

WHO WANTS BUNTER?

— By —
FRANK RICHARDS



CHAPTER I

HIS MASTER'S VOICE!

“**H**ARRY, old chap—”
Billy Bunter stopped, at that.

The fat Owl of the Remove was blinking into No. 1 Study through his big spectacles, as he began, in affectionate, indeed honeyed tones.

But that blink revealed that the study was vacant: Harry Wharton was not there. Billy Bunter's affectionate address had been wasted on the desert air.

“Beast!” added Bunter: which was quite a change from “Harry, old chap”. He frowned into the study.

As a matter of fact, Billy Bunter was not, at the moment, interested in “Harry, old chap” at all. His interest was centred in a bag of dough-nuts which he had seen Harry Wharton conveying from the tuck-shop to the House a few minutes before. Bunter had, naturally, followed on. Bunter liked dough-nuts.

But he had lost sight of Wharton on the stairs. Stairs told on Bunter. He had more weight to carry up than most fellows.

He expected to find Wharton in his study—with the dough-nuts. But if the captain of the Remove had gone into his study, evidently he had gone out again, for he was not visible. Neither were the dough-nuts. It looked as if he had gone to some other study with that bag of attractive comestibles.

“Beast!” repeated Bunter. “Where is he, blow him! Where—”

“Hallo, hallo, hallo!”

Billy Bunter jumped at a stentorian voice behind him in the passage. He revolved in the doorway, and blinked at Bob Cherry, who had come down the passage with a football under his arm.

“Looking for Wharton?” asked Bob.

“Eh? Oh! Yes! I—I’m going to help him with his lines for Quelch! But he isn’t here! Know where he is?”

“He’s gone to my study to borrow some impot paper. Inky’s sorting it out for him. Like to come and help me punt this ball about in the quad, old fat man?” asked Bob, with a grin.

“I’ll watch it!” snorted Bunter. Punting a footer had no appeal whatever for a fat and lazy Owl: especially when he was on the track of dough-nuts.

“A spot of exercise would do you good, old porpoise,” urged Bob.

“Yah!” was Bunter’s reply to that. Billy Bunter had no desire whatever for good to be done to him, in the way of strenuous exercise in the frosty air.

Bob Cherry laughed, and went on down the passage to the stairs. Billy Bunter blinked after him, and then blinked into No. 1 Study again. Then he rolled into the study, his little round eyes glistening behind his big round spectacles.

Billy Bunter’s fat brain did not often work quickly. But when provender was the subject, it could be quite alert. If Harry Wharton had gone up the passage to No. 13, Bob’s study, to borrow impot paper for his lines, he could hardly have taken that bag of dough-nuts with him. Ten to one, he had left it in the cupboard in No. 1, ready for tea later.

Bunter shot across the study to the cupboard. He was quite prepared to deal with those dough-nuts, without the assistance of “Harry, old chap”. He grabbed open the cupboard door.

“Oh! Good!” gasped Bunter.

There it was—under his eyes and his spectacles. It did not remain there. A moment more, and the bag was in Bunter’s fat hands. On the subject of tuck, William George Bunter never seemed able to remember the distinction between “meum” and “tuum”. Often and often had Bunter been kicked for snooping other fellows’ tuck. But he never could resist its lure. Somehow or other, it always seemed to Bunter that, if there was tuck about, its natural destination was his own capacious inside.



He grabbed the bag from the study cupboard

He grabbed that bag from the study cupboard, and was about to thrust in a fat hand for a dough-nut, when he paused. If Wharton had only gone up the passage to borrow impot paper, he might be back any minute—any second. There was no time to linger. Prompt retreat was indicated: to a safer spot where the voracious fat Owl could devour his prey at his leisure. Bunter put the paper bag under a fat arm, and started for the door.

But alas for Bunter! Even as he started, there was a sound of approaching footsteps in the passage. He stopped, in alarm.

“Oh, crikey!” breathed Bunter. “If that’s that beast coming back—!”

He grabbed the bag from under the fat arm, and put it behind him: only just in time, as Harry Wharton appeared in the doorway, with a sheaf of impot paper in his hand.

He started at Bunter as he came in. The bag of dough-nuts was quite invisible behind Bunter’s extensive circumference. Billy Bunter was very careful to keep it out of sight, as he blinked at the captain of the Remove.

“Oh! Here you are, old chap!” he gasped.

“Here I am,” assented Harry Wharton. “Want anything?”

“Oh! Yes! I came here to—to—to—”

“Well?”



"Here I am," assented Harry Wharton. "Want anything?"

"To—to—to speak to you, old chap—"

"Fire away."

"About—about the hols," stammered Bunter. He had to say something; and the "hols", as it happened, were very much in Bunter's mind towards the end of term. Bunter was not yet "fixed up" for the Christmas holidays; and it was necessary, as the old song says, for a victim to be found.

"What about the hols?" asked Harry.

"Well, Christmas is coming, you know—"

"I know!" assented Wharton. "It generally does, about the end of December. Quite a usual thing."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Thanks for reminding me," added Harry Wharton, laughing. "And now, roll away, old barrel: I've got lines to do, and I'm late with them already. I don't want Quelch to double them."

Billy Bunter would have been glad to roll away—if he could have rolled with the bag of dough-nuts undetected. As it was, he remained.

"But I say, old chap—" he recommenced.

"Lines—!"

"Never mind your lines for a minute. About Christmas—"

"Never mind Christmas now. I tell you I'm late with my lines—Quelch will be shirty if I don't take them down—so roll off like a good barrel—"

"I'd rather settle about the hols now," said Bunter. "I suppose you're taking some fellows home with you to Wharton Lodge."

"Bob and Inky and Nugent and Bull," said Harry. "We're all going together, if you want to know. Now cut."

"Like me to come?"

"Eh? Thanks! No."

