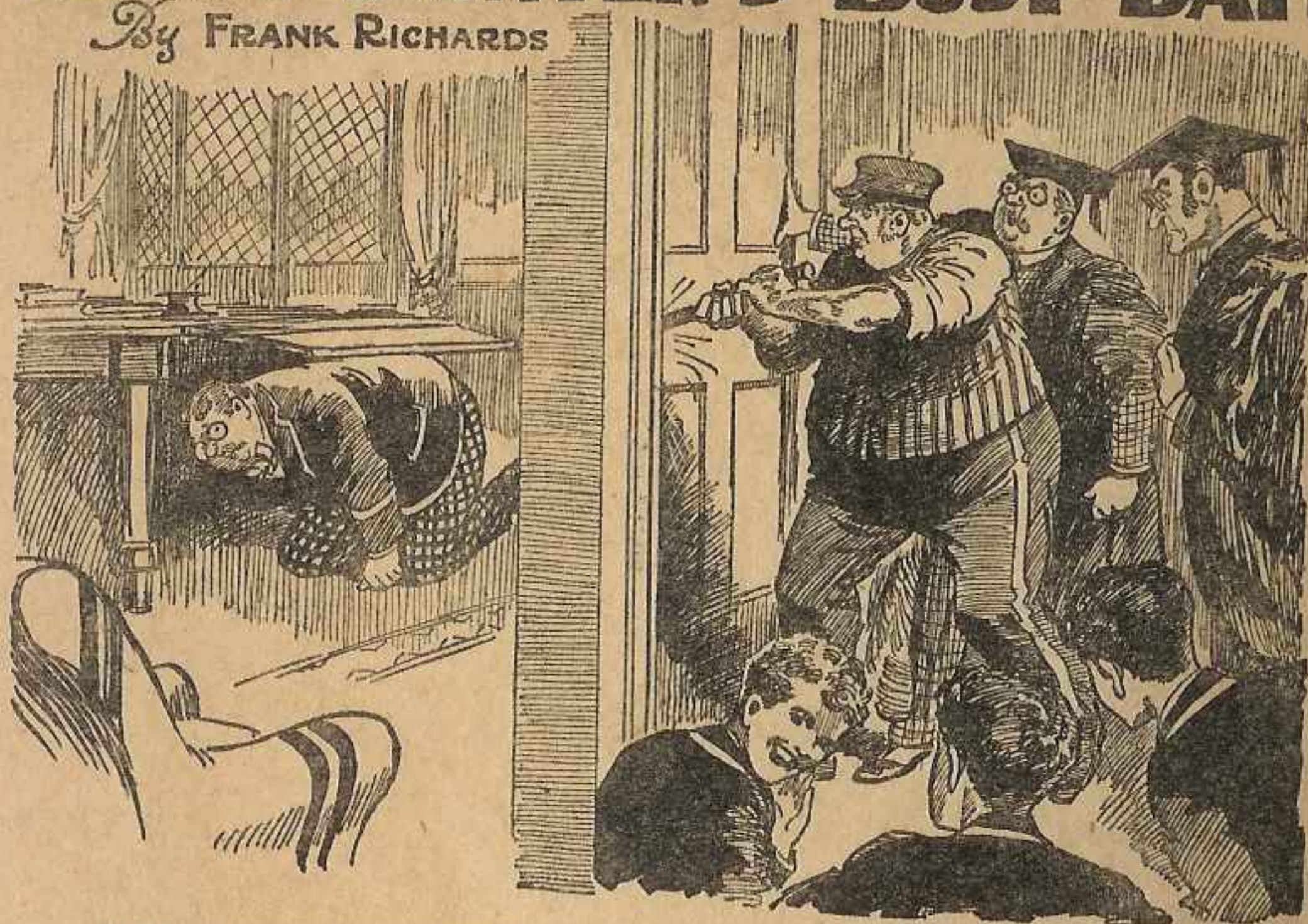


# BILLY BUNTER'S BUSY DAY!

By FRANK RICHARDS



## THE FIRST CHAPTER VENTRILOQUIAL!

"BLESS my soul!"

Peter Todd jumped.

It was enough to make any fellow jump.

The words in themselves were not, of course, very startling. Often and often had every fellow at Greyfriars heard Dr. Locke, the headmaster, utter that ejaculation. And the revered headmaster's voice, though deep, was quite a pleasant one; there was nothing startling in that.

Yet Peter Todd jumped in utter amazement.

For he was coming up the Remove

passage, and it was from his own study No. 7 in the Remove that the ejaculation proceeded.

The door of Study No. 7 stood slightly ajar. Peter could not see into the study; but he could hear.

And that was what he heard—the deep, familiar voice of the Head uttering that ejaculation—in Peter's own study.

"My only

hat!" murmured Peter.

He halted.

What the Head could possibly be doing in his study was a mystery to him. Sometimes Dr. Locke visited the junior quarters of the school on a tour of inspection. But then he came in

*A humorous long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., starring Billy Bunter, the ventriloquist of Greyfriars.*



state, as it were, with the Remove master—a sort of stately procession. Remove fellows, spotting him from a distance, would have their rooms all ready to meet his august eye—Bob Cherry would take his football boots off the mantelpiece, and Skinner would slip his cigarettes under the hearthrug.

For the Head to dodge, as it were, into a fellow's study in his absence, in a sort of surreptitious way, was absolutely unknown and unheard of; and Toddy would not have believed it possible. The Head might drop informally into a Sixth Form study for a chat—say, Wingate's or Gwynn's study. But he did not, of course, drop in on Lower Fourth fags for purposes of chatting.

So Peter Todd stood amazed, staring at the door of Study No. 7, wondering whether, in the amazing circumstances, he could venture to enter his own study.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry came up the Remove passage and greeted Toddy with a smack on the shoulder. The smack rang a good deal like a pistol shot; Bob had a heavy hand.

"Ow!" gasped Peter. "Keep off, you ass!"

"What's the row?" asked Bob. "What are you standing here for blinking at your study door? Anything up?"

"Hush!"

"Eh! Why hush?"

"The Head!" whispered Peter.

Bob Cherry stared at him, and then stared round him. There was no sign of the Head in the Remove passage, that Bob could see.

"What the thump——" began Bob.

"Hush!" breathed Peter. "I tell you the Head——"

"The jolly old Head isn't here," said Bob blankly.

Peter made him a frantic sign to be silent. Bob's voice, undoubtedly, was audible in Study No. 7. What would Dr. Locke think, hearing himself described as the jolly old Head?

The surprised Bob was about to speak again, when there was a voice from Study No. 7—a familiar voice, but very startling in that quarter.

"Upon my word!"

Bob Cherry jumped, just as Peter Todd had done.

"Oh!" he gasped. "The Head!"

He stared at the door. That door of Study No. 7 seemed to fascinate the gaze of both the juniors.

"He's in my study!" whispered Peter. "Something's up! Goodness knows what's the matter, but I suppose it means a row. The Head wouldn't come up to the Remove passage for nothing."

Four juniors came up the staircase and glanced along the passage towards Bob and Toddy. They were Harry Wharton, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. They were about to go into Wharton's study, No. 1; but their gaze was attracted by the two juniors staring blankly at Study No. 7.

"What's on there?" called out Harry Wharton.

"Bunter burst?" asked Johnny Bull.

Peter made a sign of silence, and the mystified juniors came along the passage in wonder.

There was no need then for explanation; for the voice from the study went on again.

"Bless my soul! I must speak of this to Mr. Quelch."

"The Head!" breathed Wharton.

"What on earth——" began Nugent.



"Beats me!" whispered Peter Todd. "It's not like the Head to sneak into a fellow's study like this. I went down only ten minutes ago and left Bunter there. Now——"

He broke off as the voice went on.

"I shall certainly speak to Mr. Quelch! Bunter!"

"Yes, sir!"

That was the well-known squeak of Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove. The juniors exchanged glances. Apparently Billy Bunter was in Study No. 7, along with the headmaster.

"What does this mean, Bunter?"

"What, sir?"

"The untidy state of this study, Bunter! I am surprised, Bunter—I may say I am shocked! Whose are these boots?"

"Toddy's, sir."

"Does Todd generally keep his football boots in the bookcase?"

Peter Todd, in the passage, made a grimace. It was true that his football boots were in the bookcase in Study No. 7; but he did not generally keep them there; neither would they have been there had he expected a visit from the Head. But this occurrence was extremely unexpected.

"Well, sir, Toddy's rather slovenly," came Bunter's voice. "I do my best, sir, to keep the study in order. But it's rather hard with a study-mate like Peter Todd."

"Is it, you fat villain?" murmured Peter under his breath. Only that afternoon he had been slanging Bunter for untidiness.

"I am sure of that, Bunter," resumed the Head's voice. "I have the highest opinion of you, Bunter, and I am assured that you do everything in your power to restrain the slovenly habits of your study-mate."

Harry Wharton & Co. blinked at one another. This was the first they

had heard of the Head's high opinion of William George Bunter. Upon what he founded it was a mystery to them.

"Thank you, sir!" squeaked Bunter.

"I shall certainly speak to Mr. Quelch. I shall request him to administer some correction to Todd."

Peter made another grimace.

"Where is Todd now, Bunter?"

"I think he's hanging about outside the study, sir," squeaked the Owl of the Remove. "I fancy he can hear everything you're saying, sir."

Peter's expression was quite indescribable as he heard that.

"Bless my soul! Todd! Todd, I say! If you are there, come into the study at once!"

"Oh dear!" murmured Peter.

And he pushed open the door of Study No. 7 and entered.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER

### ONLY BUNTER!

**B**ILLY BUNTER grinned cheerfully at the newcomer.

The fat junior's face was, in fact, irradiated by its most expansive grin. Bunter seemed to be immensely entertained about something.

But Peter was not looking at him.

He was looking for the Head.

A bewildered look came over Peter's face. He had entered the study in response to the Head's command. But, amazing to relate, the Head was not visible within the walls of Study No. 7. Billy Bunter was there, fat and grinning. But Dr. Locke was not to be seen.

Peter Todd blinked about the study, bewildered, almost unnerved. Unless the Head had vanished suddenly up the chimney, Peter could not guess what had become of him.



"What—wha-a-a-at——" stammered Toddy.

"He, he, he!"

"What—where's the Head?"

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

Peter stared round the study again, and then his eyes fixed on Billy Bunter with a deadly look.

"You—you—you fat villain! This is one of your ventriloquist tricks, is it?"

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter.

"I fancy I pulled your leg, old bean. He, he, he!"

"You—you——" gasped Peter.

Bunter chortled spasmodically. There was no doubt that the Greyfriars ventriloquist had pulled Peter's leg—most effectually and completely. Not for a moment had Toddy doubted that the Head was in Study No. 7; he had never even dreamed that the dialogue he had heard from outside was carried on entirely by Bunter, speaking alternately in his own voice and in the Head's.

Bunter grinned at him cheerily.

"You see, I heard you coming!" he explained. "I thought I'd make you jump, you know. He, he, he!"

Peter breathed hard and deep.

"Well, you did make me jump," he admitted.

"He, he, he!"

"And as one good turn deserves another, I'm going to make you jump."

"I say, Peter—— Yaroooooooooh!" roared Bunter, as Peter Todd grabbed him by the collar and proceeded to tap his head against the study table.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"What——"

Harry Wharton & Co. stared in. There was no sign of the Head in the study, but Bunter's head was rapping on the table in a series of postman's knocks, and the yells of William

George Bunter rang the length of the Remove passage.

"I say, you fellows, draggimoff!" yelled Bunter. "Yaroooh! Only a joke—only a j-j-j-joke! Whoop! Stoppit! I'll jolly well lick you, Peter Todd! Oh crumbs! Draggimoff!"

Crack, crack, crack!

"You fat villain!" gasped Peter. "I've warned you what would happen if you played your beastly ventriloquial tricks in this study any more! Take that—and that—and that——"

"Yaroooogh! Rescue!" yelled Bunter, struggling frantically.

Harry Wharton & Co. rushed to the rescue. The excited Peter was collared and dragged off his victim.

"Hold on!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Enough's as good as a feast, you know, Toddy."

"Mustn't slaughter Bunter!" said Johnny Bull.

"Leggo! I—I—I'll jolly well burst him!" exclaimed Peter Todd. "He made me believe that the Head was here—going to report me to Quelchy for slovenliness! He——"

"Only a jest, old man," said Harry Wharton soothingly. "You really might have guessed that it was Bunter, knowing his tricks."

"You didn't guess!" snapped Peter.

"Well, no," admitted the captain of the Remove. "Bunter had the Head's toot wonderfully. Blessed if I know how he does it."

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Keep that idiot off! It's a gift, of course—a wonderful gift——"

"Must be a gift," said Bob. "If it needed brains, you couldn't do it."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Will you leggo?" roared Peter Todd. "I tell you I'm going to squash him! Ventriloquism is barred in this study!"



"Todd!" It was a sharp, stern voice outside the door, the voice of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove. "Todd, what does this violence mean?"

Peter Todd jumped, and the Co. released him at once. Apparently the terrific yelling in Study No. 7 had brought the Remove master on the scene. Certainly Bunter's frantic howls must have been heard all over Greyfriars.

"Oh, sir!" gasped Peter.

"I—I—I——"

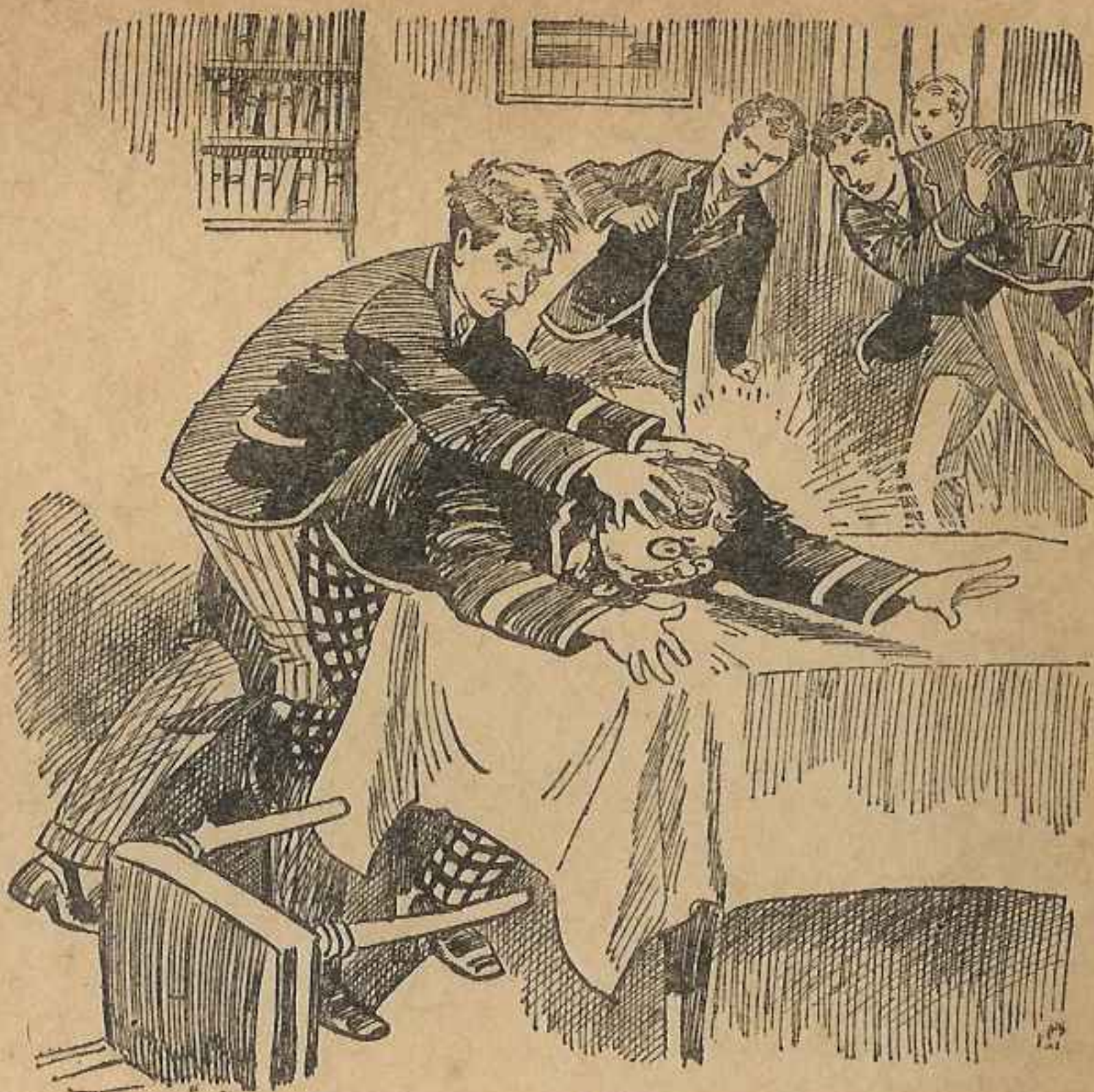
"How dare you, Todd?"

