

THE
MAGNET

BILLY BUNTER KEEPS YOU IN A ROAR!

The BOUNDER'S DUPE!

By
FRANK RICHARDS



The
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Billy Bunter's
Own Paper 2^D



The GREYFRIARS HERALD

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RIDE HIM, COWBOY!

By HAROLD SKINNER.

Sir Hilton Popper dropped in to see the Head last Tuesday. He often does drop in, dash him! It usually means trouble. On this occasion the old bean was riding a milk-white horse—a fine animal. He likes to canter round the neighbourhood on his beastly gees because he fancies himself as a horseman.

Trotter came along afterwards and asked if Master Skinner, Master Snoop, and Master Stott would go to the 'Ead's study. Master Skinner didn't want to go to the 'Ead's study, but there was no help for it. We filed in dismally, and waited while the Head chatted to silly old Popper.

"Yes, begad, very fine bit of horse-flesh," the latter was saying. "I picked him up cheap when the circus sold up here last season. Doooid good bargain!"

"Certainly a magnificent animal," agreed the Head, who was looking out of the window.

"Difficult, though. Needs a firm hand on him, begad! You've got to be a first-class horseman to ride him. Still, he's all right with me, of course—knows when he's met his master. Hrrm! Ha!"

He gave us a glare. "These are the boys, begad!"

"You trespassed on Sir Hilton Popper's island in the river yesterday, Skinner," rapped the Head, frowning. We confessed our sin glumly. "Very well! Come and see me after class to-day—all three of you."

When we got outside, we told each other what we would like to do to Sir Hilton Popper. Then I had an idea.

"You heard he bought that brute from a circus?" I said. "I wonder if— Here, come on, you men!"

We went up to Study No. 3. Tom Brown was not at home; but his wireless set was on a table near the window. I turned the set on full, and opened the window.

Popper had just mounted his charger when a military band blared out from the loudspeaker. Instantly that horse began prancing round the quad on his hind legs. The music brought back his circus tricks, and Popper got the full benefit of them.

A dense crowd watched the show. There were loud cheers and shouts of "Ride him, cowboy!" as Popper clung in frenzy to the horse's neck. "Good gad! What—what—

Whoa! Stop! Dooce take the animal! Oooogh!"

"Some horseman!" I chuckled happily, as the creature began to buck like a jumping bean.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Snoop and Stott.

It was sheer luck that the horse was underneath Popper every time he came down. The Head looked on in horror as the horse went round the quad in quick-waltz time, with Popper streaming out behind him. The crowd were in hysterics. It was better than a circus, because Popper was funnier.

Finally the horse stopped at the fountain. Popper didn't. He went on into it! There was a tremendous splash, and the horse cantered off home, while Popper sat in two feet of water and groped feebly for his eyeglass.



We had our whopping after class—but it was worth it!

TIME MARCHES ON!

By THE EDITOR.

I'm putting in a queer story by Mark Linley this week. Marky has tried his hand at the favourite sport of imagining the world in sixty years' time. Being by Marky, the yarn is pretty thoughtful, and I'm sure most fellows are interested in science and inventions these days. What do you think of his ideas?

Frankly, I'm rather doubtful. Mind you, everything he says is possible. It's possible—or even probable—that aeroplanes will be driven by radium-power before long. We must find a substitute for petrol—that's certain. But do you really think that the bombing aeroplane will drive us to build our cities underground—even if we could store sunshine for use as required?

No; I think the city will beat the bomber in the long run. The defence of London, for instance, is being made stronger every month. And if

the time comes when only one bomber in a hundred gets through to its target, it will prove an expensive weapon—too expensive.

Still, it is fascinating to imagine what life will be like in A.D. 2000. If you have any ideas on the subject, why not send them along? After all, I hope most of us will live till then, and it would be fun to compare our old ideas with what really happens.

Certainly Mark Linley's Greyfriars sounds a pretty weird show, but I'm glad to see Goshing's still here!

Your chum,

HARRY WHARTON.

BOB CHERRY again —the ass!

POISON PEN!

Still on the track of the Greyfriars underworld, I am investigating a most sinister crime this week. I have already unearthed smugglers and pork-pie pinchers, and now I turn my piercing gaze upon the practice of writing fake notices.

It is an almost unheard-of crime to meddle with official notice-boards, but some reckless forger has been stealthily gumming false notices on the boards. At least, I believe they're false. This one, for instance—

"LOST.—Packet of marked cards and a loaded dice. Finder is asked to return them to G. L., Sixth Form, who is unable to cheat his friends at banker without them."

Loder of the Sixth has offered sums ranging up to a million pounds for the name of the fellow who wrote this. He is almost weeping with anxiety to meet him. I saw Skinner just now, and asked him about it.

"You're pretty sharp, Skinner. Got any idea who wrote that thing about Loder?"

"Dash Loder!" growled Skinner. "He whopped me yesterday. Serve him jolly well right!"

The next suspicious notice was this one—

"AN ELECTION FOR SCHOOL CAPTAIN will take place shortly, as I realise I am no good at all at the job and ought to be kicked out.—GEORGE WINGATE (Capt.)."

Leaving Wingate foaming with rage, I ran into Skinner again.

"Look here, Skinny—you might keep your eyes open and see if you can spot the cad who's guying Wingate."

"Hang Wingate!" - snarled

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ON VENGEANCE BENT! AT DAGGERS DRAWN WITH MR. QUELCH, HIS FORM-MASTER, AND WINGATE, THE CAPTAIN OF GREYFRIARS, VERNON-SMITH ENLISTS THE AID OF BILLY BUNTER, THE EXPERT SCHOOLBOY VENTRILOQUIST!

The BOUNDER'S DUPE!

By **FRANK RICHARDS**



BILLY BUNTER IS WANTED!

“WHERE’S Bunter?”

Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, snapped that question in at the doorway of Study No. 7 in the Remove.

He stared into the study. But he did not behold Billy Bunter therein.