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Sorry, old fat man, but I couldn't land you on my uncle again. Last time you came, you put his back up with your potty ventriloquist tricks—"

"I should think you'd be jolly glad to have a jolly good ventriloquist at a Christmas party!" exclaimed Billy Bunter, indignantly. "It was jolly funny that time when I imitated Colonel Wharton's voice and made the butler think he was calling him a fathead—"

"Too jolly funny," said Harry.

"And when I ventriloquised a dog under the table, growling, and made your aunt jump nearly out of her skin—"

"I couldn't kick you then, as you were a guest—but I think I'll kick you now, now that you remind me—"

Billy Bunter backed hastily away.

"Look here, you beast—"

"Oh, cut!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, impatiently. "I've got my lines to do, and I tell you I'm late with them. Think I want a detention to-morrow, with the Redclyffe match due? Roll away, and shut the door after you, and for goodness sake give a fellow a rest."

Billy Bunter breathed hard. Then he gave a little fat cough. That, if Harry Wharton had thought of it, was Bunter's usual preliminary to exercising his weird powers as a ventriloquist. That peculiar gift did not make Bunter popular. Certainly it must have been a gift: for, as many fellows had remarked, if it required brains, Bunter couldn't have done it. But there was no doubt that he could do it: and fellows failed to be amused when he made them jump by imitating Mr. Quelch's sharp voice behind their backs. The fat ventriloquist could imitate any voice that was at all distinctive: and Quelch's bark was very distinctive indeed.

Harry Wharton had placed the sheaf of impot paper, borrowed from Hurree Jamset Ram Singh in No. 13, on the table, and now he sat down to write lines. Those lines ought really to have been delivered in Mr. Quelch's study some time ago: and he was anxious to get through. The mere thought of

a possible detention was alarming, with football at Redclyffe scheduled for the following afternoon—the last match in the Remove list before the school broke up for the Christmas holidays. Bunter, as so often happened, was superfluous: and the captain of the Remove, as he dipped his pen in the ink, gave him almost a glare.

“Hook it, Bunter,” he rapped.

“Wharton!”

That name came in a sharp rap. It came—or at least appeared to come—through the half-open door from the passage. If it was not the voice of Mr. Quelch, calling to the junior in the study, it was a twin to it: and if it did not come from the passage, it certainly seemed to do so.

“Oh!” ejaculated Harry. He stared round at the door in dismay. He had dreaded that Quelch might come up about those lines, as those lines, as they were so late. Now, as it appeared, Quelch had done so. “Oh! Yes, sir.”

“Have you written your lines, Wharton!”

“Oh! No, sir! N-n-ot yet! I’m just going—”

“That will not do, Wharton.”

“I—I—I’m just—”

“Follow me to my study at once, Wharton.”

Harry Wharton rose from the table, setting his lips. Quelch was a whale on punctuality. If a fellow, given lines, did not hand them in at the specified time, trouble was likely to accrue. Still, there was no need for Quelch to hoot into the study without even looking in: and an order to follow him to his own study looked like “whops”. Wharton laid down his pen, with a dark brow.

Billy Bunter blinked at him, with a lurking grin.

“I say, old chap—”

“Oh, go and eat coke!” snapped Wharton. He had no more patience for Bunter. “What the dickens is Quelch so ratty for, bother him? Fellows have been late with their lines before this.”

“I’d go down though,” said Bunter, shaking his head. “Keeping the old bean waiting only makes him worse.”

“Think I don’t know that?” growled the captain of the Remove. And he crossed to the door. Billy Bunter’s grin widened as he blinked after him.

Harry Wharton tramped out of the study, in far from a good temper. He was a little surprised not to see Quelch in the passage. Apparently the Remove master had gone immediately after calling into the study. At the moment, it did not occur to Wharton that Mr. Quelch had been nowhere near the study, and that a fat ventriloquist had reproduced his master’s voice. Had he guessed that this was one more of Billy Bunter’s ventriloquial trickeries, Billy Bunter would probably have suffered for his sins on the spot. As it was,



"I'd go down though," said Bunter

Wharton hurried down the passage to the stairs, without a suspicion.

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter blinked out of the study after him. He chuckled a fat chuckle as the captain of the Remove disappeared. Then he rolled out of the study in his turn. It would not take Wharton long to learn that his leg had been pulled: and Bunter was not going to risk being caught in the study a second time. Billy Bunter rolled away: and, like Iser in the poem, he rolled rapidly.

It was ten minute later that Harry Wharton came back—having found that Quelch was not in his study, and having learned that he was walking in the quad with Mr. Prout, and had certainly not been up to the Remove studies. Then it dawned on him, and he came back to No. 1 with a look on his face that would have alarmed Billy Bunter—had he been still there! But the fat Owl was gone: and with lines on his hands, the captain of the Remove had no time to look for him, and award him the kicking he merited. He sat down to lines again. It was no use looking for Bunter. It would have been still less useful to look for the dough-nuts. By that time, they were inside Bunter.

CHAPTER II

MERELY A MISTAKE!

"THROUGH?"
"Not yet."

Frank Nugent asked the question as he came into No. 1 Study. Harry Wharton answered it over his shoulder without looking up. He was working fast at those lines. He had a hundred to do, and so far, barely fifty had been transcribed. His master's voice at the door had been a false alarm: but time pressed all the same. Quelch would not be walking in the quad for ever, and when he came in, he would expect to find that imposition on the table in his study.

"Okay! Carry on," said Nugent. And he sat in the window-seat and picked up a book.

Wharton's pen hurried on. It was tea-time and he would have been through by tea-time but for Billy Bunter and his knavish tricks. All the Famous Five were due for tea in No. 1 Study, where they generally tea'd together when the funds ran to a study tea.

Bob Cherry was the next to arrive. He came in with a cheery ruddy face, and pitched a football into a corner.

"Tea ready?" he asked, as he came in. "I'm as hungry as a hunter—or a Bunter. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Not done your lines yet, Wharton?"

"Not yet."

"Hurry up, old man!" Bob sat down beside Nugent in the window-seat.

Harry did not reply to that. He was hurrying up as fast as he could: but lines for Quelch could not be dashed off anyhow: Quelch was rather particular about his impots.

Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came into the study together. They too expected to see signs of tea. What they saw was two juniors sitting at the window, and another at the table scribbling lines from a Virgil propped open against the inkstand.

"Still at it?" asked Johnny.

No answer. There was no time for speech, and Johnny was left to guess that the answer was in the affirmative.

"You're taking your time over those lines," remarked Johnny. "You're jolly late with them already."

"I know that, fathead."

"Well, if you'd done them immediately after class—"

"I didn't."

"I know you didn't, but I jolly well told you you'd better, and if you had—"

"Dry up, old man," said Bob Cherry. "Wharton won't get on any faster if you chew the rag."

"Well, I did tell him so—"

"Speech is silvery, my esteemed Johnny," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But silence is the cracked pitcher that goes longest to the well, as the English proverb remarks."

"Well, my idea is that when a thing has to be done, the sooner it's done the better," said Johnny Bull. "I told Wharton so—"

Harry Wharton looked up.

"Do you want me to shy this inkpot at you, Johnny?" he asked.

"Eh! No."

"Then shut up till I've done my lines."

Johnny Bull contented himself with a grunt, by way of rejoinder, and sat down in the window-seat to wait with the others. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh sat down beside him. In a row under the window, they watched Harry Wharton grinding on with his lines. His pen raced on. He was more than anxious to get those lines down to Quelch's study, before Quelch came in from his walk with Prout. He did not hear, or heed, a footstep in the passage, and as he sat with his back towards the door, he did not see an angular form appear in the doorway, and a gimlet-eye gleam into the study. The Co. looking past him from the window, saw Mr. Quelch, and rose respectfully to their feet. Wharton, unaware of him, raced on with his pen on impot paper.

"Wharton!"

It was a bark from the doorway.

Wharton's friends stared at him. They expected him to jump up at once at his form-master's voice. But he did not stir: he did not even turn his head. His pen raced on regardless.

"Wharton!"

The bark was repeated. Still the captain of the Remove did not heed. His friends could only stare at him in amazement: and the Remove master in amazement also. It was the first time that Quelch's majestic bark had been passed by, in his form, like the idle wind that was regarded not. And certainly Harry Wharton would have heeded at once, but for the ventriloquial trick Billy Bunter had so recently played on him. As it was, he had no doubt that the fat ventriloquist was at his tricks again, and he was not to be caught a second time.

"Wharton!" Quelch fairly thundered.

"Oh, shut up!" exclaimed Wharton, without looking round. "Do you want me to come out and kick you, you silly ass?"

Mr. Quelch almost fell down in his astonishment. Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gazed at the captain of the Remove in utter consternation.

"Harry!" gasped Frank Nugent.

"Wharton, old man—!" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"My esteemed idiotic Wharton—!" exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Mr. Quelch did not speak immediately. He was too astonished to speak. He gazed speechlessly at the back of the bent head over the table. Wharton, unaware and regardless, raced on with his pen.

"Wharton—!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Do be quiet—"

"But—"

"You're interrupting me! Haven't I got to get these lines done for Quelch?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in exasperation. "Do give a fellow a chance to get through. I've only a dozen more to do."

"It's Quelch!" howled Johnny. "Quelch—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"WHARTON!" Mr. Quelch found his voice, and roared, "Wharton! What is the meaning of this? What—?"

"Will you shut up?" yelled Wharton, over his shoulder.

"Bless my soul!"

"Can't one of you fellows go out and kick that silly fathead?" exclaimed Wharton. "I've no time to kick him, if I'm to get these lines down to Quelch's study before there's a row about them."

"It's Quelch—!" gasped Bob.

"Fathead! It's Bunter, playing his silly tricks again. Now shut up while I get through." Wharton mumbled the line aloud as he scribbled. "Ecce manus juvenem—"

"Wharton!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Stand up immediately."

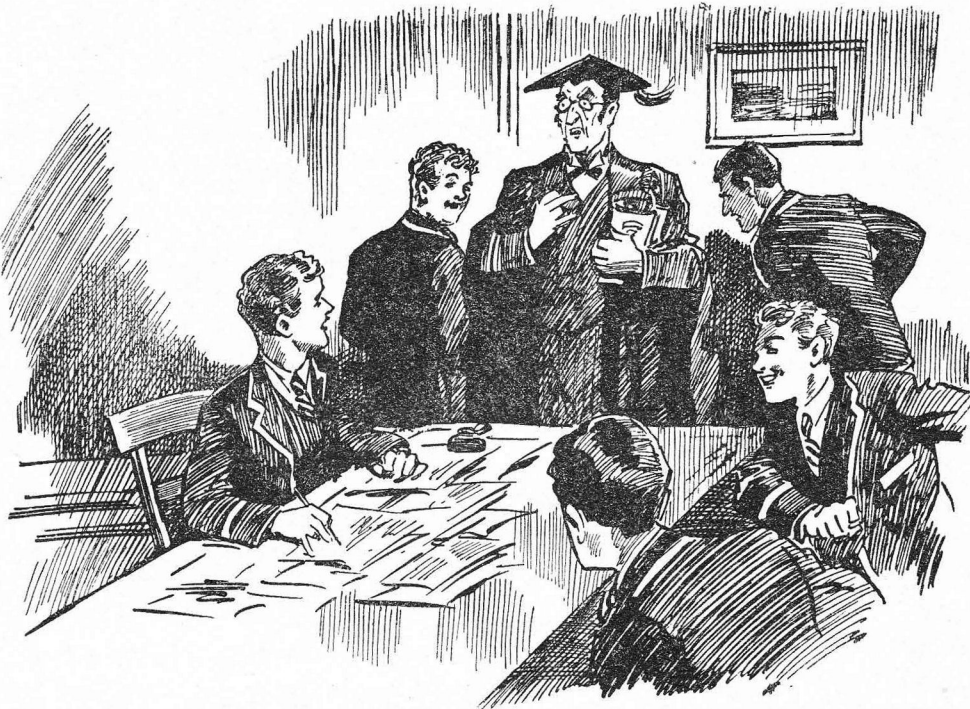
"Fathead!" hooted Harry Wharton.

