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The Magnet

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EVERY SATURDAY.



BUNTER WANTED TARTS—BUT NOT LIKE THIS!

(William George Bunter would go a long way to bag a bag of tarts—but even Bunter doesn't like tarts thrown at him in the fashion depicted above! See this week's tip-top yarn of the Chums of Greyfriars, inside.)

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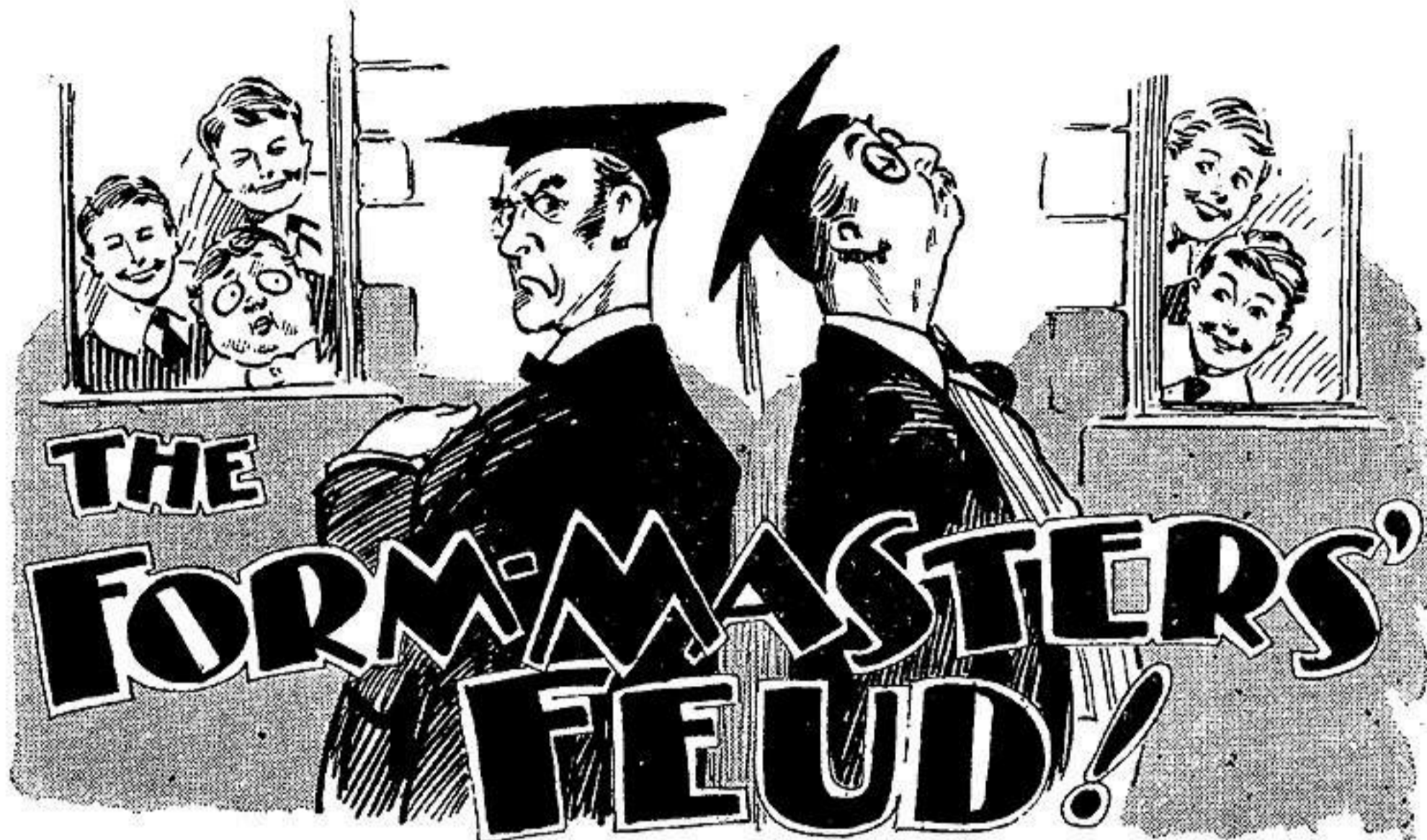
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ALL THROUGH BUNTER! Quarrels among the junior members of Greyfriars are frequent and painfully free, but quarrels among the masters—those highly dignified gentlemen in caps and gowns—are very rare indeed. Yet this week, Greyfriars has a fresh sensation to talk about, for two of their Form masters actually quarrel



A Long Complete School Story of Harry Wharton & Co., the world-renowned chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS,

THE FIRST CHAPTER

An Interrupted Game!

HACKER was to blame.

There was not a man in the Remove who did not agree that Hacker was to blame.

Had Mr. Hacker been master of the Remove, Mr. Hacker, of course, would have been within his rights, indeed his duties, in butting in. But Hacker was master of the Shell, and had nothing—or should have had nothing—to do with the Remove.

The prime cause of the trouble was the rainy weather. Rain was coming down on Greyfriars in sheets. The football ground was almost afloat; the leafless old elms in the quad were weeping; raindrops pattered on the panes, and hissed down the chimneys. Anyone who had to get out of doors went out muffled in a mac., huddled under an umbrella. Nobody went out if he could help it. Even Bob Cherry of the Remove admitted that it was not a day for the open air.

By a cruel coincidence it was a half-holiday. It was utterly rotten for a half-holiday and a terrific downpour of rain to come together. But there it was, and the Greyfriars fellows had to make the best of it.

There were short tempers among the Staff. Mr. Quelch had gone out, braving the elements, having an appointment to keep. The Remove had been pleased to see him go. They had to do something to fill in that dismal afternoon, and they felt that they had a freer hand with their Form master off the scene. Other masters were in Common-room, and fellows who passed in the vicinity of that august apartment, could hear voices that had an acid edge to them. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was arguing with Hacker, the master of the Shell, both of them extremely irritable.

Here, there, and everywhere tempers

seemed to be short, that horrid afternoon. Skinner had come up to the Remove passage with an almost demoniac expression on his face, announcing that Loder of the Sixth had pulled his ear—for nothing. No doubt the weather had affected Loder's temper, and Skinner's ear had been handy. In the Fifth Form games study Coker's powerful voice could be heard, telling Blundell of the Fifth what he thought of him. What Coker thought was not complimentary, and he confided it to all Greyfriars.

In the Remove passage, however, there were cheery spirits.

More than a downpour of rain was required to damp the spirits of the Famous Five and their comrades.

They could not get out of doors, which was a bore. But there were plenty of things to be done indoors by fellows who were determined not to be downhearted.

Bob Cherry, always strenuous, proposed passage football.

Passage football, of course, was forbidden. It was altogether too noisy. Still, Quelch had gone out; and the Remove passage was a long way from the Head's quarters. A crowd of Remove men backed up Bob's suggestion.

There were quieter fellows, who had quieter ways of killing a rainy afternoon. Mark Linley was working at Greek in his study. Lord Mauleverer was taking a nap on his sofa. Billy Bunter, in Study No. 7, was practising his ventriloquism. Bunter had generously offered to entertain all the fellows in the Rag that afternoon with a ventriloquial entertainment free of charge—light refreshments to be provided for the entertainer. His offer had been declined without thanks.

Two or three other fellows were in their studies, writing lines given them in the Form-room by Mr. Quelch for carelessness or negligence, as Quelch

firmly believed; given them because it was a rainy day, as the fellows themselves believed with equal firmness.

But most of the Remove were at liberty, with nothing to do, and the suggestion of passage football came as a boon and a blessing.

Harry Wharton sorted out an old footer. Goals were arranged at either end of the passage—one near the box-room stairs at the upper end, the other on the landing at the lower end. Hazeldene and Squiff were put in the goals. Two sides being formed, the game was soon going strong.

The Remove passage was ample in extent, considered as a passage. Considered as a football field it was rather confined.

Fellows banged into the walls and barged into study doors, sending them flying open. Mark Linley soon found that Greek was impracticable in the circumstances, and put his books away and came out to join in the footer. Lord Mauleverer found it still more impossible to nap, and he opened his sleepy eyes, but he did not emerge from his study; exertion not appealing to his lazy lordship. Billy Bunter blinked out of Study No. 7 through his big spectacles and shouted:

"I say, you fellows! Not so much row, you know."

Nobody, of course, heeded Bunter. Only when the Owl of the Remove stepped out into the passage to remonstrate Johnny Bull shouldered him in passing along and lifted him back into Study No. 7, where he landed with a bump and a roar.

After which Bunter did not remonstrate any more.

The game was going hot and strong. It was a little irregular; indeed, a careless observer might not have recognised it as Soccer at all. In some respects it was rather like Rigger, and in other respects rather like a dog-fight.

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Bolsover major, when he was charged over by Peter Todd, threw his arm round Peter's neck, brought him to the floor, and punched him. This was not according to any known rule of Association football; though such things have happened on Soccer fields. Five or six fellows piled on Bolsover major, tackling him high and low; and Bolsover might have been supposed to be a Rugby man in possession of the ball, though all that he was in possession of was Toddy's head.

But such incidents did not mar the general hilarity.

Indeed, they added to it.

Up and down and round about the echoing passage went the merry footballers in a game that consisted almost wholly of kick and rush and bump.

The uproar, as Hurree Janset Ram Singh justly remarked, was terrific.

However, Quelch was out; and it was nobody else's business to interfere with the Remove. If a Sixth Form prefect came up, it could not be helped; and the juniors did not worry about that till it should happen.

Of Hacker, of course, they did not think for a moment.

But it was Hacker who happened.

Mr. Hacker had concluded his argument with Prout in Common-room. He left with the conviction that Prout was a most irritating old ass; leaving Prout with the fixed impression that Hacker was the densest duffer on the Staff.

The argument had not improved Hacker's temper, which at the best of times could not be called sweet.

The terrific din he heard from the direction of the Remove quarters annoyed him intensely.

It was an unwritten law at Greyfriars that one master never overstepped the province of another. Only the ponderous Prout sometimes exceeded the limit, and was severely criticised in Common-room for doing so.

Hacker, therefore, kept his patience and his temper as long as he could. When he couldn't do it any longer, he whisked along to Mr. Quelch's study.

He knocked at Mr. Quelch's door, threw it open, and shot his words into the study like bullets.

"My dear Quelch! Your Form seem to be entirely out of hand! Really, sir, I must protest!"

Hacker would have said more, but at that point he became aware of the fact that the study was empty and that he was wasting his sweetness on the desert air.

Mr. Hacker breathed hard through his nose.

Quelch, apparently, was out. His Form were taking advantage of his absence to turn Greyfriars into a bear-garden.

Hacker went as far as the Remove staircase, debating in his annoyed and irritated mind whether he should intervene.

In the circumstances, Quelch had no right to be offended if he did. Of course, he might take offence without having a right to do so.

Still, this kind of thing was not to be borne—at least, by an irritable man on a rainy afternoon.

Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp!

"On the ball!"

Crash! Bang! Bump!

"Pass, there! Pass, you ass!"

Tramp! Crash! Bump, bump!

"Play up!"

"Kick, kick! Shoot, you dummy!"

"Look out, Squiff!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp! Crash!

Bang! Bump, bump! Yell!

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The Removites were enjoying themselves. Hacker, convinced that this sort of thing was not to be borne, rushed up the Remove staircase.

He did not, of course, know that the Remove landing was a goal area. He did not know that Squiff, standing there, was keeping goal. But he knew, a second later, that the ball was coming in that direction. Squiff had saved thrice; but a Fourth shot, from Harry Wharton's accurate foot, sent the ball past him, and Squiff grabbed at it in vain.

Squiff did not stop the ball. But it was stopped! Mr. Hacker had arrived at the psychological moment.

Crash!

Hacker stopped the ball with his chin. The ball stopped Hacker.

One breathless gasp the master of the Shell gave, as the impact lifted him from the stairs.

He sat down.

Sitting down in the middle of a flight of stairs requires a certain amount of care.

Hacker had no time to be careful.

He rolled.

A wild bowl floated up to the Remove passage as he went; the ball trundled after him from step to step.

"Great pip!"

"It's Hacker!"

"Serve him right for butting in!"

"There'll be a row!"

"Hook it!"

For a moment the Remove landing was packed with startled faces, staring down at the sprawling Hacker. Then they vanished, as the Removites fled for their lives. The game ceased suddenly. For a few moments the Remove passage echoed to trampling feet, and then the footballers had vanished. Nobody wanted an interview with Hacker. They vanished by box-room stairs and other passages, leaving an unpeopled solitude to greet Hacker's eyes when he recovered from the shock.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Hectic Time for Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER rolled out of Study No. 7.

He blinked this way, and he blinked that way, through his big spectacles.

Bunter was surprised.

He did not know, and he wanted to know. Bunter was still occupied with his ventriloquial stunts in his study when the catastrophe occurred. He heard a wild shouting, a rush of footsteps past his study door, and then—silence! Deep silence! It surprised Bunter, and he wanted to know what was the matter. Something evidently had happened. When anything happened at Greyfriars, Bunter always wanted to know all about it. His desire for information often led him into trouble. Seldom did it lead him into more trouble than on the present occasion.

Only one other Remove man was in his study. That one was Lord Mauleverer. Mauly heard the uproar, the rush, and noticed the dead silence that followed. But he did not stir from his sofa to ascertain the cause. He was not curious, and he was lazy. Thankful for the cessation of the din, Mauly closed his sleepy eyes to enjoy his long-deferred nap.

Not so Bunter. Bunter wanted to know. Emerging from his study, he looked this way and that way, like Moses of old. Like Moses of old he saw that there was no man.

"Well, my hat!" said Bunter, in astonishment.

It really was remarkable.

Only a few moments before, the Remove passage had echoed and re-echoed with a din that was simply terrific.

Now it was silent as the tomb.

Only a few moments before it had been crowded with excited, shouting Removites.

Now Bunter was the only fellow there!

All the Remove had vanished like ghosts at cock-crow. A whole Form had suddenly disappeared into space.

From the direction of the Remove staircase Bunter suddenly heard a sound. It was a sound of gasping and spluttering.

It seemed to indicate that somebody had fallen downstairs. That hardly accounted for the sudden vanishing of a noisy crowd of fellows. But Bunter rolled along to the landing to investigate.

"Oh, crikey!" he ejaculated.

He sighted Hacker.

Mr. Hacker had scrambled up on the stairs. He was shaken; he was bumped; he was bruised. He was in a towering rage. He was coming up the stairs three at a time, with vengeance in his wrathful countenance. That the Remove were not his Form—that he had no admitted right whatever to chastise fellows in any Form but his own—Hacker had forgotten.

A footer impinging on his chin, a tumble down a staircase, had driven all such considerations from his mind. Mr. Hacker had been reduced to the primitive state of a man who was hurt, and wanted to hurt somebody else.

And undoubtedly had the Removites lingered to encounter the wrath of Hacker, there would have been a record smacking of heads and boxing of ears in the Remove passage. Wisely, they had not lingered. Only Bunter was there to meet Hacker as he came charging up the stairs to the Remove landing.

Bunter blinked at him in alarm.

He had done nothing to Hacker—did not even know how Hacker had taken his tumble. But Hacker's look was alarming.

Bunter backed away. He did not back fast enough. Hacker was on him like a tiger.

Smack!

A box on the right ear sent Bunter reeling to port.

Smack!

A box on the left ear spun him to starboard.

The wild yell of anguish and terror that Bunter sent forth awoke every echo in the Remove passage.

"Yaroooh!"

Smack, smack!

Of course, Hacker did not know that Bunter was not one of the footballers, and that only curiosity had drawn him to the spot, after the footballers had vanished. Bunter was a Removite, and he was on the spot—the only one there. Upon Bunter, therefore, fell at one dread swoop the vengeance which would otherwise have been distributed impartially all over the Remove.

"Yaroooh!" yelled Bunter. "Help!"

Smack!

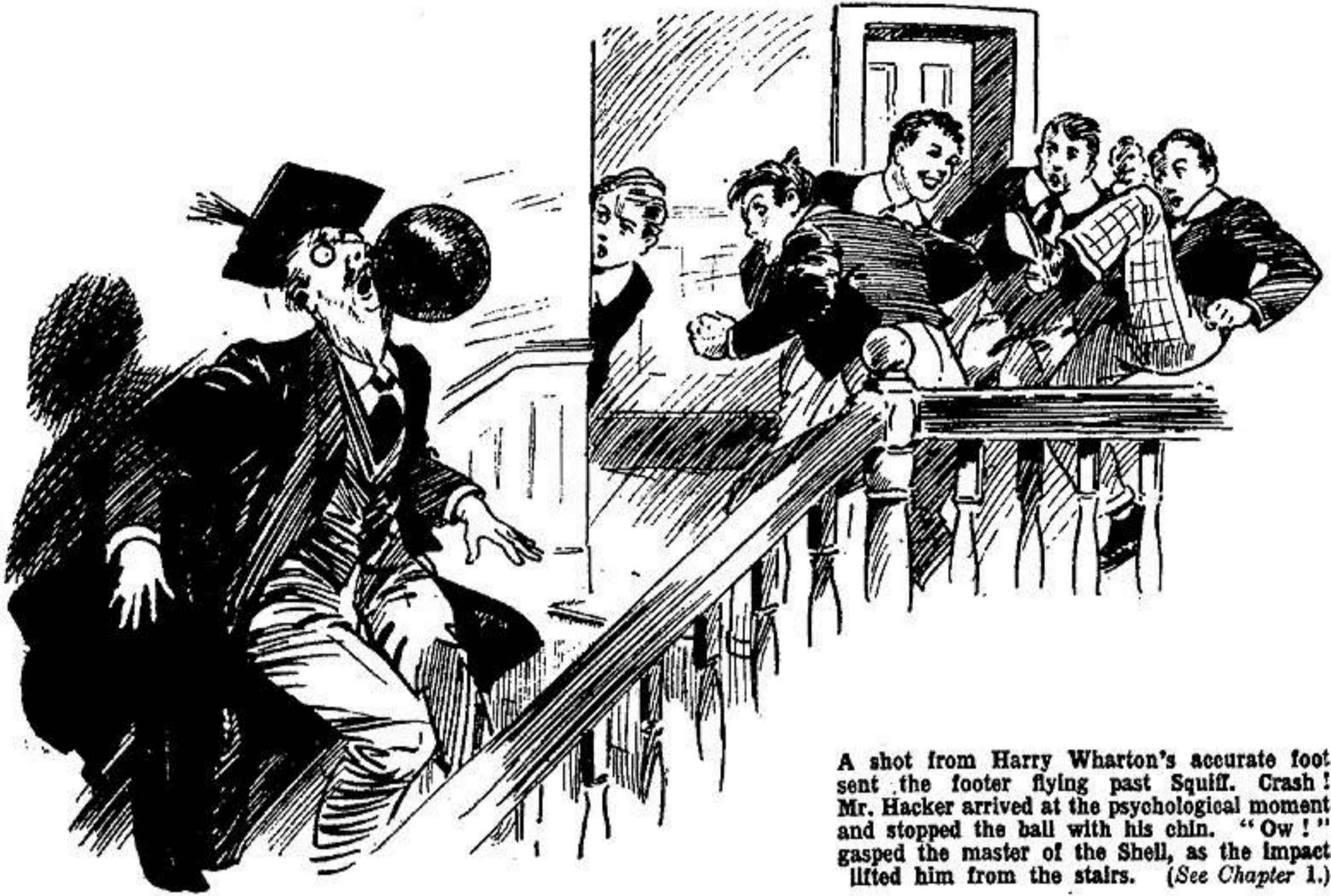
"Whoop!"

Billy Bunter fled for his life.

He negotiated the Remove passage at record speed. After him flew the enraged master of the Shell.

