a good temper in the morning. Of late he had been even less good-tempered than usual of a morning.

Billy Bunter blinked at Gosling and Mr. Mimble through his big spectacles, opened his mouth—and shut it again. Bunter had to keep on remembering that he could not speak English.

"Good-morning, sir!" said Mr. Mimble, eyeing him curiously. "The shop ain't open till break, sir."

"Ish!" said Bunter cheerily. "Koosh!"

"He don't understand, he don't!" said Gosling. "He speaks some queer lingo, he does! Why all these 'ere furriners don't learn plain English beats me! Look at the German you get over the radio! Like cracking Brazil nuts!"

"Osh!" said Bunter, pointing to a dish of jam tarts.

He did not expect Mr. Mimble to understand the language of Bongoland. But the language of signs indicated Bunter's meaning.

"This 'ere shop ain't open!" said Gosling. He raised his voice—having, like many people, the delusion that a foreigner could be made to understand English by shouting at him. "Not open—see?"

"Kerrosh-kish!" said Bunter.

"Wot a language!" said Mr. Mimble.

"I believe you!" said Gosling. "No good trying to understand the silly nigger, talking like that there! Look 'ere, Mr. Mimble, about them tomatoes—"

"I don't want to be unfriendly, William Gosling, but I've 'eard enough about them tomatoes!" said Mr. Mimble, with emphasis.

"That's as may be," said Gosling, with a snort. "But when a man sits down to tea in his lodge, and thinks

he'll have a tomato, I can tell you, George Mimble, that he don't like finding that he's been landed with a rotten tomato!"

"You kep' that tomato too long, then!" said Mr. Mimble. "I ain't the man to brag, I 'ope, but I'll tell anybody to his face that I grows good tomatoes. The Head give me leave, outside my dooties as his gardener, to plant up spare ground with vegetables, and I put that bit of ground under tomatoes, and they was good tomatoes. My belief is that the Head knowed what was coming all that time ago, when he says to me, he says, put in all the vegetables you can, Mr. Mimble, he says, you'll be glad of them later, he says. And—"

"That ain't neither here nor there, George Mimble!" interrupted Gosling. "A man sitting down to tea in his lodge, and getting 'old of a mouldy old tomato that was fair dropping to pieces—"

"Koosh!" interjected Billy Bunter. "Ish! Ish! Wosh-wooosh! Grooooooosh!"

"Ark at him!" said Mr. Mimble. "He can't expect a man to ketch on! But I s'pose he wants some of them jam tarts, seeing as he's pointing at them! I'd better serve him, I s'pose?"

"The rule is that this 'ere shop don't open till break!" said Gosling.

"I knows all the rules as well as you can teach them to me, William Gosling!" retorted Mr. Mimble. "This 'ere blaek cove don't belong to the school, so he don't come under the rules. What's he grinning at, I wonder?"

"Koosh!" said Bunter. "Wishy-wop!"

Mr. Mimble brought the dish of jam tarts forward.

"Ow many?" he asked.

"Hoshy-koshy-wop!"

"Better let him 'elp himself," said Gosling. "You won't make 'ead or tail of that lingo, Mimble."

Bunter helped himself. He transferred six jam tarts from the dish to a plate, and sat down to dispose of them.

Mr. Mimble and Gosling watched him, in surprise at the speed with which the jam tarts disappeared.

"Can that black bloke eat!" said Gosling.

"I ain't never seen anybody scoff grub like that except young Bunter—the boy what's missing!" said Mr. Mimble. "Wonder he don't choke!"

Bunter put an empty plate on the counter.

"Oshy bong!" he said.

Bunter was not good at languages, but he was quite adept at the language of Bongoland! A language came rather easy when a fellow could make it up as he went along.

"Bet you that means he wants more!" said Gosling. "He's as greedy a pig as that young Bunter."

"Beast!"

"Wha-a-t?" ejaculated Gosling. Like Coker of the Fifth, the day before, the old Greyfriars porter was surprised at a word of English suddenly escaping from the black Bongolander. "Look 'ere, that there's English all right!"

"My eye!" said Mr. Mimble. "P'raps he's heard some of the boys describing you, Gosling, and ketched that word."

Gosling gave Mr. Mimble a glare at that suggestion, snorted, and stalked out of the shop!

Billy Bunter, remembering that he spoke no English, said no more. He helped himself to another half-dozen jam tarts.

A dozen jam tarts seemed to be enough, even for Billy Bunter. He eyed Mr. Mimble through his big spectacles and made a movement towards the door.

"'Ere!" exclaimed Mr. Mimble. "Them tarts is threepence each. That's three shillings, sir."

"Oshy op."

"Three shillings!" repeated Mr. Mimble, getting a little excited. "This 'ere shop ain't run on tick! Three shillings, please!"

"Koosh! Ishy-wip!"

Prince Bomombo of Bongoland would willingly have paid the three shillings for the tarts. But there was a difficulty in the way! Billy Bunter had not yet received a postal order he was expecting. Prince Bomombo was as hard up as Billy Bunter!

In his proper person, Bunter was never given tick at the school shop! But as he had already scoffed the tarts, Mr. Mimble really had very little choice about giving Prince Bomombo tick!

"My eye!" exclaimed Mr. Mimble. "Look 'ere, don't you know that things have to be paid for in shops, you benighted 'eathen?"

"Koshy - copper - wop!" answered Bunter.

"Three bob—"

"Snooty-woot-pop!"

And with that remark, Black Bunter faded out of the tuckshop, leaving Mr. Mimble staring after him in dismay.

A SURPRISE FOR SKINNER!

"WHAT the thump are you doing here?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

In third school, when all the fellows were in Form, Billy Bunter had naturally not expected any Remove fellow to come up to the Remove studies.

Skinner had come up quite unexpectedly.

In break, Prince Bomombo had been seen in the quad, but the Greyfriars fellows were getting used to the refugee by that time, and no special notice was taken of him.

After break, Black Bunter had dropped in at the school shop again, but this time there was no tick to be obtained at that establishment. Until the sum of three shillings was paid over, that particular customer was not wanted, and Billy Bunter departed disappointed.

But he had other resources. Grub-raiding in the studies was easier than usual—Bunter being out of class, and all the other fellows in class!

He was in No. 11 at the moment, which belonged to Skinner and Snoop and Stott.

Skinner, having forgotten a map required in the lesson, had been sent to fetch it—not in a good temper, as he had been given fifty lines for forgetting the map. He was surprised, and not pleased, as he entered his study, to find a black youth there—and though he asked Bomombo what he was doing there, the question was really superfluous, for it was perfectly plain what Bomombo was doing.

He had a packet of toffee in a fat black hand, and a wedge of the same in a large mouth.

Skinner stared at him in angry astonishment.

Remove fellows were used to this sort of thing from Billy Bunter. It seemed that the black youth from Bongoland had the same manners and customs as the missing Owl.

Skinner had no objection to the hospitality of Greyfriars being extended to a refugee. But he had a very strong objection to that refugee snaffling his toffee.

"Well, this beats it!" said Skinner angrily. "You black image, do you think you can come here bagging a fellow's tuck?"

"Oooooosh!" said Bunter, remembering in time that he could speak only the language of Bongoland. "Osh! Woppy!"

"You've got my toffee!" hooted Skinner.

"Oooshy-wop!" said Bunter.

"Well, if you can't understand what I say, you're jolly well going to understand what I do!" exclaimed Skinner, and he grabbed the packet

of toffee from the black paw. "Now get out—and I'll help you with my boot!"

"Ow! Beast!" roared Bunter, as Skinner suited the action to the word. "Wow! Stoppit, you rotter! Stop kicking me, you beast!"

Skinner almost fell down in his astonishment. He was not one of the fellows who had penetrated Black Bunter's disguise—he had never dreamed of it. That sudden flow of English staggered him.

"Why—what! Oh, my hat!" gasped Skinner. "What's this game? You can speak English all right, you spoofing chunk of ink!"

"Oh! No, I can't!" gasped Bunter, in alarm. "Not a word! I don't know a word of English, Skinner!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Oshy-wop!" went on Bunter. "Wooosh! Kooosh! Washy-washy-woodle-wop!"

But it was rather too late to turn on the language of Bongoland.

Skinner stared at him open-eyed and open-mouthed.

He did not recognise Bunter. He did not guess—yet, at all events—that this was the missing fat Owl. But he could hardly fail to be aware now that Bomombo's ignorance of the English language was spoof.

"What have you been telling these whoppers for?" he demanded. "Making out that you don't understand English."

"I don't!" gasped Bunter. "Not a word!"

"You don't?" stuttered Skinner.

"Certainly not! I haven't the

faintest idea what you're saying to me!" declared Bunter. "Whatever you say, my mind's a perfect blank—I don't understand a single syllable."

"Mad, I suppose," said the astounded Skinner.

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Well, whether you're potty or not, you're not going to snaffle my toffee like that fat toad Bunter! You're going to keep clear of this study!"

"Oshy-wop!" said Bunter. "Koosh!"

"I'll give you oshy-wop," said Skinner. "You black dummy, can't you see that you've given yourself away?"

"Oooshy-woop! Kisk kosh!" said Bunter. Apparently, Bunter couldn't see that he had given himself away. "Snooty-woot! Wooosh!"

But the next moment Bunter forgot the language of Bongoland as Skinner rushed at him, and he dodged round the study table.

"Keep off, you beast!" he roared.

"Out you go!" snapped Skinner, and he charged round the table after Bunter.