Seven faces met his stare; but not one of them was the fat and fatuous face of the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter might have been expected to be present. Not only was it Bunter’s study, but a spread was proceeding there, and it was very remarkable and unusual for William George Bunter to miss a spread in his own study.

But if Billy Bunter was there he was invisible.

Peter Todd and Tom Dutton, who shared that study with Bunter, were there. Harry Wharton & Co., who had come in to tea, were there.

The Famous Five all turned smiling faces towards Smithy. So did Peter Todd. Tom Dutton only stared at him inquiringly. Tom was deaf, and he had not heard the Bounder’s question.

“Isn’t Bunter here?” rapped the Bounder. “Skinner said he saw him come up to the study.”

Bob Cherry looked round.

“Anybody seen Bunter?” he asked.

“The scēfulness is not terrific!” said Hurrce Jamset Ram Singh.

“Come in and have some of this

“I say, you fellows, have some tarts!” squeaked Billy Bunter, giving the Famous Five a hospitable blink. “I’ve got lots!”

cake, Smithy!” said Peter Todd hospitably. “Never mind Bunter—have some cake.”

“Bother your cake!”

Smithy’s answer was not polite! He did not seem in a polite mood. His brows were knitted and his eyes gleaming. Herbert Vernon-Smith was, in fact, in one of his worst tempers.

But if Smithy fancied that his bad temper mattered a boiled bean to any fellow in that study, it was a mistake on Smithy’s part; and every fellow there was prepared to make that clear to him.

“Did Quelch lay it on hard, Smithy?” asked Bob sympathetically.

“Oh, shut up, you fool!”

“What I really like about Smithy,” said Bob Cherry, “is that polished, Chesterfieldian manner of his. It’s a pleasure to listen to him. Listen to

Smithy, you fellows, and improve your manners all round.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“You gabbling fathead!” said the Bounder. “I’ve had six from Quelch—and I’ll make him sit up for it; and that fool Wingate for reporting me, too! But I’m looking for that fat fool Bunter now. Where is he?”

“O where and O where can he be?” chanted Bob Cherry.

“Will you tell me where Bunter is!” roared the angry Bounder.

“No!” said Harry Wharton coolly. “Go and eat coke! Do you think you can blow off steam at all the Remove because you’ve been whopped by your Form-master? Why shouldn’t you be whopped when you ask for it?”

“Can’t you take a whopping like any other fellow without scowling like a demon in a pantomime?” demanded Johnny Bull.

“I want to see Bunter!” shouted Smithy.

“Bunter doesn’t seem to want to see you!” remarked Frank Nugent. “Shut the door after you, Smithy!”

“You silly chumps. I know he was here! Will you tell me where he’s gone?” howled Vernon-Smith.

“If you want Bunter,” said Bob

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Cherry, "all you've got to do is to make a noise like a jam-tart! Then he will come running!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith glared into the cheery study. Nobody evidently was going to give him any information on the subject of Bunter. Everybody, on the other hand, seemed to want to make it clear that he could not throw his weight about in that study.

From Smithy's look it did not seem that Bunter was likely to have a happy time if Smithy found him.

"You cackling idiots!" snapped Vernon-Smith. "Will you tell me where that fat fool is, or not?"

"Not!" said Harry Wharton.

"The notfulness is terrific!"

"What do you want him for?" asked Peter Todd.

"That's my business!" snapped the Bounder.

"Well, it's your business to find him, if you want him, too! Now, you've given us all we want of the manners and customs of good society!" said Peter. "Buzz off and yap at some other study!"

The Bounder gave the tea-party a final glare, stepped back into the Remove passage, and closed the door with a bang that rang the length of the passage.

"Nice chap!" murmured Bob.

"Well, I suppose he's had it rather tough from Quelch," remarked Nugent. "Wingate of the Sixth spotted him smoking and took him to the old bean! It's the umpteenth time he's been in trouble this term already, and Quelch gets fed-up."

"I say, you fellows!" came a fat squeak from under the table. "I say, is that beast gone?"

"Yes: you can crawl out, Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

From under the study table, where it had been hidden by a forest of legs, a fat figure emerged.

Billy Bunter gasped for breath and blinked round through his big spectacles. It had been rather close quarters under that table; there had been altogether too many legs and feet for Bunter's comfort.

"Ooogh!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, lucky I heard the brute coming and popped out of sight, wasn't it? Smithy's jolly well not going to rag me just because Quelch whopped him. Besides, how does he know that I had the toffee? I never had it! There was no toffee in his study when I went there. And I never went there, either! And I left the toffee exactly where it was when I went away, too!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Lot of good telling Smithy that—just after he's had a whopping from Quelch!" said Bunter. "He would make out that I'd had the toffee, just as an excuse for pitching into a chap! I dare say Redwing had it, if it's gone. More likely he never had any toffee at all. The fact is, Smithy's mean! Fancy making all that fuss about a spot of toffee! There was hardly a quarter of a pound."

"If you tell Smithy all that I feel

sure he'll believe that you never had it, old fat man!" said Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" grunted Bunter. "It's pretty thick, I think, for a fellow to come rooting after a fellow in a fellow's study because he makes out that he's missed some toffee. Why does a fellow always think of me if there's any grub missing? That's what I want to know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle!" said Bunter. "If that brute comes back I jolly well shan't dodge under the table again. I'll jolly well knock him spinning into the passage! I'm fed-up with Smithy's tantrums, I can tell you. I don't want a row with the fellow—but let him put his cheeky nose into my study again, that's all—you'll see me punch it."

Bang!

The study door flew open again.

The Bounder's angry face glared in.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter.

It was too sudden this time—Bunter had had no time to hunt cover.

The Bounder's eyes fell on the fat face as he glared in.

"You fat fool!" roared Smithy.

"I knew you were here! I——"

"I say, you fellows, chuck him out!" yelled Bunter. "I say, Toddy, old man—Wharton—Bull, old fellow—Bob, old chap—I say——"

Bunter had apparently forgotten his intention of punching Smithy's cheeky nose if he put it into the study again.