"I—I—I——"

Peter broke off. The door was wide open, and there was nothing to be seen of Mr. Quelch there. Peter understood all of a sudden; really it was impossible that Mr. Quelch should be keeping out of sight round the corner while he was speaking to Todd. It was the Greyfriars ventriloquist again!

Bunter's faculty for imitating voices was really marvellous. But his weird gift earned him more kicks than halfpence, so to speak, in the Greyfriars Remove.

"Quelch's not there," said Bob Cherry. "It's Bunter again! How the dickens does he do it?"



"I say, Peter—— Yaroooooooooh!" roared Bunter as Peter Todd grabbed his head and proceeded to tap it against the table. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry as Harry Wharton & Co. looked in.

"He, he, he!"

"I—I—I'll make an example of him!" roared Peter. "Why, a fellow's life isn't worth living with a potty ventriloquist in the study! I'll burst him!"

"Whoop!" roared Bunter.

Peter's grasp was on him again, and he was yanked out of the armchair. He bumped on the carpet with a heavy bump.

"There!" gasped Peter.

"Yow-ow-ow! Help!"

"Todd! How dare you?"

It was Mr. Quelch's voice again, but this time it was the genuine article; the din in the Remove passage had, in fact, drawn the Form master to the scene.



Mr. Quelch came whisking along to Study No. 7 with a frowning brow and a cane in his hand.

He stared into the study wrathfully. Peter Todd, with his back to the door, was bumping Bunter's hapless head on the carpet.

"Todd! Cease this at once! You ruffianly boy, how dare you?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, cheese it, you spoofing rotter!" howled Peter Todd. "How the dickens you do it while I'm bumping your head is a mystery to me, but I'll jolly well stop you!"

As Peter had his back to the door, and did not see Mr. Quelch, it was natural that he should suppose that it was some more of Bunter's ventriloquism.

Bump, bump!

"Yaroooooh! Help!"

"Toddy!" gasped Wharton.

"Todd!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Are you out of your senses?"

"Shut up, I tell you!"

"What?"

"I'll jolly well make you chuck it somehow, you silly idiot!"

Mr. Quelch stood transfixed.

Really, it was incredible that a junior in his own Form should talk to him like this. But he had to believe his own ears.

"Toddy!" yelled Bob. "You frightful ass, it's really Mr. Quelch this time!"

"What?"

Peter Todd released Bunter as if he had suddenly become red-hot, and spun round.

His jaw dropped at the sight of his Form-master in the doorway.

"Oh, my hat! Oh crikey! Mr. Quelch! Oh!"

"Todd!" stuttered the Remove master. "You—you—you unruly, disrespectful young rascal! You—

you—— How dare you? I shall take you to the Head for a flogging! I—I——"

"Oh, sir! Sorry!" gasped Peter, in dismay. "I—I thought—— I didn't know it was you, sir; I never knew—I swear——"

His utter dismay was convincing, Mr. Quelch calmed down a little.

"If you were too excited to recognise my voice, Todd, that is very little excuse for you. I shall cane you severely for creating this disturbance, and for not paying immediate attention to your Form-master."

"I—I—I——" babbled Peter.

"Bend over that armchair, Todd!"

"Oh dear!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack, whack, whack!

Peter Todd squirmed and wriggled and gasped as he received "six"—the severest "six" he ever had received.

"Now, let there be no more of this," said Mr. Quelch, tucking his cane under his arm. "Any repetition of this disorderly conduct, Todd, will be followed by a flogging from your head-master. Take care!"

And Mr. Quelch, with a grim warning frown, marched out of the study, leaving Peter Todd wriggling in anguish.

Bunter rolled out after him. Just then Billy Bunter did not regard Study No. 7 as a safe place to linger in, and undoubtedly he was right. Peter Todd leaned on the table and gasped.

"Oh dear! Oh crumbs! I—I'll burst that fat villain! Ow, ow, ow! What are you grinning at, you silly owls? Ow! Is there anything to grin at, you chuckling chumps? Get out! Ow, ow, ow!"

And Harry Wharton & Co. got out, still grinning, leaving Peter to gasp and groan till, at long last, gasping and groaning brought him relief.



## THE THIRD CHAPTER

### BUNTER ASKS FOR IT!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

Bob Cherry looked astonished. "How did Bunter know we had a cake for tea?" he asked.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I didn't know you had a cake! Still, I don't mind taking a whack, as you ask me."

"Nobody asked you, sir, she said," sang Frank Nugent. And the chums of the Remove chuckled.

Billy Bunter rolled into Study No. 1.

There was a large cake on the table, and the Famous Five were beginning tea with bread-and-butter, intending to finish with the cake. Billy Bunter decided to start on the cake. He picked up a knife, sliced off about a quarter of it, and started.

"I haven't really come to tea," he remarked. "I'll leave you chaps all the bread-and-butter."

"Go hon!" said Bob sarcastically.

"You might leave us a little of the cake, too, if it isn't asking too much, Bunter," remarked Johnny Bull, still more sarcastically.

But Bunter had no attention to waste on sarcasm. His attention was concentrated on the cake.

"You're not tea-ing in your own study?" asked Harry Wharton, with a laugh.

After the exciting events of the afternoon Wharton could guess that Bunter was not keen to revisit No. 7 until he had to.

Bunter shook his head with his mouth full.

"No; I'm fed-up with Toddy. Dutton told me he's got a fives bat on the table waiting for me to come in to tea."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Pretty hard cheese for a fellow to be kept out of his own study in this

style, I think," said Bunter warmly. "I've a jolly good mind to go straight to No. 7 and give Toddy a hiding with his own bat. But—but I won't."

"No; I think I wouldn't," grinned Bob Cherry. "It would be a jolly painful thing—not for Toddy."

"The fact is Quelchy's licked him, and I'm letting him off," said Bunter magnanimously. "I say, you fellows, this is a rather decent cake. Not like the cakes I get from home, of course, but quite good. I'll have some more."

And he did.

"Don't mind us!" said Frank Nugent, also in a deep, sarcastic vein.

"Right, old fellow, I won't! I like cake better than bread-and-butter, myself; but every chap to his taste," said Bunter. "I'll do some ventriloquial stunts after tea, if you like. I don't mind!"

"We do," said Harry Wharton.

"Jolly queer thing, isn't it, how fellows are jealous of my gifts?" said Bunter. "Jealousy and detraction all round, that's what I'm accustomed to. I suppose it's a sort of penalty for being clever."

"Oh, my hat!"

"The cleverfulness is not really terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"If you fellows could do what I do——" went on Bunter.

"We'd like to, but you've got all the cake," remarked Johnny Bull.

"I wasn't alluding to the cake, fathead."

"I was," said Johnny Bull.

"I hope you're not going to be mean about a cake. I'll let you have the next one they send me from Bunter Court, if you like."

"We shall be past cakes then," said Bob Cherry. "People don't eat cakes in extreme old age."

"Yah!"



Bunter sliced the cake again. Harry Wharton reached across the table and rescued what was left. It made a moderate slice each for the owners of the cake.

"I say, you fellows, I really came in to tell you the news," said Bunter, munching busily. "The Head's son is coming home."

"Is he?" said Bob. "Did the Head tell you so?"

"Yes; confided it to me," said Bunter. "I don't think anybody else at Greyfriars has been told. You know young Locke is in the Army. He's been out in Mesopotamia, or somewhere, a jolly long time. Well, he's coming back to England, and may land at Southampton any day—the ship's been delayed by foul weather, or something."

Harry Wharton & Co. were mildly interested. They were acquainted with the Head's son, Mr. Percy Locke; he had been at Greyfriars, some time ago. He was quite a nice young man, they remembered, and they had no doubt that the Head was attached to him, and glad he was coming home again.

"The Head's going to Southampton to meet him when the steamer gets in," said Bunter. "He's rather bothered by the delay, you know, as he can't get away from Greyfriars for long; but he wants to be sure not to miss Percy when he lands."

"He told you all that?" grinned Bob.

"Yes; we had quite a chat. I understand that Quelchy will be left in charge while the Head's gone. Quelchy's the Head's right-hand man, you know, though he's only Lower Fourth master. From what old Locke was saying I think the steamer may get in to-morrow; if so, the Head will buzz off in his car at once,

leaving Quelchy in control. Any more cake?"

"Nix."

"Not much of a spread to ask a fellow to," said Bunter, with a sniff. "I rather wish I had gone to Smithy's study now."

"And so say all of us!" said Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But about young Locke," went on Bunter. "The Head said he was thinking of giving Greyfriars a holiday when the chap comes home."

"Good egg!"

"Good old Head!"

"Bravo!"

This was much more interesting news.

"The goodnessful is terrific, if true," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "But how does the esteemed and fat-headed Bunter know?"

"The Head told me," said Bunter calmly. "He was quite chatty, in fact. I don't know whether it's to be a whole holiday or a half; the Head was just going to say when Quelchy looked round and I had to clear——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean the Head didn't mention that in his chat with me. I don't see anything to cackle at. I say, you fellows, it will be ripping to get an extra holiday, especially if it's on a day when we have maths. I thought I'd tell you fellows, as you're pals of mine. If you're done with the table you might clear the things off, will you? I'm going to do my lines here."

The Famous Five looked at Bunter. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, to whom Study No. 1 belonged, did not seem in the least enthusiastic about Bunter doing his lines there. Neither did they seem keen to clear the tea-table for the purpose.





"Bend over that armchair, Todd!" ordered Mr. Quelch. "Oh dear!" gasped Peter. Whack, whack, whack, whack, whack, whack! Toddy squirmed and wriggled as he received "six."

"You see, Toddy'll be cutting up rusty if I go to my own study," explained Bunter, "and I've got to get through the lines. There's two hundred now—they've been doubled twice, because I haven't done them. Quelch's told me it will be a licking if they're not handed in by five to-day."

"It's five now!" said Nugent.

"Yes; all the more reason for hurrying. If I don't take them to Quelch he will come up here inquiring after them, you know, and that means bending over."

"Then it means bending over," said Harry Wharton. "You can't possibly get two hundred lines done in time."

"I expect my old pals to stand by me, especially when I've come here to tell you the latest news," said Bunter. "Two hundred lines won't take long with all of us working at them."

"Oh!"

"I'll do a line at the top of each sheet, see, and you fellows can copy my fist," said Bunter. "It only needs a little sense."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You've got a Virgil here," said Bunter. "I don't want to go to my study for mine. Now, there's no time to lose. Clear the table sharp."

The Famous Five did not stir.

They were not looking for lines to do, as a matter of fact. To Billy



Bunter it was extremely important that those lines should be done in a hurry, and he considered that it was a case of all hands to the mill. The importance was not so obvious to the Famous Five.

They considered that if Bunter did not want a licking for leaving his impots unwritten, he should have written them while there was yet time. That consideration did not seem to occur to the Owl of the Remove.

"Deaf?" asked Bunter, looking round irritably at five grinning faces. "I keep on telling you that there's no time to lose. If Quelchy remembers my impot, he may come up here any minute after me."

"And catch us all copying your fist!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Not quite good enough, Bunter."

"The not-quitefulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows, I'm relying on you, you know," urged Bunter. "I've had the rotten impot doubled twice, and Quelchy always makes it a licking after that."

"Why haven't you done your lines, lazybones?" demanded Johnny Bull. "Do you think we're going to do two hundred because you're too jolly lazy to do fifty?"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Call in some other study," said Nugent.

"I say, you fellows, I expect my old pals to stand by me at a time like this," said Bunter reproachfully. "I really think they ought."

"They ought," agreed Bob Cherry. "Go and tell them so, whoever they are."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cut the cackle!" exclaimed Bunter. "I tell you old Quelchy will be after me if I don't bung those lines on him soon. Look here, are you

going to pile into those lines, or are you not?"

"Not!" said five voices in unison; and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh added emphatically that the notfulness was terrific.

"Well, this is rather thick," said Bunter, in a deeply aggrieved tone. "You won't write my lines in an emergency like this, when I've come here specially to tell you what old Locke told me, about having a holiday when young Locke comes home—— What are you making faces at, Wharton?"

Wharton was making an extraordinary face, intended to convey a warning to Bunter to ring off. The door of Study No. 1 was wide open, and a figure in cap and gown was passing—the figure of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove. Obviously the Remove master was on his way to Study No. 7, in search of Bunter and the—as yet—unwritten lines.

Bunter's voice floated out of Study No. 1, and Mr. Quelch came to a sudden halt and turned to the door.

Then the Owl of the Remove learned the cause of the extraordinary expression on Wharton's face.

"Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!"

Bunter spun round like a teetotum. His fat knees knocked together as he blinked at Mr. Quelch, his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles with terror.

"Bunter," thundered the Remove master, "is it possible that you were alluding to your headmaster as 'old Locke'?"

"Oh crumbs! No, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Certainly not, sir! I—I wouldn't dream of such a thing, sir!"

"I distinctly heard you use the words 'old Locke,' Bunter."

"Did—d-did you, sir?"



"I did, Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, with a terrifying glare at the hapless Owl. "How dare you deny using words which I distinctly heard you use? Such an expression applied to the headmaster of this school——"

"I—I wasn't speaking of the Head, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"What, boy?"

"I—I was sus-speaking of—of—of——" stuttered Bunter.

"Of whom?" said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice.

"Nobody at all, sir," gasped the terrified Owl. "I—I was speaking of—of the lock on a door, sir."

"Wha-a-t?"

"The—the lock on my study door, sir," babbled Bunter. "I—I was saying it was an old lock, sir, and—and we want a new one, sir. That—that's all, sir. I—I hope you believe me, sir."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry, almost overcome.

The chums of the Remove gazed at Bunter open-mouthed.

Bunter was a fabricator of unusual powers. His first resource in a scrape was to roll out the first "whopper" that came into his obtuse head, and to back it up with more and more "whoppers," bigger and bigger, like Pelion piled on Ossa. But if Bunter hoped that Mr. Quelch believed his extraordinary explanation, it showed a remarkably sanguine disposition on his part. His hope was not destined to be realised.

"Boy," stuttered Mr. Quelch, "how dare you—how dare you, I say, look me in the face and tell me such absurd untruths?"

"Oh, really, sir——"

"You were alluding to your headmaster in the most disrespectful terms," exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "But worse than that, Bunter, you were

speaking of a private matter that has hitherto been known only to the Head and myself, outside Dr. Locke's own family. I demand to know how you became aware that Dr. Locke's son is about to return home from abroad?"

Bunter's teeth chattered.

He had told Harry Wharton & Co. that he had been having a chat with the Head. But even Bunter was not likely to make that statement to Mr. Quelch.

"You have been eavesdropping, Bunter."

"Oh! No, sir! Oh, no!" gasped Bunter.

"The matter has not been mentioned before to-day. You must have listened to Dr. Locke's conversation with me."

"Certainly not, sir! I—I wouldn't."

"Then how do you know anything about the matter, Bunter?"

"I—I—I don't, sir."

"What?"

"I—I don't know anything about it at all, sir! It—it's quite a mistake to—to think I know anything about it."

"Are you out of your senses, Bunter? I heard you making the statement to these juniors——"

"I—I didn't know you were listening, sir!"

"What?" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"I—I mean, I didn't know you were passing, sir. Oh, dear!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I wasn't really telling these fellows about young Locke coming home, sir. I—I don't know anything about it really, sir. I—I was only speaking in—in a general sort of way, sir."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

"Bunter, go to my study at once!"

"Wha-a-t for, sir?"



"I am going to punish you, Bunter, for outrageous untruthfulness, and for listening to a private conversation."

"Oh, sir! I——"

"Go!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

The hapless Owl quaked and went. Mr. Quelch whisked away after him.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Bunter does take the cake—the whole cake! Ananias was a fool to him; he could give George Washington fifty in a hundred and beat him hollow!"

"Poor old Bunter; he's for it now!" said Harry.

"Well, he asked for it, and no mistake."