"Yow-ow! Help! Keep off!" howled Bunter.

He heard the pursuing footsteps close behind. In sheer terror he collapsed on



A shot from Harry Wharton's accurate foot sent the footer flying past Squiff. Crash! Mr. Hacker arrived at the psychological moment and stopped the ball with his chin. "Ow!" gasped the master of the Shell, as the impact lifted him from the stairs. (See Chapter 1.)

the floor. It was an involuntary movement, but it was the wisest thing Bunter could have done, in the circumstances. Unable to stop himself in time, Hacker stumbled over him, flew across him, and landed on all fours on the floor beyond him.

Bunter scrambled up, quite dizzy.

He blinked in terror at the master of the Shell, sprawling on his hands and knees. He did not stay to blink twice. Inadvertently he had floored Hacker, but what Hacker would do when he got up again did not bear thinking of. Bunter spun round, scudded along the passage, and went down the Remove staircase, jumping like a kangaroo.

"Stop!"

He heard an exasperated voice behind him.

He did not heed.

Bunter was not a clever fellow; but he was far too clever to stop when he was told to do so in that tone of voice.

He bounded on, and negotiated the lower flight of stairs while Hacker was starting from the top.

Crash!

Billy Bunter flew from the staircase, and flew into Wingate of the Sixth, who was coming to the stairs.

A charge from Bunter, with all the fat junior's weight behind it, was not a light matter. Wingate went backwards as if a battering-ram had smitten him. He bumped on the floor with a roar.

"Ow! You young idiot! Oh!"

"Yaroooh! Help! Hacker's after me!" shrieked Bunter. "He's mad! Help! Yaroooooh!"

"What the thump—"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Bunter dodged round the breathless Sixth-Former and fled onward. He dodged into Masters passage.

Why Hacker had attacked him so ferociously, unless the master of the Shell had taken leave of his senses, Bunter did not know. But he knew that

he did not want any more. He rushed to his Form master's study as to a haven of refuge. Quelch was bound to protect him.

"Ow! Wow! Oh, sir, help!" spluttered Bunter, as he careered into Mr. Quelch's study.

He had forgotten that Henry Samuel Quelch was absent that afternoon. The study was empty.

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter.

At every second he dreaded to hear the pursuing footsteps of the infuriated Hacker. He whirled round to the door, slammed it, and turned the key in the lock.

Then he sank down in Mr. Quelch's armchair, panting for breath, puffing and blowing. Bunter felt that he had earned a rest.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

His Master's Voice!

"O H dear!"

Billy Bunter did not get a long rest.

Footsteps and voices sounded in Masters passage. He heard the squeaky voice of Mr. Twigg, the master of the Second Form, and the deeper voice of Mr. Hacker.

Bunter started from the armchair.

He blinked at the window; but, though it was easy enough to drop from the study window, outside the rain was coming down in sheets. That was not a way of escape that appealed to Bunter. But the door was locked, and Bunter did not intend to unlock it. If only Quelch had been there! It was the first time on record that Billy Bunter had desired the presence of his Form master, but now he longed for it from the bottom of his fat heart. If Hacker ordered him to open the door, it was very doubtful whether he would find the nerve to refuse. Hacker certainly was not his Form master, nevertheless, a master was a master.

Bunter stood quaking.

"Certainly, my dear Hacker!" Mr. Twigg was squeaking. "I saw him. He ran into one of the studies, I think—probably Quelch's study."

"Quelch is absent," said Hacker's deep, sharp voice. "I had already called to see him. If the boy is there—"

"I think he is there. But, my dear Hacker, as the boy is in Quelch's Form—"

"I have been knocked over by a football and tripped in a passage!" gasped Mr. Hacker. "If Quelch allows his Form to conduct themselves in such a manner, he cannot expect other members of the staff to submit to hooliganism. I shall certainly cane Bunter severely!"

"Wow!" gasped Bunter.

"But, my dear Hacker—" murmured Mr. Twigg soothingly.

"I shall cane him!" said Hacker.

Bunter heard the Second Form master rustle away. A heavy hand turned the doorknob of Mr. Quelch's study.

Bunter stood rooted to the floor, gazing at the door.

"This door is locked! The young rascal is evidently here. Bunter, admit me at once!" hooted Mr. Hacker.

Bunter did not reply.

He stood terrified. To admit Hacker was to face his wrath—and his cane. To refuse to admit him required more nerve than William George Bunter possessed. The Owl of the Remove was on the horns of a dilemma.

Bunter's brain was not an active one. Indeed, many Remove fellows averred that it did not function at all. But even Bunter could think, and think quickly, in an emergency. No doubt, it was because he had been practising his weird ventriloquism that afternoon that the idea flashed into his mind. He had been practising imitating the voice of

his Form master, with a view to playing tricks in the Remove. Quelch had a voice that was not hard to imitate; indeed, it was said in the Remove that sometimes, when Gosling's dog had barked, they had fancied, for a moment, that it was Quelch speaking.

Ventriloquism with Bunter was a natural gift. Had it required brains Bunter certainly never could have acquired the art. The moment the big idea flashed into his mind Bunter gave the fat little cough that always preceded his ventriloquial efforts. Then he spoke, in a voice that any man at Greyfriars would have sworn was Henry Samuel Quelch's.

"What—what! Who is there?"
"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker, taken aback. "Is that you, Quelch? I did not know that you had returned."

"Go away at once! I am busy, and do not wish to be disturbed."

"My dear Quelch—"

"Oh, get out of it!"

"What—what?"

"Look here, Hacker, shut up, and don't rattle that door-handle. I tell you I'm busy this afternoon."

"Quelch, this language to a Form master—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"What?" shrieked Mr. Hacker.

"Shut up!"

"Upon my word!"

Billy Bunter grinned.

The voice was the voice of Quelch, though the speaker was William George Bunter of Quelch's Form. In the Remove they knew all about Bunter's ventriloquism; but the master of the Shell, of course, knew nothing about it. He heard the well-known barking tones of Mr. Quelch addressing him from the study, and he had no doubts. He did not doubt, but he was astounded—indeed, flabbergasted. For any member of the staff at Greyfriars to address another member of the staff in this manner was utterly unprecedented.

Mr. Hacker was almost driven to suspect that Quelch had comforted himself with strong liquor during his walk out that rainy day.

He released the door-handle and tapped at a panel.

"Quelch, kindly admit me to the study. I will explain—"

"I keep on telling you I'm busy, Hacker! Do go away, and give a man a rest!" barked the voice from the study.

"I have been assaulted by boys of your Form—knocked over by a football, kicked in the Remove passage—"

"Nonsense!"

"What—what did you say, Quelch?"

"Rubbish!"

"I have been tripped over by the boy Bunter!" roared Mr. Hacker. "I have reason to believe that he came to your study—"

"Bosh!"

"Is the boy there, Quelch!"

"I am alone here, Hacker. For goodness' sake, clear off!"

"Will you punish the boy as he deserves? Can I leave the matter in your hands with confidence?" demanded the incensed master of the Shell.

"You can go and eat coke!"

"What?" shrieked Mr. Hacker.

"Coke!"

"I—I can scarcely believe my ears!" gasped the master of the Shell. "I can scarcely believe that any Greyfriars master is capable of using such language. Upon my word!"

"Oh, get out of it!" barked the voice from the study. "You're a bore, Hacker! Why can't you mind your own business, and leave the Remove alone?"

Butting into another master's Form—just like old Prout!"

"I have been tripped—"

"Serve you jolly well right!"

"What—what?"

"Serve you right! Keep out of the Remove passage, and don't butt in. If I catch you there, I'll jolly well clear you out of it, with a flea in your ear, I can tell you!"

Mr. Hacker almost staggered.

"I—I refuse to keep up a—a degrading altercation with you, Quelch!" he gasped. "I am surprised, shocked, astounded! I could never have believed a member of Dr. Locke's staff capable of taking such a line."

"Oh, cheese it!"

"I will say no more!" roared Mr. Hacker. "I shall consider whether to lay a complaint before the Head. I shall certainly raise the matter at the next session of the masters."

"Are you wound up?"

"What?"

"Wound up!"

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Hacker.

Heavy footsteps tramped away along Masters passage.

Mr. Hacker was gone.

Billy Bunter chuckled.

His ventriloquial stunt had saved him. Mr. Hacker was gone in the full conviction that the voice that had spoken from the study was Henry Samuel Quelch's. Bunter had only to wait till the coast was clear to escape. He heard a door slam along the passage. He could guess easily enough that it was Hacker's door.

"Beast!" murmured Bunter.

He turned back the key, opened the door softly, and peered into Masters passage. It was deserted.

Bunter trod softly out and retired from the scene without losing time. His fat face was wreathed in grins as he made his way back to the Remove quarters.

How Mr. Hacker would greet Mr. Quelch when that gentleman met him again might have been an interesting question to Bunter—had he thought about it. But he didn't. That he had started a misunderstanding which was likely to develop into serious trouble did not occur to Bunter at the time. Had it occurred to him, however, it would not have worried him. Bunter's own affairs occupied all his attention, and he had no time to waste on the troubles of others.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Trouble I

"THERE'LL be a row!"

That was Bob Cherry's opinion.

It was shared, likewise, by all the Remove.

Obviously, Hacker would be wild. Being biffed by a football in full career was enough to annoy a better-tempered man than Hacker. As Skinner put it, Hacker had taken it sitting down, but he could not be expected to take it lying down. When Quelch came in there would be a row. All the Remove men felt certain of that.

The Famous Five gathered in Study No. 1 to tea, having returned to their own quarters after giving Hacker plenty of time to get clear. The rain pattered and splashed on the study windows. It was still impossible to get out of doors. But no man in the Remove was now thinking of passage football. Anyhow, it was tea-time, and the fellows went to tea and discussed

the mishap to Hacker, and wondered what the master of the Shell would do, and what Quelch would say.

"Licking all round," remarked Bob Cherry. "Hacker will pitch it to Quelch, and Quelch will be waxy at getting complaints about his Form, and he'll take it out of poor little us."

"The lickfulness will probably be terrific," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Blow Hacker!" growled Johnny Bull. "What did he want to butt in for? It was all his fault."

"Well, we were kicking up rather a shindy," remarked Frank Nugent, with a grin.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"The fact is we were making a fearful row," he said. "The prefects would have come up, sooner or later, if Hacker hadn't."

"Well, it's the prefects' business, not Hacker's," argued Johnny Bull. "He should have left it to Wingate or Gwynne."

"Yes, Hacker was to blame," agreed Bob. "I hope Quelch will see that."

"The blamefulness of the absurd Hacker was great, but the seefulness of the esteemed Quelch will not be terrific," remarked Hurree Singh, with a shake of his dusky head. "We must be prepared for the terrific whackfulness all roundfully."

"I say, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter rolled into No. 1 Study. There was a grin on his fat face.

"Were you going to ask me to tea, Wharton?" he inquired.

"No."

"Um! Were you, Nugent?"

"No."

"He, he, he! You fellows always will have your little joke," remarked Bunter, pulling a chair to the table. "I say, you fellows, I'll tell you how I didded Hacker, if you like. Pass that ham, Bob, will you? Thanks! Shove the eggs this way, Harry, old fellow. If you'd like to make some more toast, Franky—"

"I wouldn't!"

"My dear chap, bread-and-butter's good enough for me. I never expect much in this study, anyhow. Making some fresh tea, Wharton?"

"No."

"Well, I'll have milk. Luckily, there's enough. You don't mind if I put all the sugar in it, do you? I rather like sugar. I say, you fellows, you should have heard Hacker hooting at Quelch's door after me! My belief is that that chap is going out of his mind. He attacked me—"

"Attacked you!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yes. After you fellows cleared I came out of my study to see what was up, and Hacker came up the stairs like greased lightning, sprang at me like a—a tiger—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Clutched me like a vice," continued Bunter. "Hammered me like a—a—a hammer. If I hadn't tripped him up, I don't know what would have happened."

"Great pip!"

"I ran for it," said Bunter, with his mouth full, while the chums of the Remove stared at him. "He was after me like a—a wolf after a lamb, you know. I cut along to Quelch's study, and locked myself in. Any more eggs?"

"No."

"You don't stand a fellow much of a feed in this study. Still, the ham's good, and I'll finish it if you don't mind. Hacker came raging after me, and I— He, he, he!"

Bunter chuckled.

"You fellows know what a wonderful ventriloquist I am—what?"

"We know what a silly ass you are, if that's what you mean."

"It isn't," snorted Bunter. "But I'm used to this carping jealousy of my wonderful powers. Well, I put on Quelch's bark and Hacker thought Quelch was in the study and cleared off."

"Phew!"

"Wonderful presence of mind, you know," said Bunter. "That's me all over—dauntless courage and wonderful presence of mind."

"Oh, scissors!"

"Pass the cake! Not much of a cake," said Bunter. "You fellows have rather measly cakes in this study. I'll stand you something better than this when I get my postal-order."

"When!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"The whenfulness is terrific."

"Oh, really, you fellows! I say, Hacker stamped away in an awful rage. He thought Quelch had insulted him," chuckled Bunter. "Owing to my marvellous ventriloquism, you know. Happy thought, wasn't it?"

"Oh, awfully happy!" said Wharton, staring at the Owl of the Remove. "You'll get scalped when it comes out if you've really played a trick like that on a Form master."

"Well, you see, it can't come out," said Bunter cheerfully. "Hacker thinks it was Quelch speaking to him through the study door—see? He was in a rare bate. Quite wild. Most likely he will give Quelch the marble eye over it. That little ass, Twigg, saw me scoot into the study. Still, I can swear that I never was there, if necessary, and you fellows can bear me out."

"Eh?"

"If there's any fuss, of course, I shall expect my friends to rally round me," said Bunter. "You can swear that I was in this study at the time—see? Five witnesses—eye witnesses—are enough to clear any fellow."

"Great pip!"

"The swearfulness will not be terrific, my esteemed preposterous Bunter."

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Quelch will be in soon," remarked Bob Cherry, glancing at the window. "Still raining. He won't come back in a good temper. I hope Hacker will leave his complaint over till Quelch has had his tea."

"What have you fellows being doing to Hacker?" asked Bunter.

"Only flooring him with a footer."

"He, he, he!"

"His own fault, for butting in!" said Johnny Bull. "I suppose it's no good telling Quelch that, though."

Hazeldene looked into the study.

"Quelch's come in," he remarked.

"Now for the giddy circus!" murmured Bob Cherry. "What does he look like, Hazel?"

Hazeldene grinned.

"Like a drowned rat, and a bit like a gorgon. This weather doesn't seem to have put him in a good temper."

"It wouldn't, I suppose. We're for it."

"Let's go down," said Harry; and the Famous Five left the study. They had rather a feeling that they would like to get it over.

In the Lower Hall they found Mr. Quelch. He was not looking exactly like a gorgon; but his face was not, perhaps, suitable. A long walk through a heavy downpour of rain did not conduce to cheerfulness and sprightliness in a gentleman of Mr. Quelch's mature years. He was speaking to Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, and did not

observe the juniors, who eyed him warily from the staircase.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Hacker!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"Now for it!"

Mr. Hacker had been standing by the big fireplace. He turned and moved away, passing quite near Mr. Quelch.

The juniors, watching from the distance, expected him to stop and speak, to report the hectic happenings of the afternoon to the Remove master.

But he did not stop.

Mr. Quelch glanced at him; and was surprised to receive a cold stare from Mr. Hacker, who, after that frigid stare, passed on as if oblivious of Mr. Quelch's existence.

The Remove master gazed after him. It was the cut direct.

The red came into Mr. Quelch's cheeks. Mr. Prout, ponderously surprised, stared after Hacker.

"What—what?" said Prout. "I trust that nothing has occurred, my dear Quelch, between you and Hacker—"

"Nothing!"

"His manner—"

Mr. Quelch's lips tightened.

"Hacker's manner is no doubt his

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own concern," he said. "Certainly it is a matter of no moment to me—of no moment whatever."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Prout, with glistening eyes.

The Remove master walked away to his study. Prout stood for a moment or two, with fatuous satisfaction in his plump face. Obviously, there was trouble between the master of the Shell and the master of the Remove. It was an item of news for Common-room—sadly in want of something to discuss on that dismal rainy afternoon. Here was something to discuss—what was the matter between Quelch and Hacker—what was the cause of it—to what was it likely to lead? Prout rolled away to Common-room quite happy.

In half an hour Prout had asked Wiggins, the master of the Third, Twigg, the master of the second, Capper, the master of the Fourth, and Monsieur Charpentier, the French master, whether they knew about the trouble between Hacker and Quelch. They had not known—but now they knew!

Masters' Common-room had a very pleasant little flutter! Something had happened at last—there was a topic! They could almost have been grateful to Hacker and Quelch for this rather mysterious but extremely interesting

quarrel. Really, it was one of those things that came in useful when saved up for a rainy day.

Meanwhile, the Removites returned to their studies, surprised but relieved. Hacker had had his chance of reporting to Quelch, but had not availed himself of it. From what they had seen, it looked as if the two Form masters were not now on speaking terms. The less they spoke to one another, for the present, the better, from the point of view of the Remove.

"But what on earth's up?" asked Bob Cherry, in wonder. "They were friendly enough to-day—I saw them chatting after dinner."

"He, he, he!" cackinated Bunter.

Bunter knew.

"I say, you fellows, I've saved your bacon!" he said.

"How's that, fathcad?"

"Hacker thinks Quelch insulted him, in his study you know. My wonderful ventriloquism. He won't speak to Quelch now, of course. He, he, he!"

The juniors stared at Bunter.

"You fat villain—" said the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Well, if it's that, Bunter's got us off a licking," said Frank Nugent. "We shall see. If we don't hear anything about it to-day, it will most likely drop."

"That's so," agreed Bob.

Nothing was heard about it that day or evening; and when the Remove went to their dormitory that night nothing had been said on the subject of passage football by Mr. Quelch.

Evidently Hacker had not reported the matter. Why he had not reported it was a mystery, unless he was so deeply offended with Quelch that he disdained to speak to him at all. It really looked as if the Remove ventriloquist had, quite inadvertently, saved the Remove from lickings all round.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Hobson Butts In!

"WHAT'S up?"

Hobson of the Shell asked that question when he met Harry Wharton in the quad, in break, the following day.

"Which and what?" asked Wharton.

"There's a shindy on," said Hobson. "Your Form master isn't speaking to mine. They passed one another in the quad, and Hacker looked another way, and Quelch turned as red as a turkey-cock and glared."

"So they're keeping it up?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"You fellows know what's happened?" asked Hobson curiously. "Of course, I know they're always tattling and cackling in Common-room. But something must have happened to cause a row like this."

"A misunderstanding, I think," said Harry.

Most of the Remove knew about the ventriloquial incident in Mr. Quelch's study on Wednesday afternoon. Bunter had not been in the least inclined to hide his light under a bushel. Bunter was satisfied that he had acted with remarkable cleverness on that occasion; and Bunter naturally wanted other fellows to know how clever he was.

And as he seemed to have saved the Remove—so far, at least—from serious trouble, Bunter felt that he had a claim on the gratitude of the Form. He was not to point this out. They might, a thank a fellow, Bunter considered.

But outside the Remove it was not judicious for Bunter's exploit to be known—even Bunter realised that. Had Quelch discovered that Bunter, imitating his voice, had slanged another master, the results to Bunter would have been of the most painful description.

Quelch, too, knew all about Bunter's ventriloquism. The Owl of the Remove had been spotted once or twice playing tricks in the Form-room by the weird device, with the laudable object of interrupting lessons.