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"Ass!"

"Goodness gracious me, has the boy taken leave of his senses," exclaimed Mr. Quelch: and he strode into the study, and grasped Wharton by the shoulder, "Now, Wharton—"

"You fat ass, let go! You—" Harry Wharton, at last, turned his head. Then he jumped—or rather, bounded. His eyes almost popped from his face at the sight of Mr. Quelch. Up to that moment he had not doubted that it



"Wharton! What do you mean? How dare you address me in such a manner?"

was the fat ventriloquist at his tricks again. The ghost of Banquo did not startle Macbeth more than the sight of Mr. Quelch startled the captain of the Remove. He fairly goggled at him.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"Wharton! What do you mean? How dare you address me in such a manner! I repeat, how dare you?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, crumbs! I—I—I—" Wharton stammered helplessly, "I—I—I—I—I didn't know it was you, sir—I—I—I never knew you'd come up, sir—I—I—I"

"I came up because I did not find your imposition in my study, Wharton. You have not done your lines. But that is a slight matter in comparison with your impertinence—your insolence—your—your—your unexampled audacity in speaking as you have done to your form-master! I shall take you to Dr. Locke immediately, and your head-master will deal with you."

"But, sir, I—I—I—"

"Follow me at once."

"But, sir, I—I—I never knew it was you," gasped Harry. "I—I didn't see you, sir, as I had my back to the door—"

"You know my voice, I presume."

"Oh! Yes! But—but I fancied it was a fellow playing a trick—I—I—I— Surely, sir, you know that I wouldn't have said what I did if I'd known that it was you, sir!" gasped Harry.

Mr. Quelch's stern face relaxed a little. He realised that there had been a mistake in the matter. The distress in Harry Wharton's crimson face was convincing. There was a pause.

"Very well, Wharton, I accept your explanation," said Mr. Quelch, much to the relief of the whole Co. "I advise you not to make such a mistake again."

"Oh! Certainly, sir. I'm sorry—I—I—"

"Very well: say no more." Quelch dismissed the matter with a gesture. "But you have not brought your lines to my study, Wharton. Your imposition is doubled. You will write two hundred lines instead of one hundred. You will bring them to my study to-morrow before you go out of gates. That is all."

With that the Remove master rustled out of the study.

There was silence in the study till his footsteps had died away. Harry Wharton wiped a spot of perspiration from his brow. Johnny Bull was the first to speak.

"You ass!" he said.

"You terrific ass!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, that fat villain!" breathed Harry Wharton. "It's all Bunter's fault—"

"Bunter? How—"

"He was playing his potty tricks here, imitating Quelch's voice, and I thought he was at it again—"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob. "Better make sure next time before you slang a beak and call him an ass and a fathead—"

"I'll burst that fat frog—"

"Might have guessed that Quelch would come after those lines as they were so jolly late," said Johnny Bull. "If you'd taken my tip, and done them at once—"

"Oh, pack it up."

"Well, I told you so!"

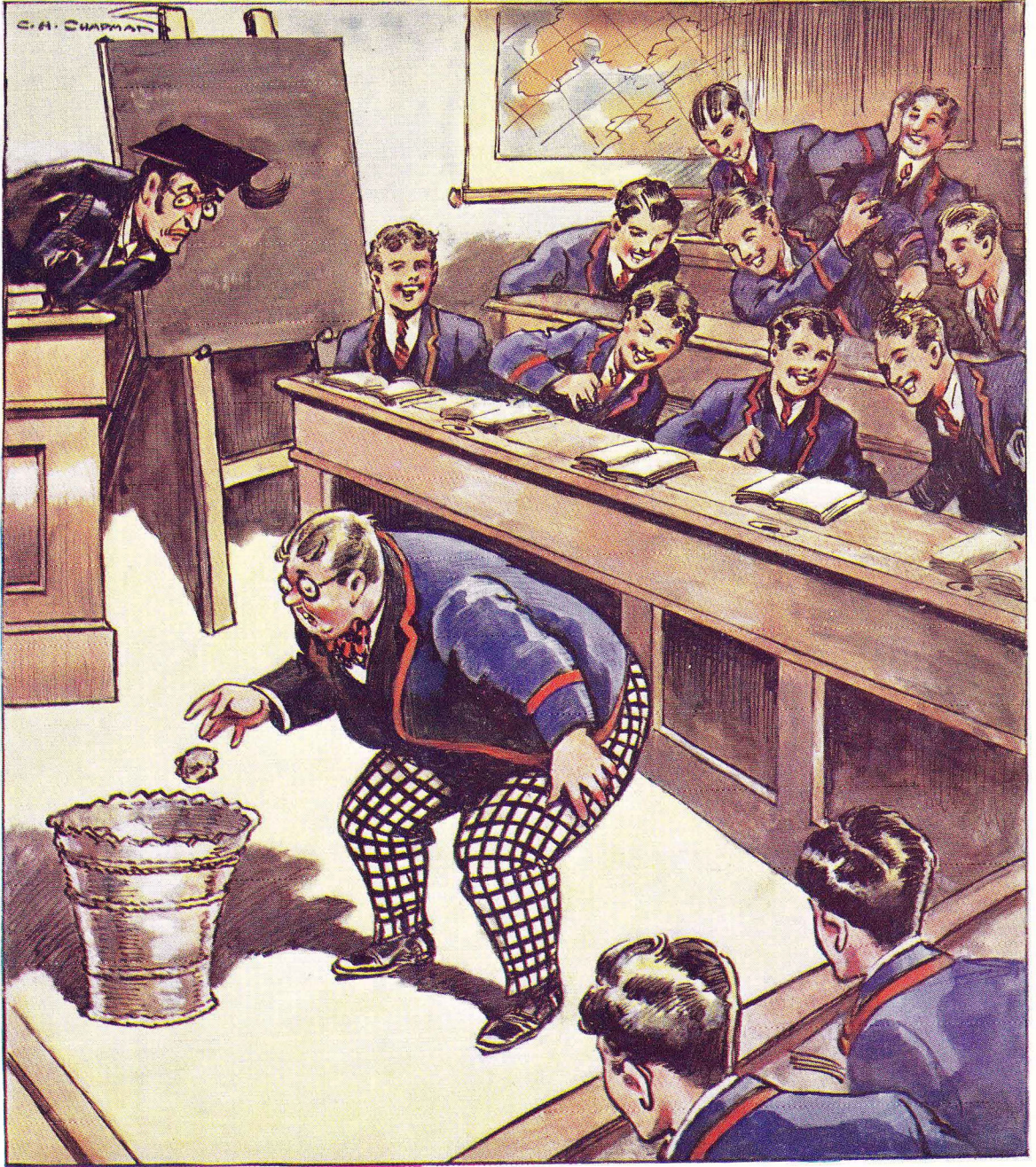
"I know you did, and if you tell me so again, I'll jolly well punch your silly head!" roared the exasperated captain of the Remove.