There was no doubt that Bunter had asked for it, and no doubt at all that he was getting what he had asked for. A few minutes later loud sounds of anguish were heard proceeding from Mr. Quelch's study—the voice of William George Bunter raised in woeful lamentation. The vials of wrath were being poured upon the Owl of the Remove, and the celebrated lamentations of Job were a mere jest compared with the lamentations of William George Bunter.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER

### WOEFUL!

PETER TODD glanced round, and reached for the fives bat that lay handy on the study table. The bat was all ready for Bunter when he came in, and Bunter was coming. There was a well-known footstep and a well-known grunt in the Remove passage outside Study No. 7.

The door opened.

Peter gripped the bat with a business-like grip.

But as the Owl of the Remove rolled in Peter unloosed his grip. It needed only one glance at Bunter's anguished face to tell that he had been gathering up punishment somewhere, and that he was not in need of any more.

The Owl of the Remove blinked at Peter with a lack-lustre eye. He had forgotten the bat.

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Todd, staring at him.

Groan!

"Loder been licking you?"

Groan!

"Too much tuck, and a pain amidships?" asked Peter.

Groan!

Bunter limped across the study to the armchair and sank down. The next moment he leaped to his feet with a howl. For reasons of his own, the hapless Owl did not want to sit down. As a rule he never stood if he could sit; just now he was keen on standing.

"Licked, I suppose?" asked Peter.

"Ow! Wow! Yes! Wow! Ow!"

"Well, don't make such a row about it, old chap!"

Groan!

"I'll let you off the bat," said Peter generously. "There! You were going to get a licking, anyhow! So shut up!"

Groan!

"Chuck it, old man!"

Groan!

Billy Bunter leaned on the table and groaned as if he were getting his form up for a groaning match.

Peter eyed him. He could see that the fat junior had been through it severely; it was not humbug this time.

"Well, if you've had it bad you can groan a bit if you like," he said.



"Dash it all, you can howl if you like! Try howling!"

Groan!

"I'll get out of the study, if you really don't mind," said Todd, rising. "Keep it up if it relieves you, old fat man, but it's a bit horrid to listen to!"

Groan!

Peter crossed to the door. But he turned back. Bunter was not a fellow whose ways were likely to make him popular or beloved, but Peter could feel for him in this dreadful state. He fumbled in his pocket.

"I've got a packet of toffee here," he said.

Obviously, Bunter's sufferings were acute. For he showed no interest in the toffee.

Peter took out the packet and held it out to Bunter. The Owl of the Remove shook his head feebly.

"Mean to say you can't eat toffee now?" asked Peter, in wonder.

Groan!

"Great Scott! You must have it bad! Well, if you don't want it I do," said Peter, and he was about to slip the toffee back into his pocket when Bunter held out a fat hand. "Oh,

changed your mind—what? Well, here you are."

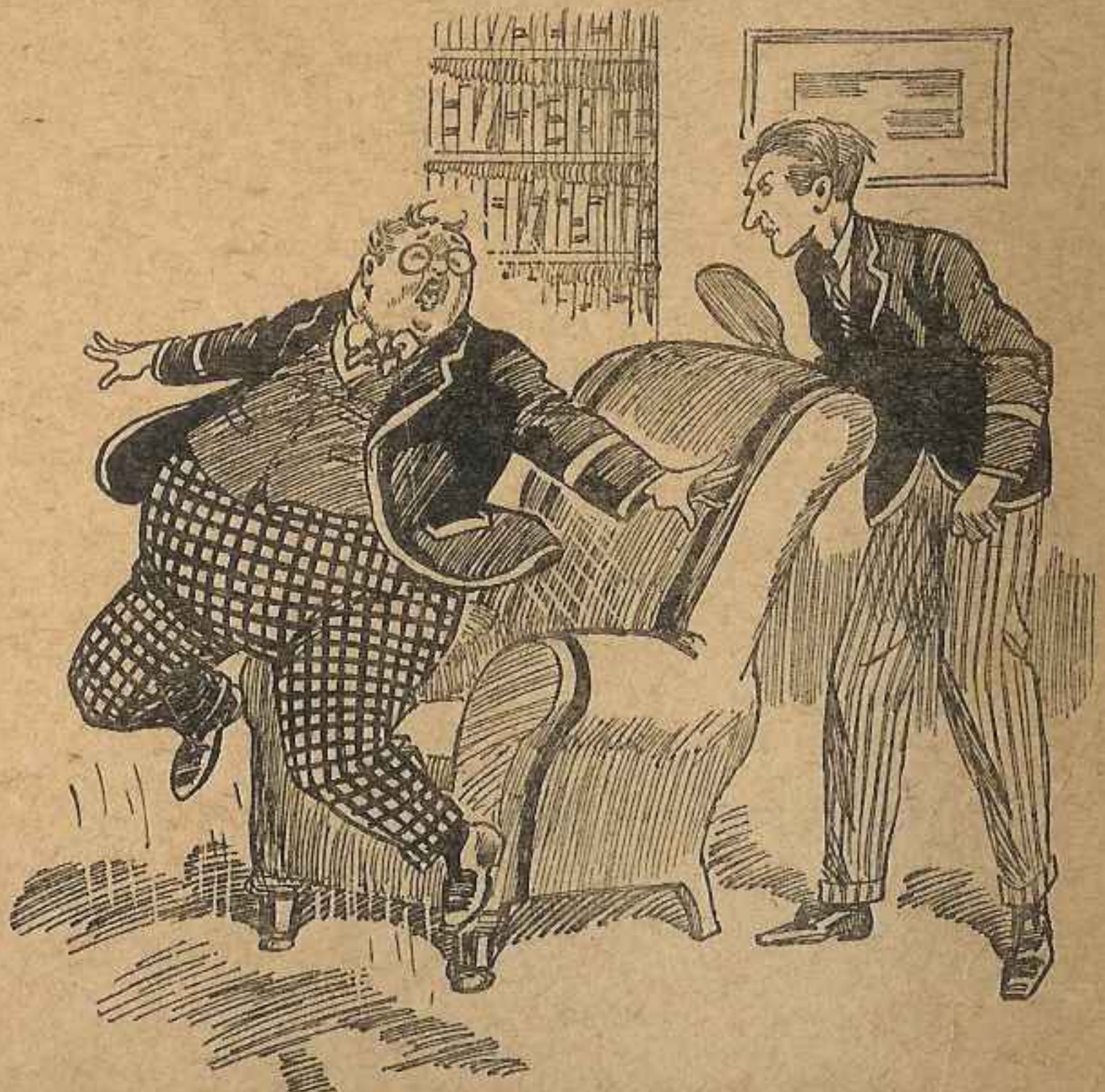
Bunter accepted the toffee. But he did not transfer it immediately to his mouth, as he generally did with anything eatable that came into his possession. He slipped it into his pocket. His interest even in food was at a low ebb in this state of suffering; but even in the midst of his woes he had an eye to the future.

Peter Todd grinned.

"Well, you can have the study to yourself till you've done groaning," he said. "Get through before prep, won't you?"

Groan!

Peter Todd left the study and



With a groan Bunter sank down in the armchair. The next moment he leaped to his feet with a howl. Bunter was not keen on sitting after receiving a licking from Mr. Que'ch!



Bunter was left to groan, which he did loud and long. Mr. Quelch had not spared the rod; he had felt that this was an occasion for severity, and he had handed out a dozen of the best. No doubt the Remove master was quite right, from his own point of view; but his point of view and Bunter's were wide as the poles asunder.

Bunter leaned on the table in deep tribulation, and the sounds of his woe echoed through Study No. 7.

He was still groaning, quite a considerable time later, when the door was tapped and opened, and Lord Mauleverer's kind face looked in.

Bunter blinked dismally at his lordship.

"I hear you've been through it, fatty," remarked Mauleverer, with a sympathetic look at the Owl of the Remove.

Groan!

"Feelin' awf'ly bad?"

"Oh! Oh, dear! Wow! Yes! Frightful!"

"Can't take an interest in anythin' just yet—what?"

"Ow! No."

"No good askin' you to supper in my study, then?"

"Eh?"

Bunter pricked up his fat ears. It dawned upon him that his pains and aches had considerably lessened, and that he was still groaning from, as it were, force of habit.

"Don't feel like supper?" asked the sympathetic Mauly. "We've got fish and chips——"

"Oh!"

"And a pie——"

"Ah!"

"And a cake! But if you don't feel equal to it——"

"I do!" gasped Bunter, in a great

hurry. "The—the fact is, I feel a lot better now, Mauly! Lots and lots!"

Lord Mauleverer grinned

"If you're sure——"

"Quite."

"Come on, then, old fat bean!"

And Billy Bunter rolled after his amiable lordship to Study No. 12. He had a twinge as he sat down at Lord Mauleverer's hospitable board, and gasped; but the feed consoled him. His woeful face brightened over the fish and chips, he was smiling when he came to the pie, and over the cake he grinned with expansive enjoyment.

Bunter was himself again!

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER

### STICKING TO IT!

MR. QUELCH frowned as he glanced at Bunter in the Remove Form the following morning.

Any fellow but Bunter would have been wary; he would have noted his Form master's frown, and taken warning thereby; he would have remembered that he had lately given dire offence, and would have been extremely circumspect. Not so Bunter.

He was thinking almost entirely of his inner Bunter; and so far from observing the danger-signals, he was not thinking of Mr. Quelch at all.

Far more important considerations occupied his fat mind.

Harry Wharton was called upon to construe, and Vernon-Smith followed, and Ogilvy followed Smithy. Bunter was not giving much attention; he hoped that he would not be called upon, but if it happened, he was prepared to render his usual excruciating construe, which certainly would have made P. Virgilius Maro tear his hair, could that ancient classic gentleman have been present to hear it.



While the other fellows were giving Virgil beans, so to speak, Bunter was groping in his pockets.

He was hungry, and getting hungrier. He groped in his pockets in the faint hope of finding some article of a comestible nature overlooked there. A chocolate, however dusty, a fragment of liquorice, howsoever sticky, even a single aniseed ball, would have been very welcome.

Bunter's fat face lighted up as his groping fingers came in contact with a toffee-packet.

It was the toffee Peter Todd had given him in the study the evening before. In the enjoyment of Lord Mauleverer's munificent feed, Bunter had forgotten all about that toffee.

He smiled.

That toffee came now like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years. It was the right thing in the right place!

Surreptitiously, under his desk, Bunter extracted the toffee from the packet, and then, stooping down for a dropped pencil, he transferred a chunk of it to his mouth.

He sat up again happily.

Mr. Quelch's attention was fixed upon Redwing, who had been called upon to follow Ogilvy. For the moment, at least, he had no eyes for Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove chewed away at the toffee, in a happy and satisfied state.

"That will do, Redwing. You will go on, Bunter."

Bunter jumped.

Mr. Quelch's gimlet-eye was upon him now.

Bunter thought wildly of bolting the chunk of toffee. But it was too bulky to be bolted in a lump without imminent danger of choking. And he could not construe Virgil with a

large chunk of toffee in his mouth. It was a desperate moment.

The Owl of the Remove brought his teeth together on the chunk of toffee, to bite it in halves.

Thus divided, it could have been bolted rapidly in two gulps—at least, that was Bunter's idea. Perhaps it was fortunate for him that he was prevented from disposing of the toffee in that heroic manner. Prevented he certainly was. His teeth almost met in the sticky chunk as he bit at it desperately, but they would not come out again. To his utter horror, he found his teeth fast in the toffee, stuck as if they were glued.

"I called to you, Bunter!" snapped Mr. Quelch, quite unaware so far of the agony of mind that oppressed his hapless pupil.

Bunter was quite willing to respond to the call, and render a construe as bad as usual. But he couldn't.

The effort he made to draw his teeth from the toffee almost uprooted the teeth from his gums.

And they would not come out.

In fact, they seemed as likely to come out of his gums as to come out of the toffee into which they were deeply driven.

Bunter gasped and spluttered, his face growing as red as a turkey cock's. His eyes goggled horribly.

"Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

Peter Todd reached out a friendly foot to kick Bunter as a warning to attend to his Form master.

But a kick was no use to Bunter. He wanted a dentist at least to help him out of this fearful predicament.

Mr. Quelch frowned portentously. He was already displeased with Bunter—extremely displeased with him. It seemed to him now that the fat junior was adding deliberate insolence to his other many offences. Called upon to



construe, he did not rise to the occasion, but sat with his mouth tight shut, his eyes goggling at his Form master. Really, it was beyond all patience.

"Bunter! Will you heed me, or will you not?" thundered the Remove master. "Are you deaf, Bunter? What does this mean? Answer me!"

"Mmmmmmm!"

That was the best Bunter could hand out in the way of an answer. A fellow whose teeth were stuck together by toffee was not in a state for conversation. Bunter, as a rule, was an incessant talker. In season and out of season his fat voice was heard. Often and often—in fact, unnumbered times—Remove fellows had implored him to shut up. Now he had shut up with a vengeance!

"Bunter!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Gooooooh!"

"Boy!"

"Moooooooh!" mumbled Bunter helplessly.

The Removites stared round at Bunter. Nobody knew what was the matter with him—unless he had suddenly taken leave of his senses. Why a fellow, if sane, should sit there making a mooing noise like a cow was a complete mystery to all the Remove.

Mr. Quelch strode towards him. He came among the forms with thunder in his brow, and his eyes fairly gleamed at Bunter.

"Stand up, Bunter!"

Bunter stood up. He could obey that order.

"Now answer me!"

Bunter gurgled. That was an order he couldn't obey.

"Do you hear me, Bunter?"

"Mmmmmmmmm!"

"Have you something in your mouth?" exclaimed the Remove

master, beginning to comprehend what was wrong.

"Moooooooh!"

"You are eating in class, you greedy, disgusting boy!"

"Moooooooh!"

"What are you eating?"

"Ug-gug-gug-gooh!"

"How dare you utter such ridiculous sounds, Bunter?" roared the Form master. "This is deliberate insolence!"

"Mmmmmmmmm!"

Mr. Quelch had been sorely tried by Bunter, and now he was tried again, and his temper was found wanting. He grasped the fat junior by the collar and shook him vigorously.

"Ooooooooch!" mumbled Bunter helplessly.

Strive as he might, he could not drag his teeth from the toffee. And as he was trying to answer Mr. Quelch, he really could not help uttering what the Form master described as ridiculous sounds. Articulation was out of the question.

Shake! Shake! Shake!

"Mmmmmmmmm! Mmmmmmm!"

"You greedy, disobedient, disgusting boy!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, and he marched Bunter out of the class and hooked him over to the wastepaper basket. "Now eject whatever is in your mouth!"

"Mmmmmmmmmoooooh!"

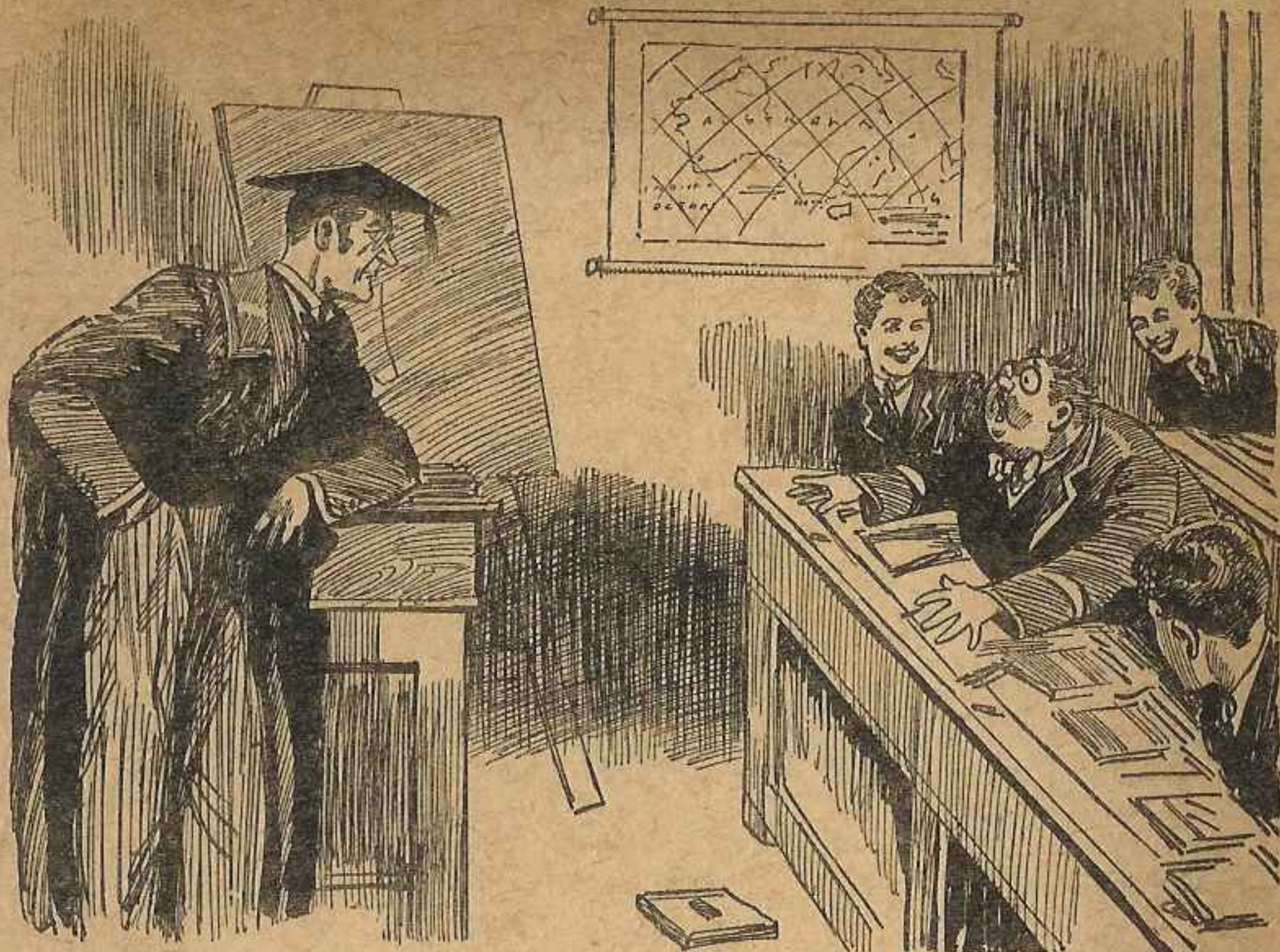
Bunter would have been only too glad to obey. But he couldn't! The toffee had the last word in that matter.