But there were plenty of other fellows ready to do so. Harry Wharton jumped to his feet.

"That's enough, Smithy!" he rapped. "Outside!"

"You fool——"

"Get out!"

"I want Bunter——"

"Will you get out?"

"No, you dummy! I want——"

Smithy had no time to say more. Bunter was not the only fellow who was fed-up with his tantrums. The whole tea-party rose to the occasion. They grasped Herbert Vernon-Smith and spun him into the passage.

Bump!

The Bounder sat in the passage with a heavy concussion. The door of Study No. 7 banged on him. And the tea-party sat down to tea again, leaving Herbert Vernon-Smith to limp away, in a worse temper than ever.

A SPOT OF VENTRILOQUISM!

BILLY BUNTER grinned cheerfully as he annexed the last spot of jam on the tea-table in Study No. 7.

He was done with the Bounder—for the present, at least. And it had been a great spread.

Peter Todd had had a tip of a whole pound note from a kind relation, and he had spent it nobly in hospitality. There had been no change out of that pound note—and

Bunter was seeing to it that there was going to be no change out of the tuck provided.

Billy Bunter was jammy, sticky, and happy.

"I say, you fellows, don't go yet!" said the fat Owl, as there was a general movement. "I'm going to give you some of my ventriloquism."

"Oh!" said the five visitors.

They were polite; but there was, perhaps, a lack of enthusiasm. Still, it was Bunter's study, as well as Toddy's; and it was up to polite visitors to go through any entertainment provided on their behalf.

Bunter, it was true, was a wonderful ventriloquist. If he could do nothing else, he could do that.

But, wonderful as it was, his ventriloquism was rather at a discount in his Form. Most fellows had had enough of it! Many had had too much.

Had Bunter made that generous offer elsewhere, the reply would probably have been "Rats!" or "Pack it up!" But in Bunter's own study, something was due to politeness.

"Oh! Go ahead, old fat bean!" said Bob.

"Delighted!" murmured Harry Wharton.

"The delightfulness will be terrific, my esteemed and idiotic Bunter!" declared Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Cut it short!" said Peter Todd.

Peter, in his own study, was not under the same necessity of exercising a lot of politeness.

"Oh really, Toddy——"

"As Quelch puts it, be brief!" said Toddy.

"Look here!" roared Bunter.

"Carry on, old fat man!" said Bob Cherry amicably. "Make a voice come down the chimney! Or make Quelch's bark come in at the door!"

"Cherry! How dare you make such an allusion to your Form-master's voice!" came a sharp, angry snap from the door.

"Oh gum!" gasped Bob, in alarm.

It was the voice of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Greyfriars Remove.

Bob Cherry spun round like a peg-top, expecting to see the door open and Quelch glaring in.

But the door was still shut! Nobody was glaring in!

Bob blinked at the door, almost dizzily.

"He, he, he!" came from Bunter.

"Oh!" gasped Bob. "You fat, frowsy, frabjous foozler, was that your putrid ventriloquism? You made me jump nearly out of my skin, you pie-faced, potty porpoise!" Then Bob remembered that he was a guest in the study. "Oh! I—I—I—I—I mean, jolly clever, Bunter!"

"You can boot him, if you like!" said Peter Todd generously.

"Um! It's all right——"

"Well, as you're a jolly old visitor, I'll boot him for you, if you like——"

"Oh really, Toddy——"

"Thanks for the entertainment, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton. "Same for the feed, Toddy! Now, I——"

"I say, you fellows, don't go!" exclaimed Bunter. "I haven't finished yet. That beast Smithy may be

hanging about the passage, waiting till you're gone—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I'm not thinking of keeping you here till that beast Smithy has cleared off! I—I want to—to amuse you!" explained Bunter. "Dash it all, you don't often get a jolly clever ventriloquist giving you a show for nothing. I'll give you an imitation of Bull's voice—"

"You needn't trouble!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"It's no trouble to me, Bull! I can imitate any voice that has anything queer or funny about it—"

"What?"

"It's not so easy to imitate Nugent's, for instance," explained Bunter. "Being so commonplace, there's nothing in it for a ventriloquist to take hold of, see?"

"Thanks!" said Nugent dryly.

"Or Wharton's," said the fat Owl. "Only when he's on the high horse, then he gets a bark like his uncle, old Colonel Wharton, and I can imitate that a treat! Shall I give you a sample of Wharton doing the high horse?"

The captain of the Remove gazed at Billy Bunter, while the other fellows grinned. However, he could not kick Bunter in his own study.

"But Bull's comes easier," went on Bunter. "It's just pie to a ventriloquist—a growl like a bad-tempered bear, you know."

"Chuck it, Bunter, you ass!" said Bob, laughing.

"You shut up and let Bunter carry on!" came Johnny Bull's deep voice. "Don't butt in, you silly fathead!"

Bob Cherry stared round at Johnny.

But Johnny did not look at him! Johnny strode at Billy Bunter and grabbed him by the back of the neck.

"Oh!" gasped Bob. "Was—was that Bunter? I thought—"

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter. "Leggo my neck, Bull, you beast!"

Shake! Shake! Shake!

"Yow-ow-ow! Leggo!" roared Bunter. "Is that how you thank a chap for entertaining you, Bull, you beast? Didn't I get your grunting growl all right? Ow! Leggo!"

Shake, shake!

"Wow! Beast!"

Shake, shake!

"Yurrooogh!"

Bump!

Johnny sat the fat Owl down on the floor and stalked out of the study. He seemed to have had enough of Billy Bunter's wonderful ventriloquism.

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "I say, you fellows—"

But the Co. did not stay for more! They, like Johnny, seemed to be satisfied with what they had had in the way of ventriloquial entertainment. They walked out after Johnny.

Billy Bunter tottered to his feet, gasping for breath.

"I say, Toddy, don't you go!" he gasped. "I—I don't want to go down yet, and—and I want your company, old chap!"

"I can't stay here for ever, in case Smithy comes in!" grinned Peter. "You should leave his toffee alone, old fat bean!"