Bunter bounded for the doorway.

Skinner bounded after him, and he landed his boot on the check trousers.

There was a roar from Prince Bomombo of Bongoland, as he shot out into the Remove passage. He landed there with a bump.

Skinner picked up the map he had come up for, and followed him out, grinning.

Billy Bunter scrambled to his feet.

His face was red with wrath—under his black complexion. His little, round eyes gleamed through his big, round spectacles.

Skinner's boot had landed hard, and Bunter had a pain—and Bunter was wrathful.

As Skinner came out of the study, the fat Owl delivered a punch—which alighted on Harold Skinner's rather sharp nose.

"Wow!" howled Skinner.

He staggered back in the doorway of the study, a trickle of red spurted from his nose.

"There, you beast!" gasped Bunter. "Kicking a chap for nothing, you rotter!"

"Ow!" gasped Skinner. "Wow!"

He clasped his nose for a moment. The next moment he was jumping at Prince Bomombo of Bongoland.

Black Bunter scuttled away down the Remove passage. After him flew Skinner.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, as he fled.

"I'll smash you, you black rotter!" roared Skinner.

"Oh crumbs!"

Billy Bunter flew across the Remove landing, with Skinner close behind. He did the stairs two at a time; Skinner doing them two at a time behind him.

At the foot of the staircase, Skinner grabbed the fugitive.

Prince Bomombo had no more chance in a foot-race than Billy Bunter had.

"Now, you cheeky black swab!" howled Skinner.

"Yaroo!"

"Skinnair! Vat is it zat you do?"

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exclaimed a sharp voice. Neither Bunter nor Skinner had noticed Monsieur Charpentier in the hall below. The French master interposed at once. "Skinnair! You verree bad boy!"

"Oh!" gasped Skinner. He released the black youth at Monsieur Charpentier's voice.

Billy Bunter tottered away, gasping for breath.

Monsieur Charpentier gave Skinner a very stern look.

"You verree bad boy!" he repeated. "You raise ze hand at zat pauvre garcon noir—zat poor black boy! How is it zat you dare, Skinnair?"

"He punched my nose!" snorted Skinner. "Look at it!"

"Serve you right, you beast!" gasped Bunter. "I—I mean, kooshy-wop—isby ishy bang wallop!"

"Mon Dieu!" ejaculated Monsieur Charpentier, staring at Black Bunter. "Is it zat you speak ze English, mon cher petit?"

"Oh, no—not at all!" gasped Bunter. "I don't know a word of English, sir—not a syllable!"

"Mon Dieu!" stuttered Monsieur Charpentier.

Billy Bunter rolled away, leaving him staring like a man in a dream.

Skinner went back to the Remove Form-room with his map in one hand and the other holding a handkerchief to his nose.

That nose was red and raw, and had a severe pain in it, and Skinner's feelings towards the black Bongolander were absolutely tigerish.

After third school, the black boy from Bongoland had something coming to him!

speaking, blow you!" grunted Bunter. "He was cheeky this morning, and I punched his nose. I want you fellows to keep him off. I can't scrap with a fellow, fixed up like this—the outfit might come off! Otherwise, of course, I'd thrash him as soon as look at him!"

"What the thump have you been rowing with Skinner for, you fat chump?" asked Harry Wharton.

"I haven't! He rowed with me!" grunted Bunter. "He made out that I was sneaking his toffee, just because he saw me eating it in his study."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Low, suspicious beast, you know!" said the fat Owl. "It's the sort of thing Skinner would suspect—a cad like him! As if I'd touch his toffee! I never even saw it in his study, and he grabbed it away, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you keep that beast off!" hooted Bunter. "You slog him, Bob Cherry, if he cuts up rusty! Hit him in both eyes, while you're about it! Mind you punch him hard!"

But Harold Skinner did not look warlike as he came up. He gave Black Bunter only a careless glance.

It did not seem that Skinner was now thinking of punching Prince Bomombo. Perhaps he was thinking of some other method of avenging the damage to his nose.

"Any of you fellows lost half-a-crown?" asked Skinner, looking round at the Famous Five.

"No!"

"Somebody seems to have dropped a half-crown in the basin of the fountain," said Skinner. "If nobody claims it, I think I might as well fish it out. You don't know whose it is?"

"Haven't the foggiest!" said Harry Wharton.

Billy Bunter opened his mouth—but remembering that he did not understand English, closed it again.

Skinner walked on, taking no notice of him, much to his relief.

"I say, you fellows," exclaimed Bunter, when he was gone, "that's my half-crown in the fountain! I dropped it there this morning."

"And never knew it till Skinner just mentioned it?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"Exactly! I—I mean, I was going to ask one of you fellows to fish it out for me, see? That's what I was really going to speak to you about—not about Skinner! Who's afraid of Skinner, I'd like to know? I say, Bob, old chap, will you fish out my half-crown for me?"

"If it's your half-crown, old fat bean, you can do your own fishing!" answered Bob.

"Well, I don't want to get wet—I mean, this dye will come off if I get wet!" explained Bunter. "I say, you fellows—Look here, you beasts, don't walk off while a fellow's talking to you!"

Billy Bunter cast an indignant blink after five departing figures, and rolled away to the fountain in the quad.

If somebody had dropped a half-crown in that fountain, and left it

there, Billy Bunter did not see wasting it. It was not exactly his half-crown, but it was going to be—which really came to the same thing.

There was a big granite basin to the fountain, full of water.

The fat Owl hoisted himself on his podgy elbows, leaned over the water, and blinked down through his big spectacles, in search of the half-crown.

It was not easy to spot. Bunter blinked, and blinked, but he could not spot that half-crown in the water in the granite basin. He leaned over farther and farther, till his little fat nose was almost touching the surface of the water.

Skinner winked at Snoop, and strolled towards the fountain.

Harold Skinner had been doing some thinking in third school. The result was that he had a strong suspicion of the identity of Prince Bomombo of Bongoland. Other fellows had tumbled to it earlier; now Skinner had tumbled to it. But he had said nothing on the subject. If Skinner had had doubts, they would have been banished when he saw the black Bongolander heading towards the fountain, and peering into it over the granite rim.

Skinner arrived at the fountain—behind Bunter.

The fat Owl, with his fat, black nose almost touching the water, was blinking down earnestly in search of that imaginary half-crown.

Skinner reached over, and clapped his hand to the back of the woolly head.

Splash! "Gurrirggh!" came a suffocated gurgle from Bunter.

The black face dipped deep in the water.

"Yurroooooogh!" spluttered Bunter, as Skinner stepped back, chuckling, and he lifted a streaming face from the fountain.

His woolly mop was drenched. His black face streamed. His fat features and his spectacles ran with water. Spluttering and gasping, the fat Owl clawed and dabbed at streaming water.

"Gerrogh! Beast! Oooooogh! Rotter! Oooooogh!" spluttered Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Skinner.

"Oooooooogh!" gurgled Bunter.

He clawed out his handkerchief and dabbed at his streaming face. Black came off on the handkerchief, leaving pallid smudges on the fat face, where the complexion was rubbed off.

Billy Bunter had forgotten, for the moment, that his complexion was not a fixture. He wiped it off right and left. The handkerchief, in a few moments, was a blackened rag—and Billy Bunter's face presented a most extraordinary aspect, a mixture of black and white and smudgy grey.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Skinner.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Look!"

"Skinner, you sweep!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Look out, Bunter!" gasped Frank Nugent. "Here comes Quelch!"

"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter gave one terrified

AND A SURPRISE FOR BUNTER!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Dry up, you ass!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You howling owl!" said Bob Cherry. "How long do you think you can keep up this game if fellows hear you speak English?"

After dinner, Black Bunter joined the Famous Five in the quad. He had an uneasy eye on Skinner.

Skinner had a malevolent eye on him. Harold Skinner's nose was crimson and painful, and he seemed to have a pain in his temper, also.

"Look here, don't be an ass, Cherry," said Billy Bunter peevishly. "I suppose I shall have to speak to you in English, if I speak to you at all."

"That's an easy one," said Bob. "Don't speak at all! Give us a rest!"

"Speech is silvery, my esteemed Bunter, but silence is the cracked pitcher that saves a bird in hand from going longest to the well, as the English proverb remarks," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"But I say—" persisted Bunter. "Pack it up!" suggested Johnny Bull. "Pack it up and keep the lid on!"

"Beast! I say—"

"Here comes Skinner!" remarked Nugent. "Do you want to let Skinner into the secret, you fat ass?"

"It's about Skinner that I want to

blink through his wet spectacles at the approaching figure of his Form-master.

Fortunately, his handkerchief was over his face, and Mr. Quelch was not yet near enough to spot the remarkable alteration in his complexion.

Bunter did not give him a chance to do so! He turned and bolted.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar in the quad.

Black Bunter ran as if for his life.

Mr. Quelch stared after him as he went. Then he glared at Skinner, who ceased to chuckle as the glare turned on him.

"Skinner, how dare you play such a trick on a foreign boy, a guest in this school!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "I saw your action, Skinner, from my study window. How dare you play such a trick on a boy who is a stranger and a guest here, and does not even understand our language?"

"It—it was only a—a joke, sir!" stammered Skinner.

"You will take two hundred lines, Skinner! Go to your study at once and write them out."

Skinner paused for a moment. But if he was thinking of giving Black Bunter away, the expressive looks of Harry Wharton & Co. caused him to give up that idea. He tramped away to the House, scowling.

"Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"Please find the black boy at once. He seems to have been frightened by Skinner's foolish trick! Please find him at once and reassure him."

"Oh! Certainly, sir!"

"You had better go also, Hurree Singh, as you understand something of the poor boy's language."

"Oh! Yes! Certainly, esteemed sir!"

Mr. Quelch went back to the House, and the Famous Five, with grinning faces, proceeded to look for the black boy—not now so black as he was painted.

BOMOMBO TURNS PALE!

"HA, HA, HA!"

The Famous Five yelled. Really, they could not help it. They found Billy Bunter in the old Cloister. To that secluded spot, the fat Owl had scuttled, to keep clear of the gimlet eyes of his Form-master.

Even Bunter's fat intellect realised that with so much of his black complexion on his handkerchief, there could not be enough on his face to pass muster. And the bare idea of being spotted by Quelch almost made his blood curdle.

A fat, smudgy, streaky, lugubrious face met the view of the chums of the Remove when they found Bunter.

Black Bunter had been sufficiently striking in appearance. But his aspect now was really staggering.

His neck, where it showed above his collar, was as black as ever. His ears were jet black. But almost all the complexion was gone from his face, revealing his natural rich, ripe complexion—smudged and streaked here and there.

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No one, looking at Bunter now, would have taken him for a black boy. They would only have taken him for a fellow badly in need of a wash.

"I—I—I say, you fellows, what do I look like?" gasped Bunter.

"That's not an easy one, old fat bean!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "I've never seen anything quite like you before. A bit like a zebra—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Something like a piebald porpoise!" said Johnny Bull. "First time I've seen a nigger turn pale!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Something like a blacking advertisement," said Nugent.

"Beast!"

"You'll have to get another black-out before you let Quelch see you again," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Think Quelch would know me?" asked Bunter anxiously.

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Quelch would spot you with preposterous promptness."

"That beast Skinner!" groaned Bunter. "I don't believe there was a half-crown in the fountain at all, now—"

"Not when you dropped it there this morning?" inquired Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"Beast! That rotter was only pulling my leg, to duck my head in the water, you know. I believe he jolly well guessed, and he wanted to make the black come off!" groaned Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I shall have to keep out of sight till Wibley doctors my face again. He will have to come here and do it—I can't be seen going to the House."

Bob Cherry whistled.

"You'll have to wait, old porpoise," he said. "Wibley went out after dinner, on his bike—"

"Oh crikey!"

"Ten to one he won't be back before tea," said Bob. "I heard him say he was going to Lantham."

"Oh, the beast!" gasped Bunter. "What the thump does he want to hike off to Lantham for, just when I want him?"

"Fancy anybody hiking off when Bunter might happen to want him!" said Johnny Bull sarcastically. "A fellow ought to hang about on a half-holiday, in case Bunter had a use for him."

"I should jolly well think so," agreed Bunter, deaf and blind to sarcasm. "And now he's gone off and left me in the lurch. Selfishness all round, as usual. I say, you fellows, do you think you could get Wibley's make-up box and make up my face again?"

"Nobody but Wib could do it, fat-head! Blessed if I know how he does it," said Bob. "You'll have to wait for Wib!"

"Think I can stick here all the afternoon?" howled Bunter. "Besides, he might not be back for tea. If he's gone to the theatrical place at Lantham, he won't be back till call-over—you know him! I should miss my tea!"

"There's worse things even than that happen in war time!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!" snorted Bunter. The fat Owl could not think of anything worse than missing a meal, in war time or peace time. "I say, I've got to get back to the House, somehow. If I've got to wait for Wibley to come in, I've got to sit down, I suppose. As for missing tea, if you fellows think I'm going to miss my tea, I can jolly well tell you that you're mistaken. Look here, what's going to be done?"

The Famous Five gazed at him. They had their own occupations for that half-holiday; but that, of course, was a matter of no consequence whatever, in the estimation of Billy Bunter. W. G. Bunter came first, second, and third—and everybody and everything else nowhere.

They were willing to help. But really, they did not see what they could do. Certainly they were not skilled in the art of make-up, like William Wibley; they could not turn Billy Bunter back into Prince Bomombo of Bongoland.

"Don't stand there blinking!" hooted Bunter. "How am I going to get back to the House and up to the studies without being spotted?"

"Is that a riddle?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Beast! Suppose somebody comes along here!" hissed Bunter. "Old Hacker walks in the Cloister sometimes. Suppose he came along and spotted me?"

"Hide behind one of those pillars," suggested Nugent.

"He couldn't!" said Bob Cherry, shaking his head. "They ain't more than three feet thick!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cackle!" howled Bunter. "I think you fellows might help a fellow out of a scrape after all I've done for you!"

"I've got it!" exclaimed Bob suddenly. "A.R.P. drill—"

"Don't gabble about A.R.P. now!" hooted Bunter. "I've got something more important than A.R.P. to think of—if I'm going to miss my tea."

"Fathead! Gas-mask exercise!" said Bob. "You can get back to the House with a gas-mask on—I'll fetch it, if you tell me where you keep it. I suppose it's in your study?"

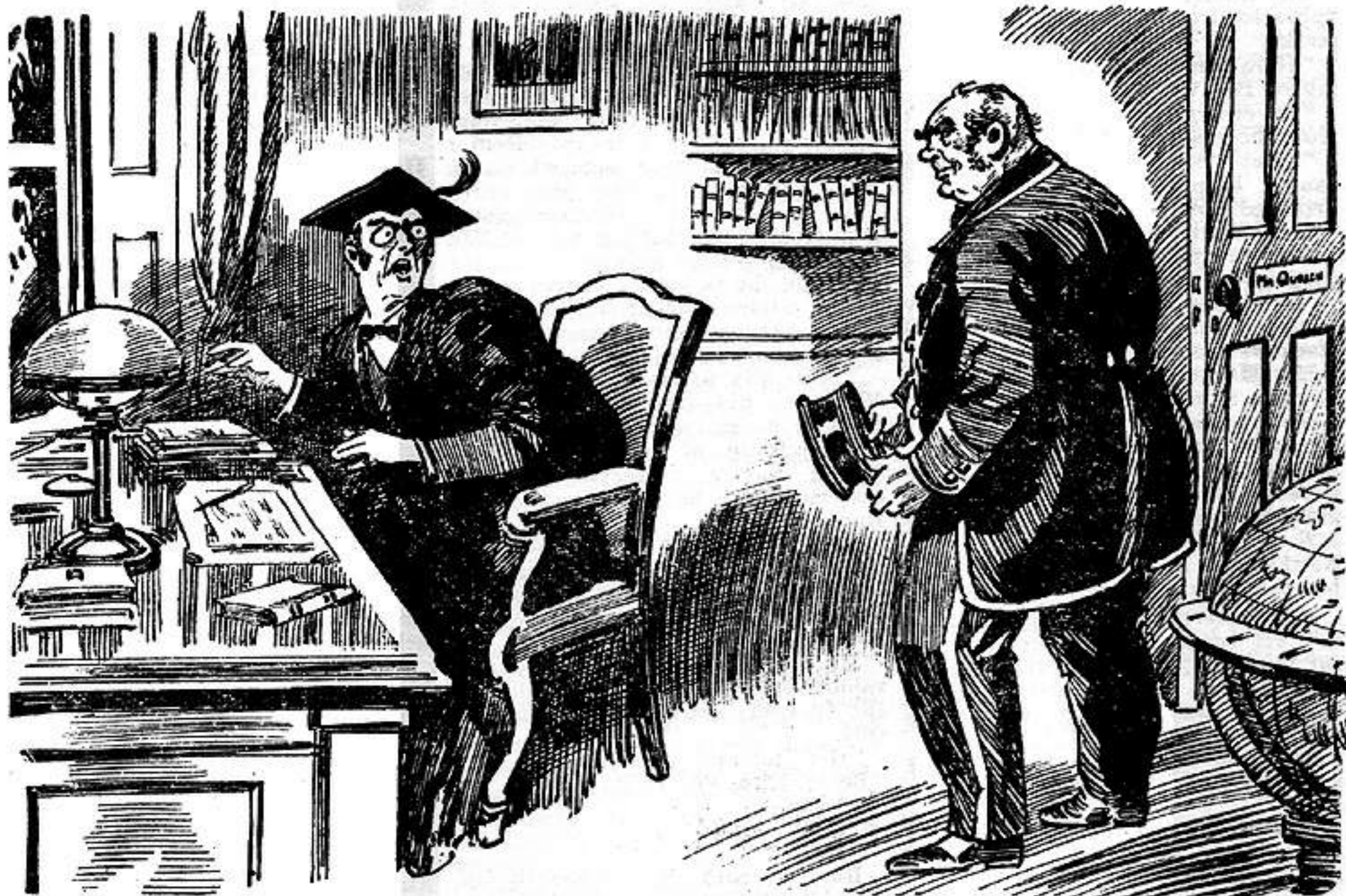
"Oh! Yes! That's a good idea!" agreed Bunter. "It's in my study—on the shelf, or else in the cupboard, or in the box under the window, or somewhere."

"You howling ass, haven't we all got orders to keep the gas-masks exactly where we can lay hands on them at a minute's notice?" exclaimed Bob. "Don't you know just where you keep it?"

"Of course I do! I'm not a careless ass like some fellows. I know I left it on the shelf—or in the cupboard—or in the box—or possibly it may be under the table—or on the mantelpiece—"

"Ass!" hooted Bob. "I'll find it, anyhow. Wait here till I get back with it."