"For the last time, Bunter, will you obey me?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Ooooooooch!"

Bunter pointed desperately to his mouth. He tried to make Mr. Quelch understand that he could not speak. That fact dawned on the Form master at last, but it did not lessen his anger.





Called upon to construe, Bunter did not rise to the occasion. He just sat, his eyes goggling at his Form master. "Bunter!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "What does this mean? Answer me!" "Mmmmmmm!" answered Bunter.

"Is that an adhesive substance in your mouth, Bunter?"

"Mmmmmmmmmmm!"

"Toffee, or butterscotch, I presume?" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"Moooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar from the Remove. They could hold it in no longer.

They knew that Mr. Quelch was in a dangerous mood, and they were well aware that it was not safe to laugh. But they could not help it. There was a limit to human fortitude, and the Remove broke out quite suddenly into a roar.

Mr. Quelch glared round at his class.

"Silence!" he roared.

The laughter died away. The look

on Mr. Quelch's face would have induced gravity in an ancient jester or a modern judge. The Lower Fourth were suddenly solemn.

"Every boy present will take a hundred lines!" hooted the Remove master, greatly incensed.

The gravity of the Remove, if possible, increased in intensity. It was really impossible to foresee what another chuckle might have cost.

"There is no occasion for merriment in this disgusting, this revolting exhibition of a greedy boy!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

The Remove did not agree with him, but they tried to look as if they did. Form masters, especially in



Mr. Quelch's present mood, had to be given their head.

"Bunter!"

Mr. Quelch turned to his victim again.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Ow! Groooogh!"

Desperate efforts had brought success at last. His teeth emerged at long last from the clinging toffee.

His face was crimson, his eyes watered. He blinked in the direst apprehension at Mr. Quelch.

He had cause for apprehension.

"Oh! You can speak now, Bunter?"

"Ow! Yes, sir! Oh dear! Oh, quite, sir!" stuttered Bunter.

"I shall not cane you for this disgusting exhibition, this reckless interruption of classes, Bunter."

"Oh! Thank you, sir!"

"I shall send you to the Head!"

"Ow!"

"I shall request Dr. Locke to administer a severe flogging."

"Wow!"

"Stand there while I write you a note to take to the Head."

"Oh dear!"

Mr. Quelch scribbled a note at his desk. The Remove watched him in breathless silence, Bunter in quaking terror. Mr. Quelch sealed the note, handed it to Bunter and glanced at the Form-room clock. It was not yet time for Dr. Locke to have taken the Sixth.

"Go to Dr. Locke's study, Bunter, at once! Hand this note to him."

"Oh dear! I—I say, sir——"

"Silence!"

"But——"

Mr. Quelch grasped Bunter by the shoulder and walked him across to the door of the Form-room.

"Go!"

"Oh, crikey!"

Bunter went; and the Form-room door closed after him. While Mr. Quelch's back was turned, smiles had crept round the Remove. But as soon as he turned back an almost preternatural gravity reigned. Mr. Quelch gave his class a suspicious look.

"We will now resume!" he said in a grinding voice.

And they resumed; and for once in their career the Greyfriars Remove were an absolutely faultless Form. In Mr. Quelch's present mood, they had to be circumspect; and they were very, very circumspect indeed.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER

### BUNTER'S LUCK!

TAP!

Buzzzzz!

Billy Bunter tapped on the door of Dr. Locke's study, and at the same moment the telephone-bell rang in the room—just as if Bunter's tap had started the instrument.

Bunter opened the door, having tapped.

"Bless my soul!"

Bunter heard the Head utter that well-known ejaculation, as he blinked into the study.

But the Head was not looking at Bunter—he was standing at the telephone, with the receiver in his hand. Bunter had only a view of the back of his gown.

Bunter blinked at the Head's back.

He had a note to deliver to Dr. Locke, and he more than suspected that the note was to elicit a Head's flogging. In the circumstances, it was really too bad to be kept on tenterhooks like this. Bunter felt rather bitterly that the Head might have done his telephoning at a more convenient time.

With a flogging impending over his



head, Bunter was still Bunter! Whatsoever the Head had to say on the telephone was no concern of his; so naturally he listened with both his fat ears. That was Bunter's way.

"My dear, dear boy! Immediately!" the Head was saying into the transmitter.

Although Bunter could see only the Head's back, he could discern that the old gentleman was a little agitated.

"Certainly, my dear Percy!" went on the Head. "I shall order the car immediately—I shall be with you at lunch, I hope. Yes, yes, and you will return with me in the car. My dear boy!"

Obviously, Dr. Locke was speaking to his son, who must have landed from the steamer which had brought him home from Mesopotamia.

"I shall lose not a moment!" said the Head, in a voice of happy agitation. "And you are well, my boy—quite well? I am thankful for that! My dear boy, I shall use the greatest haste."

Dr. Locke hung up the receiver.

He turned from the telephone, and there was a brighter smile than Bunter had ever seen before on his kind old face. Evidently his son's return from the arid sands of Mesopotamia had delighted the old gentleman. Dr. Locke took a turn up and down in the study, not even noticing the fat junior in the doorway, for the moment.

Bunter coughed.

He was wondering inwardly whether, in this happy mood, the Head would be likely to lend ear to a plea for mercy. Certainly, Dr. Locke did not look as if he would have cared to flog anyone that morning.

Bunter had slipped Mr. Quelch's note into his pocket. He decided to

try the effect of his eloquence on the headmaster before he handed over that epistle.

Dr. Locke started a little as Bunter coughed, and looked round at him.

"What? What? Bunter! What are you doing here, Bunter?"

"Mr. Quelch sent me, sir——" began Bunter.

The Head interrupted him.

"But it is fortunate, as it happens," he said, without heeding Bunter, or perhaps even hearing him. "I have not a moment to spare. You will take a message to Mr. Quelch."

"If you please, sir——"

Dr. Locke waved away Bunter's intended remarks with a wave of the hand.

He had no time to listen to Bunter. He was totally ignorant and regardless of the importance of hearing him.

"Bunter, you will go to Mr. Quelch and——"

"But, sir——"

"Tell him I am called away to meet Mr. Percy at Southampton. He will understand."

"Yes; but—— Yes, sir. But——"

"Request him to take the Sixth Form, and make what other arrangements are necessary."

"Yes, sir! I——"

"That is all, Bunter."

"But, sir——"

But the Head was gone.

Billy Bunter blinked after him as he hurried down the corridor, with a haste very unusual in the grave and dignified old gentleman.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Bunter, in utter disgust.

Really, it was too thick!

The Head seemed to think that his own trivial family matters transcended in importance the weighty affairs of William George Bunter, of the Remove.



It was another sample of the selfishness to which Bunter was accustomed!

It was Bunter's duty to repair immediately to the Remove Form-room and deliver the Head's message to Mr. Quelch.

But Bunter was in no hurry.

He had himself to think of, though the Head, apparently, did not consider him of any consequence.

Taking the Head's message to Mr. Quelch was all very well, but what was to happen then? The flogging, doubtless, would be off. The probability was that Mr. Quelch would take Bunter's punishment into his own hands, after all. On reflection, Bunter considered that most likely. He would have a caning from Mr. Quelch instead of the threatened Head's flogging.

But Bunter did not want a caning any more than he wanted a flogging.

The matter, therefore, required thinking about, even if the Head's trivial affairs had to be a little neglected.

Bunter rolled into the Head's study to think it out.

There was no hurry.

The Head was in a hurry, but Bunter wasn't! Mr. Quelch, supposing that he was getting a flogging, would not expect him back in the Remove-room yet. Bunter had time to think the matter out. The Head was gone, he was already in his own house, dressing hurriedly for the motor-car journey, no doubt. Certainly he had not expected Bunter to remain in his study, but it was quite safe for Bunter to remain there. He closed the door so that no chance passer should see him. Then he reflected.

Suppose he returned to the Remove-room, leaving Mr. Quelch to suppose that he had had his flogging! Bunter dallied with the idea, but he was forced

to give it up. Quelch was a suspicious beast and as sharp as a razor—and he might ask the Head later, too!

Supposing he had given Mr. Quelch's note to the Head—who had shoved it into his pocket unread in the hurry of the moment! That might really have happened, and Bunter felt that it was more plausible.

The fat junior extracted Mr. Quelch's note from his pocket and dropped it into the Head's grate.

It was consumed in a moment.

That, at least, was done with.

Bunter figured it out in his mind. In considering this important matter he quite forgot that he had an urgent message to deliver to Mr. Quelch.

The Sixth Form would be going to their room in a few minutes, and would not find the Head there; neither would he come! The high and mighty Sixth would be left at a loose end.

Still, that did not matter. Bunter did not give that the fag-end of a thought.

The great question was, how was Bunter, having escaped a licking from the Head, to escape a licking from Mr. Quelch in turn?

Faintly, from a distance, Bunter heard the echoing sound of a departing car.

The Head was gone! Already he was on the road, with his back to Greyfriars, speeding away from the school, his face towards the distant seaport and his thoughts already there. Bunter was done with the Head for the day.

If only he could have been done with Mr. Quelch also! Mr. Quelch, unfortunately, remained to be dealt with.

The problem was a difficult one. It beat anything in Euclid. From whatever aspect Bunter considered it, the



certainty seemed that since his punishment had not been administered by the Head, it would be administered by Mr. Quelch. The Head had been in a melting mood. Mr. Quelch was not likely to be in anything of the kind. If the flogging was off the caning was on—that seemed certain. It was an improvement, but it was not good enough.

With that prospect before him on his return to the Remove-room, Bunter was naturally in no hurry to return. The Head's message to Mr. Quelch, of course, could wait.

But the minutes were passing.

The Sixth had gone to their Form-room, and Mr. Quelch would soon be wondering why Bunter did not return.

Bunter was not much accustomed to thinking, but his fat wits were hard at work now. If Mr. Quelch could be made to believe that Bunter had had his licking, or if a fictitious message could be invented from the Head, causing Mr. Quelch to remit the punishment, either would do. But—

Deep in that problem, Bunter heard a sound of footsteps in the corridor outside approaching the study door.

He started.

Back into his fat mind came the recollection of the Head's reference to the Sixth Form which Mr. Quelch was to "take" in Dr. Locke's absence.

There was no one to "take" the Sixth, and they had obviously been waiting, and now some beast was coming along about it. Bunter even



"Bless my soul!" Bunter heard the Head utter that well-known ejaculation as Dr. Locke stood at the telephone, with the receiver in his hand.

thought he recognised Wingate's footsteps. Of course, with nobody in charge of the Sixth Form-room, the head prefect would naturally come to the Head for instructions.

Bunter hardly stopped to think.

He crossed rapidly to the door and silently, softly, turned the key in the lock.



He was only just in time.

Tap!

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

HIS MASTER'S VOICE!

**B**ILLY BUNTER breathed hard.

Wingate, or some other Sixth Form beast, was tapping at the door of the Head's study—most likely Wingate.

Bunter made no sound.

If Wingate supposed that the Head was not there, and did not look in, all was well. Bunter would have gained a respite, at least, and would still have time to solve his problem.

Tap!

The newcomer knocked again.

Then the handle turned.

"By Jove!"

Bunter heard George Wingate's voice murmur that ejaculation. Doubtless the captain of Greyfriars was surprised to find the Head's door locked and to receive no answer to his knock.

Bunter stood silent, his fat knees knocking together, wondering what the prefect would do.

Knock!

It was a louder knock than before. Bunter's eyes gleamed through his big spectacles. Why couldn't the beast go? He must know that the Head didn't want to be disturbed if he had locked the door and didn't answer a knock. But Wingate did not go. He was surprised, and perhaps startled.

Knock!

"Are you there, sir?" called out Wingate of the Sixth. "The door seems to be locked, sir!"

Bunter breathed hard.

"Dr. Locke!" called out Wingate, and there was a note of uneasiness in his voice now. "Dr. Locke! Are you ill, sir?"

"Oh, dear!" breathed Bunter.

The silly ass actually supposed that the Head was ill, because he did not answer. Knowing nothing of Dr. Locke's sudden departure from Greyfriars, and finding the Head's door locked, Wingate could really hardly suppose anything else. But it was extremely irritating to Bunter. It meant that the beast wouldn't go!

"Dr. Locke!" Wingate called out again.

And then, like a flash, came Bunter's brain-wave. There was a way of satisfying Wingate—quite an easy way, though Bunter had not thought of it before. The episode of the previous day in Study No. 7—it was only necessary to repeat it. The ventriloquial voice that had deceived Peter Todd and Harry Wharton & Co. was good enough for Wingate of the Sixth.

Bunter gave a little fat cough, his usual preliminary to ventriloquial stunts.

"Bless my soul!"

"Oh, you are there, sir!" exclaimed Wingate, as he heard that well-known ejaculation in the study through the oak door.

"Yes, certainly. Is that you, Wingate?"

It was the Head's voice to the last tone!

"Yes, sir. I knocked, and you did not answer, and I thought perhaps you might be ill, sir."

"Bless my soul! Not at all, Wingate. I have—hem!—locked my door so that I shall not be disturbed. I have a very important matter of business to deal with."

"Yes, sir," said Wingate, in wonder.

"As I shall not be at liberty this morning, Wingate, I desire Mr. Quelch to take the Sixth. Will you tell him



so, and will you take charge of the Remove, Wingate?"

"Very well, sir."

"You will inform Mr. Quelch that I have dealt with the boy Bunter, Wingate. Bunter was sent to me for punishment, and I have dealt with him."

"Yes, sir."

"Kindly inform Mr. Quelch, also, that I have given Bunter leave from class this morning," went on Bunter, almost surprised at his own facility of invention, and still in the Head's voice. "After administering—hem!—a severe punishment, I considered it judicious to excuse him from class. You will tell Mr. Quelch so."

"Very good, sir!"

And Wingate, greatly to Bunter's relief, walked away down the passage.

Bunter grinned.

The captain of Greyfriars obviously had not the slightest suspicion, though doubtless he was a little perplexed.

Bunter was safe!

Safe from the Head—safe from Mr. Quelch—safe from classes! He had a morning off, instead of a flogging or a caning! Really, it had been well worth while to cultivate his weird gift of ventriloquism.

He sat down in the Head's comfortable armchair, and put his feet on the Head's mantelpiece.

He was in no hurry to leave the study.

It was judicious to wait till Mr. Quelch was settled in the Sixth Form-room with the seniors, and all the school at work. Then he would be able to slip out of the study without the slightest danger of detection.

True, he had not yet delivered the Head's message to Mr. Quelch. He had, in fact, forgotten that, in the stress of circumstances. But that could come later. For the moment,

obviously, Mr. Quelch could not be allowed to know that the Head was gone, since he was to believe that the Head had just been giving Wingate directions.