"Oh really, Toddy! I say, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you!" howled Bunter.

Peter walked away, regardless.

Tom Dutton was left in the study with Bunter. Fortunately—from Bunter's point of view—Dutton had lines to do for Quelch! He cleared a corner of the table, and sat down to lines.

The fat Owl blinked out of the doorway into the passage. If the coast was clear, Bunter was going down.

But the coast was not clear. Herbert Vernon-Smith was standing at the door of Study No. 4, speaking to Tom Redwing in the study.

Billy Bunter backed rapidly into No. 7 again, and shut the door.

"Beast!" he grunted.

Now that the tea-party had departed, he had no doubt that the Bounder would come back. Billy Bunter really wished that he hadn't found that toffee in Study No. 4. He would have handed it back, had it been possible. But that was not possible! Smithy's toffee was within Bunter's fat circumference!

"I say, Dutton!" Billy Bunter squeaked into the ear of his study-mate, scribbling lines at the corner of the study table.

"Eh?"

"Smithy's coming to this study."

"So did I!" said Tom, staring at him. "We all got muddy, as well as Smithy! You can't play footer in this weather without getting muddy!"

"Oh, you deaf dummy!" hissed Bunter.

"Nothing rummy in it that I can see! If you weren't too jolly lazy to play footer, you'd get muddy, too," said the deaf Removite. "Don't jaw—I've got to do my lines for Quelch now."

"Blow Quelch!" hissed Bunter.

"Bother Quelch!"

"Eh?"

"Never mind Quelch!"

"Do you mean Morgan?" asked Dutton. "He's Welsh! But what about it?"

"Smithy!" howled Bunter.

"Smithy isn't Welsh," said Dutton. "What rot you talk, Bunter! I know Smithy got muddy, without you telling me, as I was there—but he isn't Welsh. And, even if he was, what about it?"

Billy Bunter glared at him through his big spectacles. A fellow had to put on steam to talk to Tom Dutton. Bunter did not want the Bounder in the passage to hear him, however! So there was a difficulty in the way.

"Look here!" he snorted.

He grabbed Tom Dutton's pen and scrawled on a sheet of paper.

Tom Dutton stared at the scrawl. "Smithy says he's kumming to this studdy to boot you."

"Does he, by gum!" exclaimed Tom Dutton, with a war-like look. "Let him jolly well try it on, that's all!"

Tom Dutton was deaf. But in other respects he was all there. He was strong, he was sturdy, and he feared no man. If Smithy had declared his intention of booting him,

Tom was ready for Smithy to get on with it—more than ready!

"I'll help you handle him, old chap!" said Bunter.

"There'll be a scrap all right, if Smithy pokes his nose in here again!" said Dutton. "I'll show him!" Then he gave Bunter a suspicious look. "I don't see why Smithy should come here and row with me! If you're pulling my leg—"

"He's coming now!" gasped Bunter.

"Eh?"

"I can hear him—"

"Fear him? Not likely! Think I'm afraid of Smithy, you fat ass? But you tell such whoppers! I don't believe he's coming here at all. I'll believe it when he butts in, see?" grunted Dutton.

The study door flew open with a bang, and Herbert Vernon-Smith tramped into the study.

That was proof—to Dutton. He jumped towards the Bounder.

"Outside!" he rapped.

Vernon-Smith stared at him.

"You ass, I want Bunter!" he snapped. "What's biting you, you fathead?"

"Fighting me won't be so jolly easy!" snorted Dutton. "But if that's what you want, come on!"

"You deaf duffer—"

"Out you go!" said Dutton. And he grabbed at Vernon-Smith, grasped him, and they staggered into the passage together, struggling.

There was a bump as they went over and rolled on the passage floor.

Billy Bunter gave them a blink through his big spectacles, and rolled out of the study. He did the Remove passage to the stairs at record speed, and vanished down the staircase—leaving Smithy and Tom Dutton still collecting dust on the passage floor.

AFTER BUNTER!

WINGATE of the Sixth frowned.

The Greyfriars captain was in the quad; thinking, probably, about much more important things than Remove juniors. A howl of laughter made him glance round—and frown.

A dozen juniors were staring at a fat figure that had suddenly got into quick motion. A dozen voices shouted to Billy Bunter, amid laughter.

"Look out, Bunter!"

"Here's Smithy!"

"He's after you, Bunter!"

"Hook it, Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were all laughing—but the Greyfriars captain frowned.

Billy Bunter shot away—like a startled fat rabbit. From the direction of the House, Herbert Vernon-Smith appeared in sight—and he started in Bunter's direction at a run.

Bunter, obviously, was in a scared state. He was fleeing from the wrath to come. It looked to Wingate like a case of bullying—he was very well
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acquainted with Smithy's temper, and he was aware that Smithy was specially disgruntled that day, over a whopping from Quelch. Wingate decided to look into this—and he stepped into Bunter's way, and held up his hand as a signal to the fat Owl to stop.

It was rather unfortunate, for the fat Owl did not even see him before he crashed.

He hurtled right into Wingate, and the big Sixth Form man staggered.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"Ow!" spluttered Bunter. "Get-rout of the way, Coker, you beast!"

The Greyfriars captain grabbed him by a fat shoulder.

"You young ass!" he gasped. "What do you mean by barging into me? What are you bolting about like a mad elephant for?"

"Leggo!" yelled Bunter.

"I tell you——"

"Smithy's after me!" howled Bunter. "Will you leggo?"

In sheer desperation Billy Bunter wrenched his fat shoulder away from the prefect's grasp, and careered on.

"Stop!" roared Wingate.

Bunter flew.

The Greyfriars captain gasped for breath. Bunter's charge had rather winded him. He stepped into the way again, as Vernon-Smith came cutting by—and held up his hand.

"Stop!" he snapped.

Vernon-Smith stopped. He was tempted to crash into Wingate, as Bunter had done. Only a couple of hours ago Wingate had reported him to his Form-master for smoking, and the Bounder was still feeling severe twinges of the six Quelch had given him. But he stopped.