And Bob Cherry cut off, leaving his chums with Billy Bunter—to find



"Wot I says is this 'ere, sir," explained Gosling. "It fair give me a turn when I 'ears that young Bunter is going to be flogged!" Mr. Quelch gazed in astonishment at the school porter.

that gas-mask in Study No. 7, according to Bunter's precise and lucid directions.

He had been gone five minutes when there was a footstep on the old stone flags of the Cloister.

Billy Bunter gave a gasp of affright.

"The Acid Drop! Oh crikey!"

And he spun round, presenting a podgy back to the view of Mr. Hacker, as the master of the Shell came walking up the Cloister.

A NARROW ESCAPE!

MR. HACKER cast a sour and suspicious glance at the group of juniors.

Fellows had a right to walk in the Cloister if they liked, on a half-holiday. Still, it was a secluded spot, and Hacker was always suspicious. Perhaps he suspected that a smoking party might be going on.

He gave a slight start as he saw Bunter.

Bunter's back was turned to him. Had he seen the fat Owl's piebald countenance he would have known at once where the missing Removite was. But Bunter had revolved on his axis in time.

But there was something familiar in the ample outlines of that figure, dressed as it was in unfamiliar checks. The resemblance to Billy Bunter's podgy proportions struck Hacker's eye at once.

Then he observed the black ears—and the back of a black neck—and the half-formed suspicion faded from

his mind. This was the black boy who was as fat as Bunter!

"What are you boys doing here?" asked Mr. Hacker, pausing as he passed the group.

"Standing on our feet, sir!" answered Johnny Bull, with perfect gravity.

"What?"

"Feet!"

Mr. Hacker compressed his lips.

Johnny's answer was intended to convey that it was no business of the master of the Shell what Remove fellows were doing. He walked on, with tight lips.

"Oh crikey!" breathed Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, do you think he noticed?"

"Quiet, you ass! He will be back in a minute!"

"Blow him!" hissed Bunter. "I say, he will get suspicious if I keep my back turned to him every time he passes. I say, suppose one of you fellows tells him that the Head wants to see him in his study?"

"The Head doesn't."

"What's that got to do with it?" hissed Bunter. "If he likes off to the Head's study it will be all right."

"Not for the fellow who sent him there for nothing!" grinned Nugent. "And there's such a thing as truth, old fat pippin! You don't seem to know anything about it, but there is."

"Beast!"

Mr. Hacker reached the end of the Cloister and came pacing back. Evidently he had come there for a saunter, and was not departing yet.

He gave the juniors another expressive look as he passed them again.

Mr. Hacker could see no reason why juniors should hang about in that secluded spot, unless they were up to something. Again he had a view of Bunter—seen from the south, as it were. He passed on.

A few minutes later he came pacing back.

Harry Wharton & Co. industriously talked football as he passed—Bunter, in a state of great uneasiness, kept his podgy back carefully turned towards the Acid Drop.

Hacker smiled sourly as he passed the group again. It was clear—to Hacker—that the young rascals were up to something, but did not venture to get on with it while he was in the offing. For which reason Hacker intended to keep in the offing.

He went on to the end of the Cloister.

Then there was a patter of running feet from the direction of the quadrangle, and Bob Cherry came breathlessly up, with a cardboard box in his hand.

"Got it?" asked Bunter eagerly.

"Yes, you howling ass! It was stuck behind a lot of books. Fat lot of use it would be to you, if there was a sudden raid."

"Don't jaw, old chap! Help me on with it!"

The gas-mask was taken from the box, and Billy Bunter proceeded to adjust it over his fat features.

Bunter was as cack-handed with a gas-mask as with everything else. But the other fellows lent their aid.

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The fattest face at Greyfriars disappeared from view under the gas-mask.

"Here comes Hacker again!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Oh crikey!" came a muffled grunt from the gas-mask.

"Idiot! Speak Bongolese, if you can't, keep your mouth shut!" breathed Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Quiet, you dummy! Hacker's coming!"

"Ishykooosh!" said Bunter. "Baggy bang wooshy kop!" He heard Hacker's footsteps!

Mr. Hacker heard that remark as he came along.

He stopped and stared at the juniors. The gas-mask surprised him. He had suspected that those juniors were up to something, but he certainly had not suspected that it was A.R.P. drill that they were up to! Neither was it, as a matter of fact—but that was what it looked like.

Fortunately, the gas-mask, though not yet secured, was over Bunter's fat face now! The parts that showed were black. Hacker had no doubt that he was looking at Prince Bomombo of Bongoland.

"Oh!" he said. "Are you teaching this negro boy the use of a gas-mask?"

"Nothing like getting used to taking it off and putting it on, sir!" said Bob Cherry blandly. "Chap may want one in a hurry any minute."

"Quite so!" agreed Mr. Hacker.

For once the Acid Drop approved. Hacker was always fearfully particular about his own gas-mask, in which, according to the Shell fellows, he was better-looking than without it!

"Koshy!" grunted Bunter. "Wishy-woop! Ishy bang!"

"What a very singular language!" said Mr. Hacker, gazing at the black boy. "Do you understand what the boy is saying?"

"It's not easy to understand, sir!" answered Bob. "I can't say I know a word of the language myself."

"Wooshy pop!" said Bunter.

"Extraordinary!" said Mr. Hacker. "I understand, Hurree Singh, that you are well acquainted with this boy?"

"Quitefully so, esteemed sir!" assented the Nabob of Bhanipur. "I have known him for a preposterous long time."

"Do you understand him?"

"The understandfulness is terrific. Wooshy pop means 'Thank you' in the esteemed language of Prince Bomombo!" answered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gravely.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Hacker.

And he walked on.

As soon as his back was turned, the fat Owl loosened the gas-mask to gasp for breath.

"I say, you fellows!" he squeaked.

"Shut up!" breathed Bob.

But it was too late! Hacker had heard that squeak, and he spun round.

Bunter clamped the gas-mask into place instantly, and gurgled with dread behind it.

But Hacker was not looking at

him. He was staring about him with angry, searching eyes.

"Bunter is here!" he exclaimed.

"Bib-bub-Bunter!" stammered Bob.

"I heard his voice!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker. "I know his voice perfectly well! I heard Bunter speak! He is here, somewhere, in this Cloister! You must have heard him, as well as I!" Hacker glared suspiciously at the juniors. "You know that Bunter is here!"

"Think he is hiding behind one of those pillars, you fellows?" asked Bob. "It certainly sounded to me like Bunter's voice."

"So it did to me!" agreed Harry Wharton. Standing with his back to Bunter, he stared round. "I can't see anything of him!" he added. Which was a perfectly veracious statement, as he had his back to Bunter.

"He is here!" thundered Mr. Hacker. "I am convinced that you know perfectly well that he is here—doubtless that is why you are here yourselves! I shall find him."

Mr. Hacker lost no time. He darted rapidly round the old stone pillars of the Cloister, searching for a hidden Owl.

"Get moving!" murmured Bob. "Better leave him to it!"

"I say——"

"Quiet, idiot!"

"Beast!"

Bunter, with his gas-mask on, rolled away with the Famous Five.

Mr. Hacker gave them a glare as they went—and continued his angry search up and down the Cloister for Bunter—a search that, determined as it was, proved to be entirely unsuccessful!

A HAIR-RAID AT GREYFRIARS!

MR. QUELCH stared.

He was standing in the doorway of the House when a party of juniors came in—the fattest member of the party wearing a gas-mask.

Quite a lot of fellows had stared at that gas-mask, as Bunter made his way to the House.

Fellows were strictly enjoined to keep their gas-masks handy. Like the cowboy's gun in the old story, a gas-mask was not wanted often, but if it was wanted, it was wanted bad! Still, fellows were not expected to walk about the quad thus adorned, in ordinary circumstances.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Quelch. "What is this? Why is the black boy wearing a gas-mask, Wharton? I have heard no raid signal."

"A bit of practice always comes in useful, sir!" said the captain of the Remove. Which was an undoubted fact.

"Very true!" said Mr. Quelch. "Every boy should become expert in adjusting his gas-mask swiftly and correctly. There is no telling what may happen in these uncertain times. Nevertheless, it should not be worn about the school in this manner. Tell the boy to take it off, Hurree Singh, as you speak his language."

There was a gasp under the gas-mask.

"Certainly, esteemed sir!"

answered the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Ishy oshy koo kerroosh!" he added, addressing the black Bongolander. "Oppy wop! Whoosh!"

"Ooooshy-kish!" came a gurgle from the gas-mask.

"Dear me! What does that mean, Hurree Singh?" asked Mr. Quelch.

Quelch was a learned man; he knew many languages; he took Latin and Greek in his stride; but the language of Bongoland was quite a new one on Quelch! He could not begin to guess what those words meant—which was not surprising, as they did not mean anything at all!

"The fastening has become tangled, esteemed sir!" answered the nabob blandly.

"That should not be allowed to happen!" said Mr. Quelch severely. "I will assist the boy to remove it, and you must warn him, Hurree Singh, to be more careful another time."

Mr. Quelch stepped towards Bomombo, with the kind intention of helping him off with the gas-mask.

The black boy had no use for such kindness!

He made a sudden bolt for the staircase.

Mr. Quelch stared after him.

"Whatever is the matter with the boy?" he exclaimed. "He seems to be very easily alarmed! Perhaps it is Skinner's foolish trick that has upset him. Follow him at once, Hurree Singh, and assure him that he has no occasion for alarm while under our roof."

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Hurree Singh.