Bunter sat in the Head's armchair and groped in his pocket. He still had a chunk or two of Peter Todd's toffee left, and he proceeded to dispose of it with satisfaction.

Footsteps again!

Bunter started up.

If that beast Wingate was coming back, or Mr. Quelch— Fortunately, the door was locked. Bunter listened with painful intentness. Then he recognised the heavy, ponderous tread of Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth. Portly Mr. Prout had a tread that was unmistakable—indeed, Potter of the Fifth had applied to him a quotation from Macaulay, describing him as the "huge earth-shaking beast."

What the thump did the Fifth Form master want? He ought to have been in his Form-room with his Form, but here he was!

Knock!

The Greyfriars ventriloquist answered at once; he did not want Mr. Prout to become suspicious.

"Who is there?"

"It is I, Dr. Locke," answered Mr. Prout's portly voice, and he turned the handle of the door.

"The door is locked, Mr. Prout. I must not be disturbed this morning. I am engaged upon—hem!—some pressing business."

"Oh, quite so, sir!" said Mr. Prout. "I am sorry to disturb you, sir, in that case, but as you instructed me to come at ten-thirty——"

"Eh?"

"Perhaps you could spare one moment, sir, to hand me the Latin paper for which I have called, and for



which you instructed me to call," said Mr. Prout, with a faint note of sarcasm in his voice.

Bunter breathed quickly.

Of all unlucky things it seemed that the Head had been preparing a Latin paper for the Fifth, and told Mr. Prout to ask him for it that morning! Really, it was not an unusual incident, but it was very unfortunate in the circumstances—the peculiar circumstances. Bunter was at a loss for a moment, and did not know what to reply, and Mr. Prout went on:

"I have been to the Sixth Form-room, sir, and was told that you were in your study, sir, so I came here. I am loth to disturb you, sir; but your own instructions——"

"Yes, yes; quite so, Mr. Prout," said Bunter, in the Head's voice, "quite so! But the fact is—the—the fact is——"

"Yes, sir?"

Mr. Prout evidently wanted to know what the fact was!

"The—the fact is——" Bunter cudgelled his fat brains. "The—the fact of the matter is—is this, Mr. Prout—I have gone to Southampton to meet——"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I am going to Southampton to meet my—my son, who is returning from India——"

"From India, sir?"

"I mean from Mespot—that is to say, Mesopotamia. I have had a telephone message from my—my son, Mr. Prout, to say that he has landed at Northampton——"

"At Northampton?"

"I mean Southampton. In the circumstances, Mr. Prout, I quite forgot the Latin paper, and I have not—not prepared it. I shall have no time to attend to the matter to-day."

"Very good, sir."

"I am now expecting a trunk call from Southampton, so I must not be disturbed. Kindly go back to your Form-room at once, Mr. Prout, and remain there!"

"What?"

"Remain there!"

There was a sort of gurgling grunt outside the Head's door. Dr. Locke was extremely popular with his staff, for his urbanity of manner, his old-world courtesy, was unfailing. So this kind of talk from him was very surprising and disconcerting, and Mr. Prout was very much surprised and very much offended.

"Dr. Locke!"

"Yes, yes!"

"You will excuse me, sir," said Mr. Prout, his portly voice trembling with resentment. "You will excuse me, Dr. Locke, if I take exception, sir, to this mode of address, to which, sir, I am unaccustomed—quite unaccustomed. I came to see you, sir, on your own instructions—your instructions, sir, given to me personally. I will return to my Form-room, sir, immediately, and I shall certainly remain there, sir—most certainly; but, although you are my chief, sir, and I respect you highly, sir, I am bound to say that I take exception to such a mode of address, sir—I am bound to say that, Dr. Locke!"

And Mr. Prout, extremely offended, marched away down the corridor with his heavy tread.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bunter.

He had escaped again, at all events; and the offence taken by Mr. Prout did not matter much—to Bunter. He sat down in the Head's armchair to finish the toffee.

The toffee finished, Bunter decided that it was time to get out of his present quarters before some other troublesome person came along.



He unlocked the door quietly, opened it a few inches, and blinked into the corridor.

Like Moses of old, he looked this way and that way. After what had occurred, it was extremely important that the Greyfriars ventriloquist should not be seen leaving the Head's study.

The next moment Bunter's head popped back into the study, like that of a tortoise into its shell.

A few yards along the corridor was a window. At that window stood Trotter, the House page, polishing the glass.

Bunter's heart thumped.

He closed the door again softly,

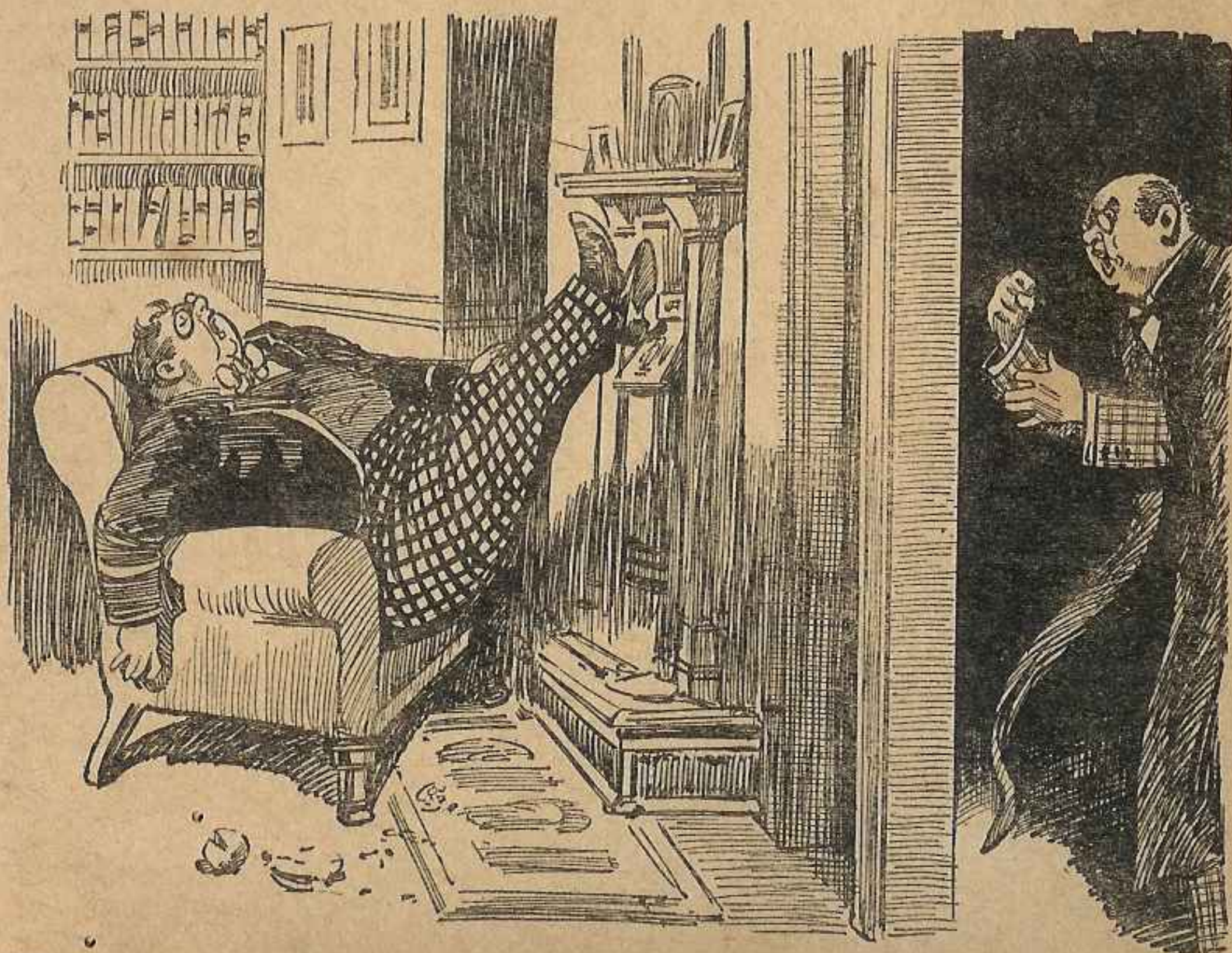
and as softly turned the key in the lock.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bunter.

He had not been seen, but the escape had been narrow. Evidently he could not leave the Head's study yet.

"Oh dear!"

Up to that moment all had gone well—remarkably well! But the peculiar situation had developed awkwardness! Billy Bunter was a prisoner now in the Head's study, and how long his imprisonment was to last was a troublesome question to which there was, as yet, no answer.



"The door is locked, Mr. Prout," said the Greyfriars ventriloquist in the Head's voice. "I must not be disturbed this morning. I am engaged upon—ahem!—pressing business."



## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

### MYSTERIOUS!

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

"Not Bunter!" whispered Nugent.

The door of the Remove Form-room had opened, and all eyes in the Remove turned upon it in the expectation of seeing Billy Bunter.

All the Remove knew what Mr. Quelch's note to the Head meant. It meant that the Head was requested to give Bunter a flogging.

So the Remove fellows expected to see Bunter return to the Form-room in a crumpled condition, squirming.

But it was not Bunter—it was Wingate of the Sixth who entered the Remove-room.

Mr. Quelch glanced at him in surprised inquiry.

"The Head sent me, sir," said Wingate. "I am to tell you that he is very busy this morning, and desires you to take the Sixth Form in his place, sir."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch.

"I am to take the Remove in your absence, sir."

"Very good, Wingate!"

"The Head desired me to tell you that he has punished Bunter, sir, and has excused him from classes this morning in consequence of his punishment."

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows a little.

"Indeed! Bunter is excused from class?"

"The Head said I was to tell you so, sir."

"Very good!" said Mr. Quelch, compressing his lips a little.

Mr. Quelch saw no reason whatever why Bunter should be excused from classes simply because he had been

flogged. But this was not the first occasion that Dr. Locke had taken a more lenient view than the somewhat severe Remove master. It was slightly irritating, but it was not a matter of surprise.

Mr. Quelch glanced over his class.

"I shall leave you in Wingate's charge this morning," he said. "Wharton, you will acquaint Wingate with the order of work for the lessons. I shall expect order to be kept in this Form-room during my absence."

And Mr. Quelch left the Remove-room and went away to take the Sixth, nothing doubting.

The Remove brightened up considerably.

Mr. Quelch's temper had been very tart that morning, and the juniors were by no means displeased to change him for Wingate.

First lesson was over and second lesson went off quite amicably with the captain of Greyfriars in control.

Then came morning break, and the Removites were dismissed for a quarter of an hour, and they streamed out cheerily into the sunny quadrangle.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where's Bunter?" inquired Bob Cherry.

The juniors had expected to find Bunter in the quad, but he was not to be seen.

"Lucky bargee, to get off classes for the morning," said Skinner. "Almost worth a flogging."

"Not quite, I think," said Bob, laughing. "I'd rather have Quelchy and Latin irregular verbs than a Head's flogging. I wonder where he is?"

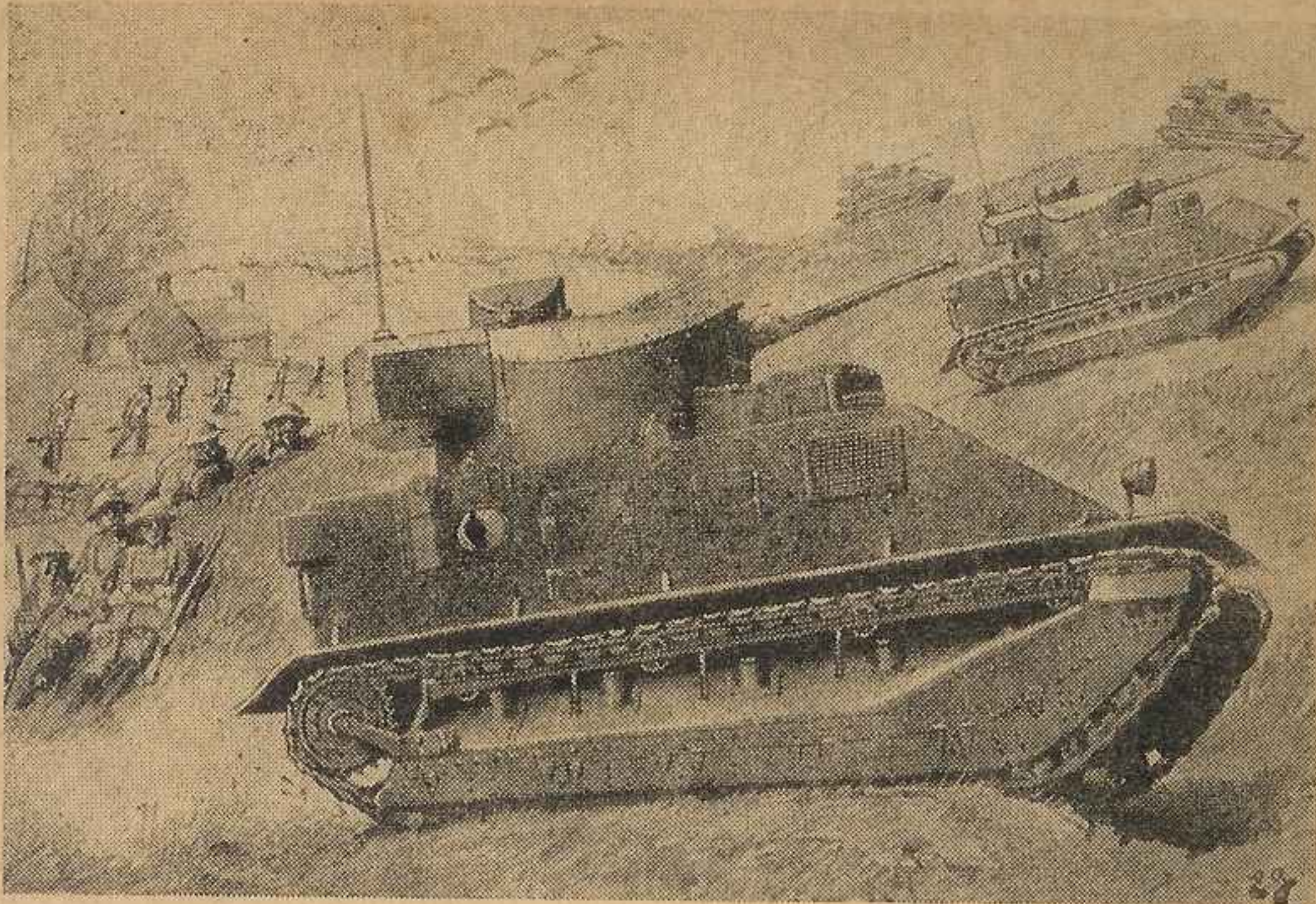
"Gone up to the study to sleep it off, perhaps," suggested Johnny Bull.

"Poor old Bunter!"

"The sufferfulness of the esteemed Bunter is probably terrific," remarked



## THE MODERN BRITISH ARMY IN ACTION



During the early years of the 1914-1918 World War, when the success of the Allied Forces hung in the balance, and the use of a new weapon by either side might spell victory or defeat, mysterious orders were issued to British commanders concerning the delivery and use of certain "tanks."

Had the enemy got knowledge of these orders they would have been little the wiser, for the tanks mentioned might have been for holding water or oil—they certainly would not have connected them with the new and deadly instrument of war they actually were. That is how it was possible for the Tank to be brought into action secretly and used with terrible effect on the unprepared foe, and how these bullet-proof armed motor-tractors came to get their name.

Tanks now form the most effective attacking force in the modern army. Used as "shock-troops" in the vanguard of an infantry attack—as the Heavy Cavalry was used in the old days—they smash through enemy lines, destroying machine-gun nests, breaking through barbed-wire entanglements and tearing across trenches. Practically nothing can stop them. At the same time, they are keeping the enemy under heavy fire.

Our illustration shows a section of the Royal Tank Corps advancing under fire. The machines shown are the Mark 2 type, a 14-ton tank armed with one three-pounder gun, three large-calibre machine-guns and equipped with wireless. A crew of five men is carried at a cruising speed of 15 m.p.h.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "Let us seekfully look for him, and administer the harmless and necessary sympathy."

"Good!" said Bob. "I've got a packet of chocs. They'll help to comfort Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. proceeded

to the Remove passage to look for Bunter, with sympathetic intentions. No doubt Bunter had asked for trouble that morning; still, a fellow who was up against trouble enlisted the sympathy of the heroes of the Remove.

Bunter was not to be found in Study No. 7.