"Well," he snapped, "what do you want, Wingate? Think I've got any more smokes about me?"

"I shouldn't wonder," answered the Greyfriars captain. "You're a dingy little sweep, Vernon-Smith! But never mind that now. What are you chasing Bunter for?"

"I want to speak to him."

"Is that all?"

"That's all."

"Does a Remove kid generally chase off, as if a mad bull were after him, when you want to speak to him?" asked Wingate.

"I suppose the fat fool thinks I'm after him to whop him!" snorted the Bounder. "I suppose he knows he's done something to deserve it."

"The Head hasn't been appointing prefects from the Remove, has he?" asked Wingate, with gentle sarcasm. "If you whop Bunter, Vernon-Smith, whether he deserves it or not, I'll whop you—hard!"

Vernon-Smith's eyes gleamed at him. The Bounder did not find it easy to toe the line at any time. He was, like most high-handed fellows, a rebel by nature. And just at present his feelings towards the captain of Greyfriars were bitter and resentful.

But he checked the angry words on his tongue. He had had six from Quelch's cane, and he did not want six more to follow from Wingate's ashplant. Instead of answering, he

made a movement to walk round Wingate and go on.

"Stop!" said Wingate very quietly. "If you walk away before I'm through with you, Vernon-Smith, I'll give you a lesson you'll remember till the end of the term."

"What do you want?" breathed the Bounder, between his teeth.

"I want to know what you're chasing Bunter about the place for, and you're going to tell me!" answered Wingate. "Now then, sharp!"

"I've told you. I want to speak to him."

"As Bunter seems so particularly anxious not to hear what you have to say, you'd better tell me what it is!" said Wingate.

"I don't mind telling you. I'm going to ask him to my study because I've got some toffee there."

"What?"

"Getting deaf, or don't I speak plain?" asked Vernon-Smith, with a sneer. "That's what I want to speak to Bunter about, if you're keen to know."

George Wingate looked at him long and hard. He did not, of course, believe a single word of that statement. The Bounder was well known to be regardless of veracity in dealing with masters and prefects, and this seemed to Wingate about the most impudent untruth he had ever heard, even from Herbert Vernon-Smith.

If any fellow had toffee to dispose of it was not necessary to chase Billy Bunter to tell him so. Far from that. It was not difficult to get Bunter into the presence of toffee. It was difficult to keep him away from it. It was only necessary to breathe the word toffee to Bunter to draw him like a magnet.

"Well, my hat!" said Wingate. "You don't suppose that I'm going to believe that, do you, Vernon-Smith?"

"You can please yourself!" snarled the Bounder.

"Thanks—I will!" said the Greyfriars captain. "Now listen to me. You're not going to chase Bunter any more—even to invite him to your study for toffee, you young rascal! You're going into the House now, and staying there till call-over. Go to your study and write out fifty lines from Virgil, and let me have them at call-over. That will keep you out of mischief, and perhaps save you from another whopping."

"I tell you——"

"You've told me enough," interrupted Wingate. "You told me this afternoon that you had no smokes about you, and I turned a whole packet out of your pocket. Next time you want to invite a Remove kid to your study for toffee, you'd better do it a bit more tactfully. Chasing a fellow round the school and scaring him out of his wits isn't the way invitations are issued in the best circles."

"I tell you I was only going to ask him——"

"That will do! If you're not inside the House in one minute, I'll help you on your way with this ash! Cut off!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith breathed

fury. But he walked off to the House, and was inside under the minute.

Wingate resumed his walk, with his ashplant under his arm.

Billy Bunter, from a distance, watched the Bounder disappear into the House through his big spectacles, in great relief.

He had escaped once more.

But the fat Owl was beginning to find this rather wearing. He had had quite a lot of luck so far, but, obviously, he could not dodge Smithy for ever. There would not always be a tea-party at hand to deal with Smithy—he could not expect to pull Tom Dutton's leg again in the same way—neither was it likely that Wingate of the Sixth would be on the spot when the Bounder got after him again. From the bottom of his fat heart, the Owl of the Remove wished that he had looked for tuck in some other study that afternoon, and left the Bounder's alone.

MERELY A MISUNDERSTANDING.

"BUNTER!"

"Oh!"

"Look here——"

"Keep off, you beast!" roared Bunter.

He was fairly cornered at last.

After calling-over, Bunter had dodged away quickly. He had seen the Bounder go into the Rag. As Smithy was downstairs, Bunter had decided on upstairs; so he rolled up to the Remove studies.

Stairs made Bunter tired. In the Remove passage he paused for breath. He was still pumping in wind when there was a footstep on the Remove landing, and Vernon-Smith came into the passage.

Bunter backed up the passage in great alarm. It was not yet time for the fellows to come up to prep. There was no help at hand. Bunter's eyes bulged through his spectacles at Smithy.

"You fat ass!" roared Vernon-Smith.

"You keep away, you beast!" howled Bunter. "I never went to your study at all! I haven't been in your study!"

"Who said you had, you fat fool?"

"Eh?"

"You blithering bloater, what's the matter with you?" snapped Smithy. "What are you dodging all over the shop for?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked at Vernon-Smith in sheer amazement.

Smithy was scowling. He was still in a rotten temper. But he made no hostile movement.

Bunter wondered, rather dizzily, whether Smithy knew that the toffee was missing from Study No. 4 after all!

Still, if he didn't, why had he been hunting Bunter all over the school? It couldn't be because he liked his company. Nobody had ever been known to hunt for Bunter because he was a nice chap to know!

"I—I—I say, ain't you after me?" gasped the mystified fat Owl.



"My only hat!" ejaculated Wingate, staring in blank astonishment at the sight of Billy Bunter standing at his study table gobbling cake.

"No, you fathead! No, you clump! No, you idiot! No, you gabbling gander!" snapped the Bounder.

"Then why did you butt into my study at tea-time, and make a fellow dodge under the table?" demanded Bunter indignantly.