Quelch, no doubt, had forgotten the matter; but he would remember it fast enough if he heard of what had happened in his study. Probably the story would spread further in the course of time, especially if the coolness between Hacker and Quelch lasted. But Harry Wharton & Co. were not the fellows to spread it. It was a case of the least said the soonest mended. Undoubtedly the licking of his life awaited Bunter if he was found out.

"A misunderstanding," repeated Hobson of the Shell. "Got any idea what it is, you kids?"

"Who are you calling kids?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Whom, dear boy, whom!" chided Hobson. "Don't you learn declensions in the Lower Fourth?"

"You cheeky ass—"

"But look here—" said Hobson.

"Can't be done—you must get a new set of features before you can expect a fellow to do that."

"You cheeky chump!" roared Hobson.

"Bow-wow!"

The Famous Five walked on, playfully pushing Hobson against a tree as they passed him. James Hobson collided rather forcibly with the trunk, slid down it, and sat on a gnarled root.

"Why, I—I—I'll—" gasped Hobson.

He got up and dusted his trousers, and followed the Famous Five. Hobson wanted to know. Also, he was wrathful. The Shell prided themselves on being Middle School; not exactly seniors, of course, like the Fifth and the Sixth, but seniors in comparison with the Lower School. This claim to superiority on the part of the Shell was regarded with disdainful derision by the Fourth and the Remove, in whose eyes the Shell were just juniors like themselves, merely that and nothing more. Pushing Hobby over was no more to the Famous Five than pushing over Tubb of the Third, or Gatty of the Second. To James Hobson it was superlative cheek.

"Hold on, you fags!" rapped out Hobson. "Look here, I've heard from a Remove kid that some of you barged a footer at my Form master yesterday."

"Quite a mistake!" answered Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"You didn't barge a footer on Hacker's chin?"

"Not at all. Hacker barged his chin on our footer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You ought to keep your Form master better in hand, Hobby," said Johnny Bull. "Tell him not to come butting into our passage. The fact is he's cheeky—like his Form!"

"The cheekfulness is terrific."

Hobson glared.

"Which of you two barged the footer at Hacker?" he demanded.

"I've told you Hacker barged his face at the footer."

"You silly ass! Which of you kicked the footer, then?"

"Little me," said Wharton cheerily.

"It was an accident, of course. Hacker

butted in just in time to stop it with his features."

"Well, you're not going to barge footers at my Form master," said Hobson. "I dare say that's why he's rowing with Quelch. He was in a tantrum in the Form-room this morning, and I got fifty lines. I've a good mind to give you a jolly good licking, Wharton!"

"You exaggerate, old bean!"

"Eh—what do you mean?"

"You haven't a good mind," explained the captain of the Remove. "You've never shown any sign, so far, of having one at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That was too much for James Hobson. The captain of the Shell, head boy of the Middle School, was not likely to take this from a mere junior.

He hurled himself at Wharton.

"All hands on deck!" chirruped Bob Cherry.

"Collar him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Five pairs of hands closed on James Hobson all at once. He was swept off his feet, and his nose tapped gently on the cold, unsympathetic quadrangle.

Hobson struggled furiously.

"Rescue, Shell!" he bawled.

Hoskins and Stewart of the Shell came speeding up.

James Hobson was dropped—rather suddenly. He sprawled on the earth and roared.

Hoskins and Stewart, charging valiantly to the rescue, were collared and strewn across Hobson; Carr of the Shell came racing up a moment later, and was added to the heap.

"Cease this instantly!"

Mr. Hacker emerged from a walk under the elms and came suddenly on the scene. His eyes gleamed at the grinning Removites.

Hobson & Co., scrambling to their feet, were eager to rush on the enemy. There were four of them now, and they had no doubt that four of the Shell could mop up the quad with five of the Remove. But in the presence of their Form master they had to hold their hands.

"Wharton!" rapped out Mr. Hacker.

"Yes, sir?" said Harry.

"I will not allow this ruffianism in the quadrangle!"

Wharton coloured.

A little horseplay really was not ruffianism; moreover, Hobson had started the trouble. Wharton checked the hot reply that rose to his lips.

"Yesterday," said Mr. Hacker, "I was struck by a football kicked in the Remove passage. Now I find you indulging in ruffianism in the quadrangle almost in sight of your headmaster's windows! Disgraceful!"

"It was an accident with the footer, sir, and we're very sorry it happened," said Bob Cherry meekly.

"It was not an accident, I presume, that you were playing football indoors, contrary to all regulations?" snapped Mr. Hacker.

"N-n-no!"

"Nor that you are handling boys of my Form this morning in this ruffianly manner?" hooted Mr. Hacker.

"The fact is, sir—" stammered Hobson. "I—"

"You need say nothing, Hobson."

"Oh! Very well, sir."

"Wharton, take warning! I will not allow this!" said Mr. Hacker. "If your Form master does not keep you in control, other measures will be taken!"

The juniors simply blinked at Hacker.

For one master to criticise another in the presence of the boys was utterly

unknown at Greyfriars, utterly unprecedented. They could hardly believe their ears. They realised that Hacker must be in a state of the deepest resentment to allow himself to be guilty of such bad form.

"Now disperse!" snapped Hacker.

Hobson & Co. vanished from the scene at once. The Famous Five were not in such a hurry.

Hacker had absolutely no right to give them such an order. They were strongly inclined to stand upon their rights.

"Do you hear me?" snapped Mr. Hacker.

Johnny Bull's jaw squared.

"You're not our Form master, sir," he said.

"What!" roared Mr. Hacker.

Bob caught the belligerent Johnny's arm.

"Come on," he said.

"Look here—"

"Oh, come on!"

Bob dragged Johnny Bull away, and the other fellows followed. Mr. Hacker frowned after them darkly; but probably he was feeling a little relieved, for had the Famous Five refused to go he would have been placed in a very awkward position. Still frowning, he walked away under the elms.

In third lesson that morning the Shell found Hacker rather a trial. His temper, never of the sweetest, now seemed to be of the sourest.

"Hacker's on the jolly old war-path," Bob Cherry remarked, as the Famous Five sauntered away to the House. "Looks as if Bunter pitched it rather strong when he was playing his idiotic tricks yesterday. It's fairly got Hacker's back up."

There was no doubt about that.

At dinner that day Mr. Quelch and Mr. Hacker met face to face in the dining-room; and as the rumour of their disagreement had spread all over Greyfriars by that time, all eyes were upon them.

Hacker, under all eyes, deliberately turned his back on Quelch.

It was the climax.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

In Masters' Common-room!

"QUEL malheur!" murmured Monsieur Charpentier.

Mossoo was the only member of Common-room, or almost the only member, who thought that it was a "malheur."

Of course, nobody on the staff at Greyfriars wanted to see two members of the staff at loggerheads.

It was unseemly.

It was bad form.

It was subversive of the respect in which the whole staff as a body should be held by the whole school.

Would—and could—fellows respect, in the same way, masters who were in obvious disagreement with one another? They wouldn't and couldn't.

Prout harped considerably on this string. Other members of the staff concurred. It was unseemly, subversive—all sorts of things.

Nevertheless, had Common-room examined deeply into its own feelings on the subject, Common-room would have had to admit that it was deriving a little much-needed excitement and entertainment from the episode.

It broke the monotony. It gave them something to talk about. It was a new subject of discussion. It was a new record on the old, old gramophone!

Since this trouble had arisen between



"Yow-ow! Help! Keep off!" howled Bunter, as he heard the pursuing footsteps of Mr. Hacker behind him. In sheer terror, the fat junior collapsed on the floor. Unable to stop himself in time, the master of the Shell stumbled over him, flew across him, and landed on all fours on the floor beyond. "Ow!" (See Chapter 2.)

Hacker and Quelch, Mr. Prout had not told one story of his old youthful days as a mighty hunter. He had talked about this trouble, instead. That alone made life more worth living in Common-room. Mr. Twigg, too, who bored his colleagues almost to weeping with his tales of strenuous life in the Second Form, of the rebelliousness of fags, and his—Twigg's—herculean firmness in dealing with them—even Mr. Twigg gave his old, old subject a rest, and bit into the Hacker-Quelch row, instead. Capper of the Fourth—a mild gentleman with rather watery eyes—fastened on the Hacker-Quelch feud like a dog on a bone, and said no more—for the happy present—of his Oxford days. In his Oxford days—unless memory deceived him—Capper had been much of a buck, and had heard the chimes at midnight; though nobody, looking at the mild gentleman now, would ever have thought so. All Common-room knew Capper's Oxford life by heart, and could almost have recited it. To hear no more of it for a few days was actually exhilarating.

Then there was Wiggins, the master of the Third, the most absent-minded gentleman that ever was, who forgot to ask the Third for lines, who sometimes forgot his own Form-room and butted into the wrong one; who came in an hour late for a meal, or an hour early; who went out in blazing sunshine with an umbrella up, or in pouring rain with his hat off. Wiggins, being gifted with humour, saw the humorous side of his own absent-mindedness; which was all to the good. But he never tired of telling Common-room instances of this

peculiar little failing of his, with a little dry chuckle; which was not so good. Common-room tired if Mr. Wiggins did not.

There was Lascelles, the mathematics master, an athlete and footballer, who was frightfully silent in Common-room, never taking part in the unending tattle—perhaps because he worked off his superfluous energy on the football field, and had none left for chit-chat.

All the rest of the staff viewed Lascelles with more or less suspicion, as a man who, as he did not speak, might be suspected of thinking all the more. Sometimes even Mr. Prout's ponderous volume of voice would ebb a little when he caught the steady eye of Lascelles, who was always civil and pleasant, and yet, somehow, gave the other masters a disagreeable impression that they talked too much.

Lascelles did not jump at the new topic, because he did not care for topics. Topics were of no use to a man who did not enjoy the sound of his own voice. Lascelles was seen, or supposed to be seen, to smile sarcastically when the Hacker-Quelch feud was going strong in Common-room.

There was Monsieur Charpentier, who talked incessantly with Gallie effervescence, never finding any listeners, but talking all the same, because he could not help it. Like many French masters, Mossoo was rather patronised by the rest of the staff. Either he did not see it, or he did not mind it; anyhow, he was always ready with a flood of conversation when any victim came within range. He would talk of La Belle France; of his difficulties in the

French sets; of the good behaviour of some juniors, of the shocking, bad behaviour of most; of his misgivings and heart-searchings when once the Head forgot to acknowledge his respectful salute in Quad; of his happy satisfaction when the Head stopped him in a passage to speak for a few minutes in the most benign and friendly manner. He would talk, in fact, of anything and everything; and every single subject was worn threadbare, and had been heard in Common-room over and over again. Mossoo plunged neck and crop into the Hacker-Quelch trouble, and if his talk was as incessant as ever, at least it struck out a new line.

Undoubtedly, Common-room was "bucked."

Hacker and Quelch, of course, were not bucked. They were, so to speak, the actors on the stage, affording the entertainment to the rest of the staff. They were not in a position to enjoy the entertainment.

But everybody else was bucked, or nearly everybody else; eager for the latest news, athirst for the latest incident.

When the staff gathered to tea, after the thrilling incident in the dining-room before all the school, there was quite a pleasant tremor along the long table. Hacker came in to tea, Quelch came in to tea.

How they would treat one another was a thrilling question.

They ignored one another. Quelch looked through Hacker as though Hacker wasn't there. Hacker looked past Quelch with unseeing eyes.

Both retired early from the tea-table. "They are not speaking!" murmured little Mr. Wiggins breathlessly. "You noticed, Prout—"

"Bad form!" boomed Prout. "Bad form!"

"As an example to the boys—" began Capper.

Prout interrupted him, as he generally did. In Common-room, Capper hardly ever got a chance of finishing a remark when the Fifth Form master was there.

"Extremely bad form! I am surprised at Quelch. I am surprised at Hacker. I am surprised at both of them!"

"No one appears to know the cause of this extraordinary posture of affairs," remarked Mr. Twigg. "If anyone knows—"

He blinked round hopefully.

Nobody, apparently, knew.

"You know nothing, Lascelles?" asked Prout.

"Nothing."

"You have no idea?"

"None."

That was just like Lascelles, doling out words as if they were articles of value, or as if the subject weren't worth discussing!

Prout barely suppressed a snort.

"Quel malheur!" said Monsieur Charpentier, rushing into the pause. It was not safe to pause in Common-room; Mossoo was always certain to take advantage of it and rush in. "Two so worthy gentlemen, zat I respect and like so verree much. Is it not zat somezing may be done to—what you call?—reconcile zese two so worthy gentlemen?"

"Better not to interfere," said Capper.

"Much better," said Wiggins.

"It is their own concern," said Prout. "But it is also the concern of the whole staff and the whole school. Such bad form—"

"It reminds me," said Mr. Twigg, "of an incident in the Second Form room this morning. Gatty—Gatty, of my Form—"

There was immediate interruption. Twigg was getting back to his old subject, which was intolerable.

"We are discussing this extraordinary behaviour of two members of the staff, Twigg!" said Prout.

And Twigg was crushed.

"Precisely," he agreed meekly. "I was merely about to say—"

"Intervention," said Prout, "I do not recommend. I think, however, that the staff as a body should take up a certain attitude in the matter."

At this point Lascelles, having hastily finished his tea, retired. Prout's eye followed him to the door.

"An opiniated young man!" commented Prout.

"Very!" said Wiggins.

"Extremely so!" said Capper.

"Mais, mes amis," said Monsieur Charpentier, "is it not zat one word, what you call in ze season, may set zis painful matter right? Two so worthy gentlemen—"

Prout's ponderous voice overwhelmed Mossoo's. Twice, thrice, four times Mossoo strove to wedge in again, but Prout held the field. When Prout fairly got the bit in his teeth there was nothing for the other masters to do but to give in, and escape as soon as they could.

Monsieur Charpentier, with inexhaustible conversation bottled up inside his spare form, left Common-room with his little light mincing steps, and a generous and friendly concern in his effervescent heart. He felt that a word in season might blow away the clouds of

misunderstanding and reconcile these two so worthy gentlemen. At least, by endeavouring to make peace he might learn the cause of the trouble, and be in possession of information which would make even Prout willing to listen to him.

"Mon cher Quelch!" He came on Mr. Quelch affixing a notice to the board. "Mon cher! I am verree sorry to see zat trouble he arise between two so verree worthy gentlemen."

Mr. Quelch's face seemed to be cast in iron.

But Mossoo was not easily abashed.

"Perhaps zere is somezing zat a friend of bofe may do," he suggested. "If you will expliquer—zat is to say, explain—"

"I have nothing to explain, Monsieur Charpentier."

"Mais, mon cher Quelch—"

Cher Quelch seemed deaf; at all events, he walked away without appearing to hear.

Having drawn Mr. Quelch blank, so to speak, Mossoo meandered away to Mr. Hacker's study.

"Mon cher Hacker—"

Hacker eyed him.

"I am verree sorry to see zis misunderstanding arise between two so verree worthy gentlemen," said Mossoo. "Perhaps zere is somezing zat a friend of bofe—"

"I prefer not to discuss the matter, sir!" said Hacker stiffly.

"Mais, mon cher Hacker—"

"I may raise the matter at the next sessions of the masters. I cannot say for certain. Until then I prefer to say nothing."

"Mais—" murmured Mossoo.

Hacker devoted his attention, in a very marked way, to a heap of exercises on his table.

Mossoo retired, with only a very small morsel to comfort him. He was able to tell Common-room that the matter, whatever it mysteriously was, would probably come up for official discussion at the next session of the masters.

It was a small item, but it was better than nothing. Common-room devoured it with avidity.

Masters' session, held at regular intervals, were generally rather dull affairs. They would have seemed frightfully dull to an outsider, but the masters, of course, had the solace of talking shop. Still, even the masters generally found them dull. On this occasion, the next session was looked forward to with eagerness. If Hacker brought the matter up, the staff, at least, would learn what the trouble was. And, though they were far from admitting it themselves, the staff clung to the hope that the trouble, whatever it was, would not blow over before the next session of the masters.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Uncivil War!

IN the Shell, and in the Remove, the Hacker-Quelch feud was as keen as in Common-room.

The juniors, of course, did not discuss the matter with the dignified reserve of the masters.

Dignity was not prominent in junior Forms, and reserve almost non-existent. Comment was candid, and verged on the disrespectful.

"Two old donkeys!" was Skinner's description of the two masters who were no longer on speaking terms.

"What a game!" said the Bounder.

"They'll be chewing this in Common-room!" chuckled Skinner. "Something for the whole crew to tattle about."

It was fortunate for Harold Skinner

that he made this remark at a safe distance from Common-room.

"I say, you fellows, it's a lark, isn't it?" chortled Billy Bunter. "Fancy those two goats getting by the cars like this! He, he, he!"

Prout had said that it was bad form; Capper had feared the result of such an example on the boys. They were right. The Form masters being at loggerheads, the Forms took it up as a matter of course.

True, neither the Shell nor the Remove cared two straws what the row was about, or what caused it, or who was to blame. It afforded an opening for a glorious row among themselves, and they rather cared about that.

Often there had been trouble between Shell and Remove. The claim of the Shell to be Middle School, verging on seniors, was inadmissible on the part of the Remove. If a Shell fellow carried his head high, Remove men delighted in bringing it down, and even tapping it on the quadrangle. On the other hand, Hobson & Co. agreed that the Remove were the cheekiest Form in the Lower School, that the prefects did not thrash them enough, and that a few thrashings now and then from the Shell could only be productive of good.

Trouble happened at times, generally when there was nothing else to do. Trouble happened now.

Hobson took the view that it was up to the Shell to teach manners to a Form who thought nothing of biffing a football into the chivvy of the master of the Shell. If they wanted to biff a footer into a chivvy, said Hobson, let them biff it into the chivvy of their own Form master. The Remove shared a general indignation at Hacker's check in turning his back on Quelch. He deserved to be kicked for his cheek, all the Remove agreed. Kicking Hacker was out of the question. Kicking Hacker's Form was practicable. The Remove did what was practicable.

Rows with the Fourth, ragings of the Fifth, alarms and excursions against the Highcliffe cads, were "off" in the Remove now. Like a loyal Form, they took up the cudgels of their Form master, and took it out of the Shell.

Harry Wharton, as the fellow who had kicked the ball on that disastrous occasion, was collared in the quad, and came near being ducked in the fountain. The prompt arrival of his comrades turned the tables, and Hobson was ducked in the fountain instead. Billy Bunter, harmlessly shopping for tea, laying out a borrowed two-shilling piece in jam-tarts, was ambushed, and came back to the Remove passage roaring, with jam-tarts plastered all over him. Skinner was seen running for his life in the passages with three or four of the Shell whooping after him; those three or four Shell fellows were reduced to a state of wreckage, after which Skinner was kicked for having run away from them. A Remove study was ragged—furniture overturned, books and papers scattered—but the ragers were caught in retreat, followed to their own study in the Shell, and wrecked along with that study. War had broken out all along the line, in fact.

The two estranged Form masters confined themselves to the marble eye, as became the dignity of their position. But the marble eye was not emphatic enough for their Forms. Much more drastic measures appealed to the Remove and the Shell.

In the Rag, where the Shell sometimes gathered on an evening, as well as the Fourth, and the Lower Fourth, there were rows innumerable.

Hobson declared that disorderly fags shouldn't be admitted to the Rag at all.

He barred the Remove. Five or six Remove men were kicked out of the Rag, and the Shell held the fort triumphantly till the Remove forces gathered and swept in on the Shell, and smote them hip and thigh, with a terrific uproar that brought three or four prefects to the spot—with their ashplants. The fact that they were Middle School, and nearly seniors, did not save the Shell from the swiping of the prefects' canes. Wingate, and Gwynne, and Loder, and Walker, dealt with them faithfully, and with the Remove. The battle of the Forms ended in general flight.