The juniors looked in the other studies. Knowing Bunter's little ways, they would not have been surprised to find him raiding some fellow's study cupboard.

But the whole Remove passage was drawn blank. Bunter was not there.

"Oh, where and oh, where can he be?" sang Bob Cherry.

"Can't be gone out of gates," said Johnny Bull. "There's no leave out of gates till after third lesson. I say, Toddy, where's your prize pig?"

Peter Todd came up to the Famous Five in the quad. He was looking puzzled.

"I've been looking for him, and I can't find him anywhere."

"Same here!" grinned Bob.

"Of course, he doesn't matter," said Peter; "but as the fat duffer seems to have had a flogging, I thought I'd look for him. If the Head's given him leave, he may have given him leave out of gates, though."

"Let's ask Gosling."

The Removites walked down to the school-porter's lodge. The ancient and gnarled William Gosling was sunning himself in his doorway.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Seen a porpoise rolling by this morning, Gossy?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Has Bunter gone out, Gosling?"

Gosling shook his head.

"Agin' orders," he answered, "and wot I says is this 'ere, you young gentlemen ain't going out, neither!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We're not after that, Gossy; we're looking for Bunter. He's got leave from class this morning, and he seems to have vanished. The Head let him off class after giving him a flogging."

Gosling eyed the captain of the Remove.

"Gammon!" he answered.

"Eh?"

"You can't pull my leg, Master Wharton. I don't know why you're spinning me this yarn, sir, but wot I says is this 'ere, you can't pull my leg!"

Wharton stared at him.

"But I'm not pulling your leg, old bean," he answered. "Bunter was up for a flogging in first lesson, and the Head let him off class afterwards."

"Chuck it!" said Gosling derisively. "Think I wouldn't know if a feller had been flogged? When it's a Head's flogging, ain't I always called in?"

"Well, weren't you?"

"No, I wasn't!" said Gosling.

"And I know the 'Ead's been too busy to flog anybody this morning, too, seeing that he's gone off to Southampton in his car quite early."

"The Head's gone to Southampton, has he?" asked Bob. "Does that mean that Mr. Percy Locke has landed, after all?"

"It do!" said Gosling. "The 'Ead was off mighty quick; I s'pose he 'ad it by telephone. Jest a word as he went—he knowed 'ow glad I should be to 'ear that Mr. Percy was safe 'ome again." Gosling's crusty face was quite genial for a moment.

"So don't you spin me any yarns about 'Ead's floggings, Master Wharton, 'cause why, I know he ain't flogged anybody!"

"Well, my hat!" said Harry.

The juniors walked away from Gosling's lodge, quite mystified. In an official Head's flogging, Gosling had a part to play; and certainly he should have known whether it had taken place or not.

"I suppose it wasn't really a first-class, gilt-edged flogging," said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "The Head just



made him bend over, like a prefect, I suppose. When it's an official ceremony Gosling has to hoist the giddy victim."

"I suppose that's it," said Harry. "Quelchy was awfully ratty with Bunter; but I dare say the Head didn't quite see it. He isn't quite such a Tartar as Quelchy."

"That's so."

"But where is Bunter?" asked Peter Todd. "If he's only had a mild licking, he must have got over it

before this. Where is he? We've looked everywhere."

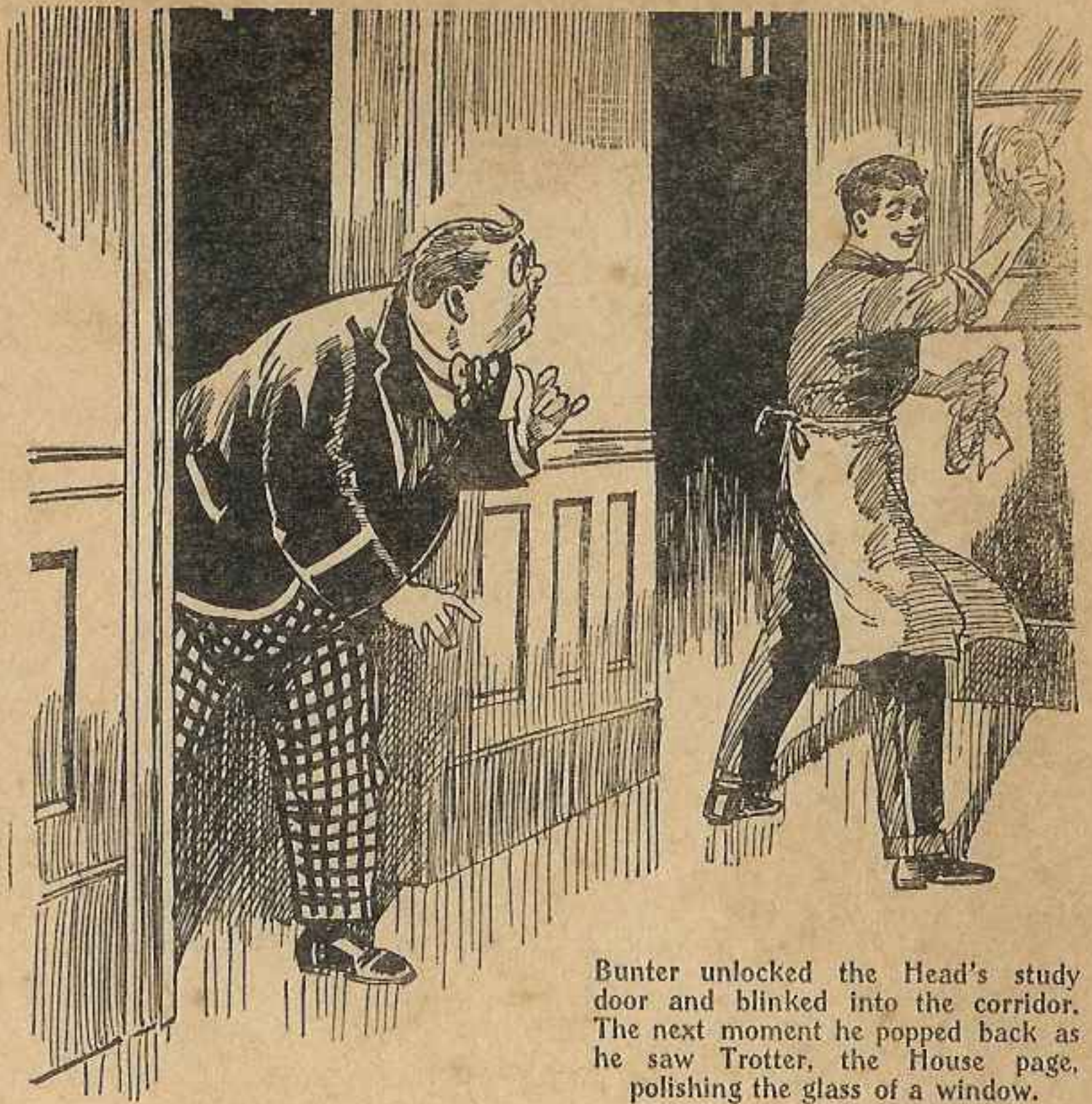
"Goodness knows."

It was near the end of morning break now, and Harry Wharton & Co. walked back to the House, much puzzled. In the quad they passed Coker and Potter and Greene of the Fifth. The three seniors were chatting and chuckling.

"Prouty was quite wild!" Potter was saying. "Can't quite understand it; but the Head must have said something to get his rag out. Did you spot his face when he came back to the Form-room in second lesson?"

Coker and Greene chortled.

"Didn't we?" said Coker. "I dare say the Head sat on him. My



Bunter unlocked the Head's study door and blinked into the corridor. The next moment he popped back as he saw Trotter, the House page, polishing the glass of a window.

opinion is that Prouty needs sitting on at times."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Greene.

"And he didn't give us the Head's Latin paper, either," remarked Potter. "And he was in a fearful temper! I wonder what the Head said to him?"

Harry Wharton & Co. paused and looked at one another. Then they walked on, leaving the three seniors still discussing—with hilarity—what the Head could possibly have said to Mr. Prout in second lesson.

"I say, that's jolly queer!" said Wharton. "You heard what those chaps were saying—the Head seems to have ragged old Prout in second lesson."

"And Gosling says he has gone to



Southampton," said Bob, with a nod. "Wingate told Quelch that the Head was too busy to take the Sixth this morning—that must have been when he was going off, I suppose. But that was before second lesson."

"It's jolly odd!"

"The oddfulness is terrific!"

According to Gosling, the Head had departed in his car quite early, and it was at the close of first lesson that Wingate had come in to tell Mr. Quelch to take the Sixth in the Head's place. That should have marked the time of the Head's departure.

Yet after that—some time after that, in second lesson—Mr. Prout appeared to have had an interview with the Head, according to what the Fifth-Formers were saying. And Wingate had brought the information that Bunter had been flogged; and, according to Gosling, there had been no flogging. And Bunter had mysteriously disappeared! Really, it was very, very puzzling and mystifying, and the heroes of the Remove did not know what to make of it.

The bell for classes called them in to third lesson; and they found that Wingate of the Sixth was taking them again, in place of their Form master. Apparently, Mr. Quelch was to stick to the Sixth that day—for which relief his Form were duly thankful. Yet how odd it was that the message had been that the Head was busy, and not that he had left the school for the day!

In third lesson the juniors forgot the matter—Wingate kept them up to their work. But if they had thought about it, with wet towels round their heads, they would not have been likely to guess the astounding truth, and still less likely to guess what was to follow during that remarkable day at Greyfriars.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER

### UNPRECEDENTED!

MR. QUELCH walked down the corridor to the Head's study with a very firm step and a knitted brow.

The Remove master was not in the best of tempers.

He was annoyed, and, like the ancient prophet, he felt that he did well to be angry.

The Head only the day before had been kindness and courtesy itself; discussing with Mr. Quelch his son's return in the most amicable spirit. That was only yesterday; and to-day there was an unpleasant change. To-day the Head lacked his usual polished politeness, always unfailing to his subordinates. He had let Bunter off lessons—although the mere fact that Mr. Quelch had sent Bunter to the Head demonstrated that the junior was most seriously an offender. He had sent quite a cavalier message to Mr. Quelch—merely saying that he was busy and that Mr. Quelch was to take the Sixth while Wingate took the Remove.

Really, a gentleman, though only a subordinate, could not be treated with friendly courtesy one day and off-hand casualness the next. That was not the way to treat a Form master, a Master of Arts, an elderly scholastic gentleman of dignified character and rather touchy temper. It was not the way at all.

Moreover, it had not been stated how long Mr. Quelch was to take the Sixth and how long Wingate was to take the Remove. Such matters, too, could not be settled off-hand by a careless verbal message. If a prefect was to take his Form for a whole day, Mr. Quelch had to arrange matters accordingly. He was left quite in the dark as to what the Head



really wanted, after third lesson. It was quite unprecedented.

For which reasons Mr. Quelch's brow was knitted, and his step had an unusual decided firmness as he approached the Head's study in morning break. He wanted to know.

Knock!

It was a very decided knock at the Head's door. As the Head's message had been that he was busy, Mr. Quelch supposed that he was busy in his study. Mrs. Locke was away, so it could hardly have been any household matter that had so suddenly claimed the Head's special attention. Neither did Mr. Quelch suppose that it was any news of young Mr. Locke, for in that case the Head surely would have told him, after their very friendly discussion on the subject the day before.

Knock!

Mr. Quelch turned the handle of the door.

"Upon my word!" he murmured.

The door was locked on the inside. That was proof that the Head was there—at all events, it was naturally taken as such proof.

Had the door opened, Mr. Quelch would have beheld a fat and terrified junior shaking in his shoes.

Fortunately, it could not open. Billy Bunter was safe from observation, even if Mr. Quelch looked through the keyhole—which he was not likely to do. Bunter, judging others, even Form masters, by himself, kept out of the line of vision from the keyhole.

He knew that it was Mr. Quelch who had knocked—he knew that determined tread. He knew that it was Mr. Quelch, and that Mr. Quelch was in an annoyed temper. And Bunter quaked.

But ventriloquial tricks were second

nature to Bunter now; his facility in that curious line never failed him. It was in the Head's voice, to the final shade of a tone, that he spoke as he answered the knock.

"Bless my soul! Really, I should not be disturbed like this, when I have given strict injunctions that I should not be disturbed this morning! Bless my soul!"

"Dr. Locke!"

"Ah! Is that you, Mr. Quelch?"

"It is I, sir," answered Mr. Quelch, in his iciest tone. Chilly dignity now enwrapped Mr. Quelch as a garment.

"I have no desire, sir—no intention to disturb you."

"Very good, Mr. Quelch! The fact is I am exceedingly busy."

"I simply desire to know your wishes, sir," said Mr. Quelch frigidly. "If I am to continue to take the Sixth——"

"Oh, certainly!"

"For the remainder of the day——"

"Precisely."

"In that case, I shall instruct Win-gate, I presume, to remain in charge of my Form for the remainder of the day also?"

"Just so, Mr. Quelch."

"Very good, sir! That is all!"

Mr. Quelch's voice trembled a little, in spite of his icy self-control. It was the very first time in his long experience that he had ever been kept on the doormat in this style.

He had never expected to talk with Dr. Locke through a door—the Head not even troubling to unlock the door to answer him. It was treating him like—like—Mr. Quelch scarcely knew what. But he knew that he did not like it—he knew that very clearly.

Bunter's fat heart was thumping.

He knew that Mr. Quelch was deeply, intensely angry; which made



it all the more important that Mr. Quelch should not discover him in the Head's study. It was no time to think of remote consequences—even if Billy Bunter had been accustomed to looking far ahead. The immediate danger was pressing—Mr. Quelch had to be barred off.

"One word more, sir——"

"Really, Mr. Quelch, you are disturbing me seriously."

"I am sorry, sir!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "But I am bound to ask you concerning Bunter. Is he excused from third lesson as well as earlier classes?"

"Certainly."

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch.

"In fact, I have decided to excuse Bunter from classes for the whole day, Mr. Quelch."

"What?"

"The boy appears to me to be somewhat delicate, Mr. Quelch. Considering everything, I have given him a day's leave."

"It is for you to decide, of course, sir," said Mr. Quelch, almost choking. "As Bunter's Form master, I feel compelled to say that I do not share your view. But, of course, it is for you to say."

"Quite so."

"Is that all, sir?" gasped the Remove master, pale with anger.

"Let me see! Yes! I have been somewhat disturbed by someone cleaning windows in the corridor, Mr. Quelch. Please give instructions that no one is to enter this corridor again unless I ring—either the boys or the servants."

"Regarding the servants, sir, doubtless you will ring for Mrs. Kebble and give her instructions."

"I have given you instructions, Mr. Quelch, and I expect you to carry them out."

"Oh!"

Mr. Quelch glared at the oak door.

"Kindly convey my wishes to Mrs. Kebble, sir."

"Very well, Dr. Locke."

"That is all," said the voice from the study. "You may go."

Mr. Quelch trembled with wrath. He was told that he might go—as if he were a fag of the Second Form—or Trotter the page! He could not trust himself to speak. He went.

Billy Bunter breathed more freely when his footsteps receded along the corridor. He had escaped once more—and if the corridor remained unvisited after that, he had an excellent chance of dodging unseen out of the Head's study later. Dinner would be coming along presently, and dinner could not be missed. That was very important.

Mr. Quelch's face was very set as he turned out of the Head's corridor. By the corner he met Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth. There was an unusual frown on Mr. Prout's flushed, portly face. He stopped Mr. Quelch.

"You have been to see the Head, Quelch?"

"I have!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Possibly you have noticed something a little unusual in the Head this morning, my dear Quelch—a lack of respect and consideration which members of Dr. Locke's staff had always considered that they had a right to expect."

Mr. Quelch started a little.

"I have certainly noticed it, Mr. Prout. May I ask if your experience has been the same?"

"It has, sir!" said Mr. Prout. "Most decidedly, sir!"

"It has pleased Dr. Locke, on this occasion, to talk to me through a locked door," said Mr. Quelch bitterly.



"Precisely the same as my experience, sir," said Mr. Prout, "and the expressions used by the Head, sir, were not such as I am accustomed to hearing."

"I can quite credit it," said Mr. Quelch, compressing his lips. "My experience is similar."

"It is very unpleasant and disconcerting, Mr. Quelch."

"It is exceedingly so, Mr. Prout."

"I scarcely understand Dr. Locke this morning, Mr. Quelch."

"I fail to understand him at all, Mr. Prout."

"It is really extraordinary!"

"Unprecedented, sir — unprecedented!"