The Famous Five followed Bunter up the staircase.

The black youth had more occasion for alarm than Quelch guessed. Only that gas-mask stood between Billy Bunter and a Head's whopping, now that his complexion was gone—and Quelch's kind offer to help him get it off had terrified the fat Owl.

Billy Bunter scuttled across the Remove landing, and bolted into Study No. 1.

Harry Wharton & Co. followed him in.

The fat Owl dragged the gas-mask loose.

"I say, you fellows, is Quelch coming?" he gasped.

"No, ass! It's all right."

"If he'd seen me, you know!" gasped Bunter. "I say, they ought to have found out by this time who chucked that tomato at Hacker! I thought they'd find out who it was if I kept out of sight for a bit. If I get copped before they find him out, I shall get it all the tougher for this, you know."

"Sure thing!" agreed Bob Cherry. "You'd better keep that gas-mask on till Wibley comes back!"

"You silly chump, I can't keep the beastly thing on for hours and hours!" Bunter jerked it off. "Besides, I've got to get this beastly mop dry—it's drenched. The beastly water's dripping down the back of my neck!"

Bunter put the gas-mask back in the box. Up in the Remove studies he was safe from discovery—or so he hoped, at least. And he had to dry

that woolly mop which Skinner had ducked in the fountain.

"Ow!" came a sudden squeak from the fat Owl as he tugged at it.

"What's the row now?" asked Bob.

"Wow!"

Bunter tugged—and squeaked!

Wibley had fastened the woolly wig on to Billy Bunter's fat head with fixing-gum, such as was used in amateur theatricals. That fixing-gum held it hard and fast to Bunter's own mop!

It was necessary to fix it securely; Bunter admitted that! But when it came to getting it off again, the parting was painful.

"Ow! Yow! Wow! Yow!" howled Bunter, as he jerked at the woolly wig. "Wow! It won't come off! It's stuck too tight! Ow!"

"Time we got down to the footer, if we're ever going!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Beast!" howled Bunter. "Help me off with this beastly wig! Just like you to think about football when a fellow's trying to tug off a beastly wig!"

"We've got a pick-up game on this afternoon, Bunter!" said the captain of the Remove mildly.

"Blow your silly pick-up! Help me off with this wig!" howled Bunter.

"Oh, all right!" said Bob Cherry resignedly, and he grasped the woolly wig stuck on the fat head of the Owl of the Remove.

He gave a tug!

There was a terrific roar from Bunter.

"Yaroooooh!"

"Oh, my hat! What's the trouble now?" asked Bob. "I'm trying my hardest to get it off!"

"Leggo!" shrieked Bunter. "You're pulling my hair out by the roots! Will you leggo, you beast?"

"How can I help you off with it if I let go?"

"Beast! Leggo!"

"Oh, all right!"

Bob Cherry let go, and Bunter jerked his woolly head away.

He wanted that wet wig off, but he did not seem to want any more assistance from Bob Cherry.

"We'll all pull together, if you like!" offered Johnny Bull.

"Beast!" hooted Bunter. He did not seem to like!

"Keep it on!" suggested Nugent. "It will get dry in time."

"You'd like me to catch pneumonia in my head, I daresay," said Bunter bitterly. "I daresay it would amuse you."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five.

The idea of Billy Bunter catching pneumonia in his head did seem to amuse them!

"Oh, cackle!" said Bunter. "That wig's wet through, and I can feel pneumonia coming on all over the top of my head—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Harry Wharton & Co. left Study No. 1, leaving Bunter to it. They chatted as they went, heartlessly regardless of the fact that Bunter had pneumonia coming on all over the top of his head!

"Beasts!" hooted Bunter, as they went; no doubt by way of thanks to

the Co. for having wasted an hour of their valuable time on him.

Left to himself, the fat Owl jerked and wriggled at that woolly wig till, at long last, it became detached from his own mop.

Deprived of his wool, Bunter looked less like an African than ever. Without his woolly wig and his black complexion, the fat Owl was obviously Billy Bunter—only with a rather dirtier face than usual!

That wig had to be replaced—but it had to be dried first.

Bunter stirred up the study fire and knelt in front of it, holding the woolly wig to the heat of the flames.

Wet wool was slow to dry.

Billy Bunter was soon tired of holding it to the fire. Laziness—Bunter's besetting sin—soon supervened.

Five minutes of it were enough for Bunter. Then he spread the wig on the fender and sat down in the study armchair.

There was a footstep in the Remove passage a few minutes later.

Bunter gave a jump as he heard it.

Ten to one it was only some Remove fellow! But suppose it was Quelch—or suppose it was Hacker—and suppose the beast looked into the study? One glance at Bunter, in his present state, would reveal the real identity of Prince Bomombo of Bongoland!

"Oh crikey!" breathed Bunter.

The footsteps stopped at the door of Study No. 1.

Billy Bunter twisted over in the armchair and buried his head in the cushion therein, his back to the door. He was going to be asleep in the armchair if anyone looked into the study!

A moment later the door-handle turned. The door opened.

Snore!

With great astuteness Bunter snored as the door opened. He hoped that whoever it was, seeing him asleep, would pass on! The soft cushion at the back of the armchair hid his fat cranium and his piebald face. The fat Owl snored, and hoped for the best!

It was Skinner who looked into the study.

Skinner had been at work on his lines when the Famous Five came up with the fat junior in the gas-mask.

Now they were gone, Skinner was looking in to see how much was left of Prince Bomombo's complexion.

But he saw nothing of Bunter's complexion. He had a back view of a fat figure sprawling in the armchair, the fat head hidden from sight by the cushion.

He had also a view of a woolly wig on the fender, which Bunter, for the moment, had forgotten, in his alarm.

Skinner grinned.

Snore from Bunter!

The fat Remove knew that somebody was looking in, though he could not see who it was.

He snored industriously.

Skinner did not speak! Grinning, he tiptoed into the study and picked up the woolly wig from the fender! Still grinning, he tiptoed out of the study again, taking the woolly wig with him.

The door closed.

"Beast!" murmured Bunter.

He sat up, and blinked at the door. He wondered who it was that had looked in! Whoever it was, he had gone; and if it was Quelch or Hacker, he had not spotted Bunter.

It was some minutes before Bunter remembered the woolly wig. Then he glanced at the fender, to see how the drying process was getting on. Then he jumped!

"Oh crikey!" he ejaculated.

He blinked in dismay at the spot where the woolly wig had lain!

That spot was vacant! The woolly wig had gone! Prince Bomombo of Bongoland had lost his hair as well as his complexion! A gas-mask could not save him now!

"Oh crikey!" repeated the dismayed fat Owl.

All that remained of Prince Bomombo of Bongoland was a black neck, a pair of large black ears, and a check suit! Billy Bunter was almost himself again—recognisable at the most casual glance, if he was seen. Who had raided his hair, he did not know—but his hair was gone—his black complexion was gone—and that unspeakable beast Wibley would very likely not be back till calling-over. The dismayed Owl wondered dismally whether, after all his artful dodging, he was going to get that Head's whopping after all!

(Continued on next page.)

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HACKER GETS HIS MAN!

MR. HACKER came across the Remove landing with his quiet step.

Hacker always stepped quietly—almost stealthily. But on this occasion he had special reasons for caution. He did not want any fellow in the Remove studies to hear him coming.

Bunter—the iniquitous tomato hurler—had now been missing for twenty-four hours! That he was still in the school was a certainty—Hacker himself had heard his fat, familiar voice in the Cloister early that afternoon.

How and where he was hiding Hacker could not guess; but he did not doubt for a moment that the fat junior had assistance from his Form fellows in keeping out of sight. If there was a clue to the hidden Owl it was somewhere in the Remove; Hacker was sure of that.

Now he was going to root through the Remove studies, most of the proprietors thereof being out on a half-holiday.

If Bunter was, somehow, hidden in one of them, the Acid Drop was going to root him out this time.

Quietly Hacker walked up the Remove passage.

Suddenly he halted.

A sound reached his ears from the first study in the passage. It was a rather unexpected sound at that time of day. Snoring was, as a rule, a nocturnal performance! But it was a deep and resonant snore that the Acid Drop heard from Study No. 1.

Somebody was asleep there! Who was it that was snoring in a study, when almost every other Greyfriars fellow was out of doors in the fine October weather?

Hacker smiled grimly. He was

going to see whether it was Bunter! Wherever and whatever the fat junior's hiding-place was, Hacker had no doubt that he would emerge from it sometimes when he was satisfied that the coast was clear! And, as a matter of fact, Bunter had indeed emerged from his extraordinary hiding-place—Skinner having washed off his complexion and raided his hair!

The Acid Drop turned the door-handle of Study No. 1, opened the door quietly, and looked in.

He started and stared at the fat figure in the armchair.

He recognised the check suit worn by Prince Bomombo of Bongoland, and had, for a moment, a pang of disappointment. It was not Bunter—it was only that black boy who had sought shelter at Greyfriars School.

But the next moment Hacker's stare became fixed and intent on that fat figure in the armchair of Study No. 1. His eyes glinted.

Bunter was fast asleep.

Bunter had intended to remain very keenly on the watch that afternoon, till Wibley came home. But he had been nearly two hours in the study, with nothing to do but wait. It was warm and cosy, and the fat Owl naturally fell asleep in the armchair before the fire.

Once asleep, Bunter was not a quick waker! Even when an air-raid siren boomed, Bunter had to be shaken before he would wake! Having closed his eyes behind his spectacles, he did not open them again.