The next morning there were signs of damage in both Forms that could not possibly escape a Form master's eye.

Hacker and Quelch both came down heavy.

Remove and Shell were given a sufficiency of lines to keep them busy for quite a long time, and keep them from rowing with one another. Not that it did keep them from rowing. The weather had turned so rainy that games practice, and games, were practically "off." A state of warfare came as a happy relief from inaction.

The most serious drawback to the present state of affairs, was that both Hacker and Quelch were very sharp-tempered.

Quelch, perplexed and indignant at the utterly inexplicable conduct of Hacker, deeply annoyed and incensed at becoming the talk of Common-room, was unusually short-tempered in class.

He was far too just a man to pick faults or imagine delinquencies. But there were plenty of real faults and delinquencies in the Remove to afford a wide field for his activities. Little matters that, at other times, might have passed unnoticed, now drew down the vials of wrath.

It was the same with Hacker. Burning with resentment at the uncalled-for insults he had received at Quelch's study door, Hacker, generally a little acid, was now completely acidulated. The Shell suffered in consequence.

As they could not take it out of Hacker, they took it out of the Remove. The Remove met them more than half way.

On Friday evening, Billy Bunter put a fat face and a pair of spectacles into the doorway of Study No. 1, where Wharton and Nugent were at prep.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hook it!"

"Hobson—"

"Oh, what about Hobson?"

"He's gone to the tuckshop," said Bunter. "I heard him tell Hoskins that he would just catch Mrs. Mimble before she closed."

"What about it, fathead?"

"He said he was getting a cake for supper in his study," explained Bunter. "You know they had my tarts! Plastered them all over me. I want you fellows to back me up."

"Prep!" said Nugent.

Snort, from Bunter.

"Prep can wait! Are we going to let those Shell cads walk all over the Remove?" he demanded. "Didn't they take away my tarts and bung them all over me?"

It was an appeal not to be resisted. Wharton and Nugent rose to their feet. Prep could wait.

"Good!" said the captain of the Remove. "We'll crumble Hobby's cake down his back. That's tit for tat."

"I say, you fellows, don't waste the cake," said Bunter anxiously. "I'm entitled to the cake for my tarts, you know. You fellows collar Hobson, and let him watch me eat his cake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. I think it's a jolly good idea."

"Come on!" said Wharton.

Bob Cherry, and Bull, and Hurrec Singh having been called, the Famous Five proceeded on the warpath, with William George Bunter bringing up the rear—prepared to devour the fruits of victory—if there was victory—and lead the flight if there was defeat.

James Hobson, running lightly up the stairs, with a cake in a paper bag under his arm, found that the light had been turned out on the first landing.

He guessed why, when several forms loomed up in the gloom and he was collared on all sides.

Hobson, realising that he had run into an ambush, opened his mouth to yell for aid. A pad, made of blotting-paper mixed with ink, was promptly shoved into it. Hobson did not yell—he spluttered wildly.

"Ooooooch!"

"I say, you fellows—quick!" gasped Bunter.

Bump!

Hobson was strewn on the landing. Five juniors set on him. Bunter bagged the cake.

"Moooooooooooh!" came from Hobson, wildly chewing at inky blotting-paper.

In the gloom he could see only dimly. But his ears told him what was happening to his cake.

Bunter's jaws were working at express speed.

It was only a two-pound cake, so it did not last the Owl of the Remove long. While he disposed of it, the Famous Five sat cheerfully on Hobson of the Shell. Hobson ejected the last of the blotting-paper: only to have his necktie jerked off and jammed into his mouth.

Bunter grinned at him serenely while he disposed of the cake. Hobson wriggled and writhed and gurgled.

"I say, you fellows, that was a ripping cake," said Bunter. "Hold him while I shove the bag down his back."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooogh! I'll smash you! Oooooch!" gurgled Hobson.

There was a footstep on the lower stairs.

"Dear me, the light is out!" came the voice of Mr. Wiggins.

Like ghosts, the Removites vanished from the scene. Mr. Wiggins reached the landing as Hobson was scrambling to his feet.

"What—what—oh!"

Bump!

Mr. Wiggins stumbled over Hobson, sprawled, and rolled on the landing. There was a wild howl.

Hobson leaped up. He did not stay to speak to Mr. Wiggins, or to ask him whether he was hurt. Perhaps he knew he was: he stood not upon the order of his going, but went at once.

Mr. Wiggins sat up dizzily.

"Dear me! Goodness gracious! I fell over something!" gasped Wiggins. "Is there anyone there? What—what! Goodness gracious! I am absolutely certain that there was something on the landing."

Mr. Wiggins picked himself up and switched on the light. He had the landing to himself by that time.

He blinked round amazedly.

"Goodness gracious! I am assured that I fell over something—yet there appears to be nothing here!" gasped Mr. Wiggins. "Dear me! This is most—most disconcerting."

And Mr. Wiggins proceeded on his way, very disconcerted indeed. What he had fallen over was safe in the Shell studies by that time—breathing wrath and vengeance.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

High Words!

MR. QUELCH tapped at the door of Mr. Hacker's study in Masters passage.

Mr. Quelch's face was grim. After long cogitation on the mysterious and perplexing matter, Mr. Quelch had decided that he would speak to Hacker, and learn from his own lips—straight from the horse's mouth, as it were—the cause of the Shell master's insulting and inexplicable behaviour. Matters could not go on like this, Mr. Quelch considered. He tapped.

"Come in!"

Mr. Quelch went in.

(Continued on next page.)

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Hacker, seated at his table correcting papers, stared at him. He raised his eyebrows in a very expressive manner.

"You!" he said.

Mr. Quelch coloured with vexation. But he had come there determined to keep his temper.

"I presume that I may enter!" he said. A little sarcasm was allowable.

"I am surprised to see you here!" answered Hacker.

Mr. Quelch closed the door and faced the master of the Shell. Like the Alpine climber in the poem, his brow was set, his eye beneath flashed like a falchion from its sheath. He was determined not to lose his temper with Hacker. But he found it hard to keep.

"For some days," said Mr. Quelch, "you have treated me with what I can only describe as contumely."

"Is that all?" asked Hacker.

"That is not all, sir!" said the Remove master. "I desire to know your reason, if, indeed, you can assign any reason for such conduct."

"You are perfectly aware of the reason, sir," answered Mr. Hacker. "You do not, I presume, suppose that you can insult a man in the most outrageous manner, with no result accruing."

"I fail to understand you, sir."

"In that case, sir, I do not compliment you on the state of your understanding."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

"You speak of insults," he said. "Your manner to me has been most insulting. It has been remarked by all the staff. It has been commented on in Common-room."

"No doubt."

"I have a right to an explanation, sir," said Mr. Quelch, raising his voice a little.

"It is needless to explain a matter which you understand quite as well as I do, sir," said Mr. Hacker.

"I beg to inform you that I understand nothing of the kind. Your conduct is absolutely inexplicable to me. I demand to know the reason."

"Search your memory, sir," said Mr. Hacker, with bitter sarcasm. "You need go no further back than Wednesday afternoon."

"Wednesday afternoon!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Wednesday afternoon!" assented Mr. Hacker.

"I was absent during the greater part of that afternoon," said Mr. Quelch.

"No doubt. You were not absent, however, during the whole of the afternoon," said Mr. Hacker. "You were certainly in your study during a part of the afternoon, sir."

"I believe so," said Mr. Quelch. "But that does not enlighten me. Am I to understand that on Wednesday afternoon something occurred at which you have taken offence?"

"You are to understand precisely that," answered Mr. Hacker.

"I have no recollection of any such incident."

"You have a poor memory, sir," said Mr. Hacker.

"On the other hand, I believe I have an excellent memory," said Mr. Quelch tartly. "Kindly acquaint me with the incident to which you refer."

"It is beneath my dignity to describe it," said Mr. Hacker. "Neither can I consent to soil my lips by a repetition of the expressions you used."

Mr. Quelch almost staggered.

"Are you in your senses, sir?" he gasped.

"That is scarcely a question to which

you can expect an answer, sir. I shall be glad if you will terminate this unprofitable interview."

"I shall not leave this study, sir, until you have explained," snapped Mr. Quelch. "You dare to insinuate that I have used expressions unbecoming a Form master and a gentleman."

"I insinuate nothing, sir!" rapped Mr. Hacker. "I state a fact—a fact perfectly well known to you, Mr. Quelch."

"I will be patient, sir," said the Remove master. "I will strive, at least, to be patient. If there is some extraordinary misunderstanding, I shall be glad to have it cleared up. Where did this alleged incident take place?"

"In your study, sir, as you are well aware."

"You are labouring under some strange delusion, sir! I am positive that you never came to see me in my study on Wednesday."

"Perfectly so; but I came to the door, which was locked, and you shouted—yes, shouted—insults at me through the locked door. Shouted, sir—indeed, I might say, bawled!" said Mr. Hacker, with heat. "Bawled, sir, is the word! Bawled!"

Mr. Quelch gazed at him.

He was so astounded that he could not speak for some moments. His amazement was so obvious, that Mr. Hacker was amazed in his turn.

"You have not lost your memory, I presume, sir!" he snapped.

"Certainly I have no recollection of any such incident as you have described, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "I can state positively that you did not come to my study—"

"What?" hooted Mr. Hacker.

"And most certainly my study door never was locked on Wednesday afternoon. Most assuredly not, sir!"

Mr. Hacker breathed hard.

"No doubt you are ashamed of such an outbreak," he said. "If that is so, I am glad. But I am surprised that even a sense of shame for your ebullition, sir, should drive you to prevarication."

"Prevarication, sir?" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"Prevarication, sir!" hooted Mr. Hacker.

"You dare to say—"

"Certainly, I do! You deny an incident as well known to yourself as to me. If that is not prevarication I am unacquainted with the significance of the word."

Mr. Quelch gasped.

"Very well, sir! Very well! I will pursue this matter no farther with you. I shall place it in the hands of our chief. Dr. Locke will judge between you and me, Mr. Hacker."

"I have no objection whatever, sir," said Hacker. "It was my intention to raise the matter at the next session of the masters. If you prefer to place it before the headmaster, sir, you are more than welcome to do so."

"I shall do so without delay, sir. The only excuse I can find for your statement is that you are subject to hallucinations, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Such hallucinations are out of place in a school, sir, and I trust that Dr. Locke will request your resignation from the staff."

"I have not the slightest anticipation of any such request from Dr. Locke, sir. I certainly expect him to request the resignation of a master capable of using such expressions as 'Shut up!' and 'Cheese it!' and of telling a member of the staff to go and eat coke. Coke, sir! Pah!"

"You dare to assert that I have used

such expressions, addressing a master or anyone else?" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Certainly I do, and shall inform Dr. Locke so, if you indeed have the effrontery—the effrontery, sir!—to place the matter before him."

"You must be out of your senses, sir!"

"Enough, sir!"

"If you are not out of your senses you are making a deliberately false statement, sir!"

"Sir!"

Mr. Hacker jumped to his feet.

"I repeat my words, sir!" roared Mr. Quelch, quite forgetting that he had come to Hacker's study determined to keep his temper. "I repeat my words without hesitation."

"You will not repeat them here, sir!" roared Mr. Hacker. "This, sir, is my study, in which I refuse to allow the presence of a blackguard, sir!"

"A—a—a blackguard?"

"Yes, sir; a blackguard! I request you, sir, to leave this study. If you do not do so immediately I will not answer for the consequences, sir!"

Mr. Hacker made a stride towards the Remove master. Mr. Quelch's steely eyes glittered at him.

For one breathless moment it looked like a collision. Fortunately, it did not come to that.

"I will go, sir," said Mr. Quelch, his voice trembling with anger. "I warn you that I shall go to the Head."

"You may go to Jericho, sir, for all that I care, provided that you go, and go at once!" retorted Mr. Hacker.

The study door closed on Mr. Quelch. It was time that a door closed between the two incensed gentlemen.

"Upon my word!" murmured Mr. Quelch, as he went down the passage. "A false—an absolutely and unscrupulously false statement! Pah!"

"Upon my word!" murmured Mr. Hacker, as he sat down. "Barefaced prevarication—the most palpable and barefaced prevarication! Pah!"

The interview had thrown no light on the matter. Rather, it had made the darkness deeper. It remained to be seen whether the Head would be able to unravel the tangled skein. It was not an easy task for the Head—and it was not a task in which Billy Bunter, for one, would have wished him luck.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Raiding the Remove!

"THE fact is," said Hobson of the Shell, "that those fags are getting quite out of hand."

Hobson's friends nodded assent, though some of them smiled. Hobby might have been a Sixth Form prefect by the way he spoke. Indeed, his remark was modelled on some remark he had heard fall from the lips of Loder or Walker, of the Sixth.

But the Shell fellows agreed with Hobby. The fags were out of hand—at all events, the Remove were getting rather the best of their warfare with the Shell, which came to the same thing.

Having taken on the task of teaching the Remove manners, this was not as it should have been. The Lower Fourth ought to have been licked all along the line; reduced to a state of fear and trembling.

They ought to have been; but they weren't.

"Cheeking our Form master!" went on Hobson.

"Cheeking us!" went on Hoskins. "Yes, us!" said Hobby. "Between ourselves, you know, Hacker's a bit of an ass. Still, he's our Form master."



Five pairs of hands closed on Hobson all at once. He was swept off his feet, and his nose tapped gently on the cold, unsympathetic quadrangle. "Rescue, Shell!" he bawled, struggling furiously. (See Chapter 5.)

"A poor thing, but mine own," remarked Stewart of the Shell, who had been reading Shakespeare.

"We're backing up Hacker. We're teaching those cheeky fags to respect our Form master. This afternoon," said James Hobson impressively, "we're going to give them a lesson."

"Hear, hear!"

It was Saturday afternoon. Like the previous half-holiday, it was a rainy day. Greyfriars fellows began to think that Nature had been saving up her rain for half-holidays. Football was out of the question. Out of doors, the whole earth wept with rain and moaned with the wind. The deep boom of the sea on the chalk cliffs could be heard as far as the school. The sea that broke along the white cliffs was not much wetter than the earth and the sky. All was wet and woeful. At such a time the Form masters' feud at Greyfriars could not fail to come as a boon and a blessing. It was difficult to say what the Shell and the Remove could have found to do that afternoon had they not been in a state of warfare, while Masters' Common-room would have been bored to extinction but for the new topic.

"We've got to stick indoors," remarked Stewart. "Ragging those cheeky fags will fill up the time."

"What's the programme?" asked Carr.

"I've mapped out the whole thing," said Hobson. "We're going to raid the Remove passage and rag the studies. Not just one study, as we did before, but the whole lot. My idea is to give these Remove fags a lesson. They won't know we're coming, and won't be ready. Half of them will be down

in the Rag, and only a handful of them in the studies. Not that it matters how many there are on the spot—we can lick fags easily enough."

"Hear, hear!"

"Every man in the Shell will roll up, and we'll go in force," continued Hobson. "We shall carry all before us. After a lesson like that I fancy the Remove will sing small. If they don't we'll give them some more of the same."

"Good egg!"

Perhaps it was rather a reckless plan of campaign, but something had to be done on a rainy afternoon, and what could be better than ragging the Remove—putting a cheeky mob of fags in their proper place? There was not a dissentient voice in the Shell.

Quite early in the afternoon Hobson & Co. were ready for the raid. They armed themselves with knotted dusters and handkerchiefs, and, led by Hobby, the whole array advanced cautiously to the Remove landing. Fortune favoured the raiders, for when they looked into the Remove passage they found it vacant. There was no eye to observe the approach of the enemy. Obviously, the Remove were caught napping.

In Study No. 1 Harry Wharton & Co. had settled down to put in an hour or two at editorial work on the "Greyfriars Herald." In Skinner's study some select spirits had gathered to smoke cigarettes, with the door locked. Wibley of the Remove had gathered a number of the Form for a rehearsal of the Remove Dramatic Society, which was taking place in the Rag, far from the scene of operations. Less than half the Remove were in their studies now, and not one member of the Form was in

the passage. The coast was quite clear for the raiders.

"Wait till I give the word!" murmured Hobson.

He led his men on tiptoe into the Remove passage.

Hobson halted outside Study No. 1.

The door of that celebrated apartment was closed, but the sound of voices could be heard from within.

"What about this for a limerick?" Hobson heard the voice of Bob Cherry. "I haven't finished it, but it seems to me to sound all right. Topical, too."

"Cough it up, old man!"

Bob was heard to cough it up:

"There's a frabjous Form master named Hacker,
Whose manners lack polish and lacquer—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear man, mustn't mention names! That's enough to get the paper suppressed by the beaks, if they saw it."

James Hobson breathed hard.

He made a sign to his followers and quietly turned the door-handle of Study No. 1. The door was suddenly flung open.

The Famous Five were seated round the table, all busy with pens and ink. Squiff and Vernon-Smith were also there. A chief editor and six sub-editors were all going strong on the "Greyfriars Herald."

They stared round as the door was flung open.

They had only time for a second's stare. The next moment Hobson & Co. were rushing in.

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

"Look out!" roared Bob Cherry, forgetting all about limericks as he leaped to his feet.

"Back up!"

"Rescue, Remove!"

There was a crash as the table went over, and two or three chairs. Seven Removites were hotly engaged with as many of the Shell as could crowd into the study.

The Famous Five were great fighting men. They gave a good account of themselves. So did Squiff and the Bounder. But they were taken by surprise and overwhelmed by numbers.

For a few minutes the study was the scene of a wild and whirling combat. Then the Removites were strewn on the floor, fairly overwhelmed by the Shell.

There were sounds of scuffling and scrapping in the passage. Fellows ran out of their studies to find a horde of the Shell in possession, and to be driven in again by heavy odds.

Study No. 1, in a few minutes, looked as if a cyclone had struck it. In the midst of the wreckage of overturned tables and chairs and other furniture, of scattered books and papers and pens and ink, the Removites sprawled breathlessly.

Hobson called off his followers, and the victorious Shell fellows retreated into the passage, Hobby putting the key on the outside of the door. With masterly strategy, Hobby locked the door on the most formidable bunch of fighting men in the Remove.

Harry Wharton & Co., scrambling up, dusty and breathless, saw the door slam and heard the key turn.

Bob Cherry wrenched at the door-handle.

But the door was fast.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob. "We're locked in!"

"Let us out, you Shell cads!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the passage.

The Shell were in triumphant possession now. Skinner & Co., in their study, hearing the sounds of war, judiciously kept their door locked. Lord Mauleverer looked out, and was hurled in again; Peter Todd sallied forth and was collared; five or six other fellows rushed to his aid, and were collared in their turn, overpowered by numbers. In a cheering crowd the Shell spread along the passage, rooting fellows out of studies that were not locked, bumping them and rolling them over, and generally making an example of them. Billy Bunter was jerked out from under the table in Study No. 7, where he had taken refuge, and Bunter's yells awoke every echo as an inkpot was up-ended over his head.

Meanwhile, there was a terrific hammering on the inside of the door of Study No. 1. The Famous Five were yelling to the rest of the Remove to come and let them out, eager to get into the fray. But the rest of the Remove were not in a condition to help them or themselves. Hobson & Co. carried all before them.

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Dusty and dishevelled Removites fled up the box-room stairs and rallied there, shouting defiance to pursuers. But the Remove passage and the Remove studies remained at the mercy of the invaders.

It was a glorious triumph for Hobson & Co. In the excitement of the fray and the overwhelming victory, they forgot all about masters and prefects. They ragged studies, they pitched furniture about, they paraded the passage, cheering and cat-calling in response to the infuriated voices from Study No. 1. For once the Remove were down and out, and Hobson & Co. triumphant; and James Hobson, like the classical gentleman of old, was like to strike the stars with his sublime head.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Hacker Asks for It!