"You idiot! I wanted to speak to you!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

Why the Bounder wanted to speak to him, or wanted him at all, unless it was to boot him for grub-raiding, Bunter could not begin to guess. But he guessed now that there had been a misapprehension.

When Smithy had come to his study at tea-time, in a raging temper, it had not been on account of missing toffee. That whopping from Quelch, no doubt, had been the cause of the Bounder's tantrums; he did not, evidently, know yet that Bunter had snaffled his toffee! Bunter had taken that for granted—as it was said of old: the guilty flee when no man pursueth!

"Oh scissors!" said the fat Owl. "I—I thought——"

"You fat fool!"

"Oh, really, Smithy! What was a fellow to think when you were yelling out for a fellow?" demanded Bunter. "Scowling like a demon, and yelling like a Red Indian!"

"You burbling owl!"

Billy Bunter grinned.

Now that he realised how the matter stood, he thought it funny.

Smithy had not been after him.

He did not know about the toffee. He had been chucked out of Study No. 7; he had had a scrap with Tom Dutton; he had been jawed by Wingate of the Sixth—and all the while he had only wanted to speak to Bunter! The mistake was due equally to the Bounder's scowling bad temper and Billy Bunter's guilty conscience.

It was explained now, but it was still a mystery what Smithy wanted. If he wanted Bunter's fascinating society, it was the first time he had ever done so.

"Come into my study!" grunted the Bounder. "I want to speak to you, you silly, fat-headed freak!"

"You can speak here, Smithy!"

Bunter was reassured; but he was wary. He was not going to be cornered in a study.

"Fool! I've got some toffee——"

"Toffee!" repeated Bunter.

"A tin of toffees!" snapped Smithy.

"You'd like to guzzle toffee, I suppose—or have you changed all of a sudden?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Oh crikey! He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at?" snarled Smithy. It was clear that he wanted something, or he would not have been wasting time and trouble on the egregious fat Owl. But he was in an angry and dangerous temper.

"Oh, nothing!" gasped Bunter. "Were—were you looking for me to ask me to have some toffee?"

"Yes, idiot!"

Bunter blinked at him. He knew all about that tin of toffees in Smithy's study—more than Smithy did, as a matter of fact. Smithy supposed that there were still toffees in it! Bunter knew that those toffees had long since changed their residence!

That was what Smithy wanted! He was asking Bunter to his study for toffee—which Bunter had already parked, hours ago, within his fat circumference.

"Well, are you coming?" demanded Smithy.

"Oh! Yes! No! I—I don't care for toffee, thanks!" answered Bunter.

"Wha-at?"

"I'm not one of those fellows who are always eating, like some fellows I could name!" said Bunter. "I don't want any toffee. The fact is, I—I want to speak to Mauly. I'm going down."

Vernon-Smith glared at him.

Toffee was an absolutely reliable bait to draw Bunter—as a rule. Now he was turning up his little fat nose at toffee!

It was quite surprising! But the fact was that Bunter preferred to be off the scene when Smithy looked into that toffee-tin.

Smithy did not know yet that the toffees were gone! He would know as soon as he opened the tin! Then, it was probable, the band would begin to play! He would know then why Bunter had been dodging him! He would know who had had the

toffee. Bunter did not want to be on the spot when Smithy found that out. And—much as Bunter liked toffee—he saw no attraction in an invitation to share the contents of an empty tin!

"You fat chump, what are you getting at?" demanded the angry Bounder. "You'd have pinched that toffee already if you'd known it was there!"

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"Come into my study, anyhow—I've got something to say."

"I've got to go down and see Fishy—I'm going to sell Fishy my pen-knife——"

"Never mind that now——"

"I—I mean I've got to see Quelch."

"Come into my study, you burbling bloater!"

"Look here, I jolly well don't want your toffee, Vernon-Smith!" retorted Bunter. "I'm jolly well going down! Keep your toffee for somebody who wants it! If you think I want your toffee, I can jolly well say plainly—Leggo, you beast!"

The Bounder made a rapid stride at Bunter, and grasped him by his fat neck.

With his left hand he threw open the door of Study No. 4. With his right, he tumbled the fat Owl head-long into that apartment.

"Ow! Yow! Oooh!" spluttered Bunter, as he rolled on Herbert Vernon-Smith's expensive study carpet. "Oh! Beast!"

Smithy followed him in and shut the door. He stood with his back to the door, glaring angrily at the fat Owl.

"Now, you flabby fool!" he snapped.

Bunter sat up, gasping.

"Ow! Beast! Lemme out of this study!" yelled Bunter. "I'll go to Wingate! I'll go to Quelch! I'll go to the Head!"

"Shut up, idiot! Squat in that armchair! I've got something to say to you!" snarled Vernon-Smith. "If you give another squeak, I'll boot you round the study."

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

He tottered to the armchair. With the Bounder between him and the door, there was no escape for Bunter. He eyed Smithy very uneasily through his big spectacles.

"You can guzzle while I speak to you, you fat pig!" added the Bounder. He picked up a toffee-tin from the table and began to remove the lid.

"I—I—I don't want any toffee!" gasped Bunter. "Don't trouble to open that tin, Smithy! I—I really d-d-d-don't want any toffee——"

Smithy dropped the lid on the table. Then he stared, rather blankly, into an empty tin!

"Oh!" he ejaculated.

"I—I say, I—I never had it!" gasped Bunter. "I—I haven't been in this study, Smithy, and—and I never saw that toffee-tin on the table, either. I—I—I never noticed that it was a toffee-tin at all. I never looked into it, old chap, and—and it was empty, too! I expect Redwing had those toffees!"

"So that's why you were dodging

me, you pernicious idiot!" The Bounder understood at last.

"Oh, no! I never had the toffee!" yelled Bunter in alarm. "I tell you that tin was empty when I looked into it—and I never looked in it at all—I haven't been in the study——"

Vernon-Smith gave him a look. For some mysterious reason he wanted Bunter, and had provided toffee as a lure! Bunter had gobbled that toffee in advance! For a moment it was plain that the Bounder was on the verge of grabbing the fat Owl out of the armchair and booting him round the study. But he controlled his temper.