He slept and he snored.

Leaning back in the deep armchair with his fat little legs stretched out to the fender, his eyes shut and his mouth open, Billy Bunter slumbered happily, and the resonant snore that was wont to wake the echoes of the

Remove dormitory now woke those of Study No. 1.

"Oh!" breathed Mr. Hacker.

Up to the neck, it was Prince Bomombo of Bongoland that he saw—check suit and black neck! But above the black neck was a smudgy chin—and two ripe red cheeks streaked here and there with smudgy black! Crowning the lot was Bunter's mop of hair—no longer hidden under a woolly wig.

"Oh!" repeated the amazed Acid Drop.

It was Bunter!

It was Prince Bomombo of Bongoland—but it was Billy Bunter, too! It was amazing—it was staggering—but there it was! There was no more mistaking the fat face of William George Bunter than the check suit and black neck of Bomombo! Really, it looked as if Billy Bunter's fat head had somehow been glued on to Bomombo's shoulders!

But that, of course, was unimaginable! Prince Bomombo of Bongoland and Billy Bunter were one and the same! Hacker had penetrated, at last, the strange mystery of Bunter's disappearance—he had discovered the fat Owl's remarkable hide-out!

"Upon my word!" breathed Hacker.

He stepped into the study.

He stood for a long minute gazing down at the sleeping beauty.

It was Bunter! Amazing as it was, it was Bunter! Hacker had been right in suspecting that other fellows had had a hand in the fat junior's disappearance. Some of them must have fixed him up like this!

Bunter—the most easily recognised of all Greyfriars fellows—had been about the school all this time—unrecognised! In a black skin and a woolly wig, he had walked under the very nose of his Form-master—under the sharp nose of the Acid Drop!

Hacker understood that little scene in the Cloister now—only too clearly! Those young rascals, Harry Wharton & Co., were in this, as he had suspected.

He had Bunter now! That tomato in his eye was going at long last to be avenged!

Hacker smiled a grim smile.

Stooping, he grasped a fat shoulder and shook the sleeper into wakefulness. There was a grumbling grunt from Bunter.

"Urrgh! Leggo, you beast! 'Tain't rising bell!"

Shake, shake!

"Oh crikey!" Bunter's eyes opened. "I say, you fellows, is it an air-raid? I say, where's my gas-mask? Where's my trousers? Where's my specs? I say, you fellows, stand round me in case a bomb goes off! I say—Oh!"

Bunter blinked at Hacker.

He realised that he was not in bed in the dormitory, and that it was not an air-raid! Really, it was rather worse! A fellow had a million chances to one of getting through an air-raid safely if he took ordinary care. But there was no chance whatever of getting through this! Hacker had him!

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"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.
 "Get up from that chair!" said Hacker sternly.
 "I—I can't! I—I'm fast asleep!" gasped Bunter. "I—I mean——"
 "I have found you, Bunter!" said the Acid Drop grimly.

"No you haven't!" gasped Bunter.
 "I—I ain't Bunter! So far as I know, I've never heard the name! Ishy-kooosh-wop!"

"What?" stuttered Hacker.
 "Wooshy-wop-koooshy-pip!"
 "You utterly ridiculous boy——"
 "Snooty-wooty-pop-pop!" groaned Bunter.

"Is it possible, Bunter, that you fancy you can keep up this deception when I have recognised you?" thundered Mr. Hacker.

"Oh! Yes! I—I mean—wooty-snoot!" gasped Bunter. "Ishy-iah—kosky-go-go-bang! Erin-go-bragh—kisky-wishy-fishy-wop!"

It was too late to talk the remarkable language of Bongoland to Hacker. But Billy Bunter never was quick on the uptake. He spluttered out Bongolese at a great rate.

"Come!" thundered Hacker. "I shall take you to your Form-master, Bunter, just as you are, and let Mr. Quelch see how he has been deluded."

"Oh crikey! But I ain't Bunter!" wailed the Owl. "It's no good saying anything to me about Quelch, when I don't understand a word you're saying! I don't know a single word of English—not a syllable!"

"Come!" roared Hacker.
 "Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as the angry Acid Drop hooked him out of the armchair with a bony grip on a fat shoulder.

"Now come with me!" thundered Hacker.

"Ow! I ain't going to Quelch!" howled Bunter. "I don't want to go to the Head! I never chucked that tomato at you! I don't know who did! Besides, I ain't Bunter! This ain't me—it's somebody else entirely that——"

"Come!"
 "Ow! Leggo! Oh crikey!" howled Bunter, as Hacker hooked him to the door of the study.

The bony grip hooked him into the passage.

The Acid Drop marched a spluttering fat Owl down the passage to the Remove landing.

Billy Bunter wriggled and squirmed as he went. But there was no escaping that bony grip! Hacker's fingers were on that fat shoulder like a pair of pincers!

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Coker of the Fifth, on the study landing, staring quite dizzily at Bunter, as Hacker marched him to the stairs. "Who—who's that?"

"I say, Coker, make him leggo!" roared Bunter. "I say, it ain't me—I keep on telling him it ain't me——"

"Oh gosh!" gasped Coker.
 "I ain't Bunter at all, you know! I say, Coker, will you make him leggo?" wailed Billy Bunter.

"Come!" roared Hacker.
 He marched Bunter down the staircase, leaving Coker gazing.

The hapless fat Owl wriggled and squirmed his way down with Hacker.

At the foot of the staircase was a little crowd of fellows who had just come away from the changing-room after the pick-up. They all stared blankly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Hacker's got him!"

"The gotfulness is terrific."

"That potty ass Wibley!" growled Johnny Bull. "It was the pottiest stunt that even Wib ever had!"

"Poor old Bunter!" said Nugent.

"I say, you fellows," yelled Bunter, as he saw the Famous Five. "I say, make him leggo! He thinks I'm Bunter——"

"What?" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Tell him I ain't!" howled Bunter. "Tell him I ain't Bunter, and that I can't speak English—he won't believe me!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Come!" hooted Hacker.

He marched the wriggling Owl to Mr. Quelch's study.

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed after them as they went.

The game was up now, that was clear—it was up with a vengeance! It had, as Johnny Bull declared, been a potty stunt—and now it had been completely bowled out.

"Well, this tears it!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"It do—it does!" agreed Nugent.

"We shall get six each for this!" said Johnny Bull. "Bunter will get his flogging, and we shall get six each from Quelch. And I'll tell you what I'm going to do! I'm going to boot Wibley up the Remove passage and back again."

"That's all we can do now!" agreed Bob.

Which was the only consolation the Famous Five had for the prospect of being called on the carpet for their share in the extraordinary affair of Black Bunter.

LIGHT AT LAST!

"GOSLING! What is it, Gosling?"

Mr. Quelch was busy that afternoon. He was at work on a pile of Form papers, when the ancient porter of Greyfriars School tapped at his door and shuffled into his study.

The Remove master's pen remained suspended in the air, like Mahomet's coffin, as he gazed inquiringly at Gosling.

Gosling stood shuffling his feet, his ancient hat in his hand, and looking disconcerted and uncomfortable.

"It's like this 'ere, sir——" said Gosling.

"Kindly be brief!" said Mr. Quelch. He could not imagine why the school porter had come to his study at all, and he had no time to waste.

"Yessir! Certainly, sir!" said Gosling. "Boys is boys, which is to say young sweeps, but fair play's a jool, sir."

"Eh?"

"A jool!" said Gosling, doubtless meaning a jewel. "Wot I say is this 'ere, sir—fair play's a jool!"

"Will you kindly come to the

point, Gosling?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir! That there young Bunter, sir——"

"Do you mean that you know where that foolish boy has hidden himself?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, interested at once.

"No, sir! Ain't the least idea!" said Gosling. "But wot I says is this 'ere, sir. That there young Bunter never did it."

"What do you mean, Gosling?"

"Jest wot I says, sir!" answered Gosling. "All this 'ere talk about young Bunter a-iding of hisself away, sir, I 'ears about it, and I asks some of the young sweeps—I mean the young gentlemen—what it was all about, sir! And it fair give me a turn, sir, when I 'ears from them that young Bunter is going to be flogged, sir, along of that there tomater."

Mr. Quelch gazed at him.

"Do you mean that you know anything about that episode at the gates on Monday afternoon, Gosling?" he asked.

"I never see no episode, sir, not knowing what it might be, if I did see it!" answered Gosling. "I ain't come 'ere to tell you nothing about no episode, sir, but about a tomater."

"That was the episode to which I allude, Gosling."

"Oh! Well, I ain't never 'eard a tomater called a episode before, sir!" said Gosling. "I've 'eard them called tommies, but I ain't never 'eard 'em called episodes. It's a noo word to me, sir."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

"Will you tell me what you know about the matter, Gosling?" he asked.

"Yessir; that's why I come 'ere, as soon as I 'eard that there young Bunter was up for it!" explained Gosling. "I never knowed it had 'appened at all, till I was told ten minutes ago—but seeing as it did, I knowed at once, of course, 'ow that tomater 'appened to 'it Mr. 'Acker in the heye."

"Do you mean that it was not Bunter who threw the tomato, as Mr. Hacker supposed?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Course he didn't, sir!"

"Do you know who did?"

"Course I do!"

"Then who was it?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch quite eagerly.

"Me, sir!" said Gosling.

"You!" Quelch almost bounded from his chair. "You! What do you mean, Gosling? You—you—you threw a tomato at a master in the school? Impossible! Gosling, have you been drinking?"