"SHOCKING!" said Prout.

"Extremely so!" said Capper.

"Oh, quite—quite!" said

Twigg.

"Intolerable!" said Hacker.

They were alluding to the terrific din that proceeded from the quarters belonging to the Remove.

The Remove passage never was the quietest spot at Greyfriars. Often it was the noisiest. On the present occasion it seemed to be breaking records—and a lot of other things.

Hammering and trampling and shouting and cheering and yelling made up a din that sounded and resounded far and wide.

So far no prefect had intervened. Hobson, who was something of a strategist in his way, had ascertained that there was a meeting of the Sixth Form Debating Society that afternoon, and had sagely opined that it was unlikely that any prefects would be rooting about near the junior quarters. Hobson was right. The lecture-room in which that august society met was a good distance away. Every prefect at Greyfriars was at the meeting, debating the intriguing question: "The Public School. Could the Empire Continue to Exist Without It?"

Outside the weather was pouring wet; in the apartment of the Sixth Form Debating Society the debate was, perhaps, dry. But it occupied the attention of the great men of the Sixth; they had no ears for a shindy among the juniors, or for anything but their own eloquence. The terrific uproar in the Remove passage passed absolutely unnoticed by the prefects whose duty it was to keep law and order in the Lower School. Had the Sixth Form debate been a Parliamentary debate, it could not have been carried on with a more complete disregard of realities.

The wild and whirling state of affairs in the Remove, therefore, went on uninterrupted by prefects. It reached still more august ears, however, and one by one members of the staff collected by the stairs, listening to the uproar above, exchanging significant glances and commenting.

Mr. Quelch had not arrived there, however.

Mr. Quelch was in the school library, digging into ancient tomes for materials for his celebrated History of Greyfriars.

In the calm and scholastic shades of the library Mr. Quelch heard nothing and knew nothing. Ancient manuscripts in black letter occupied his attention. While it was, so to speak,

a black-letter day for Mr. Quelch, it was a red-letter day for the Shell.

"Scandalous!" said Prout.

"The prefects are not doing their duty!" squeaked Twigg. "Where are the prefects?"

"Prefects or no prefects," said Hacker, "no Form should ever break out into this violent uproar! The state of the Remove is a scandal to the school."

Hacker, no doubt, was annoyed by the noise. But in his present state of animosity towards Quelch, he was not displeased by even this scandalous state of affairs. It showed all the staff the state into which Quelch's unruly Form was allowed to fall.

Hacker, of course, had not the faintest idea that his own Form were concerned in the uproar. The din came unmistakably from the Remove passage, where no Shell fellow should have been unless as an invited and friendly guest.

Hobson, needless to say, had not taken his Form master into his confidence on the subject of that raid on the Remove.

From the Shell passage there came absolutely no sound—not a single sound on a rainy afternoon, when juniors might have been excused for being a little noisy. From the Remove passage came a din as if, to use the poet's words, the Volscians were coming o'er the wall. Comparison was needless and superfluous.

"One ought to intervene!" said Prout.

"Quelch is somewhat sensitive in such matters," remarked Wiggins.

Prout uttered a sound as nearly resembling a snort as could possibly be uttered by a majestic senior Form master.

"Can this continue?" he said.

"Perhaps a word to Quelch—" murmured Mr. Twigg.

"Where is Quelch?" said Prout.

"While this unseemly—indeed, this riotous uproar is proceeding in his Form, where is Quelch?"

"In the library," said Capper, "I think—"

"Far be it from me to criticise a colleague," said Prout, who seldom opened his mouth without criticising a colleague. "But in the present state of disorder in the Remove, the library is no place for the master of the Remove."

"Quite so!" assented Twigg.

"Extremely so," said Capper.

"I shall call Quelch," said Hacker, with a gleam in his eyes. "Intervention in his Form is strongly resented by Quelch. But if Quelch expects the House to be turned into a bear-garden by his Form without remonstrance on the part of his colleagues, Quelch must be enlightened on the subject."

"Undoubtedly!" said Prout.

Hacker started for the school library. Remove fellows coming from the Rag, hearing that there was a shindy on in their quarters, were turned back at the stairs. The masters had agreed not to intervene till Quelch arrived; but they intervened so far as to prevent any more fellows adding to the riot. Remove men eager for the fray were turned back and sternly ordered off.

Meanwhile, Hacker reached the library.

There he found Henry Samuel Quelch deep in black-letter, enjoying his afternoon in his own way, regardless of rain.

"Sir!" said Hacker stiffly.

Mr. Quelch raised a pair of steely eyes.

"I have no desire to interrupt you,

sir," said Mr. Hacker satirically. "I have merely come to inform you that your Form is in a state of disorderly riot—"

"Sir!" said Mr. Quelch.

"That they appear to be fighting among themselves, and apparently wrecking their part of the House—"

"Indeed!"

"And to add, sir," said Hacker, "that the uproar is unendurable, sir, and that the whole staff request you, sir, to intervene and restore at least some vestige of discipline in the Lower Fourth Form."

Mr. Quelch's face grew a deep crimson.

"If there is a disturbance in the Remove studies, I shall certainly take immediate measure!" he rapped.

"Perhaps you doubt my statement, sir!" sneered Hacker. "In that case, I can only ask you, sir, to use your own ears, which will tell you that your Form are acting in a manner that would disgrace a bear-garden."

"Enough, sir!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Failing your immediate intervention, sir, I shall have no recourse but to summon the headmaster to the spot," said Hacker.

"I shall intervene, immediately, sir, as you know very well, if the case is indeed as you state!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "I may add that I have little doubt that your report is exaggerated. The conduct of my Form compares very favourably, I think, with that of your own."

"You will scarcely say so, sir, when you proceed to the spot!" said Mr. Hacker.

The Remove master made no reply to that, but proceeded to the spot. Hacker, with a satirical smile, followed him.

A change came over Mr. Quelch's face as he joined the group of masters at the foot of the big staircase.

"Upon my word!" he ejaculated.

"My dear Quelch," began the ponderous Prout, "far be it from me to offer advice, unasked, to a colleague; but—"

Far as it was from Prout, he was getting on with it. But Mr. Quelch did not stay to listen. He mounted the stairs hurriedly.

The other masters exchanged looks. Hacker smiled sarcastically. Mr. Quelch's face bore a striking resemblance to that of a Gorgon as he went up to the Remove passage.

He whisked up the Remove staircase with rustling gown; he whisked across the Remove landing; he stared, or, rather, glared, into the passage lined by the studies belonging to his Form.

Deafening uproar was going on. Study No. 1 echoed with the banging on the door and the yells of the imprisoned juniors there. Other studies echoed to the sound of overturning tables and chairs and bookcases. The passage itself swarmed with fellows parading, cheering, cat-calling.

For a second Mr. Quelch gazed at the scene, unnoticed himself in the general uproar and excitement.

Then a grim smile glided over his face.

Without a word to the rioters, he turned and retraced his way down the stairs.

He rejoined the group of masters.

Din, undiminished, rang and roared from above. The staff gazed at him in wonder. Quelch, like Cæsar, had come and seen; but, unlike Cæsar, he had not conquered. He had come back, leaving the riot exactly as it was. Amazement held the masters mute. Hacker was the first to find his voice.

"Sir, may I ask what this may mean?" he ejaculated.

"Are we to understand that you have decided not to intervene and put an end to that scandalous riot?"

"Perfectly so, sir!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

"My dear Quelch—" boomed Prout.

"You decline to intervene, sir?" exclaimed Hacker.

"You decline to call those—those young ruffians to order?"

"I do, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "On principle, sir."

"On principle?" hooted Hacker. "May I inquire—I am sure the whole staff will be pleased to learn—on what principle you decide to allow that scandalous riot to run its course?"

"On the principle, sir," said Mr. Quelch in a grinding voice, "of abstaining from intervention in another master's Form."

"Wha-a-at?"

"I shall not intervene, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "No boys belonging to my Form being concerned in this riot, I shall not intervene. But I request you, sir, to intervene without delay."

"You—you request me—" gasped Hacker.

"You, sir! I request you most urgently to proceed to the Remove passage and to order away the boys of your Form who are rioting there—"

Hacker almost fell down.

"The—the—the boys of my Form!" he babbled.

"The boys of your Form, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "No Remove boy is in the passage at all. The Remove passage

(Continued on next page.)

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is occupied by a riotous mob of Shell boys who are responsible for the din that is disturbing the House. As they have gone into the quarters occupied by my boys to create this extraordinary disturbance, I have no doubt a right to intervene; but I prefer, sir, on principle, to leave them to their own Form master."

"Oh!" gasped Hacker.

"I request you, sir, to intervene immediately, failing which I shall have no recourse but to summon the headmaster to the spot," said Mr. Quelch, with grim irony.

Mr. Hacker did not answer. In a completely deflated condition, he limped up the stairs.

"Upon my word!" said Prout. "Then it is the Shell—"

"Hacker's Form!" said Capper. "Extraordinary! Extremely so."

"Shocking!" said Prout.

There was a sudden cessation of the uproar. Hacker had reached the Remove passage. Mr. Quelch, with a grim smile, went back to the library. The other masters exchanged a grin.

"Poor Hacker!" murmured Twigg.

He might better have said "Poor Shell!" In his present frame of mind, Hacker was not likely to spoil the Shell by sparing the rod. Hobson & Co. were booked for the time of their lives.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Horrid for Hobson!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! It's jolly old Hacker!" said Bob Cherry. And he ceased to bang upon the inside of the door of Study No. 1.

The voice of Hacker was heard in the Remove passage.

It was not loud, but deep.

Indeed, there was a note in it that might have reminded one of the growl of a tiger.

Hacker was in an unenviable mood.

It was his own Form that were responsible for that terrific uproar, as he might have ascertained earlier had he not been so keen to score over Quelch.

He had not scored; Quelch had scored. Hacker's feelings were almost too deep for words, as he arrived in the Remove passage.

However, he found some words to address to the Shell. They were scarifying words, uttered in scarifying tones. Hobson & Co. ceased to parade and to cheer and to cat-call. A silence that might have been felt reigned in the Remove passage. The look on Hacker's face was positively terrifying. The tones of his voice sent cold chills down the backs of Hobson & Co. They quitted the scene of their triumph over the Remove, rapidly, and looking anything but triumphant. Hacker followed them. Silently, swiftly, the Shell evacuated the quarters of the enemy.

"Hacker sounds waxy," remarked Nugent.

"He do—he does!" grinned Bob. "I suppose somebody will come along and let us out now."

Peter Todd came along in a few minutes and opened the door of Study No. 1. Harry Wharton & Co. came out into the passage.

Remove men who had been downstairs came up now, the masters no longer standing in the way. They came up to find their studies in a state of havoc. The Shell raiders had ragged, not wisely but too well.

"I'll smash 'em!" roared Bolsover major, as he stared into the study.

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"Look at my room! Look at my things! Look—"

"Look at mine!" hooted Hazeldene.

"The cheeky rotters!"

"We'll give them some of the same!" roared Bolsover major. "We're not standing this."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"I say, you fellows," wailed Billy Bunter. "I'm smothered with ink! I've got it all over me—in my ears and hair, you know. Look at me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts! I don't see anything to cackle at. Ow!"

"I guess we're going on the war-path!" howled Fisher T. Fish, in towering wrath. "They've mucked up my study—they've upset my papers! All my accounts chucked all over the shop. My inkstand's been trodden on. I gave ninepence for that inkstand. It ain't worth threepence now."

Fisher T. Fish was not a fighting man, as a rule. But a net loss of sixpence on the value of his inkstand was enough to rouse him to the fighting pitch. Fishy was wounded in the tenderest place.

"We'll jolly well take it out of them," said Harry Wharton. "This is altogether too thick. They've jolly nearly wrecked the whole passage. We'll rag the Shell studies from end to end!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Better wait till Hacker's off the scene," remarked Squiff. "We don't want to run into Hacker."

"Blow Hacker!" roared Bolsover major.

"The blowfulness of an esteemed Form master is not practicable, my worthy Bolsover," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Let us give the preposterous Hacker a miss."

The Remove men proceeded to set their rooms to rights. It was a long and laborious task. The Shell had done their work well. There was deep wrath while the juniors sorted out their things and restored the studies to some semblance of order. By the time they were finished, Hacker had had plenty of time to get off the scene. He had marched the Shell back to their own quarters; and no doubt he was gone now. Harry Wharton marshalled the forces of the Remove for the counter attack. Every man in the Remove was called up, even Billy Bunter and Skinner & Co. Led by the captain of the Remove, the army started for the stronghold of the Shell.

After what had happened, they expected to find the Shell on their guard, ready for resistance, and to have to fight their way.

To their surprise, no hostile demonstration greeted them. The Shell passage was quiet and subdued. Not a man was to be seen. If the Shell were there, they were in their studies. Suspecting an ambush the Removites advanced cautiously. Then they became aware of mumbling, moaning sounds that proceeded from most of the studies. Something seemed to have happened to the Shell.

Harry Wharton halted at the door of Hobson's study, which was open. His followers crowded behind him.

They stared into the study.

Hobson and Hoskins and Stewart were there. They glanced carelessly at the juniors in the doorway, without interest.

Hobson was rocking himself to and fro. Hoskins was wriggling on the carpet. Stewart was leaning on the mantelpiece, uttering a succession of ejaculations in a low, pained voice:

"Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow, ow!"

"What the thump—" said Harry Wharton.

"Wow, wow!" murmured Hobson.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! We've come here to give you rotters the ragging of your lives!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Wow, wow, wow!"

"Mop them up!" yelled Bolsover major.

"Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow, ow!"

Hobson & Co. did not seem to care whether they were mopped up or not. The cup of their sufferings was already full.

"Hold on!" said Wharton. "What on earth's happened, Hobby? What's the matter with you fellows?"

Hobson gazed at him.

"Hacker!" he moaned. "Ow! Wow, wow!"

"Oh, my hat! I suppose he's ragged you for kicking up such a shindy," said the captain of the Remove. "But—"

"Ow! Wow!" moaned Hobson.

"I've never known Hacker like it before. Like a tiger! Wow!"

"Well, you asked for it," grinned Bob.

"Oh, crikey!" Hobson groaned. "He's caned the whole Form—a dozen each—every man in the Shell! I never knew Hacker had so much beef in him! He looked tired when he had finished, though. I hope he gets cramp in his arm, or something. Ow! Wow, wow!"

"Well, my hat!"

"Something must have annoyed, Hacker," moaned Hoskins. "It wasn't just the shindy—that wouldn't have made him so ferocious. Of course, there was some row, but that wasn't it. Something else must have annoyed him to make him take it out of us like this. Ow, ow, ow!"

Hobson's study was filled with the sounds of woe. From the other Shell studies came woeful moanings. Obviously, Hacker had put his Form through it in a very drastic way.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances. They had come on the war-path for vengeance. But they could pity an enemy reduced to this pitiable state. They realised that the raiders had had enough from Hacker, and did not need any more from the Remove.

"Chuck it, you men," said Harry. "Can't rag a set of wrecks like that! Give it a miss."

"Look here—" hooted Bolsover major.

"Oh, chuck it!"

"The chuckfulness is the proper caper."

Hobson & Co. did not heed. They did not seem to care. They rocked themselves and moaned, regardless of the Remove.

Harry Wharton led his men back to the Remove passage. The rag was postponed. In the Shell studies, moaning and groaning were the order of the day. After the feast had come the reckoning, and the reckoning had been severe. It was not till many hours had passed that Hobson & Co. began to feel as if life, after all, might still be worth living.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

His Master's Voice Again!

"H!" gasped Bunter.

Bunter was alarmed.

Many alarms occurred in William Bunter's fat career.

Bunter always had a feeling when there was tuck about that, somehow or other, he was entitled to take a share in it—the lion's share, as a rule. On the present occasion there was tuck in Study No. 1 in the Remove.

Moaning and groaning were still going strong in the Shell studies. But in the Remove studies they were thinking of



While Billy Bunter disposed of the cake, the Famous Five sat cheerfully on Hobson of the Shell. Bunter grinned as he disposed of the cake, while Hobson wriggled and writhed and gurgled. (See Chapter 7.)

tea. Bunter, in fact, had been thinking of tea for some time. As soon as dinner was over Bunter's thoughts generally turned to tea.

Owing to some inexplicable delay in the post Bunter's postal-order had not yet arrived. The Owl of the Remove was hard up, as usual. For that reason he had invited himself to tea with his old pals in Study No. 1. He had picked them out for this distinction because he was aware that the Famous Five were all teasing together in Study No. 1 that afternoon, which meant that there would be something like a spread. If there was enough for five, there would be enough for six—at least, Bunter hoped so. It was, therefore, simply to ask himself to tea that he rolled into Study No. 1 at tea-time, and quite by chance that he found the study empty.

After the Shell raid editorial work on the "Greyfriars Herald" had ceased. Rain was still falling, but all the Famous Five agreed that they couldn't stick permanently indoors. So they had muffled themselves up in macs, and plunged out into the wild and windy weather, for a trot round the quad before tea. So Bunter found the study empty.

Bunter also was empty. So as he was going to tea with the chums of the Remove, he saw no reason why he should wait. The supplies were ready in the study cupboard—Bunter was in the study, more than ready. A snack, at least, could do no harm. Bunter felt that the fellows wouldn't mind, or at least ought not to mind. He started with a snack. Bunter's snacks were always extensive, and would have made solid meals for any other fellow. Almost unconsciously, the Owl of the Remove, standing at the cupboard, travelled through the supply of tuck that had been intended for tea for five.

By the time he was two-thirds through the supply, Bunter felt that the matter

would be difficult to explain when the owners came in. On the whole, he considered that it would be better not to stay for tea. He decided to finish what there was, and go.

That was what tore it, so to speak. Bunter was almost at the last crumb, when he heard the footsteps and the cheery voices of the Famous Five coming up the Remove staircase.

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter. "Oh crumbs!"

He knew those beasts would be wild! Without even thinking it out, he realised that.

And he was cornered! There was no escape for him! Five hungry juniors were coming in, to find Bunter in the study, and the whole supply of tuck in Bunter!

For a moment the fat junior stood transfixed. Then he made a jump to the door, closed it, and locked it.

That gave him a breathing-space. Footsteps arrived at the door. The handle turned.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! This floor's jammed!" said the cheery voice of Bob Cherry.

The door-handle rattled.

"It's locked!" said Wharton.

"Who on earth's in the study? Those Shell bounders—"

"Who's there? Open this door!" shouted Wharton.

Bunter breathed hard.

Once before, in such an extremity, his wonderful presence of mind and his marvellous ventriloquial powers had saved him from Hacker. There was a chance, at least, that the same chicken would fight again. Bunter gave a fat little cough, and spoke in his weird and lifelike imitation of the voice of Henry Samuel Quelch.

"What? What? Is that Wharton? How dare you make such a disturbance!"

There was a gasp outside the door.

"Quelchy!" exclaimed Bob. "What? What did you say, Cherry?" hooted the voice from the study. "Take care, sir!"

"I—I beg your pardon, sir! I—"

"Silence!" Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged surprised and rather angry glances. They had not the slightest doubt that it was Mr. Quelch in the study. They were not thinking about Bunter, and had forgotten his weird ventriloquial stunts. But what Quelch wanted in their study was a mystery.

Wharton tapped on the door. "May we come in, sir?" he asked respectfully but firmly. "It's tea-time, sir—"

"I am aware of that, Wharton. I have no doubt that you intend to enjoy a—an orgy with the indigestible things I have found in your cupboard!" barked the voice from the study. "I disapprove of it! I forbid you to devour—I can only use that word—to devour these indigestible pastries! I disapprove of gluttony!"