"Peace, my infants, peace!" said Bob Cherry. "What about tea! You needn't scurry over those lines now—you've got till to-morrow—"

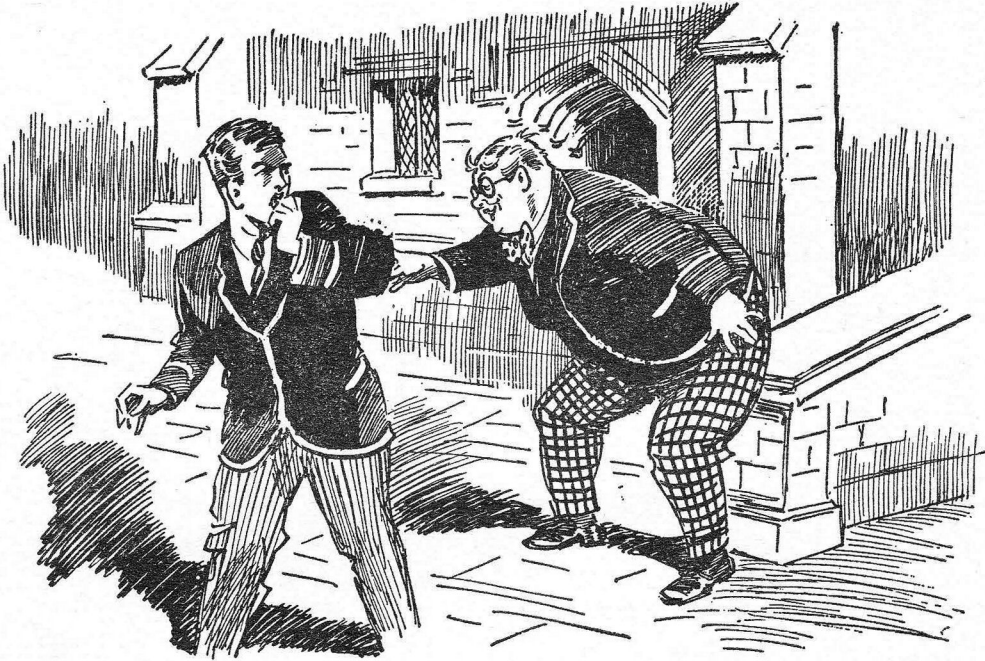
"Yes—and two hundred to do—and the Redclyffe match to-morrow! I shall have to get through them this evening, somehow. That fat villain—"

"Well, let's have tea," said Nugent.

"Bother tea—"



"Bunter! You will take 50 lines. Go," snapped Mr. Quelch



"Mauly, old man?" "Yaas," sighed Mauly

"Past tea-time," said Johnny Bull.

"Blow tea-time! You fellows can tea if you like," snapped the captain of the Remove, turning to the door.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to look for Bunter, and strew him in small pieces over the House!"

With that, Harry Wharton tramped out of No. 1 Study. Four fellows exchanged grins, and sat down to tea. A few minutes later, a sound of frantic yelling up the passage announced that the captain of the Remove had found Bunter. Probably he was not strewing him in small pieces over the House—but it certainly sounded something like it.

CHAPTER III

WHO WANTS BUNTER?

"**M**AULY, old man—"

"Yaas," sighed Lord Mauleverer.

He stopped—reluctantly. But he had to stop as a fat and rather sticky paw clutched his sleeve.

It was morning break at Greyfriars. The day was quite sunny, for December, and there was a nip of frost in the air. Most fellows were out of the House, in break, enjoying both the sunshine and the frosty nip. Among them was William George Bunter of the Remove.

Bunter, certainly, did not enjoy frosty nips. As a matter of taste, he would have preferred an armchair before the fire in the Rag. But the fat Owl had a matter of some weight on his fat mind. Break-up for Christmas was near at hand. Often and often as Bunter had described the luxurious amenities of Bunter Court, he never seemed keen to head for home in the "hols". He had, in fact, banked on Wharton Lodge for Christmas. The lack of an invitation for the hols did not worry Bunter. So long as he could wedge in, Bunter was satisfied. But, after the episode in No. 1 Study the previous day, the fat Owl had to realise that Wharton Lodge was a very doubtful proposition. Harry Wharton was far from being in a mood to listen to the voice of the charmer. At that very moment, in fact, he was in his study, finishing his doubled impot, instead of joining his friends in the open air.

Billy Bunter wanted to get this matter settled. It was really rather a puzzle to Bunter why invitations for the "hols" did not shower on him right and left. So charming a fellow, it might have been supposed, would be a gladly welcomed addition to any party. Nevertheless, though many fellows were asking one another, nobody seemed to want Bunter. That Lord Mauleverer didn't was only too clear from the expression on his noble visage. Billy Bunter could have seen that, even without the aid of his big spectacles. But that, to Billy Bunter, was a trifle light as air.