"Course I never throwed it at Mr. 'Acker, sir!" said Gosling. "Me, at my time of life, playing tricks with tomaters! Course I didn't! It was a haccident."

"But how—why——"

"I never knowed Mr. 'Acker was there, sir—ow'd I know, when I never looked out of the winder? I'll tell you 'ow it was, sir! I was a-setting at my tea—in my lodge, sir! I 'ad a tomater! Mimbble makes out that he grows good tomaters, sir, but

I can tell you this, about George Mimbble's tomatoes—"

"Never mind that; come to the point!"

"There—there is the point, sir! That there tomat,er," said Gosling impressively, "was fair talking! I'd 'ad it in my cupboard a day—I own that! But a tomat'er oughtn't to go off quick like that, like I said to George Mimbble—"

"Will you be brief?"

"Yessir! I hown up I got into a temper," said Gosling. "I was going to 'ave that tomat'er for tea, and it was fair falling to pieces, and I up and throws it out of the winder—"

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Never thinking, sir, that somebody might be passing along of that winder. I never knowed it had 'it anybody! Never thought about it! I jest went on with my tea, and arterwards, I went round to tell George Mimbble wot I thought of 'im and his tomatoes."

"Oh!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Never knows that anything had 'appened at all, sir!" said Gosling. "Not till I asks some of the boys what was young Bunter 'iding away for, and they tells me, and then I knows 'ow it 'appened. So I comes to you, sir, to tell you, 'cause wot I says is this 'ere, sir; fair play's a jool—and young Bunter never did it."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch. "Gosling, you acted very thoughtlessly, and very carelessly; but I am glad—more than glad—that you have come here and told me this! I am much obliged to you, Gosling."

"Yessir! Fair play's a jool, sir—"

"Quite so! And—"

A knock came at the study door. It opened, and Mr. Hacker marched in, leading by the collar a startling and extraordinary figure.

Mr. Quelch gazed at that figure—Prince Bomombo of Bongoland up to the fat chin—Billy Bunter from the chin to the cranium. He gazed at the strange sight like a man in a dream.

Gosling goggled at him, thunder-struck.

Hacker's acid voice cut an amazed silence.

"Here, sir, is Bunter!" hooted the Acid Drop. "Here, sir, is the boy who has been missing for twenty-four hours—and you see him, sir, in what remains of his disguise! This boy, sir—this—this Bunter—has been under our eyes all the time, sir—made-up—disguised—painted—as a black boy, sir—"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch faintly.

"My eye!" gasped Gosling.

"I ain't!" wailed Bunter. "I keep on telling Mr. Hacker that I ain't Bunter, sir, and—and never was! Never in my life, sir! I say—"

"Silence, you ridiculous boy!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Bunter! Is—is it possible that you have played such a trick—that you have deluded me—that—that—that—"

"Oh crikey! No, sir! I—I'm a nigger, sir—I ain't Bunter."

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"Silence!"

"Oh lor'!"

"For twenty-four hours, sir," snorted Mr. Hacker, "this boy has deluded the whole school—undoubtedly with the help of other boys in the Remove! They are as responsible as Bunter for this trickery! But for them, Bunter would already have received the flogging from the headmaster for having hurled a tomato at me, sir, on Monday afternoon—"

"Which he never did, sir!" said Gosling.

"Silence!" roared Hacker. "How dare you intervene, Gosling? Mr. Quelch, will you conduct this boy at once to the Head—and call upon his helpers—his confederates, sir—to answer for their conduct!"

Mr. Quelch drew a deep, deep breath.

"A quarter of an hour ago, Mr. Hacker, I should certainly have done so!" he answered. "But it has now transpired that it was not Bunter who threw the tomato that unfortunately struck you in the eye—"

"Nonsense, sir!"

"Kindly hear me, Mr. Hacker," snapped the Remove master. "That tomato was thoughtlessly flung out of

the window of Gosling's lodge—and Gosling has come here to tell me so."

"What!" gasped Mr. Hacker.

"It was a haccident, sir!" said Gosling. "I never knowed you was there, and never knowed what 'appened till 'arf an hour ago. I'm sorry it copped you in the heye, sir, but I never knowed. But as soon as I knowed, I comes 'ere to tell Mr. Quelch, sir, for what I says is this 'ere—fair play's a jool!"

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Hacker.

His bony fingers released a fat shoulder.

Even Hacker did not want Bunter flogged if Bunter had not done it!

That tomato had not been buzzed in his eye by Bunter! It had been thrown out of an open window by an ancient gentleman in a bad temper—and found an unexpected billet!

"Oh!" repeated Mr. Hacker. "Gosling, you are a fool!"

"Wot I says is this 'ere, sir—"

"An unthinking blockhead!" hooted Hacker. "Your action was that of an idiot, if not of a lunatic!"

"Look 'ere, sir—"

"Pah!" snorted Hacker. And he tramped out of the study, still snorting.

(Continued on page 28.)

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the MAGNET, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.

I GUESS most of you readers of long standing wonder how Frank Richards manages to turn out such jolly fine yarns week after week for the MAGNET. So do I, sometimes—but he does it, and never lets us down. And you'll find that next Saturday's yarn:

"THE TUCK-HOARDER!"

is as good as any he has written for the good old Paper. This super story tells of a certain Greyfriars junior who, thinking wholly and solely of himself, lays in a huge store of tuck—actually a violation of the law against food hoarding in wartime! But there's some other person as cute as the Greyfriars tuck hoarder, with the result that things don't quite work out according to plan for the latter. You'll be sure of getting your fill of fun—yes, and excitement, too—in next Saturday's MAGNET, which will also contain another issue of the "Greyfriars Herald," giving the latest news of Greyfriars in nutshell form.

As I have already stated, you can only make sure of getting your issue of the MAGNET each week by filling in the Order Form on page 23 of this issue and handing it, without further delay, to your local newsagent.

Who says a real bumper feast of School, Sport and Adventure Stories? Then get

"THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL."

Once again, this world-famous Annual takes pride of place on the bookstalls, for it constitutes an amazing value-for-money bargain. Full of delightful school, sporting and adventure stories, written by the best boys' authors of the day, this year's issue of the "Holiday Annual" beats its own high-water mark of quality. Ask your newsagent to show you a copy of this Annual today. When you've purchased a copy you'll agree that it's five shillings well spent!

Acknowledgments for their excellent letters go to: J. Meek (Coven-try), T. Smith (Purley), H. Turner (Epping), C. Price (Catford), T. Macdonald (Glasgow), H. Faulkner (Worcester), Miss Bolton (Australia), and Miss Wass (Birmingham).

Before winding up this Chat, I must recommend all readers of the MAGNET to get a copy of this week's issue of our grand companion paper, the GEM. Star items in this great issue are: "Coker's Catch!" a humorous, sparkling yarn of the chums of Greyfriars, and written by our excellent author, Frank Richards; "The Boy Who Vanished!" a powerful new long yarn of those popular favourites, Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, and "Biggles' South Sea Adventure!" by Capt. W. E. Johns. A bumper programme—what? Every newsagent sells the GEM!

Another cheery chin-wag next week, chums.

YOUR EDITOR.

The GREYFRIARS HERALD

(Continued from page 2.)

"Surely."

"Well, then, I'll give you something instead," said our representative.

Owing to the wreckage of the company's office, and the personal injuries sustained by the managing director, the Fish Insurance Company has temporarily gone out of business.

Penfold's Parodies.

THE LAY OF THE LOST POSTAL-ORDER!

The way was long, the wind was cold,

The postman was infirm and old;
He groaned beneath the bulging sack

Of letters borne upon his back,
Those letters came from dukes and lords

And titled relatives in hordes,
And every letter there was sent
To Bunter major, Greyfriars, Kent.
For, oh! that ancient postman bore
Large postal-orders by the score,
And, reckless of the sad delay,
He'd been and gone and lost his way.

Year after year he plodded on,
Though hope had dimmed and almost gone,
And Bunter, at the college gate,
Was doomed to wait and wait and wait!

O'er village, valley, down and dale,
The postman plodded on his trail,
By hamlet, hedgerow, house and hill,

The postman kept on plodding still,
Through mountain, meadow, marsh and moor

He kept on plodding as before.
But though he's plodded far and near,

He hasn't so far plodded HERE!

Hope lingers on, of course—but still

I sometimes fear he never will!
And so, my dollar, fare thee well,
Thou'rt gone, I fear. Goo'-bye, ol' pal!

True Tales of Greyfriars.

ALI BEN AZRA

Guaranteed Nothing-but-the-Truth!

By TOM BROWN

When we heard that a new boy from the Far East was coming to Greyfriars we were not greatly excited, for we already have an assortment of Indians, Chinese, New Zealanders, and other strange creatures. And apart from being a light snuff colour, there was nothing extraordinary about Ali Ben Azra.

He drove up on a magic carpet and landed on the school steps. We looked at him carelessly and noted that he was a typical Far Eastern boy, such as we often see in pantomimes and so on. He was accompanied by a tame dragon.

"You can't take that there into the school, you young rip!" said Gosling. "You'll 'ave to leave it at the school farm."

Ali muttered a magic spell, and after the earth had opened and swallowed Gosling, he went in to report to Mr. Quelch. We promptly forgot all about him until we heard, later on, that he had been put into Study No. 10.

"Bad luck for a little kid like that to have to share a study with Bolsover," said Wharton thoughtfully. "I'll keep my eye on him, and chip in if Bolsover tries any bullying."