The Famous Five glared at the thick oak door.

Had they been able to see through it, they would have seen a fat, grinning face on the other side.

But they could, of course, not see through it. The thought of Billy Bunter did not cross their minds. The voice of Mr. Quelch being there, they had no doubt, naturally, that the rest of Quelch was there, along with the voice.

"We're allowed to have tea in our studies, sir!" said Harry Wharton, at last.

"Do not bandy words with me, Wharton!"

"But, sir—"

"I shall confiscate these indigestible things. I shall not allow you to consume them. I forbid it utterly!"

"But—" gasped Wharton.

"You will go to Hall to tea! I command you to go to Hall to tea! The plain fare provided by the school will prove more healthful. Not a word! I order you to go to Hall immediately!"

Wharton breathed hard.

"Very well, sir!" he said quietly.

Evidently, Quelch was in a tantrum—owing to the rainy weather and his row with Hacker, the juniors supposed. When a Form master mounted the high horse, his Form had to take it as calmly as they could. It was known to all the Remove that Quelch had to be given his head.

Harry Wharton & Co. turned away from the study door.

Bob Cherry whistled softly.

"Quelch's in a wax to-day!" he remarked.

"The waxfulness is terrific!"

"He's no right to butt in and bag our spread!" said Frank Nugent indignantly. "I've a jolly good mind to tell him so!"

"Better not, old chap," grinned Bob. "Let's get down to Hall. We don't want to miss tea there, while Quelch's confiscating the grub."

"Let's!" assented Wharton.

And in an indignant mood, the Famous Five proceeded towards the stairs to go down to Hall.

Billy Bunter chuckled softly.

He could really scarcely believe in his good luck. Once more he had got away with it! Harry Wharton & Co. had gone down to Hall to tea, believing that their Form master had ordered them there; and all that Bunter had to do was to finish up the remnant of the tuck and stroll out of the study at his leisure.

Bunter, with grinning satisfaction, stood at the study cupboard, finishing what was left.

But his satisfaction was destined to be short-lived. Bunter had risked it once and got away with it, in the case of Hacker. He had risked it a second time, and he was to discover that in this case he had risked it once too often.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Once Too Often!

"**G**REAT Julius Cæsar!" yelled Bob Cherry.

He almost fell down the rest of the stairs.

It was enough to astonish any fellow.

Having left Mr. Quelch—as they supposed—in Study No. 1, the Famous Five had gone downstairs. And as they were within a few steps of the bottom, Bob, who was in advance, suddenly sighted Mr. Quelch.

There was Quelch—as large as life, standing by the fireplace in the hall, talking to Lascelles. It was Quelch, not his ghost, though for a moment Bob almost thought that it was his Form master's ghost.

Bob's involuntary howl of astonishment caused the two masters to look round. Mr. Quelch frowned.

"Cherry! What—"

"Oh!" babbled Bob helplessly. "I—I—" He blinked dazedly at the Remove master.

"It's Quelch!" gasped Frank Nugent blankly.

"What the merry thump—" stuttered Johnny Bull.

Leaving the maths master, Mr. Quelch came towards the juniors. His brow was stern and knitted, his eyes glinting.

"What does this mean?" he demanded, in a voice like the edge of a newly-whetted razor. "How dare you—"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Bob. "I

thought— Oh dear! I—I thought it was your—your ghost, sir! Oh dear!"

"Explain what you mean at once, Cherry. You appear astonished to see me—why? Explain yourself!"

"You're up in the Remove passage, sir—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I thought you were!" stammered Bob. "I—I— We came straight down, sir, and—and seeing you here, I couldn't make it out, sir—"

Bob couldn't make it out yet. He was staring at Henry Samuel Quelch, as if still not quite sure that the angular form was real flesh and blood.

"I fail to understand you, Cherry! If this is some absurd jest—" began Mr. Quelch, in a terrifying voice.

"But you were in the study, sir!" exclaimed the bewildered Bob. "Only a minute ago you were in a Remove study."

"Are you in your senses, Cherry?"

"We—we heard you, sir—"

"I have been standing here for the past ten minutes," said Mr. Quelch severely. "I repeat that I fail to understand you, Cherry."

"You haven't, sir—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, you can't have been, when you were in Wharton's study, with the door locked, only a couple of minutes ago!" gasped Bob.

Mr. Quelch looked at him fixedly.

"Cherry, I can only explain your words on the assumption that you are venturing upon a foolish jest. Follow me to my study."

"But we all heard you, sir!" exclaimed Johnny Bull warmly. "You ordered us to go to tea in Hall."

"What? When did I do so?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Only a couple of minutes ago, in the Remove passage," answered Johnny.

"We all heard you."

"The hearfulness was terrific, honoured sahib!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "We heard with our esteemed and preposterous ears."

Mr. Quelch paused.

"There is some strange misunderstanding here," he said. "You appear to be speaking what you suppose to be the truth. Do you mean to say that there is someone in a Remove study whom you supposed to be me, and who ordered you in my name to go down to Hall to tea?"

"Yes," Bob gasped. "It was you—"

"It was not I!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!"

"I cannot imagine how you could mistake some junior's voice for mine, if some foolish trick has been played," said the Remove master in great perplexity. "However, I shall certainly look into the matter at once."

He started up the stairs.

The Famous Five looked at one another.

"What does it mean, you fellows?" breathed Bob Cherry. "How did Quelch get down before us—unless he flew down the chimney like Santa Claus—"

"Ask me another," said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Wharton.

All of a sudden the explanation of the mystery flashed into the mind of the captain of the Remove.

Obviously, Mr. Quelch could not be in two places at once. He could not have come down the chimney like Father Christmas. It followed that it could not have been Mr. Quelch who was locked in Study No. 1. It was

someone who had imitated his bark—and at that thought Wharton knew in a flash what had happened. Only Bunter could have done that.

"That fat villain—" he gasped.

"What—who—"

"Bunter!" said Wharton.

"Bunter?" repeated Bob blankly.

"Yes. Don't you remember the trick he played on Hacker last Wednesday? It's the same stunt over again."

"Oh, my hat! But why—"

"The whyfulness is terrifically clear," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed and absurd Bunter was after the tuck!"

"That's it," said Wharton. "And if we hadn't seen Quelch here, we should have gone to tea in Hall, thinking Quelch had sent us, and all the time—"

Bob Cherry gasped.

"And all the while Bunter would have been scoffing the grub! Why, the fat burglar! I'll—" Bob broke off. "My hat! Quelch's gone up! Let's get after him. Bunter ought to be boiled in oil, but we don't want to get into a fearful row with Quelch. If it's Bunter—"

"It's Bunter right enough. It couldn't be anything else."

"Let's stop Quelch if we can."

Bob Cherry ran up the stairs after his Form master, his chums following him. That was just like Bob. He was feeling inclined to mop up the whole passage, using Billy Bunter as a mop; but he did not want the fat junior to encounter the vials of official wrath. He raced up the stairs.

Mr. Quelch had already reached the Remove landing. He was stalking into the passage when Bob overtook him.

"If you please, sir—" gasped Bob.

"Well?" rapped Mr. Quelch over his shoulder as he stalked on.

"I—I was mistaken, sir—"

"What? What do you mean?"

Quelch did not stop.

"I—I think it—it was some other fellow in the study, sir. I—I just fancied it was your voice, sir. It—it was a mistake—"

A gimlet-eye bored into Bob.

"Are you trying to hide something from me, Cherry?"

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

"I shall certainly investigate this matter. Say no more."

Mr. Quelch rustled on, arrived at Study No. 1, and turned the door-handle. There was the sound of a sudden movement in the study as the Form master rattled the door.

"Go away at once!" came a barking voice from the study. "How dare you return here when I ordered you to go to Hall!"

Mr. Quelch stood transfixed.

Like most people, he was unaware what his own voice sounded like in other ears. But that voice from Study No. 1 was the voice of a middle-aged gentleman, with an acid tone. Though Mr. Quelch would not have recognised it as his own, he would have sworn that it was a master's voice. He stood rooted, staring at the door.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged hopeless looks. Bunter had done it now! In the belief that the juniors had returned, the Greyfriars ventriloquist was ordering them off—in Quelch's voice! While Quelch stood dazed, Bunter proceeded to bark out an emphatic order, in blissful ignorance of the fact that the master whose voice he was imitating was at the door.

"Go down at once! Upon my word, this is too much! I will keep order in

this Form! Take a hundred lines each!"

"Oh crumbs! murmured Bob Cherry.

"What—what does it mean?" gasped Mr. Quelch. He knocked violently at the door. "Who is there? Admit me at once!"

At the sound of his voice there was a terrified squeak in the study.

"Oh, lor'!"

"Bunter!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Owl! No! Not at all, sir! Oh crikey!"

"Are you there, Bunter?"

"No! No, sir! I—I'm somewhere else!" stammered Bunter. "I—I mean—"

"Open this door at once, Bunter!" thundered the Remove master.

"Oh scissors!"

The door was unlocked. Mr. Quelch threw it open, and he strode into the study with Olympian wrath on his majestic brow, the hapless Owl of the Remove shrinking into the furthest corner of the room, eyeing him as a canary might have eyed a cat.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Lucky for Bunter!

"BUNTER!"

"Oh dear!"

"What does this mean, Bunter?"

"N-n-nothing, sir."

Mr. Quelch stared round the study. Nobody was there but William George Bunter. Evidently it was Bunter who had spoken in that voice which resembled a happy combination of a grinding handsaw and a bulldog's growl.

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch.

"This—is—this is—extraordinary! You were speaking in some extraordinary imitation of a grown-up man's voice, Bunter."

"W-w-was I, sir?"

"You were! Is this some unseemly jest?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, no, sir! It—it was only—"

"Only what?" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Only a lark, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Were you endeavouring to give the impression that a master was in this study for a lark, as you call it?"

Bunter blinked at him. Evidently Quelch had not recognised that handsaw voice as his own. The imitation was exact. Any man in the Remove would have taken it for Quelch's voice. Had Quelch ever heard his voice reproduced on a phonograph record he would have been enlightened. But he hadn't. He was quite unaware of the actual sound of it. He had no idea that when he spoke sternly, his tones were reminiscent of a handsaw, or that he bore even the most distant resemblance to the growl of a bulldog, or the bark of a mastiff. Bunter saw his chance.

"No, sir! I mean, yes, sir! I—I wasn't imitating your voice, sir!"

"My voice?" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Not at all, sir! I—I couldn't! I've never tried! It's quite impossible, sir! I never did—"

"I do not suppose for a moment that you were imitating my voice, Bunter."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, in great relief.

"Wharton!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

"Did you suppose, when this absurd boy spoke in that gruff, unpleasant, ridiculous voice, that it was I who spoke?"

"We—we—" stammered Wharton.

"You have heard him speak in that

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Next on the list is a Christmas "shocker" from the pen of Dicky Nugent entitled:

"LICKHAM'S CHRISTMAS PARTY!"

Another "extra" is a fine article of topical interest. You'll find it under the title of:

"THE TRUTH ABOUT FATHER CHRISTMAS!"

ridiculous manner in my presence. Is that the voice you heard from the study, which you supposed to be mine?"

"Well, sir, we—we—"

"Yes or no?" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

"Then you are a very stupid boy, Wharton."

"Oh!"

"A remarkably stupid boy!" said Mr. Quelch severely. "It is incomprehensible to me how any boy, in his right senses, could have taken that extremely unpleasant and ridiculous voice for mine."

"We—we thought—" gasped Bob.

"You are as stupid as Wharton, Cherry!"

"Oh!"

"I am sorry to see boys of my Form capable of such obtuseness," said Mr. Quelch. "It passes my comprehension. Bunter!"

"Oh dear! Yes, sir."

"You have played a ridiculous trick, and I forbid you to do anything of the kind again. I acquit you of attempting to imitate my voice, as these foolish boys supposed you were doing—the ridiculous and unnatural voice in which you spoke was obviously nothing like mine, and could only have deceived persons of unusual stupidity. But you must not play such foolish tricks."

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

And Mr. Quelch, looking very cross, rustled out of the study and descended the Remove staircase.

Billy Bunter breathed more freely when he was gone.

"I say, you fellows, the old donkey doesn't know what his own toot sounds like!" he gasped.

"Lucky for you he doesn't, you fat

fraud," said Harry Wharton. He looked into the study cupboard. "All the tuck's gone, you men! Collar him!"

"I—I say, you fellows—"

Bunter made a wild rush for the door. Three or four pairs of hands grasped him and brought him to a halt.

"You don't get away with it this time, you fat sweep!" said Bob grimly.

"You jolly nearly sent us down to tea in Hall while you were scoffing the tuck. Where's the grub?"

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I don't think there was any grub here!" gasped Bunter. "I—I think perhaps the cat had it."

"The cat!" roared Bob.

"Mrs. Kebble's cat, you know!" gasped Bunter. "She's always prowling round the studies—"

"Did the cat open the tin of condensed milk?"

"She—she must have—"

"And did she leave a streak of it round your mouth?"

Bunter promptly mopped his mouth with his sleeve. But it was too late.

"The fat villain's scoffed the whole lot!" said Wharton. "We'll jolly well make an example of him this time."

"I—I say, you fellows, I never had it!" yelled Bunter. "Perhaps it was Quelch!"

"Oh, my hat! Bump him!"

"Yarooogh!"

The fat person of William George Bunter smote the floor of the study. A terrific yell rang along the Remove passage.

"Whoooooop! Help!"

"Give him another!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Give him a dozen!"

"Cease this disturbance instantly!"

barked a stern voice from the doorway, and the Famous Five dropped William George Bunter as if he had suddenly become red-hot.

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Bob.

Bunter made a jump for the door, and escaped into the passage. The next moment Bob gave a yell.

"Tain't Quelch! It's that fat villain ventriloquising again!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The Famous Five rushed into the passage. There was no sign of Mr. Quelch there! The voice that had barked at them was evidently due to the Remove ventriloquist.

"After him!" roared Bob.

Slam! Click! The door of Study No. 7 closed, and the key turned! Bunter's ventriloquism had saved him once more.

The Famous Five stopped outside No. 7, banged at the door, and breathed bloodcurdling threats through the keyhole for a few minutes. Then, giving it up, they went in search of hospitality farther along the passage—tea in Study No. 1 being already over and safely packed away inside William George Bunter.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last!

DR. LOCKE wore a worried look. He wore, of course, other things; but his worried look was the most noticeable.

The Form masters' feud at Greyfriars caused the good old Head deep perturbation.

Mr. Quelch was a man whom he liked and respected very highly. They never had any differences of opinion, except regarding the rendering of certain obscure passages in Sophocles. And, like two scholarly gentlemen, deeply versed in classical lore, they found interest without acrimony, in the discussion of such differences as that. The Head respected Mr. Hacker also, though not to the same extent; Hacker being much more limited than Quelch in his delvings into the classics. Hacker took no interest in elucidating what Sophocles might possibly have meant, admitting that he had meant anything. Still, he was a satisfactory Form master.

The resignation of Quelch would have been a heavy blow to the Head. And he did not want to part with Hacker.

But if this feud went on, it seemed scarcely possible that the two incensed gentlemen could remain members of the same staff.

Mr. Quelch had placed the matter before the headmaster, placing himself, as he expressed it, in Dr. Locke's hands. Hacker had treated him with contumely, and charged him with prevarication.

Hacker, called into the Head's august presence, had accused Quelch of deliberately insulting him, in the first place, and charging him with a false statement in the second place.

It seemed impossible for even the wise old Head to reconcile such differences.

But the Head, at least, could see what the two angry gentlemen could not see. A looker-on sees most of the game. He could see that both were in earnest, and neither of them prevaricating or making false statements. It followed, from this, that there was a misunderstanding of some sort.

But the nature of that misunderstanding baffled the Head.

Hacker was positive in his statement that Quelch, on Wednesday afternoon, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,086.

had barked insults at him through the locked door of his study. Quelch categorically denied having done anything of the kind.

The Head was up against a problem that baffled him.

The sage old gentleman, who could elucidate what Æschylus meant when he was most Æschylean, and what Sophocles implied in his most Sophoclean moments, was quite at a loss in dealing with a mystery like this.

Yet the present state of affairs could not go on. Want of harmony in the staff was bad for the school—bad for discipline, bad on principle, bad in every way. And this was not merely a tiff, such as occurred frequently enough in Common-room in dull weather. It was a real quarrel—a feud that grew and grew, like the little peach in the orchard.

Having taken the week-end to reflect on the matter, the headmaster found that his reflections had let in no light whatever on the subject.

Having hoped that the dispute might have blown over and peace been restored, he was disappointed in that hope. With his own eyes, in open quad, he had seen Quelch and Hacker pass one another with averted faces—in full view of the school in break on Monday morning.

It could not continue! Either the breach must be healed or one of the disputants must withdraw to some other scene of activity.

That was why the Head wore such a worried look as he sat in his study after classes on Monday and waited for Quelch and Hacker.

"Come in!" said the Head gently, as there was a tap at his door.

The door opened, to reveal the master of the Shell and the master of the Remove.

Each stood aside with ceremonious and bitter politeness to allow the other to enter first.

Each, finding that the other waited, decided at the same moment to enter first—with the natural result that there was a sudden jam in the doorway.

The Head promptly suppressed a smile.

"Pray come in!" he said mildly.

With somewhat heightened colour, the two gentlemen disengaged themselves and came in.

"Pray be seated, Mr. Quelch! Pray be seated, Mr. Hacker!" The Head's manner was benignity itself; peace radiated from his kind old face. "I trust, gentlemen, that we shall be able to clear up this unfortunate misunderstanding."

"I have little hope of it, sir," said Hacker. "When a master has descended to actual prevarication—"

"When a member of your staff, sir, has made a statement knowingly untruthful—"

—said Quelch.

"Sir!" said Hacker.

"Sir!" said Quelch.

The Head raised a deprecating hand,

almost as if he were blessing the two masters.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen! Recrimination will serve no purpose," he said in his mildest tones. "A misunderstanding has arisen. No member of my staff is capable of prevarication or untruthfulness. Such an idea I decline to entertain for one moment."

"However, sir—"

—said Quelch.

"However, sir—"

—said Hacker.

"Allow me!" said the Head gently, but firmly. "A misunderstanding has arisen. That, to me, is obvious. It remains to determine its nature. We will go into the matter from the beginning. It appears, Mr. Hacker, that on Wednesday last week you called at Mr. Quelch's study—"

"I did, sir; and the door was locked, and abusive expressions were hurled at me from within," said Hacker.

"Nothing of the kind occurred," said Mr. Quelch.

"I repeat—"

"And I repeat—"

"Allow me! As the study door was, you say, locked, you did not actually see Mr. Quelch on that occasion?"

"No, sir! I heard him, however, only too plainly!" said Hacker bitterly.

"As Mr. Quelch denies the circumstance, it is obvious, Mr. Hacker, that you were mistaken!" said the Head a little severely.

Hacker flushed crimson.

"Sir! If you accept Mr. Quelch's statement and condemn mine, I can only say—"

"Allow me! I accept Mr. Quelch's statement, but I do not condemn yours," said the Head. "I am convinced that you are speaking in good faith. You were mistaken. The only explanation possible is that you were deceived."

"Impossible, sir!"

"The possibility exists," said the Head, "that some surreptitious person had gained admittance to the House—possibly some dishonest person with a view to petty larceny. Such a thing happened once within my knowledge, and may have happened again. Such a person, perhaps pilfering in the room, may have been surprised by your coming, Mr. Hacker, and may have answered your knock, you supposing that it was Mr. Quelch speaking."

The Head paused.

"That there was a third person on the scene admits of no doubt, to my mind," he said. "Someone answered you from the study, Mr. Hacker. Mr. Quelch denies that it was he. It follows that it was some other person."