"Hold on a minute, Mauly—"

"Yaas!" sighed his lordship again. Had he seen Bunter coming, his lordship would have accelerated and escaped. But now a sticky paw was clutching his sleeve.

"About the Christmas hols, old fellow—"

That did it! Lord Mauleverer was just one chunk of polished politeness: but there was a limit. He jerked his arm away from the fat clutch and walked off without waiting for Bunter to continue.

A wrathful glare through a pair of big spectacles followed him.

"I say, Mauly—!" howled Bunter.

Lord Mauleverer disappeared behind the elms.

"Beast!" hooted Bunter.

It was necessary—indeed urgent—that a victim should be found! But it was clear, even to Bunter, that Lord Mauleverer was not going to be that victim.

The fat Owl blinked disconsolately round him. Four members of the

Famous Five were in a group, discussing the fixture of the afternoon. Billy Bunter rolled up to them.

"Wharton will get through all right with that dashed impot," Bob Cherry was saying. "He did most of it after prep last night. He will have it ready for Quelch when we go in for third school. All right for this afternoon—and we're going to wipe Redclyffe off the face of the earth."

"We are—we is!" agreed Johnny Bull.

"The wipefulness will be terrific," assented Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Last match of the term," said Bob, "and we're going to wind up with a glorious victory—"

"I say, you fellows—!" howled Bunter.

"Redclyffe are pretty good, but we're going to walk over them," said Bob. "They won't find it easy to get past Johnny in goal."

"Not if I can help it," said Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows—"

"And Smithy on the wing is a real nut," went on Bob. "And I'm not bad at half, though it's me as sez it as didn't orter—"

"I say, you fellows—!" yelled Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that a barrage balloon got loose in the quad? Oh, it's Bunter! Did you speak, Bunter?"

"Yes, I jolly well did—"

"Well, don't!"

"Beast! I mean, look here, dear old chap—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"About Christmas—"

"Run for your lives!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" howled Billy Bunter, as four laughing juniors trotted away. Only too clearly, the Co. did not want to hear anything from Bunter about Christmas.

"Smithy!" called out Bunter, as Herbert Vernon-Smith came along. The Bounder glanced round at him.

"Well?" he asked.

"Fixed up for the hols, Smithy?" asked Bunter.

"Yes."

"I hear you're going abroad this time—"

"You hear a lot of things," said Smithy. "I suppose you always will, so long as they make keyholes to doors."



The Bounder glanced round at him

“Oh, really, Smithy—”

“Is that the lot?”

“Well, what I mean, if you’re going to the south of France, you’ll want a pal with you who speaks jolly good French—”

“Yes: Redwing does.”

“I could talk Redwing’s head off at French, Smithy. Look here, I’ve just told Mauly I can’t go with him for the hols—he’s such a bore, you know: and I don’t much like the idea of Wharton and his gang—they’re rather a rough-and-ready lot. If you’d like a pal with you who speaks French like a native—I say, Smithy, don’t walk away while a fellow’s talking to you.”

But Smithy did walk away.

“Beast!” breathed Bunter.

He rolled back to the House. In the doorway he encountered Peter Todd, who had the pleasure—or otherwise—of sharing No. 7 Study in the Remove with the fat Owl. He caught Peter by the arm.

“I say, Toddy, old chap—hold on a minute—I say, I’ve decided not to go with Wharton after all for Christmas—”

"Lucky man!" said Toddy.

"Oh, really, Toddy! The fact is, old chap, I should miss you in the hols—we're such pals here. I'll come home with you, Toddy."

"Will you?" said Toddy.

"Yes, old fellow. Your people aren't exactly the sort I'm accustomed to mixing with, I know—"

"Eh?"

"But I can stand them all right," said Bunter, reassuringly.

Peter looked at him.

"There's just one difficulty," he said.

"What's that, old fellow?"

"They couldn't stand you!" explained Peter: and he jerked his arm away, and walked on.

"Beast!" mumbled Bunter.

He rolled away disconsolately to the Rag and an armchair before the fire:



"They couldn't stand you!" explained Peter

his problem still unsolved. It was inexplicable—to Bunter—and it was quite annoying and exasperating—but it seemed an indubitable fact that, fascinating fellow as he was, nobody wanted Bunter!

CHAPTER IV

HARD LINES!

“**B**LOW!” said Harry Wharton.

He made that remark, in No. 1 Study, as a bell rang. That bell announced the end of “break”: and summoned Greyfriars fellows back to the form-rooms. It was never really a very welcome sound to the ears of juniors: and, at the moment, it was more unwelcome than ever to Harry Wharton’s.

All through break, he had been grinding at lines in his study. The previous evening he had got through quite a chunk of that imposition: and he had intended to complete the final chunk in break, and have done with it. But he was not quite finished when the bell rang for third school. Fifteen lines remained to be written, out of the two hundred, when the clang of the bell woke the echoes.

“Blow!” he repeated, quite crossly.

He laid down his pen and rose from the table. There was no time to finish now: he had to cut down to the form-room. It was a half-holiday that afternoon, and he was booked to captain the Remove footballers at Redclyffe: the team had to leave immediately after dinner. But that impot had to be handed in to Quelch first. However, there was time between third school and dinner to add the final fifteen lines, and get through: and then all would be well. Leaving the unfinished impot on the study table, he hurried out of No. 1 and down the stairs to join his friends at the door of the Remove form-room.

“Hallo, hallo, hallo! Done your lines?” asked Bob Cherry, as he came up.

“Not quite. Fifteen more to do,” answered Harry.

“Lots of time before tiffin,” said Bob, cheerily.

“Oh, lots,” agreed Harry.

“For goodness sake,” said Johnny Bull, “cut up to your study and finish the minute we get out of form. If you put it off like you did yesterday, the fat will be in the fire.”

“Fathead!” was Wharton’s reply to that.

Johnny’s advice was good: Johnny Bull was the man for good advice. He was a fellow of sound and solid common-sense. But he did not always shine in tact. Nor did he always realise that even good advice may be superfluous.