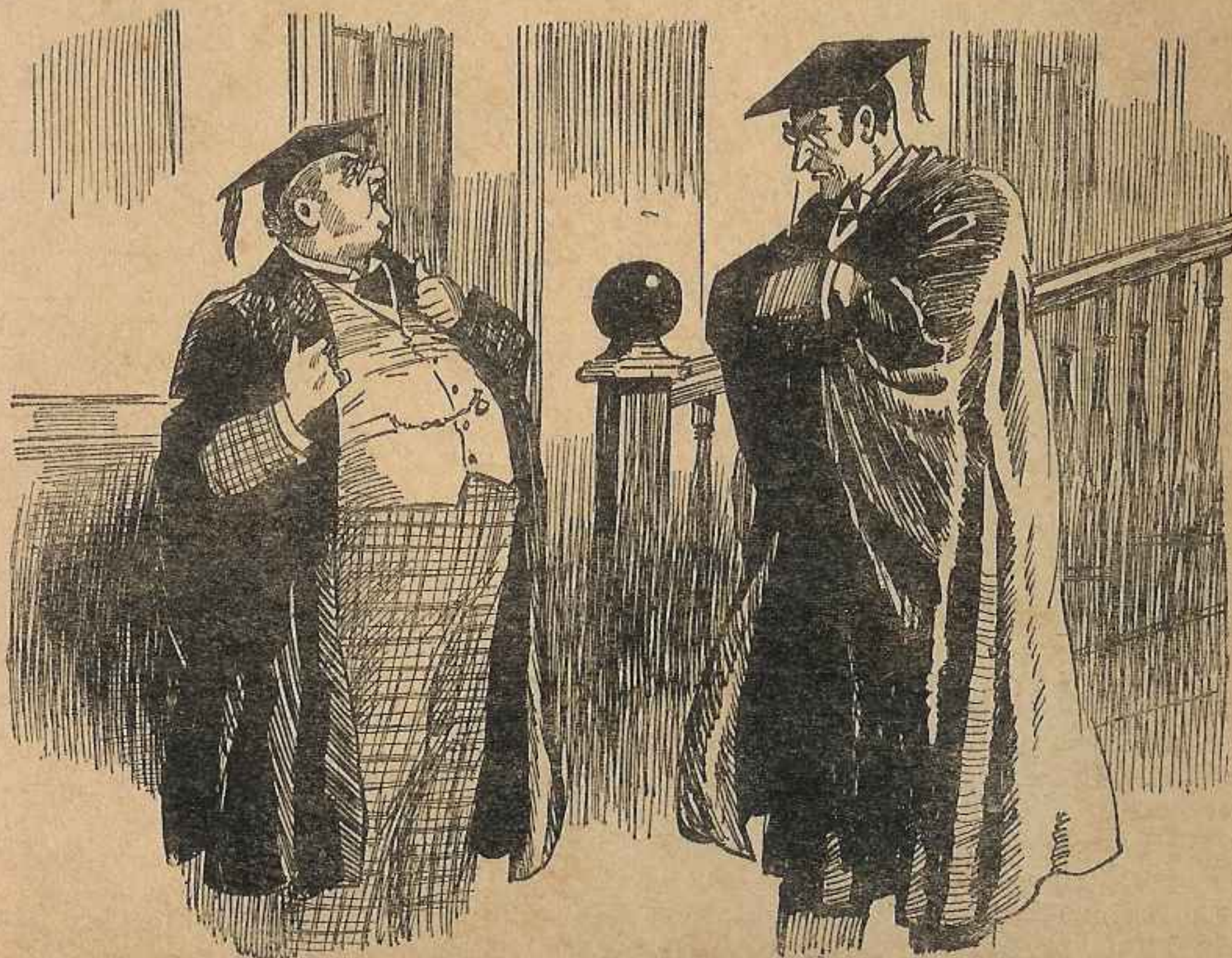
And the two masters separated, having comforted one another a little by a mutual grouse.

Really, the proceedings of the Head that morning were decidedly extraordinary and unprecedented. But the occupant of the Head's study, at that time, was also rather extraordinary and unprecedented, if the two masters had only known it.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER

NO EXIT!

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER gasped with relief when Mr. Quelch's footsteps died away down the corridor.



"You have been to see the Head, Quelch?" asked Mr. Prout. "I have," replied the Remove master. "Possibly," went on Mr. Prout, "you have noticed something a little unusual in the Head—a lack of consideration and respect to the staff."



There was silence; and Bunter grinned.

Mr. Quelch was gone, and was not likely to return. The supposed Head's instructions would keep the corridor clear—and as soon as all the fellows were fairly settled down in the Form-rooms for third lesson, the fat junior would be able to make his escape from the Head's study. The coast would be clear at last.

Once he had escaped unseen, who was to know that he ever had been there? Mr. Quelch did not know at what time the Head had started for Southampton—he did not know yet that the Head had gone at all. When he learned that much, he would not know how long the Head had been gone—he would suppose that he had started during third lesson—after that talk on the doormat. That was a reasonable expectation—and if it so turned out, it would see Bunter clear. Once he was safe out of the Head's study, all was serene—only it was frightfully important to get out unseen. The mere thought of the facts coming to light made Bunter shiver.

He waited; and a glance from the window showed him the quadrangle deserted. The Greyfriars fellows had all gone in to class.

Now was the time.

Tap! came at the door as Bunter turned from the window. His eyes fairly glinted through his spectacles! It seemed to be raining visitors at the Head's door that morning.

"Who is there?" called out Bunter, with the amazing imitation of Dr. Locke's voice which was now growing habitual.

"Me, sir!" replied the voice of Mrs. Kebble, the house-dame.

The handle turned.

"I cannot be disturbed now, Mrs. Kebble. Another time——"

"The door don't open, sir."

"I have locked it, Mrs. Kebble, in order not to be disturbed. Kindly go away at once."

"What! What did you say, sir?"

"Go away at once, my good woman! I am exceedingly busy."

Mrs. Kebble bridled, outside the study door.

"Far be it from me, sir, to disturb you, you being a busy gentleman, sir," said Mrs. Kebble, with dignified acerbity. "But you will remember, sir, I'm sure, that I asked you most particularly whether your study could be done this morning."

"Eh?"

"Now Mr. Quelch, sir, comes to me and says that no one is even to enter the corridor, sir."

"Quite so, Mrs. Kebble—quite so!"

"I thought, sir, that I had better speak to you, sir, as it was most distinctly said, sir, that your study could be done this morning while you was in the Sixth Form, sir."

"Nonsense!"

"Eh?"

"You are interrupting me, Mrs. Kebble. I am exceedingly busy with—with a Greek translation. Kindly go away."

"Sir!"

"Go away at once, Mrs. Kebble."

There was a sound of flouncing in the corridor. Mrs. Kebble was going away—in a frame of mind that made things unpleasant for the maids when she arrived below stairs again.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bunter, wiping his fat forehead, which was perspiring.

A good part of third lesson had elapsed—and Bunter simply had to be clear of the Head's study before it ended, unless he was to remain there a prisoner. He waited anxiously at



the door, listening, giving Mrs. Kebble plenty of time to get clear.

There was silence, and Bunter softly turned back the key at last. Softly he opened the door.

Footsteps!

With feelings too deep for words, Bunter shut the door again and turned the key once more in the lock. There was a renewed sound of flouncing in the passage. Mrs. Kebble had come back!

Knock!

"Dr. Locke, if I may make so bold as to say a word, sir," said Mrs. Kebble, with dignified indignation.

"What is it now, Mrs. Kebble?"

"Which I am not accustomed, sir, to speaking to a gentleman through a locked door, sir."

"Nonsense!"

"Sir!"

"Go away, my good woman!"

"I have come back, sir, to ask you whether the corridor floor, sir, may be done? That being the arrangement made. You will remember, sir, that you told me quite distinct——"

"No!" roared Bunter.

"Very well, sir—very well. But I presume, sir, that it will not disturb you in your study, sir, if Trotter polishes the window fastenings. I will tell him to be very quiet."

Bunter shook a fat fist at the door. It was plain that Mrs. Kebble was annoyed at having her household arrangements thrown out of gear in this inconsiderate manner. She was annoyed, and she actually wanted to annoy the Head in retaliation. Knowing—at least, believing—that the Head was very busy, she was interrupting him again from sheer irritation of temper.

"Go away, Mrs. Kebble!" snapped Bunter. "Go away, and do not let

anyone come anywhere near my study!"

"Very well, sir—oh, very well! I will tell Trotter not to come nearer than the corner of the passage."

Mrs. Kebble flounced away again.

Bunter stood rooted to the floor. If Trotter was going to polish window fastenings at the corner of the corridor he might as well be just outside the Head's study—Bunter could not get away without being seen.

"Mrs. Kebble!"

But Mrs. Kebble was gone.

"Oh, crikey!" murmured the new Head of Greyfriars in dismay.

The Head's study, which had been a refuge, now began to appear to Bunter a good deal like a lion's den—which it was easy to enter, but extremely difficult to get out of.

"Oh crumbs! What's a fellow going to do?" murmured the dismayed Owl of the Remove.

He dared not open the door.

Trotter was practically certain to see him if he emerged. Besides, as likely as not, Mrs. Kebble might be keeping an eye on Trotter, to see that he did his work thoroughly—which Trotter did not always do unless an eye was kept on him.

But to remain in the study—— Later, doubtless, there would be plenty of opportunities of escape. But what about dinner? Missing dinner was absolutely impossible!

And the minutes were passing fast! Every minute was precious to Bunter in this peculiar predicament—and the minutes were going!

He turned to the window at last.

It was risky. He might be seen dropping from the window—Gosling might see him—Mr. Mible, the gardener, might see him—he might be observed from some other window.

But Bunter was getting desperate.



He longed and yearned to be safe out of the Head's study.

He blinked from the window and groaned. There was Mr. Mible, the gardener, sedulously attending to a grass border on the Sixth Form green—in full view! What he would think if he saw a junior dropping from the Head's study window Bunter could not guess. But he knew that he could not afford to give Mr. Mible an incident of that kind to think about.

He watched the gardener savagely.

Mr. Mible moved off at last. Bunter watched him go, and then—

Then there was a sound of a joyous whoop in the quadrangle. The spaces that had been silent and deserted suddenly swarmed.

Third lesson was over, and the Greyfriars fellows were out!

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

### LIGHT AT LAST!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. came out of the Remove-room after third lesson and trooped cheerily into the quadrangle. They were the first out, but the Fourth were only a minute behind them, and then came a riotous swarm of the Third and the Second. The old quad was alive with voices.

Little dreaming of the dismay their appearance caused to a fat junior watching from the window of the Head's study, the Greyfriars fellows came out into the sunshine in cheery mood.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Anybody seen Bunter?" called out Bob Cherry

Nobody had!

"The fat boulder's disappeared!" said Harry Wharton. "He must have gone out of gates without Gosling noticing him."

"He'll be back for dinner!" grinned Bob.

"Ha, ha! That's a dead cert!"

But it did not turn out to be a "cert." When the Remove fellows went in to dinner a place at the Remove table was empty. William George Bunter did not join up for dinner.

Mr. Quelch took his usual place at the head of the Remove table, with an unusual acerbity of manner. He noticed at once that one member of his Form was missing—the member who was already in his black books.

"Wharton!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir?"

"Where is Bunter?"

"I don't know, sir."

"What! Todd, you are Bunter's study-mate. Do you know where he is, and why he has not come in to dinner?"

"No, sir," answered Peter.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips hard. The Head had given Bunter a day off, as it seemed, and perhaps Bunter considered that he was free to go out of gates and "cut tiffin." If so, it was a mistake on Bunter's part, for which Mr. Quelch intended to call him to severe account when he turned up again.

Dinner over, the Greyfriars fellows marched out, the Remove discussing Bunter's absence in wonder. It was remarkable—indeed, amazing—for the Owl of the Remove to miss a meal. Such a thing had never happened before in the memory of the oldest inhabitant.

"Bunter's going it and no mistake!" said Bob Cherry, as the chums of the Remove went out after dinner. "The Head can't have given him leave to cut tiffin."

"Quelchy looks waxy!" murmured Nugent.



There was no doubt about that. Mr. Quelch passed the juniors with rustling gown, like a thunderstorm.

The Remove master went to his study.

He did not sit down there and take up a newspaper, as was his wont after lunch.

He was too disturbed and angry. Indeed, Mr. Quelch was seriously thinking of tendering his resignation to Dr. Locke. The Sixth had not had a pleasant time with Mr. Quelch that morning.

Buzzzzzz!

Mr. Quelch started angrily. He did not want to be worried with the telephone just then.

However, he jerked the receiver off the hooks.

"That is Courtfield 242?"

"Yes," snapped Mr. Quelch.

"A trunk call from Southampton."

Mr. Quelch sniffed. Then his face cleared a little. Dr. Locke's son was expected to land at Southampton any day; possibly the call was from Mr. Percy, a pleasant young gentleman, to whom Mr. Quelch was rather attached. Yet it was odd that he should ring up Mr. Quelch, instead of ringing up the Head—if it was Mr. Percy Locke.

"Is that you, my dear Quelch?" came the voice over the wires.

Mr. Quelch almost fell down.

It was not Percy Locke's voice. It was the voice of Herbert Henry Locke—Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars!



Buzzzzzz! Mr. Quelch started angrily as the telephone rang. He did not want to be worried with the 'phone just then; he was thinking of tendering his resignation to Dr. Locke.

"Mr. Quelch!"

The Remove master could not answer. He could only stare dazedly at the instrument.

Was the Head ringing him up from his own study? Yet they had said from the exchange that it was a trunk call. What did it mean? Mr. Quelch wondered whether he was dreaming.



"Are you there, Mr. Quelch?"

The dazed master made an effort, and spoke.

"Who is speaking?"

"Dr. Locke, from the Grand Hotel, Southampton. Do you not know my voice, my dear Quelch? I recognise yours quite distinctly."

Mr. Quelch's head seemed to be turning round and round.

Certainly he knew the Head's voice, just as he had known it from his study. There was no difference that Mr. Quelch could detect. But what could it mean? What could it possibly mean, in the name of all that was mysterious and miraculous? It was a long journey to Southampton; Dr. Locke could not have made that journey since Mr. Quelch had spoken with him at his study door. What could it mean?

"My dear Quelch, are you there?"

"Yes," gasped the Remove master, "I—I am here! But you—are you there? I do not understand this."

"What?"

"Are you not in your study? I mean are——"

"Mr. Quelch!"

"Is that really Dr. Locke who is speaking?" stuttered the astounded Mr. Quelch.

"Certainly it is! I have rung you up, Quelch, because I left in so great a hurry this morning. My son telephoned that he had landed, and I left instantly to meet him here. I am glad to say that I have met him, and he is well—fit and well. You will be glad to hear that, Mr. Quelch."

"Undoubtedly, but——"

"Bunter gave you my message, I presume?"

"B-B-Bunter?"

"Yes. Bless my soul, is it possible that the boy did not give you my message, Mr. Quelch?"

"Bunter gave me no message, sir. I have not seen Bunter since I sent him to your study during first lesson this morning."

"Bless my soul!"

"I received your message sent by Wingate——"

"Wingate! I have not spoken to Wingate this morning. I have not seen Wingate! What do you mean, Mr. Quelch?"

The Remove master's head spun. This was too much for him.

"Dr. Locke!" he gasped. "I—I suppose I am speaking to Dr. Locke? I certainly seem to know your voice. You—you are at Southampton?"

"Certainly!"

"Then — then what — who — how——" Mr. Quelch became almost incoherent. "Dr. Locke! When—when—when did you leave Greyfriars?"

"During first lesson. Bunter had just come to my study, and I gave him a message for you——"

"Upon my word! You—you—you left Greyfriars during the first lesson?" babbled Mr. Quelch.

"Certainly!"

"But I spoke to you, sir—I—I spoke to you in your study, sir, after second lesson——"

"Eh?"