The Head leaned back in his chair with a rather satisfied expression on his face.

"Impossible, sir!" said Hacker.

"And why?"

"Because I recognised Mr. Quelch's voice," said Hacker. "Mr. Quelch's voice is not easily mistaken. It is—hom!—distinctive."

The Head felt that he had his work to do over again.

"If you feel positive of that, Mr. Hacker—"

"Absolutely positive, sir!"

"It is too much to suppose that some unauthorised intruder may have had a voice closely resembling Mr. Quelch's," said the Head.

"I agree, sir, fully."

"I have been silent, sir!" rasped Mr. Quelch. "But I must state my belief that the whole incident is imaginary. I see no reason to believe that Mr. Hacker went to my study at all that afternoon. He was aware that I should be out of the House most of the afternoon—"

"I went to your study, sir, twice!"

A TIP!

As so many readers have written to me recently on the subject of a cheap yet serviceable fountain pen, a reference to the advertisement on page eleven dealing with the "Platinum" fountain pen will not come amiss. This pen is made in six different styles with a special metal pocket clip that will not tarnish. Fine, medium, broad or oblique nibs are fitted, and at the modest price of one shilling and threepence the "Platinum" would appear to be the pen for which you fellows have been looking. Any stationer will be pleased to show you one.—Ed.



In a few minutes, Study No. 1 was the scene of a wild and whirling combat.—The Removites had been taken by surprise, and were completely overwhelmed by Hobson and his followers. Tables were overturned as well as chairs and other furniture, and in the midst of the wreckage the Removites sprawled breathlessly. (See Chapter 9.)

rapped Mr. Hacker. "On the first occasion, sir, to inform you of a disorderly disturbance going on among your Form; but you were not there. On the second occasion—the occasion when you had returned, and for some unknown reason locked yourself in the room—I was following a Remove boy, who had tripped me in the passage. Mr. Twigg informed me that he thought that Bunter had gone into your study, and for that reason, sir, I applied there—expecting to find the boy Bunter. It was then, sir, that you refused to admit me, and hurled insults at me through the locked door."

"Calmness, please," said the Head. "Calmness, I beg."

Mr. Quelch gave a sort of jump.

"Bunter! Did you say Bunter?" he repeated.

"I did, sir!" glared Hacker.

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch faintly. "You had reason to believe that Bunter of my Form was in my study—"

"I had, sir!"

"Mr. Quelch, something appears to have occurred to your mind," said the Head, eyeing the Remove master in surprise.

Mr. Quelch was almost gasping. Undoubtedly something had occurred to his mind—the episode in Study No. 1 in the Remove on Saturday afternoon.

"Dr. Locke! I—I think I see light!" he stammered. "There is a boy in my Form—the boy Bunter—who has a trick of imitating voices—"

"Ah!" said the Head.

That "Ah!" spoke volumes.

"He played such a trick on Saturday in a Remove study," said Mr. Quelch, very agitated. "By speaking in an assumed voice he led a number of

juniors to believe that I was there."

"Ah!"

"I must say that when I heard him, myself, speak in a forced, harsh, unnatural voice, I detected in it no resemblance whatever to my own. But a number of Remove boys certainly were deceived by it, actually to the extent of allowing Bunter, in this assumed voice, to order them down to Hall. On this occasion also the study door was locked, and they could not see the speaker, whom they supposed to be myself."

"Ah!" said the Head, for a third time.

"If Bunter was there, sir, as Mr. Hacker believed—and if he had the unparalleled impudence to play such a trick on a Form master—"

"I will send for Bunter!" said the Head grimly.

And he touched the bell.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bad for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter sniffed, a sniff of lofty disdain, as he blinked into Study No. 1 through his big spectacles.

"If you think I've come to tea—" he sneered.

"Haven't you?" grinned Wharton.

"No!" roared Bunter. "I've just dropped in to tell you—"

"That you're expecting a postal-order?" asked Frank Nugent. "Don't trouble, old fat bean; we've heard that one."

"Beast! I stopped to tell you—"

"Tell somebody else!" suggested the captain of the Remove. "Shut the door after you."

"To tell you—"

"Good-bye!" said Bob Cherry.

"To tell you," roared Bunter "that

you can keep your measly tea! I'm asked to tea by the Head!"

"Good! The Head's welcome to you!"

"The welcomefulness is terrific!"

"Better wash your face before you go," suggested Johnny Bull. "You ought to wash it once a term, anyhow!"

Bunter's fat lip curled.

"The Head isn't likely to ask you fellows to tea, anyhow," he said. "He's asked me—at least, he's sent for me to his study, and it can only mean that he's asking me to tea. You can think of me stuffing ripping cake in the Head's house, while you're having your measly tea here. Yah!"

And Bunter, with another sniff, rolled away, leaving the Famous Five to their tea, which he could afford to despise, in view of his present glorious anticipations.

Bunter rolled away cheerily to the Head's study.

He tapped.

"Come in!"

Bunter rolled in.

He was rather surprised to find Quelch and Hacker with the Head. He hoped that they weren't coming to tea, too.

"You sent for me, sir!" purred Bunter.

"I sent for you, Bunter."

"I'm ready, sir."

"I do not understand you, Bunter. For what are you ready?" asked Dr. Locke.

"Tea, sir!"

"Tea!" repeated the Head blankly. Bunter's fat face fell.

"I—I thought—" he stammered.

"You were mistaken, Bunter!"

"Oh, lor'!"

"I have sent for you, Bunter, to

(Continued on page 27.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,086.

Get started on this fine Old-Time Romance, which tells of the breathless adventures of "The Chevalier"—one of the most picturesque gallants of his day!



By Ernest McKeag.

HOW THE STORY BEGAN.

Spurred on by the call of the sea and tales of treasure on the Spanish Main, young Roger Hartlett sets out for the seaport of Fotheringham. He is nearing his destination when he overhears two pirates named Abednigo One-Eye and Slim plotting the death of the owner of a nearby house. Despite Roger's warning, the man is fatally wounded in the fight with the scoundrels, and in his last moments, hands over to the lad a sealed packet, charging him to take it to a man known as "The Chevalier." The packet contains the chart of an island on which a great treasure lies buried, and it is soon evident that One-Eye and Slim will stop at nothing to get hold of it. The schooner on which Roger and the Chevalier set sail for the Spanish Main is attacked by the pirates' barque, with its crew of cut-throats, and the two comrades are taken prisoners. Baffled in his search for the chart, which Roger has hidden, One-Eye sends the Chevalier to his doom by making him walk the plank. Later, Roger is rescued and hidden in the hold of the ship by Jem, a powder-boy on the pirate craft, but is discovered again one night by a ruffian named Lop-ear.

(Now read on.)

How Slim Plotted Against One-Eye!

THE watch! The watch!" Again Lop-ear called, and Roger, helpless in the ruffian's grasp, could do nothing to loosen that grip of iron which held him fast by the shoulders. He kicked out, but Lop-ear avoided the blows aimed at his shins. Roger heard an answering cry come from the poop, and his heart sank as he pictured the wrath of One-Eye when he discovered that Roger was alive, and had hidden from him these many days.

There came the patter of footfalls on the deck, and in a few minutes all would be over. Yet, even as it seemed that all hope was lost, a ghostly figure sped swiftly across the deck, and the pale glimmer of the stars fell upon the rapier that was clenched in its hand.

"Loose ye the boy!" came a whispered voice. "Loose him, or by Jupiter—"

"The watch! The watch!" cried Lop-ear again, and then the cry gave place to a rattling cough in his throat.

He choked, and his grip fell from Roger.

The lad wheeled, and saw his assailant give one step, and then fall face forward upon the deck. The ghostly figure wrenched his dripping rapier from the pirate's body, and the next minute had thrust it beneath the great black cloak that clad him from head to foot.

"Make ye for your hiding-place, right speedily!" the ghostly figure whispered, and then he was gone, flitting as silently as he had come, the darkness swallowing him up as though he had been a wraith of the night.

Cries arose on every hand, and the pattering footfalls came nearer.

With a bound like a young fawn, Roger sprang for the hatch-combing

which gave on to a ladder that led below into the hold. Nor did he pause until he was secure in his lurking-place, where he cowered in the darkness, hoping that no search of the ship might be made. His lanthorn was at hand, and Jem, the powder-monkey, had provided him with flint and tinder, but he did not dare to strike a light.

His brain was a riot with the suddenness of the happenings which he had witnessed. Whence had come the ghost-like figure that had flitted so noiselessly across the deck? Far above him, on the main deck, he could hear cries and shouts, and the number of footfalls told him that the whole ship was aroused. The noises went on far into the night, but Roger did not dare move from his place of concealment.

Strange fancies began to work havoc with his brain. He imagined that he heard scuffling sounds around him, and the heavy breathing of men.

"Rats!" he murmured. "It can be no more than rats!"

Yet he was not satisfied, and the time dragged on wearily. Suddenly, he stood bolt upright, for the unmistakable sound of soft footfalls near at hand had come to his ears.

He waited, hardly daring to breathe. Someone was approaching his hiding-place!

"Are ye there? Are ye there?" The faint whisper sounded like a cannonade in his ears, but he was mightily relieved, for the voice that spoke these words was the voice of the powder-monkey!

"Ay, here I am!" replied Roger.

"Strike a light," came the answering whisper, "'tis safe now!"

Roger struck a light, and soon had the lanthorn guttering. Its feeble rays played on the pale, thoroughly frightened face of the young powder-monkey.

"Ye are safe, then?" gasped the boy. "But how came it that ye had a rapier to run through Lop-ear?"

"'Twas not I who ran him through," answered Roger. "There came a faint, ghostly figure, and e'en as the watch would ha' snatched me, a rapier found its scabbard in Lop-ear!"

"Then 'tis true?" gasped the boy.

"What is true?" asked Roger mystified by the boy's words.

"What they say—that the Swordfish is haunted!" was the amazing reply.

"They say that the ghost o' one o' One-Eye's victims haunts the ship, leaping out o' the darkness and falling on the pirates one by one. Lop-ear is not the first dead man to be found in his gore on the deck! Three others ha' met the same fate, and there ha' been splashed i' the night—and men missing i' th' morning! There ha' been mysterious footfalls. I thought 'twas ye who made them, but now I cannot

but believe that the tale is true—the Swordfish is haunted!"

The powder-monkey looked around him uneasily, and Roger could see that a cold chill had stricken the heart of the lad. He, too, did not feel any too secure, now that he knew there was a secret killer aboard the vessel. And yet the killer, whoever he was, had saved Roger from Lop-ear.

"I shall be glad to be quit o' this ship o' death," continued the powder-monkey. "List ye—to-morrow, belike, we drop anchor in the lagoon o' Cayacos. 'Tis where One-Eye makes his headquarters. Will ye help me to get ashore? Then, perhaps, we can hide i' the forest, or strike our way across the island and, perhaps, sight a passing ship."

"To-morrow we anchor?" repeated Roger. "Then, Jem, we will make our attempt. Mark ye, when night falls, see where the boats are made fast, for surely will One-Eye lower a dinghy. Then, mayhap, we can slip into it, and row to the shore. Know ye Cayacos?"

"But little," was the reply. "Still, I would rather face the perils o' the forest, and the snakes and the beasts that lurk therein, than remain on this ship o' death!"

"To-morrow, then, Jem!" said Roger.

"Fail me not, and it may yet be that we shall outwit One-Eye and his rogues."

The two boys parted, Jem to slink silently along the hold and make his way to the deck above, and Roger to remain in his hiding-place and await, with what patience he could muster, the coming of the next day.

Time dragged wearily, and the continual plash-plash of the water told Roger that the Swordfish was ploughing her way through the waters of the Main.

Many hours had passed, when he heard the creaking of sails, the noise of hauling, and the chanting of the pirates as they lowered the yards, and made fast the sails. Then came the mighty splash which told him that the anchor had been dropped. After that silence fell.

It was broken within a short time, however, by the creak of tackles, which betokened the lowering of boats, and Roger could hardly contain his curiosity further.

Stealthily he made his way to the ladder which led above, and, going up it cautiously, lest some unwary movement betrayed his presence, he at last gained the gun-deck.

It was deserted, and was lighted dimly by the rays of the sun which struck down through the hatch above, and through one or two of the gun ports which had been left open.

To one of these gun ports Roger crept, and took in a great breath of fresh air as he surveyed the scene which lay before him.

The Swordfish lay at anchor on the placid waters of a lagoon. Far out to seaward he noted a line of foam, which told of the presence of some barrier reef which protected this calm lagoon from the seas outside. In the other direction, Roger saw an island, its palms waving lazily in the breeze. A coral reef spread out, crescent-wise, to enclose the lagoon.

This, then, was the headquarters of One-Eye.

Yet, so peaceful did it seem, that it was hard to believe that it harboured these wolves of the Main.

Even as Roger watched through the port, another vessel plunged on the turmoil of waters that marked the position of the barrier reef, danced like

(Continued on page 26.)

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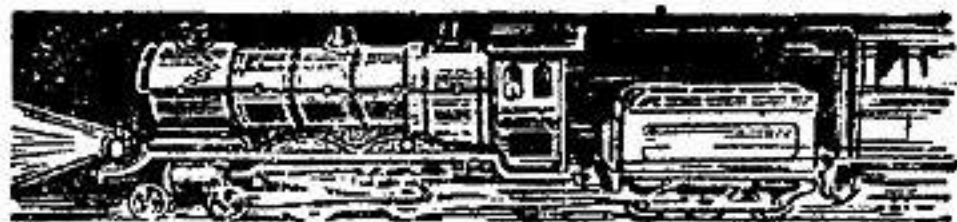
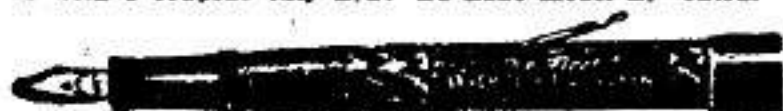
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a cork upon the foam, and then slid calmly into the lagoon. On she came, her yards rattling down while sails were furled, and her anchor dropped with a splash into the waters.

"The Celestine!" breathed Roger. "'Tis the schooner of the Chevalier, which Slim now commands!"

He watched fascinated, and then saw a longboat lowered from the schooner. It nestled on the blue waters of the lagoon like a sea bird, and then, a moment later, oars were shipped, and it came skimming across the surface, making for the Swordfish.

"'Tis Slim coming to visit One-Eye!" thought Roger, and as the boat drew alongside he saw that he was not mistaken.

The snake-like Slim, his rat-like eyes gleaming, sat in the stern and spurred on the rowers by hurling invectives at them. In a short space of time the boat was alongside the Swordfish, and Roger, peering cautiously out of the port, saw Slim seize a rope-ladder and mount to the deck.

At the same moment a slight noise made Roger turn quickly, and he was just in time to see the legs of a man appearing at the top of the ladder which led down to the gun-deck from the deck above.

There was no time for Roger to gain the security of his hiding-place in the hold, yet to delay meant certain discovery. He scuttled away swiftly, like a rat, making his way aft, and trusting there to find some place where he could shelter.

Luckily he found a locker, half-full of ropes and stores. He clambered swiftly over the gear, and lay there for a spell, hardly daring to breathe lest he might betray himself. But no sound came from the gun-deck, and the man, whoever he was, had not had his suspicions aroused.

Now the sound of voices carried to

Roger's ears—voices that were strangely muffled, so that at first he could not guess whence they came.

Then, as he listened, he became aware that there was a chink in the timbers of the store-room in which he was, and it was from some place beyond this chink that the voices came. Roger scrambled to his feet, and, standing upon a coil of rope, found that he could gaze through the chink. He did so, and, with difficulty, suppressed a cry!

For through the chink he could see the cabin beyond, and he knew that it was the great after-cabin of the barque. Three men were there—One-Eye, Slim, and another villainous-looking rascal whom Roger knew not. The grating voice of One-Eye carried to his ears.

"Sit you down, Slim!" he heard the ruffian growl. "I would speak wi' ye! Ha' ye discovered the chart that the Chevalier hid?"

"The chart?" growled Slim. "Why ask ye that? Had not the Chevalier the chart upon him? Ha' ye not wrested his secret from him?"

"The Chevalier is gone to his last reckoning!" grunted One-Eye. "But he took not the chart wi' him. He hid it, Slim, rat me, but he must ha' hid it aboard the Celestine. Ha' ye found it, Slim? Ha' ye, ye gallows rat? Would ye seek to double-cross me, eh? Rat ye, but I'll ha' the heart o' ye nailed dripping to the mainmast an' ye ha'!"

It seemed to Roger watching there silently, that a crafty look came into the eyes of Slim as he answered:

"Hid it, did he? Then rip me if I ha' found it. One-Eye, old pal, if 'twas aboard the Celestine, 'tis there yet!"

"Sink me, wait ye here a bit!" One-Eye stumped his way across the after-cabin, leaving Slim and his fellow-scoundrel alone.

A cunning smile wreathed the face of Slim as One-Eye disappeared, and he

turned swiftly and caught the arm of his companion, a swarthy rogue who Roger guessed rightly, was a Portuguese half-breed.

"Did ye hear that, Gomez?" he wheezed. "The chart is still aboard the Celestine! What say ye Gomez? Shall we ha' the chart ourselves, Gomez? Shall we ha' the rich red gold between us? Sink me, why should we not get rid o' One-Eye—ay, and his men—an' ha' all the more for ourselves?"

"Can we do it, cap'n?" asked Gomez, as his eyes, too, lit up with greedy cunning.

"Ay, can we!" was the swift reply. "Gomez, ye know this ship well, and ye know the magazine. While I engage One-Eye in conversation, go ye to the magazine and lay a train of powder. Then, when I give the signal, fire the train! After that we'll drop from the stern ports to our boat, and leave the Swordfish to blow sky-high. The treasure will be ours, Gomez—ours alone!"

Roger's Peril!

HARDLY had Slim ceased speaking than the cabin door opened again, and One-Eye entered.

"Sit ye down, Slim!" he growled. "I ha' lots to say to ye." He fixed Gomez with his one eye. "Ye can quit, Gomez," he went on. "I'll ha' none listening when I speak to my lieutenant!"

"I go, senor!" said Gomez, and crossed towards the door.

But, as he hesitated there a moment, Roger caught the glance that passed between him and Slim.

Roger's heart thumped violently. So Slim was going to carry out his plan without a moment's delay.

"The chart! I must save the chart!" was the thought that flashed instantly through Roger's brain and, spurred by the necessity of haste, he left his watching-post and emerged upon the gun-deck. He cared not whether he was seen or not. During his nocturnal ramblings around the barque he had marked the place where he had been held prisoner, and he made straight for that. It was a noisome hole deep in the bows of the vessel.

Roger needed no light to guide him, for he knew exactly where he had placed the chart.

In a short space of time Roger had retrieved the package of papers, and had thrust them into his shirt. But time was passing, and as he scrambled back to the gun-deck he gave a cry. The place was full of smoke!

Gomez, apparently, had wasted no time! The magazine was situated just behind the mainmast, in the lower depths of the hold. Gomez had laid a train of powder, and had fired it!

"The lad Jem! Where can he be? I must warn him!" gasped Roger, and he scrambled hastily to the deck, shouting as he ran:

Whether his cries reached and warned the lad, Roger knew not, for, almost as soon as he ran on deck he was seen by a man who came at that moment from the fo'c'sle, and who gave the alarm.

"Split me, but 'tis the lad who vanished!" yelled the pirate. "Hi, lads! Come quick! I ha' him!"

(Without a doubt Roger's plight is a terrible one, for at any moment the pirate barque may be blown sky-high, bringing swift and sudden death to all aboard her! Look out for further thrilling developments next week.)