"All right!" he said. "You fat chump, you needn't have pinched the toffee—I got it for you, you blithering idiot!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. Really, he could not blame himself for not having guessed that one! It was the first time on record that Smithy had done anything of the kind; and Bunter could not begin to understand why he had done it this time.

"I want you to do something for me!" grunted Smithy.

"Oh!"

"And if you pull it off, I'll stand you as much toffee as you can guzzle."

"Oh!"

"Now shut up, and listen!"

And Billy Bunter, in great astonishment, shut up, and listened!

SMITHY'S SCHEME.

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH stood leaning on the study door, his hands in his pockets, angry temper in his face.

Bunter, from the armchair, blinked at him.

He had not the faintest idea what was coming. There was nothing, that he could imagine, that he could do for Smithy—except devour his tuck, which could hardly be what Smithy wanted him to do!

"You're a silly fool, Bunter!" began Smithy. "The biggest idiot in the school—or out of it! Goodness knows why your people sent you to Greyfriars, instead of to a home for idiots. But there's one thing you can do—your rotten ventriloquism."

Bunter could only blink.

"That's what I want," added Smithy.

"Oh crikey!" said Bunter. "If—if you want me to give you some ventriloquial entertainment, Smithy, I don't mind!"

Bunter did not mind at all. He was always glad of a chance to show off what a jolly clever ventriloquist he was! But it really was amazing, if that was what the Bounder wanted.

"Don't be a silly ass, if you can help it!" snapped Smithy. Apparently that was not what the Bounder wanted.

"Oh, really, Smithy——"

"How you do it, I don't know," said Smithy. "You're such a silly ass, that nobody would expect you to be able to do anything. But you're as good at ventriloquism as Wibley is at theatrical stunts. I suppose it's

a gift—you haven't brains enough to learn anything."

"Look here——"

"I've heard you pick up Quelch's bark," went on the Bounder. "You can do it—and that's what I want. It's a jape on Quelch, see?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He shook his head.

Japing Quelch was a dangerous game! As an amusement it might be compared to twisting the tail of a tiger in the jungle! Billy Bunter was willing, indeed eager, to show off what a wonderful ventriloquist he was! But he was not willing to jape Quelch! Not Bunter!

"And Wingate——" added Vernon-Smith.

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter shook his fat head again.

He was to help the Bounder jape his own Form-master and the captain of the school! Never had any prospect appeared so utterly unattractive to William George Bunter. Smithy could hardly have selected two more dangerous subjects.

He understood Smithy's reason, of course. Wingate of the Sixth had reported him to Quelch, and Quelch had whopped him! Smithy was on the trail of vengeance! But Billy Bunter had no desire to be mixed up in the Bounder's feuds and vendettas.

"It's easy enough for you," went on Smithy, taking no notice of the alarm in Bunter's fat face. "I've been thinking it out——"

"I—I say, Smithy, I—I've got to see Mauly——" stammered Bunter. "I—I really must see Mauly before prep——"

"Shut up! The idea is this—Wingate's going to get a jaw from Quelch!" said Vernon-Smith. "He's going to be told to mind his own business, and not to meddle with the Remove."

"Eh? Quelch won't tell him that!" gasped Bunter.

"I know he won't, idiot! You will!"

"Will I!" stuttered Bunter. "I'll watch it!"

"Wingate will think it was Quelch—see? We've got to fix up some way for Quelch to speak to him without Wingate seeing him, see? He wouldn't believe it was Quelch speaking if he saw a fat grampus gurgling. You've got to do it—and make believe it was Quelch!"

"But he—he wouldn't!" groaned Bunter. "The—the fact is, Smithy, I—I can't ventriloquise at all! I couldn't imitate Quelch's voice to shave my wife—I mean, to save my life! I say, if you've finished, old chap, I've got to go and speak to Ogilvy——"

"I haven't finished."

"Oh lor'!"

"To-morrow afternoon's a half-holiday," said Smithy. "Old Quelch is going on his usual jaunt with Prout. I know that! Quelch will be out most of the afternoon. He will be safe off the scene."

"Oh!" said Bunter, a little encouraged.

If Quelch was going to be safe off the scene, it sounded better,

"You nip into Quelch's study and lock the door—"

"Do I?" said Bunter. He seemed to doubt it.

"Then you call to some fellow in the quad to send Wingate to your study—in Quelch's voice, of course, and—"

"But a fellow wouldn't think I was Quelch, if he saw me at the window!" argued Bunter. "I ain't anything like Quelch!"

"You burbling idiot—"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"You call from the window without showing yourself! You can just let a mortar-board be seen at the window! I can get a master's mortar-board from Wibley's property box."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Evidently the Bounder had been thinking this out.

"Some kid takes the message, and Wingate comes to the study," went on Smithy. "As the door's locked, he can't see Quelch, see?"

"But he would expect Quelch to open the door, Smithy! Haven't you thought of that?" asked Bunter.

"You howling ass, of course I have!" hooted the Bounder. "Quelch—that is, you with Quelch's voice—tells him through the door that the lock has jammed, and mentions that he has phoned for a man to come from Courtfield and see to it—"

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter.

"So he has to speak to Wingate through the door!" went on Smithy. "See?"

"Oh! Yes! But—"

"I'll tell you exactly what to say," went on the Bounder, his eyes glittering. "We'll get all that fixed up all right! We'll fix it so that Wingate won't worry Quelch with any more reports about Remove fellows this term. See?"

"Oh! Yes! But—"

"There's absolutely no risk," said Smithy. "After Wingate's gone, you simply unlock the door and walk out."

"Yes! But—"

"And afterwards you can go to the tuckshop and give an order to be put down to my account."

"Oh!" said Billy Bunter. He was interested by that!

"Two or three pounds, if you like—"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

His little round eyes danced behind his big round spectacles.

Smithy was talking now!