"In the morning break, sir, I spoke to you at your study door——"

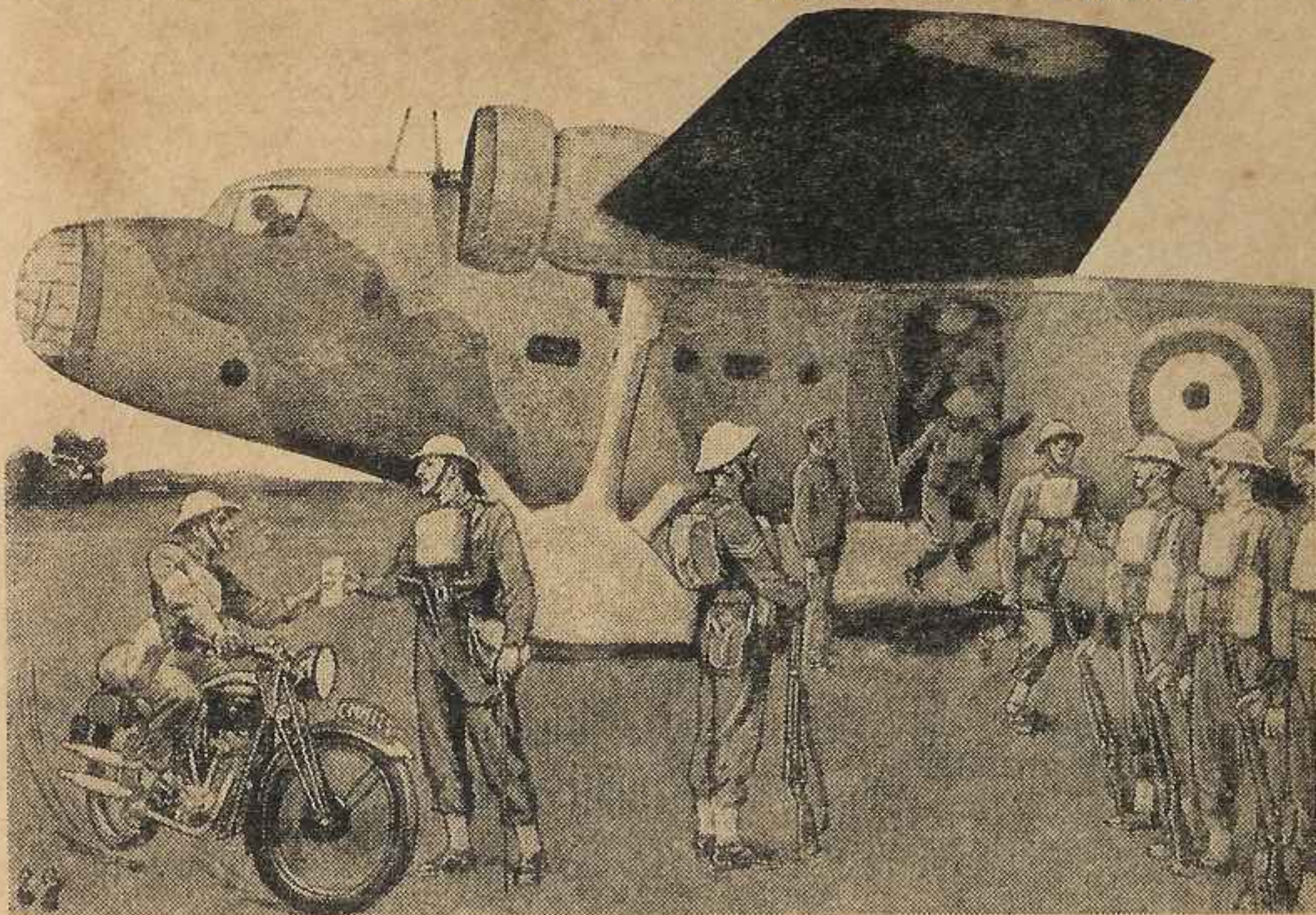
"Mr. Quelch!"

"There is some trickery here!" exclaimed the Remove master. "You, sir, cannot be in two places at once. If you are indeed Dr. Locke speaking it cannot be you who spoke to me from your study this morning."

"Decidedly not. Are you—are you ill, Mr. Quelch?" The Head's tone seemed to imply that he really meant had Mr. Quelch been drinking!



## THE MODERN BRITISH ARMY IN ACTION



The use of aeroplanes for transporting troops is comparatively recent. Although it is difficult to transport large armies by this means, the advantage lies in being able to land a small striking force for a surprise attack far in advance of the main army, or to land reinforcements quickly at some distant position where they are urgently needed.

Troop-carrier 'planes are specially useful in desert warfare, and also where an enemy is strongly entrenched but open to attack from the rear. Then a small body of troops, flying over the enemy's

lines and landing behind them, can attack from the rear.

The illustration shows an R.A.F. Co-operation 'plane landing troops. It is a Bristol Bombay Transport fitted with two 1,010 h.p. Bristol Pegasus XXII's, and is constructed of metal with a stressed skin. Its seating capacity varies according to its bomb freight, but 25 to 30 men with equipment would be an average load. It has a wide cruising range at high speed, and has been used with great effect in Palestine and the Far East.

"No, sir; I am only amazed—astounded—dazed, sir! There is some trickery at work here! Sir, if you are Dr. Locke speaking, and you have met Mr. Percy, doubtless Percy Locke is with you."

"He is at my elbow now."

"Then kindly ask him to speak to me; I shall know his voice. If you really are Dr. Locke there is some unknown person locked in your study here, pretending to be you."

"Good heavens, Mr. Quelch!"

"Let Mr. Percy speak to me."

"Certainly!"

There was a pause, and then a fresh, cheery young man's voice came through over the wires.

"Are you there, Mr. Quelch? Do you know my voice, my old friend, after I have been away all this time?"

"Yes, yes," gasped Mr. Quelch. "I know your voice, Mr. Percy. I



am not likely to forget it, my dear lad. Your father is with you?"

"He is here now."

"Then that is proof! Some impostor—some wretched rogue and criminal—is locked in your father's study at this very moment, imitating Dr. Locke's voice with such extraordinary skill that he has deceived everyone who has heard him speak. Now I understand why the door was kept so carefully locked. Some criminal—probably a burglar or thief—excuse me, I must go instantly! He must be seized—arrested——"

Mr. Quelch hardly stayed to jam the receiver back on the hooks ere he rushed from the room. He left the telephone rocking.

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

### AN AMAZING DISCOVERY!

**B**ILLY BUNTER groaned. He groaned dismally.

The Owl of the Remove felt that it was hard cheese. Dinner, the most important event of the day, the central fact round which the whole universe revolved—dinner was going on and Bunter was not there! Bunter was a prisoner in the Head's study. Once his refuge from classes, from lickings, from Quelchy, it was now his dismal prison. Like the flighty little fly who walked into the spider's parlour, he was in, and he could not get out.

After his series of amazing tricks he dared not—simply dared not!—let it be known that he had been in the study at all. He could not—must not—be seen leaving the study. Even the thought of dinner did not tempt him to run that awful risk. The flogging he had escaped would be as nothing compared with the flogging he might expect for playing such an astounding

series of tricks—even dinner was not worth it. But it was hard cheese! Bunter had been hungry after breakfast—that had caused all the trouble. So at dinner-time he was famished. He understood, and sympathised with, the feelings of fellows lost in open boats at sea as the dinner-hour glided by dinnerless. He knew now what they must feel like!

Until the school had settled down for afternoon classes he dared not venture forth.

By that time he was likely to be in a ravenous state, almost on the verge of cannibalism.

Footsteps in the corridor again. Was everybody at Greyfriars coming to the Head's study that day? Really, it seemed like it, for this time the footsteps came in a swarm. Quite a crowd was gathering outside the Head's study, much to Bunter's surprise and alarm.

Knock!

"Bless my soul! Who is there?" Bunter put on the Head's voice again. "Kindly go away at once. I am very busy."

"Open this door!"

Bunter's heart thumped. Was it because "the Head" had not left his study for lunch that this crowd had come along?

"Nonsense!" he rapped out. "Kindly go away! I repeat that I am busy; I shall lunch later——"

"Upon my word, Mr. Quelch!" came Mr. Prout's deep voice. "Are you sure, sir, that you are not mistaken? That is certainly Dr. Locke's voice."

Bunter started. Did that mean that Quelchy was getting suspicious? Of old, Bunter knew that Quelchy was a downy old bird.

"Mr. Prout, I am not mistaken," said Mr. Quelch's voice. "Dr. Locke





Wingate grasped the table and whirled it away. There was a yell of terror from the revealed Bunter. "Ow! Keep him off! Yaroooh!" "Bunter!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

is at Southampton at this very moment."

Bunter quaked.

"There's no doubt about it, sir," came Wingate's voice. "I have spoken to Gosling, and he says that the Head left early in his car. He saw him go."

"Amazing!" said Mr. Prout. "That certainly seems to place the matter beyond doubt. But the voice——"

"The voice is undoubtedly remarkably like the Head's, but it cannot be the Head's voice, as Dr. Locke is now in Southampton," came Mr. Quelch's icy tones. "Some wretched impostor—some criminal—has obtained admission to the school. I have little

doubt that he has robbed the Head's safe, and is now waiting for an opportunity of escape."

"Very probable, sir, very probable," said Mr. Prout. "Indeed, the scoundrel can scarcely have any other motive for this extraordinary imposture."

Bunter leaned on the Head's table, scarcely breathing.

Knock!

"Open this door, whoever you are!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "I warn you not to resist arrest; you will be seized and handed over to the police. Every point is guarded, and you cannot escape."

"Ow!"



"Will you unlock this door, you scoundrel, or shall it be forced?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

Bunter groaned.

The game was up now, with a vengeance! This was worse than missing dinner.

He rolled hurriedly to the window. At any risk, now, he had to get out of the Head's study before the door was forced.

But a glance from behind the window curtains made him jump back.

Outside, there was a swarm of Greyfriars fellows.

Evidently the alarm had spread; all Greyfriars knew that some unknown person—probably a burglar—was hidden in the Head's study, no doubt robbing the safe!

Really it was not so bad as all that! But that was the most natural supposition in the strange circumstances.

The window was guarded. Under it stood Loder and Gwynne of the Sixth, and half a dozen other sturdy seniors, and Mr. Mible, the gardener, and a swarm of the Fifth. Behind the seniors was an army of juniors, all watching eagerly, all keen to lend a hand in collaring the unknown scoundrel, if he attempted to escape by the window. Harry Wharton & Co. were there, half the Remove with them, and a swarm of the Fourth and the Shell.

Bunter backed away from the window.

There was no escape that way.

In desperation, he thought of the chimney! But there was a blazing fire in the grate!

"Oh dear!" groaned the Owl of the Remove.

Knock!

"For the last time!" came Mr.

Quelch's grim voice. "Will you unlock this door, you scoundrel?"

The "scoundrel" was not likely to unlock the door. Bunter made no answer—it was useless to mimic the Head's voice further, now that the secret was out. Of all that crowd of Greyfriars fellows, not one was likely to heed "his master's voice"—in the circumstances.

"Very well! Gosling!"

"Yessir?"

"You will force the lock, Gosling. You have your tools?"

"Yessir."

"Oh crikey!" moaned Bunter as Gosling began operations on the lock of the Head's door.

He blinked wildly round the study, his eyes almost starting through his big spectacles. Almost, he forgot that he was hungry!

Crack! Creak! Groan! Creak! Crack!

The lock was strong, but it was giving! In a few minutes the door would be open. And then——

Bunter dived under the Head's writing-table. There were flaps to that table which let down when not in use. Between the flaps Bunter was well hidden from sight.

Really, there was little to hope from taking cover. The study was certain to be searched. But it was a case of any port in a storm. Perhaps Bunter indulged a wild hope of being overlooked; at all events, he was postponing the awful moment of discovery.

Crash!

The door flew open.

"Take care, my dear Quelch!" came Mr. Prout's portly voice. "He may be armed—he may have firearms! Take care!"

Unheeding, Mr. Quelch strode into the Head's study.

Mr. Prout followed him in, and Mr.



Capper, and Wingate of the Sixth, and several more hefty seniors. The rest of the crowd blocked the doorway, ready for a desperate rush on the part of the cornered "scoundrel."

But the scoundrel was not to be seen!

Mr. Quelch stared round the study.

"Where is he?"

"The window is shut—he has not escaped that way," said Mr. Capper.

"He is in concealment!" exclaimed Mr. Prout. "The scoundrel has hidden himself! Take care—he may be armed! One moment while I get the poker." The Fifth Form master grabbed up the heavy poker from the grate. "Now I am ready for the villain!"

"Search through the study!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Come forth!" roared Mr. Prout.

"Scoundrel, come forth!"

The scoundrel did not come forth.

"Under the table, I think sir," said Wingate. "There's no other place. You fellows stand ready to collar him while I pull the table away."

"Ow!"

"I hear him!" exclaimed Mr. Prout, uplifting the poker. "Drag away the table, Wingate, and I will stand ready! I will brain him if he lifts a finger—before he can use his revolver——"

"Wow!"

Wingate grasped the table and whirled it away. There was a yell of terror from the revealed scoundrel.

"Ow! Keep him off! Keep that poker away! Yarooooooh!"

"BUNTER!"

"Great Christopher Columbus!" gasped Wingate.

"Bunter!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"Bunter!" went in a yell down the corridor.

"Bunter! It's Bunter!"

Mr. Quelch gazed spellbound at the fat junior. Mr. Prout, with a rather sheepish look, dropped the poker into the fender with a clang. Evidently that weapon of war was not required.

"B-B-Bunter!" stammered Mr. Quelch. "Can I believe my eyes? Bunter, is—was anyone else in this study with you?"

"Yes, sir! No, sir! Oh, sir! I—I—I wasn't——"

"What?"

"I—I didn't—— I never——"

"Stand up!" bawled Mr. Quelch. Billy Bunter quaked to his feet.

"Bunter! It's Bunter—Bunter of the Remove! It's Billy Bunter!" the fellows in the corridor were yelling, and word passed out to the eager crowd in the quadrangle.

"Bunter!" howled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my hat! That's where Bunter was all the time, then!" gasped Peter Todd.

"Bunter! Great pip!"

"The Bunterfulness is terrific."

"Bunter!" stuttered Harry Whar-ton. "Bunter! The giddy ventri-loquist! You remember his game yesterday mimicking the Head's toot! That's it! Bunter's giddy ventri-loquism——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh dear!" gasped Peter. "Bun-ter will be the death of me!"

"I fancy Quelchy will be the death of him—or jolly near it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The roars of laughter echoed in the Head's study. But in that apartment there was no merriment. Billy Bunter stood quaking before his incensed Form master.

"Bunter!" Mr. Quelch's voice almost seemed to bite. "Bunter! It—it—it was you! You! You have



been locked in the Head's study during his absence——”

“ No, sir! I——”

“ What? ”

“ I—I mean yes, sir——”

“ You have imitated the Head's voice. I remember now that I have had to punish you for similar trickery, though never before have you ventured to play tricks involving your headmaster. Upon my word! This is almost beyond belief! ”

“ Wretched boy! ” thundered Mr. Prout. “ It was you—you who answered me through the door, and made me believe that Dr. Locke was speaking to me discourteously.”

“ No, sir! Oh, sir! Yes, sir! Oh, dear! ”

“ You! ” gasped Mr. Quelch.

“ Oh, dear! I—I—I—— The fact is, sir, I wasn't here. I mean, it wasn't me! I never did, sir! I wouldn't! ” stuttered Bunter.

“ Rascal! ” boomed Mr. Prout.

“ Ow! ”

Mr. Quelch calmed himself with an effort.

“ Wingate! Take that wretched boy to the punishment-room and lock him in! He will be expelled from the school for this offence, and he must remain in security till the Head returns to deal with him.”

“ Wow! ”

“ Come along, ” said Wingate, dropping his hand on Bunter's shoulder.

“ I—I say, sir——”

“ Silence! Go! ”

And Bunter quaked and went.

Greyfriars was in a buzz that afternoon over the mystery of the Head's study and its amazing outcome. There was only one opinion on the subject of Bunter: it was, as Smithy put it, Bunter for the long jump! Bunter, as a matter of certainty, would be “ bunked ” from Greyfriars. The Owl of the Remove, a dismal prisoner in the punishment-room, was of the same opinion, and fellows who passed near his quarters heard dismal groans proceeding therefrom. ‘ It was not a happy day for Bunter.

No doubt it was fortunate for Bunter that the Head, returning to Greyfriars with his son, was in a happy and amiable mood—a mood to regard even Bunter's heinous proceedings with a lenient eye. Certainly the Owl of the Remove had fairly asked for the “ sack, ” and it seemed certain that he would get it. But under the influence of Mr. Percy's happy homecoming the Head was unexpectedly lenient.

Bunter was not “ bunked. ” He was handed over to his Form master for punishment, and Mr. Quelch did his duty well—too well, in Bunter's opinion. For a long, long time after Mr. Quelch had done his duty, nothing more was heard of Billy Bunter's ventriloquism. Bunter was fed-up with ventriloquism, and the Owl of the Remove was chiefly occupied with groaning, while the rest of the school were chuckling over the mystery of the Head's study.