"Well, you can call a pal names," he said. "But you did put it off yesterday and look what happened—"

"Ass!"

"If you put it off again—"

"Chump!"

"Well, it was fatheaded to put it off yesterday, as I told you at the time. You remember that I told you so, don't you?"

"Blitherer!"

"Shirty about something?" asked Johnny, staring at him. "Nothing to be shirty about, that I can see. Look here, you cut up to your study and finish that impot the minute Quelch lets us out. That's my advice: take it or leave it."

"I say, you fellows." A fat voice chimed in, before Wharton could speak again: which was perhaps just as well. "I say—"

"Don't say 'Christmas'," warned Bob Cherry. "One word about the hols and I'll jolly well bang your head on the wall. That's a tip, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Pack it upfully, my esteemed and idiotic Bunter," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Scat, you fat ass!" snapped Harry Wharton.

"I say, old chap—"

"If you 'old chap' me I'll boot you."

"But I say, have you finished your lines—?"

"No, bother you."

"Like me to come up to the study after class and help?" asked Bunter.

"If I find you in my study again, I'll kick you to the end of the passage, and back again."

"Beast!"

Mr. Quelch arrived just then to let in his form. The Remove went in and took their places and English History was the order of the day for the next hour. With a football match due that afternoon, and the Christmas holidays so near, it was probable that many thoughts, among the juniors, wandered from the annals of their native land.

Billy Bunter, certainly, was not giving undivided attention to the words of wisdom from his form-master. That was quite clear when, in answer to a question, he informed Mr. Quelch that the Spanish Armada came in the reign of Charles the Third. Neither did he improve matters when, guessing from Mr. Quelch's look that that answer wouldn't do, he hurriedly made it George the Eighth. Fifty lines apprised Bunter that History in the Remove form-room was not to be treated as a guessing game.

However, third school came to an end at last, and the Remove were dismissed. As they came out, Johnny Bull tapped Wharton on the arm. Once more he failed to realise that, good as his advice was, it was possible to have too much of a good thing.

"Don't forget your lines, old chap," he said.

"Think I'm likely to forget them, when I shall be out of the football if I don't hand them in on time?" asked Harry.

"Well, you did yesterday—anyhow, you left them late. If you leave them late again—"

"Fathead!"

"You've got plenty of time before tiffin, if you don't waste any," said Johnny. "Don't waste any, old fellow. You were an ass to waste time yesterday. I told you so, and I'm bound to say—Yaroooop!" Johnny Bull wound up with a sudden yell as his chum suddenly caught him by the collar and banged his head against the corridor wall. "Wow! You mad ass, what do you think you're up to? Wow!"

Harry Wharton hurried on and cut up the stairs to the Remove studies. He was very anxious to get that troublesome impot finished and handed in to Quelch: and really and truly, he did not need Johnny's sage advice on that subject. Johnny was left rubbing his head and his friends grinning.

"Is Wharton shirty about something to-day?" asked Johnny.

"Perhaps you've told him once too often that you told him so!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I did tell him so, didn't I?" demanded Johnny.

"You did, old chap! Now go up to his study and tell him again that you told him so! I'll come after you and pick up the pieces."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" grunted Johnny.

Harry Wharton, in No. 1 Study, sat down at the table and dipped his pen in the ink. One hundred and eighty-five Latin lines lay there, all nicely and neatly written: equal to the test if a gimlet-eye looked over them scrutinisingly, as probably it would! From "conticuere omnes" to "Calchas attollere molem" had been neatly transcribed from the second book of the Aeneid: and it remained to push on to "improvida pectora turbat". Taking up the tale, so to speak, at "roboribus textis", the captain of the Remove went on with his task.

"I say, old chap—"

Ten of the fifteen lines had been written, when that fat voice floated in at the doorway of No. 1 Study.



"Get out!" he hooted

Harry Wharton looked up, with a concentrated glare at the fat and fatuous features of William George Bunter.

"Get out!" he hooted.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Buzz, you bloated bluebottle."

"If that's what you call civil to a fellow—"

"Hook it!"

"I say, old chap, don't be so jolly shirty," said Bunter. "I've come up to help you with your lines." The fat Owl rolled into the study. "Think Quelch would notice if I did twenty or so for you?"

"You fat ass, he would think a spider had got into the inkpot and crawled over the paper! Scat!"

"Well, I mean it," declared Bunter. "I'll help you with your lines, if you like. After all, we're pals, ain't we? I'm always ready to help a pal. Kindest friend and noblest foe, you know, that's me! You kicked me yesterday, Wharton—"

"I'll kick you again if you don't hook it."

"Well, I'm not the chap to owe a grudge," said Bunter. "You kicked me—and now I've come up to help you out. I know you can't help having a beastly temper, old chap, and I don't expect much in the way of manners from you.

That's all right. I'm going to help you with those lines, because we're pals—I'm not thinking about the Christmas hols, or anything of the kind—just being pally, you know—I say, what are you picking up that Latin grammar for—yaroooooh!" added Bunter, suddenly discovering why Wharton had picked up the Latin grammar, as it flew through the air and landed on a fat little nose. "Wow! Why, you beast—wow! ow!"

"Now get out—"

"Ow! wow! wow!"

"Or do you want the inkpot next?"

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "I jolly well won't help you with your lines now, and I wouldn't come with you for Christmas if you asked me on your bended knees! Ow! My boko! wow! Here's your rotten grammar back, you beast."

Bunter clutched up the Latin grammar and hurled it back.

"You fat chump!—"

Harry Wharton put up his hand and knocked the whizzing grammar aside as it arrived. It landed on the table, knocking over the inkpot. There was a splash of ink and an almost frantic roar from the captain of the Remove.

"Oh! My lines! Oh!"

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Bunter.

His little round eyes almost popped through his big round spectacles at the havoc he had wrought. The inkpot lay upturned on that long, long imposition: one hundred and ninety-five Latin lines swam in a sea of ink. Harry Wharton gazed at the ruin in utter dismay, for a moment spellbound by that overwhelming catastrophe.