As a matter of fact, Bolsover started bullying right away, but it didn't last long because, as we went up to tea, we saw Bolsover's head sticking out of a large jar of boiling oil. We didn't shed many tears over losing Bolsy, of course; still, it did seem rather drastic. However, as we know from the pantomimes, they have strange customs in the East.



Ali did very well indeed in class. Whenever Mr. Quelch asked him a question, he merely rubbed an old lamp and a huge nigger appeared and told him the answer. Quelch became rather fed-up with this, and commanded Ali to leave his lamp alone. However, a minute later the youngster rubbed the lamp and ordered some toffee, whereupon Quelch snapped:

"How dare you continue to do that when I told you not to? Take a hundred lines, Ben Azra!"

"Your will is my pleasure, O Moon of Delight," said Ali, and promptly rubbed his lamp. When the nigger appeared he said: "Give me a hundred lines!"

"Certainly, O Master!" cried the nigger, and produced them from his trousers pocket. Whereupon Ali handed them over to Quelch, who grabbed him by the neck and gave him six.

That made Ali yell, and as soon as he got away he rubbed his lamp and had Quelch removed to the middle of the Gobi Desert.

So we were taken by a prefect for the next six weeks, while Quelch was walking back to school, and life was much pleasanter.

In some ways, Ali was a proper young bounder. He liked breaking out at night and going down to the Three Fishers. Of course, he didn't

shin down the drainpipe—he just went up to the front door and said: "Open Sesame!" He was fond of backing horses, and as he knew the names of all the winners for weeks in advance—by the aid of his magic lamp—he soon had Joey Banks broke and in the workhouse, which was the best place for him.

Of course, Bunter was soon after the magic lamp, but Ali spotted him and had Bunter turned into a pig, so we had to send him to the farm. The funniest part was that the pig still wore glasses and check trousers.

Ali was a great success in the footer match against Highcliffe. He put a spell on the ball so that whenever it was kicked it went straight into the Highcliffe goal. We won by 384 to nil, and Highcliffe scored 383 of them because they always lifted the ball into their own goal from the kick-off each time. Wharton was very pleased with his new recruit, naturally.

However, Ali's days were numbered. He was standing with us in the quad one day when we were listening to Prout's story of how he used to hunt grizzly bears in the Rockies. Prout had his gun with him, and his eyes glistened as he said:

"Ah, my boys, if we had some bears in England I'd show you some shooting."

"No sooner said than done, O Fat One," said Ali briskly. He waved his hand and said: "Abracadabra!" and the quad became full of bears.

Prout tried to run, but they had him right away. It wouldn't have mattered so much if Prout alone had been eaten, but some of the Sixth and Fifth were

devoured as well, so the Head had to expel Ali, and that was the end of him.

"I'm afraid I can't make it a sensational story because I promised to stick to the truth. True stories are usually very boring, so don't blame me. It was just one of those incidents which happen every day, and that's all one can say about it.

Another true story soon, lads! (Perhaps!—ED.)

OUR LETTER BAG

Dear Sir,—On Tuesday last, walking in the Cloister, I was surprised to hear the song of a bird which was unfamiliar to me. I had thought I knew our local birds fairly well, but this song, though it reminded me of the shrill scream of the Barred Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos minor*), was undoubtedly strange. It was a piercing, wailing yell, very loud in volume, and probably the bird's alarm call. Can you inform me about this?—NATURE LOVER, Shell Form.

(The bird in question was probably the Dingy Sweep (*Nugent minor*), which often visits the Cloister to smoke a cigarette, and when attacked by a savage prefect utters this alarm note very loudly.—ED.)

Dear Master Wharton,—Will you please tell a man what young rip put

gum in my slippers last Wensday?—**CONSTANT REEDER** (The Lodge).
(It is against the policy of this paper to divulge official secrets. Sorry, Gossy.—ED.)

MY TOUR OF GREYFRIARS!

By A DUD BOB

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The "Dud Bob" in question seems to be Bob Cherry, judging by the spidery writing.)

I am a dud "bob"—in other words, a shilling made of lead. It is far more fun to be a dud bob than a real bob, because people call me such funny names. Last week I found myself in Uncle Clegg's till. I didn't stay there long, because I was handed to a youth named Bolsover major as part of his change.

Bolsover kept me in his pocket for a day, and then offered me to a tuckshop dame named Mimble. Mrs. Mimble pointed out that I was a dud, whereupon Bolsover let rip for a good ten minutes. Slouching back to school, he met a youth named Skinner, who asked him to join a game of nap in the woodshed. Bolsover hesitated a minute, and then, remembering me, he consented.

He lost eightpence at nap, so he gave me to Skinner and took fourpence change. Skinner offered me to Mrs. Mimble at tea-time, but she recognised me at once, and Skinner went away, calling me some bad names and Bolsover worse ones. He met a fat youth named Bunter, who asked him, not very hopefully, to "lend him a bob." Skinner grunted and passed me over, whereupon Bunter made a bee-line to the tuckshop.

In a tired voice, Mrs. Mimble said she had already refused me twice that day, so Bunter retired baffled. Meeting Harry Wharton, he asked if he had a shillingworth of stamps to sell. Wharton had, so I again changed owners. (I found out afterwards that Bunter sold the stamps to Ogilvy and spent the bob at the tuckshop.)

Wharton did not look at me, but dropped me in his pocket—until an American youth named Fish came along while Wharton was at tea. Fish had a tin of pineapple for sale cheap—one shilling. Wharton therefore exchanged me for the tin of pineapple, and Fish took me along to his study to put in his money-box. But two minutes later, Wharton looked in angrily.

"This pineapple's bad!" he roared. Fishy burst into a cackle.

"I guess that's your funeral," he said. "I didn't guarantee that pine was a good one." Then he spotted me. "Why—what—great gophers!" he yelled. "This hyer bob's a dud!" That made Wharton laugh heartily. "I didn't guarantee that bob was a good one!" he chortled, and went away.

"Stung!" hissed Fishy, glaring at me like a fiend. "I've been sold! But I guess they won't get by with it. No, sir!" And he took me down to the tuckshop.

I gave Mrs. Mimble a cheery nod for auld lang syne. She pushed me back to Fisher T.

"I'm getting quite tired of seeing this shilling, Master Fish," she said. "Take it away at once!"

"By the great horned toad," snarled Fishy, "I guess I'll get the valoo out of it somewhere!"

And he did, almost at once, when he found Tubb of the Third trying to sell a pocket-knife. The knife was bought for a bob, and Tubb cut off to the tuckshop to get some tarts for tea.

Well, of course, Mrs. Mimble pushed me back with a tired sigh, so Tubb breathed hatred as he looked round for someone to diddle. He was lucky. George Wingate gave him a pound note to buy him some things for tea, and Tubb deftly slipped me into Wingate's change.

I did not stay long in the high and mighty Sixth. Wingate kindly changed a ten-shilling note for Hobson, and I was part of the change—quite unconsciously, of course. I stayed the night with Hobson, and did not leave him until next midday, when he bought a pocket-knife from Fisher T. Fish for three shillings. I was one of the shillings.

Fishy could hardly believe his eyes when he got me back to his study.

"Jee-rusalem crickets!" he gasped. "Hyar, Hobson—" And he rushed back to the Shell.

Hobson, however, merely jabbed him with the pocket-knife (which was broken), so Fishy had to put up with me until he worked me off on Russell in exchange for a book.

Russell took me to the tuckshop, and Mrs. Mimble said if she had any more of it, she would tell Mr. Quelch.

Russell, however, did not look around for someone to diddle. He merely flung me away.

Two minutes ago I was found by Bunter and I am now on my way to the tuckshop.

Well, well, well—a shilling does see life!

THE BLACK PRINCE OF GREYFRIARS!

(Continued from page 26.)

Gosling blinked after him, blinked at Mr. Quelch, blinked at Bunter, and stumped out of the study, leaving the fat Owl with his Form-master.

Mr. Quelch was eyeing Bunter with a very peculiar expression on his face.

There was a long silence, during which Bunter's fat knees knocked together.

"Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, at last. "I should punish you with the greatest severity for this trickery—and those who have helped you also—but for the fact," continued Mr. Quelch, "that your innocence of the action attributed to you has now been established. As I cannot help feeling glad and relieved that an unjust flogging was not administered, I feel that I cannot punish you for having eluded it, even by such extraordinary means."

"Oh!" said Bunter. His fat face brightened.

"Go and change your clothes at once, and clean off that ridiculous make-up," said Mr. Quelch sternly. "I shall pardon you for this trickery, Bunter, in the very peculiar circumstances. You may leave my study!"

Billy Bunter left Mr. Quelch's study like a stone leaving a catapult. He was not going to give Quelch time to change his mind!

WHEN William Wibley came in—at calling-over—he found Billy Bunter in the ranks of the Remove, in his own proper person, and Prince Bomombo of Bongoland a thing of the past. And—as matters had turned out—Harry Wharton & Co. did not boot William Wibley the length of the Remove passage, and back again! All had ended well—the only drawback to that happy ending, in the fat Owl's opinion, being that Billy Bunter had to go into class again and do a spot of work—now that he was no longer Prince Bomombo from Bongoland!

THE END.

(Watch out for next Saturday's **MAGNET** and another rollicking fine story of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, entitled: **"THE TUCK-HOARDER!"** The only way to make sure of getting your **MAGNET** regularly each week is to fill up the Order Form on page 23 of this issue and hand it to your newsagent.)



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