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"THE FORM-MASTERS' FEUD!"

(Continued from page 23.)

question you with regard to an incident in your Form master's study last Wednesday," said the Head.

"Ow! I wasn't there, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"You deny having been in the study?"

"Oh, yes, sir! All the Remove fellows can bear me out, sir; they can swear that I was in the Remove passage at the time I was there—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, at the time I wasn't there, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Bless my soul! It appears that you were there, as Mr. Hacker supposed. I am told, Bunter, that you have a curious trick of imitating voices—"

"Oh! Oh no, sir! Nothing of the kind! I couldn't possibly imitate Mr. Quelch's voice, sir. I didn't, sir—I never did! Never dreamed of it."

"And who told you that Mr. Quelch's voice had been imitated on that occasion?" demanded the Head.

Bunter jumped.

"I—I mean, sir—I didn't know—I never did—I wasn't—"

"Your knowledge of the circumstance is a proof of your guilt, Bunter."

"Oh, no, sir! I hadn't any knowledge—not a bit! I wasn't there at all, sir! I—I'm prepared to swear that I wasn't, sir! I should never have gone near the place if Hacker hadn't been after me. A fellow has a right to go to his Form master for protection, sir! Not that I went there! I mean, I wasn't there when Mr. Hacker came there, sir."

"How do you know, then, that Mr. Hacker came there?"

"Oh dear! I—I don't."

"What?" stuttered the Head. "You have just said that you did."

"I—I mean that I didn't, sir! That's what I really mean to say!" babbled Bunter. "If Mr. Hacker thinks I was there, sir, he's mistaken. Twigg was mistaken in thinking he saw me go into that study. He's always making mistakes—"

Hacker was staring blankly at Bunter.

"The boy was evidently in the study," he said. "He must have heard Mr. Twigg speaking to me."

"Oh, no, sir! Not a word!" said Bunter hastily. "I wasn't there! And as for imitating Mr. Quelch's voice, I couldn't! I'm not a ventriloquist, sir—I don't really know what ventriloquism is. Besides, as if I'd tell a Form master to go and eat coke! I—I shouldn't dream of such a thing, sir! I—I should think it disrespectful."

Three masters gazed at Bunter in silence.

"This," said the Head at last, in a deep voice, "is a most extraordinary boy!"

Bunter edged towards the door.

"M-m-may I go now, sir?" he stuttered.

"You may go, Bunter, and you may await your Form master in his study!"

"Oh, lor'!"

"Silence! Go!"

"Wow!"

Bunter went.

"I think," said the Head, "that the matter is now cleared up, gentlemen."

Hacker and Quelch looked at one another.

"Perfectly, sir," said Hacker. "I beg Mr. Quelch's pardon with all my heart! I was deceived by a disrespectful boy."

"Absolutely!" said Quelch. "I beg

your pardon in my turn, my dear Hacker, and withdraw entirely any expressions I may have used—"

"I am extremely sorry—" said Hacker.

"I regret the whole incident extremely," said Quelch.

The kind old Head beamed upon the two masters. They left the study together. Other masters, seeing them walking together on the most amicable terms, were surprised—interested—perhaps even a little disappointed. The Form masters' feud was at an end, and Common-room had lost its topic!

From Mr. Quelch's study, a little later, sounds of woe were heard proceeding. In that study Billy Bunter was learning—not for the first time—that the way of the transgressor was hard and the path of a wonderful ventriloquist set with thorns.

Bunter's return to the Remove passage was heralded by a series of hair-raising groans.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "You don't look as if you've been enjoying tea with the Head!"

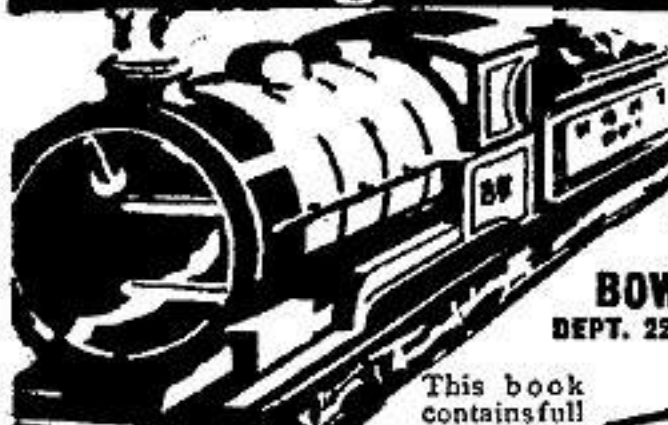
"Ow, ow, ow! Wow!"

The Head was satisfied; Quelch and Hacker were satisfied. But William George Bunter was not satisfied; and the sounds of his dissatisfaction were heard for quite a long time in the Remove passage. In Bunter's opinion, at least, this state of affairs was worse—ever so much worse—than the Form Masters' Feud!

THE END.

(There will be another grand story of Harry Wharton & Co. in next week's ENLARGED CHRISTMAS NUMBER of the MAGNET, entitled: "THE PHANTOM OF THE CAVE!" To make sure of securing a copy place an order with your newsagent RIGHT NOW!)

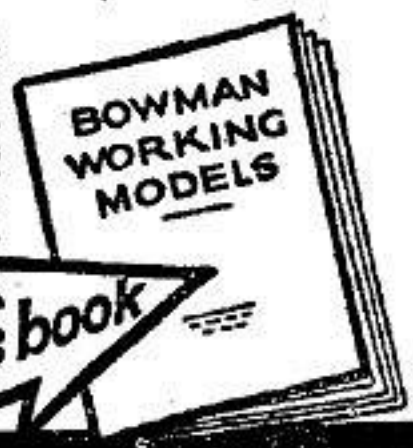
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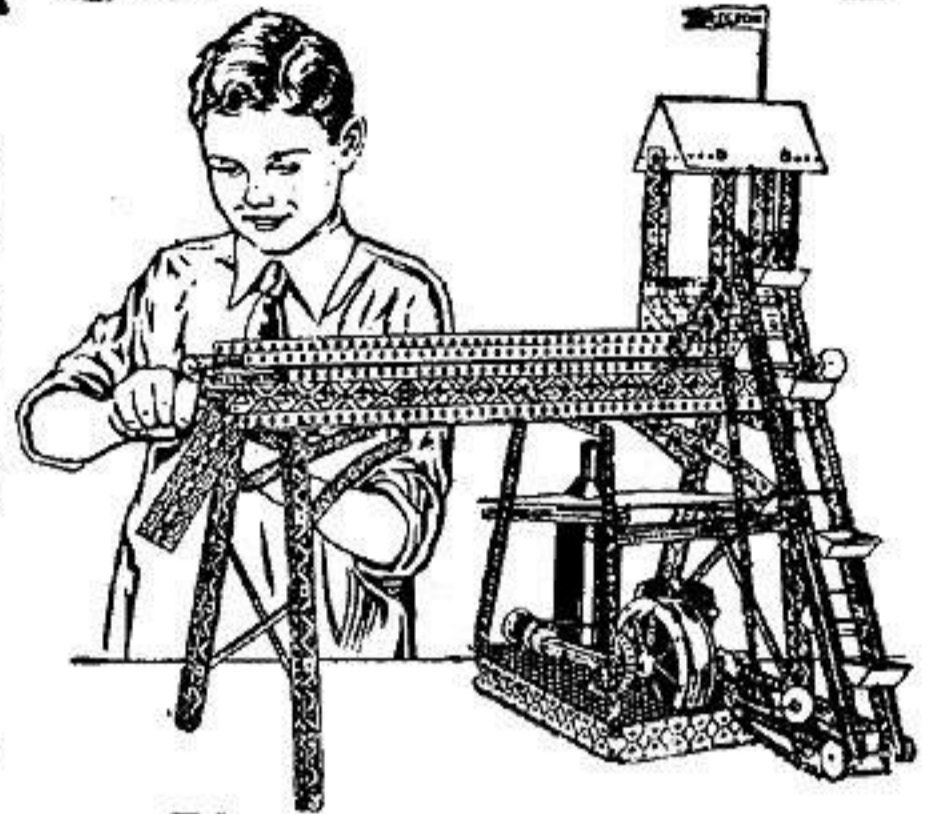
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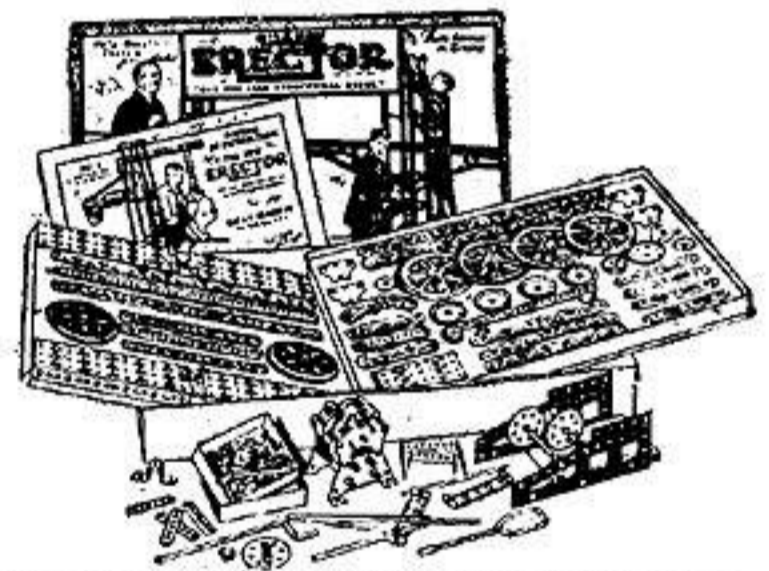
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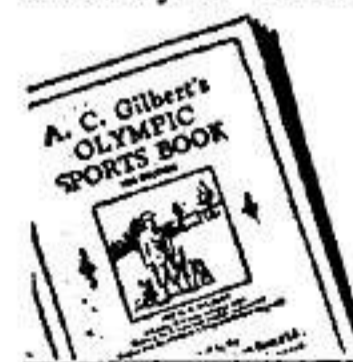
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MR. LICKHAM IN THE LIMELIGHT!

By Dicky Nugent.



"SOMETHING'S got to be did!" said Dr. Birchmell, emphatically. "Or somebody!"

Mr. I. J. Lickham, the master of the Fourth. "Eggsactly! Whichever it is, we must find a way out of the dilemma!"

The Headmaster of St. Sam's wore a worried frown on his scholarly face. He was in a quandary, in addition, of course, to his academic gown.

On the following day, the old school was breaking up for an extra long Christmas holiday, so as to give the School Governors a chance of repairing the scene of the recent fire. Four of the boys—Jolly, Merry and Bright and Tubby Barrell, the hippopotamus of the Fourth—had nowhere to go. And what to do with them, the Head really didn't know.

It had all happened so unexpectedly. First, a telegram arrived to say that Merry must go home owing to an outbreak of chicken-pox at Merry Manor, the ancestral home of the Merrys. Then General Jolly fumed to say that scotch fever had broken out in the district and Jack was to stay away till further orders. A postcard followed from Bright's mother forbidding her son to come near the house till an outbreak of mumps and hooping-cough had subsided. And to crown all, Tubby Barrell's mother had written from Portland to say he couldn't entertain Tubby until he had served his sentence for one of his recent Stock Exchange swindles. Such a sequence of disaster was unprecedented. But there it was!

"What about entertaining the unfortunate hunt lads yourself, sir?" suggested Dr. Birchmell, after a pause.

"Don't be an idiot, Lickham! You know very well I'm looking for an invitation out myself. If that's the best suggestion you can make, you'd better buzz off!"

Mr. Lickham shrugged his shoulders and turned to buzz off. But he didn't get beyond the door. A sudden yell of amazement from Dr. Birchmell brought him back with a jump. "What's the matter, sir?" he asked in surprise.

"Mother! Grate pip! Just look at this!" shouted the Head eggsactly, pointing to a copy of "Society Snippings" he had picked up from his desk. "Wondering what the dickens had come over the Head, the master of the Fourth realized that anybody else, barring an aged moulter and his brother, Bill, bore the name of Lickham."

But immediately his eyes fell on the paragraph, the fact was brought home to him that another person also eggasted—a man of wealth and position at that—whose name and initials were the same as his own!

Gratuly surprised, he read the following: "Mr. I. J. Lickham, the wealthy and eccentric mystery man of Society, has just bought a beautiful country seat in Loamshire which he has called Lickham Lodge. After furnishing it regardless of eggspense, and engaging a staff of servants, he has again mysteriously disappeared. All Society is asking where does he get to, during his long absences from home?"

"Lickham, you're found out at last!" yelled Dr. Birchmell, as the master of the Fourth finished perusing the paragraph. "I have always maintained that there was something funny about you, and now the scales have fallen from my eyes! The yarns you have always told me about being hard up were all cod from beginning to end!"

"Not at all, sir!" gasped Mr. Lickham. "Surely you don't imagine for one moment that I'm the gentleman they're referring to?"

"Of course you are! Are you going to tell me there are two I. J. Lickhams about?" eggspalmed the Head. "Your secret is revealed at last, Lickham, and it's no good trying to bluff it out!"

"But—but—" "Tut, tut! There's nothing to be ashamed of in being a wealthy Society man! Take a seat, Lickham, and have a cigar!"

Mr. Lickham grinned. The Head was feverily rubbing his hands with delight. He had fully made up his mind that the mystery man of "Society Snippings" was Mr. Lickham of the Fourth, and his sudden discovery filled him with glee.

"To think that you've kept it dark all these years, Mr. Lickham!" he eggspalmed, calling his assistant "misther" for the first time in history. "No wonder they call you the mystery man of Society! Obviously nobody would dream of finding you at St. Sam's!"

Mr. Lickham smirked. After the first shock of surprise, he was beginning to realize that it would be rather peggzant to be regarded as an eccentric Croesus.

"Well, I suppose it's no good denying it any longer, sir," he said. "I'll admit now, that I am a bio-blinded aristocratic millionaire. I've done my best to keep it a secret, but truth will out!"

"Bravo, Mr. Lickham! I thought you'd soon confess after seeing it in black and white!" cried the Head. "Are you

sure you're quite comfotable in that chair, sir?" "Oh, quite! Don't worry about me, Birchmell!" said Mr. Lickham, in lofty accents.

"Won't you like me to get you a cushion, your highness?" asked Dr. Birchmell, beginning to fawn and grovel.

"That's quite all right, my man! It's a pleasure, your honner! And now about the vaek—"

Mr. Lickham felt a spasm of fear run through him. He had a sudden idea of what was coming.

"Well, what about the vaek?" he asked, in alarm.

"I suppose now the cat's out of the bag, sir, you'll invite the boys and myself to Lickham Lodge?" said Dr. Birchmell.

"L. L. Lickham Lodge! Where's that?" "Your new country seat in Loamshire, of course!"

"But—but it's not mine!" stammered Mr. Lickham. "I mean, of course, it is mine!" he corrected, hastily.

"Then why the dickens can't we all go there?" "I—I—" "Ay, ay? That's the idea!" grinned the Head. "I knew how anxious you would be to have us with you for a week or two. I'll inform Jolly and his friends immediately, and we'll catch the first train to-morrow afternoon to Lickham Lodge!"

"Oh, grate pip! But look here, sir—" "But Dr. Birchmell had already gone, leaving Mr. Lickham to eggspal his objections to the furniture in the study. The master of the Fourth staggered on end with horror. It was impossible to get out of it now. Dr. Birchmell and four juniors were definitely booked as his guests at Lickham Lodge—and he didn't even know where Lickham Lodge was!

With an egggrimed yell at the thought of the fix his thoughtless deception had landed him in, he rushed from the study.

At last, the grate express thundered into the little wayside station of Toad-in-the-Hole, and the St. Sam's party alided.

"Shall we take a cab to Lickham Lodge, sir?" asked Jack Jolly, as they passed through the barrier.

"Most decidedly," grinned the Head. "Mr. Lickham will pay!"

They engaged the station hack and drove off at furious speed through the frosty Loamshire lanes, on which the wintry dusk was now beginning to fall.

Mr. Lickham groaned a hollow groan, and sank back into his corner, praying for the Loamshire lanes to open and swallow him up. But they didn't, and in dew course, the hack rolled through the grate gates of Lickham Lodge.

Mr. Lickham found that there was no need for a front door key. As they drove up the carriage-drive through the wooded grounds, the lights of the house glittered in the distance. Evidently servants were in readiness, if nobody else. Mr. Lickham's heart sank down into his boots.

The cab drove up at last before a stately Elizabethan oddities, and with a loud cheer, the juniors alided, followed by Dr. Birchmell and the quaking master of the Fourth.

"My giddy aunt! You do yourself well, Lickham, and no mistake!" remarked the Head, as he caterered up the steps leading to the front door. "I can see we are going to have the time of our lives, here. Ring the bell, Jolly!"

Jack Jolly rang a terrific peal on the bell, and immediately the grate portal swung open, and a tall footman looked out, mistaking the party at first for a gang of carol-singers.

Dr. Birchmell snorted. "How dare you, mental!" he wrapped out. "Know you not that we are the honored guests of your master, Mr. Lickham?" "Come on, Lickham! Lead the way!"

"Oh, crickey! I'm sorry, gentlemen!" gasped the footman. "You see, none of us servants have ever seen our master yet, so naturally I didn't know!"

"What?" yelled Mr. Lickham, a sudden wild hope springing in his breast. "I said none of us servants have ever seen our master," repeated the footman. "Are you Mr. Lickham, then, sir?"

The cutter suried back into Mr. Lickham's alle again, making him turn as red as a pony. Just when he thought the deception would be found out, he was saved!

"Oh, grate pip! What amazing luck!" he muttered to himself, then aloud, he said: "Of course I am Mr. Lickham. Kindly see to my guests' luggage immediately."

"And tell the cook to prepare a ten-course dinner at once!" added Dr. Birchmell.

"Yesir! Certainly, sir!" cried the footman, "rushing to eggsecute the commands." "Trot in and make yourselves at home, gentlemen!"

Mr. Lickham, gasping with relief, staggered into the hall, and made himself at home, and the rest of the party did likewise. Then as if by magic, a small army of servants appeared on the scene to look after them, and they were conducted to luxurious bedrooms, and informed that dinner would be served in half-a-jiffy.

Dr. Birchmell was fairly beaming with delight in his magnificent surroundings, while Jack Jolly & Co. and Tubby Barrell were trooly delited with the two adjoining bedrooms in which they were placed. As for Mr. Lickham, he was grinning all over his face at the unexpected success of his reception at Lickham Lodge.

Never in his wildest dreams had the master of the Fourth imagined that it would be possible to carry the deception beyond the gates of Lickham Lodge. But everything had gone in his favor. The real owner of the grate mansion was far, far away, and the servants all accepted Mr. Lickham of St. Sam's as their master without question. The master of the Fourth felt like jumping for joy at his good fortune.

Dinner at Lickham Lodge that nite was a cheerful meal. Masters and boys alike tucked in ravenously, and the welkin rang with their happy laughter. Loud were their praises of Mr. Lickham; and the master of the Fourth as he went to bed, felt he had had the nite of his life. How it would all end up, he didn't care!—For for the present, he didn't care!

And for the present, he didn't care!—For for the present, he didn't care!—For for the present, he didn't care!

And for the present, he didn't care!—For for the present, he didn't care!

And for the present, he didn't care!—For for the present, he didn't care!

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And for the present, he didn't care!—For for the present, he didn't care!

And for the present, he didn't care!—For for the present, he didn't care!

THE END. (If you want more laughs, boys? Of course! Then you won't be disappointed when you read "Lickham's Christmas Party"—next week. Order your Christmas Number of the MAGNET now.) THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 1,056.