Bunter made the most of that moment. He made a bound for the door and vanished into space. Harry Wharton was left staring blankly at his hapless lines: certainly not now in a condition to be handed in to his form-master.

CHAPTER V

BOOT FOR BUNTER!

"TIFFIN!" said Bob Cherry.

"Didn't you hear the bell?" asked Nugent.

"You're through by this time, surely?" said Johnny Bull. "You've had lots of time since class."

Harry Wharton did not answer. He was bending over a batch of inky lines at his study table. Billy Bunter had fled for his fat life: but the captain of the

Remove was not thinking of Bunter. He was seeking to salve something from the wreck, as it were. But it was hopeless. Every sheet covered with lines from the Aeneid was blotted and spotted with ink, and half the lines were quite undecipherable. On one sheet hardly a word could be read. That imposition had to be written out again, its whole weary length from "Conticuere omnes" to "improvida pectora turbat": and Harry had to realise that unpleasant fact. He had to realise, too, that as no time was left for the completion of such a task before the footballers had to start for Redclyffe, the probability was that they would have to go without their captain. The expression on his face was very grim as he sorted over those inky lines.

"Anything up?" asked Bob.

"Is the upfulness terrific, my esteemed Wharton?" inquired Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

As Wharton had not come down, they had come up for him. The bell for dinner was ringing. Four fellows stared in at him from the doorway of No. 1 Study.

Harry Wharton glanced round, and then pointed to the inky impot.

"Look at that!" he said.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, as he looked. "Your lines? Phew! That won't do for Quelch."

"Upset the inkpot over them?" asked Johnny Bull. "Dash it all, that was jolly clumsy, old chap."

"Idiot!" was Wharton's brief rejoinder.

"Look here—"

"Accidents will happen!" said Bob. "But—my hat! That's jolly unlucky. Quelch wants his dashed lines before you go out."

"Rotten luck," said Nugent. "There's no time to do them over again, if you're playing at Redclyffe this afternoon."

"No!" said Harry, compressing his lips.

"What are you going to do, then?"

"I'm going to kick Bunter, every time I see him, till the end of the term," said Harry. "That fat fool was playing the goat here—that's how it happened. By gum, I'll boot him all over Greyfriars."

"Do him good," agreed Bob. "But—"

"That won't help much, though," said Johnny Bull. "If you take my advice—"

"Oh, pack it up!" Wharton, apparently, had had enough advice from Johnny, and did not want any more.

"If you take my advice—"

"Give us a rest."

"If you take my advice," said Johnny, stolidly, for the third time, "you'll take that impot to Quelch, just as it is—"

"Fat lot of use that would be."

"—just as it is, and tell him it was done, but the inkpot got upset over it. If you explain—"

"Quelch wants lines, not explanations."

"I'm rather afraid he does," remarked Bob Cherry. "But—you've simply got to come over to Redclyffe with us, old man. Quelch might stretch a point if you explain—"

"Not likely."

"Well, we've got to go down to tiffin now," said Bob. "The bell's stopped. Come on—Quelch don't like late comers."

Harry Wharton nodded and left the study with his friends. His face was clouded as he went down to hall with them. He could picture the look on Quelch's face when he saw those inky sheets—if a fellow had the nerve to show up such an impot. He would be told to write that impot over again: quite regardless of anything else on hand that half-holiday. The Redclyffe match was washed out for him: another man would have to take his place in the forward line, and Smithy would have to captain the side—while he sat in his study at Greyfriars writing lines. Kicking Billy Bunter was, no doubt, a solace: but, as Johnny Bull had sapiently remarked, it would not help much.

Mr. Quelch, at the head of the Remove table in hall, gave the Famous Five an expressive glance, as they came in, a minute late. Quelch did not approve of unpunctuality, even to the extent of one minute. However, he said nothing and they took their places—Billy Bunter blinking across the table at Wharton with a very uneasy blink. The glance he received in return left him in no doubt that his uneasiness was well founded: and the fat Owl sagely made up his fat mind to steer carefully clear of Harry Wharton after dinner.

After "tiffin" Mr. Quelch called to Wharton, as the crowd were leaving hall. His expression was severe.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you written your lines?"

Harry Wharton had not received Johnny Bull's advice very graciously. But at that moment, he made up his mind to act upon it.

"Yes, sir! But—"

"Take them to my study."

"But, sir—"

"That will do, Wharton."

"There was an accident with them, sir—"



"Ow! Beast! You keep off!" he howled

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch, very dryly. "I shall expect those lines before tea-time, Wharton."

"But, sir—"

"You may go, Wharton." Mr. Quelch turned away with that, leaving Wharton with a view of his back.

The captain of the Remove compressed his lips and followed his friends out. They went into the quad together, not very cheerfully. A fat voice impinged upon their ears as they came out of the House.

"I say, you fellows, that silly ass Wharton knocked his inkpot over on his lines for Quelch—he, he, he!—I'll bet the old bean makes him do them over again! Serve him jolly well right, with his beastly temper! I say—yaroooooh!"

Billy Bunter broke off, with a loud yell, as a foot crashed on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars School.

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Billy Bunter.

He spun round and blinked at Harry Wharton. One blink was enough for Bunter. He jumped away in alarm.

"Ow! Beast! You keep off!" he howled.

"You fat villain, I'm going to boot you all over the school—"

"Oh, crikey!"

Billy Bunter did not wait to be booted! His little fat legs fairly flashed as he flew. Harry Wharton made a step in pursuit: but Frank Nugent caught his arm, and he paused, and then walked on with his friends.

But Billy Bunter did not stop. The guilty flee when no man pursueth! The fat Owl charged on breathlessly and did not stop till, at last, he halted under Mr. Quelch's study window, where he leaned on the wall gasping for breath. In that spot he was secure from booting: and he sagely resolved to remain there out of the reach of an avenging boot.

END OF FIRST SECTION