Smithy's credit at the school shop was unlimited! Bunter's was very severely limited. Mrs. Mimble knew Bunter too well to trust him with the price of a single, solitary jam tart. Not for all the postal orders that Bunter was expecting would Mrs. Mimble have trusted him with an ice-cream!

Often and often had the fat Owl yearned to splash money about in the school shop like Smithy! This was his chance!

"We'll fix up all the details in the morning," said the Bounder.

The expression on Billy Bunter's face showed that he had landed his fat fish!

"Are you on?"

"Oh! Yes! I—I don't mind the risk!" said Bunter. "I—I mean, if—if there isn't any, you know! I've got pluck, I hope! Leave it to me."

"You can do it!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Can I?" grinned Bunter. "My dear chap, I could ventriloquise your head off! Did you say three pounds?"

"Yes, if you like!"

"I shall settle, of course, when I get a postal order I'm expecting," said Bunter. "I could only take it as a loan!"

"You fat idiot—"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Shut up—the fellows are coming up to prep!" said the Bounder hastily, as there was a tramp of footsteps in the Remove passage.

The door of Study No. 4 opened, and Tom Redwing came in.

He glanced in surprise at Bunter in the armchair.

Smithy made the fat Owl a sign to get out. His chum Redwing knew nothing of this precious scheme for getting back on Wingate. It was not the sort of scheme Smithy wanted fellows to know about.

Bunter heaved his podgy person out of the armchair. He bestowed a wink on Smithy as he rolled to the door.

"O.K., Smithy!" he said breezily.

"Rely on me! I say, does Redwing know?"

"Shut up, you fat ass!"

"Oh, all right—I'm not going to tell him anything!" grinned Bunter. "I can keep a thing dark, I hope! Better not tell Redwing, I think."

"Get out, you ass!"

"What is that fat ass braying about?" asked Redwing.

"Don't you be inquisitive!" said Bunter. "I'm not going to tell you anything, Redwing. There isn't anything to tell, really! Smithy and I haven't been talking about old Quelch, have we, Smithy? We—we've been having a chat about football! Entirely about football, and— Oh, you beast!"

Bunter wound up in the passage as the Bounder, slamming the door, hurtled him out of Study No. 4.

Tom Redwing looked rather sharply at his chum.

"What's up, Smithy?" he asked.

"Is anything up?" drawled the Bounder.

"If you've got your back up with Quelch—"

"Not at all!" said the Bounder. "I like getting six! I forgot to thank Quelch for it at the time, but I'm just as grateful! And naturally I approve highly of Wingate reporting me to the old bean! Isn't it his duty, as a prefect—and don't I make the stern doing of duty the one aim of my life?"

Redwing grunted, and sat down to prep.

BUNTER KEEPS IT DARK!

"I SAY, you fellows!" "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Come into a fortune, Bunter?"

It looked like it! In break, in the morning, plenty of fellows visited the school tuckshop, if funds were available.

Bunter, if he had a spot of cash, was certain to be found there. Now he was there when the Famous Five looked in. And he seemed to be having the time of his life.

Ginger-pop and jam tarts were before Bunter, and he was busy. Smears of jam on his fat face showed that some of the tarts had already gone the way of all jam tarts. But he had a lot left—through which he was travelling as if they were oysters.

He gave the Famous Five a hospitable blink through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, have some tarts!" he squeaked. "I've got lots."

"Don't tell us your postal order's come!" exclaimed Bob.

"Break it gently!" said Nugent.

"Oh, really, you fellows! The fact is, my postal order came this morning," said Bunter. "You fellows

(Continued overleaf.)

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always made out that it was never coming! Well, it's come, see! That's how I got ten bob this morning."

Harry Wharton & Co. looked curiously at Billy Bunter.

They never, of course, expected Bunter to tell the truth! They knew him too well! But why he was telling whoppers now they did not know.

He was in funds, that was clear! But he had not had that celebrated postal order which he was always expecting, and which was taking such a very, very long time to make its way to Greyfriars School. They had looked for letters themselves that morning, and had seen Bunter look for letters—and so they were aware that there had been none for Bunter.

"Poor old Mauly!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—if you think I borrowed ten bob off Mauly—"

"Then who was the happy victim?" asked Johnny.

"Yah! If you can't be civil, I jolly well shan't ask you to a spread in my study this afternoon!" said the fat Owl. "And I can tell you it's going to be a spread—not a measly feed like you fellows have in your studies. I shall ask a lot of chaps. Why not, when I'm spending pounds on it?"

"Pounds!" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

"Yes—pounds!"

"Whose pounds?" asked Johnny.

"Yah!"

"Is the poundfulness terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter?" asked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a dusky grin.

Bunter gobbled jam tarts.

"You fellows can't afford to spend pounds on a feed!" he said loftily. "What are you going to have now—a bun each? He, he, he! Well, if you want a decent spread for once, drop into my study this afternoon at tea-time! Toddy's spread yesterday will be nothing to it."

"Rolling in it, what?" asked Bob. "Gratters, old fat bean! Glad to hear that that jolly old postal order has come—if it has."

"Oh, it's come all right!" said Bunter, through a barrage of jam tart. "Where do you think I got this ten bob from, if it hadn't? Smithy never lent it to me—I haven't spoken to him to-day."

"Well, my hat!" said Harry Wharton.

Billy Bunter had been seen not only speaking to the Bounder, but in deep and earnest confabulation with him, before class that morning.

There was no reason why he shouldn't speak to the Bounder, if Smithy was prepared to tolerate his conversation. Why he was telling barefaced fibs about it was a puzzle. And as Bunter stated that Smithy hadn't lent him ten bob, it looked as if Smithy had! Which was really astonishing—for the Bounder was about the last fellow in the Remove to be touched for loans by the impecunious fat Owl.

"Smithy seems to have got over his tantrums," remarked Bob. "He was hunting you like a Red Indian yesterday."

day and we had to chuck him out of your study!"

"That was all a mistake!" explained Bunter. "Smithy never knew I'd had the toffee! I thought he did, but he didn't! He was simply looking for me as a pal, and you fellows needn't have barged in."

"What?"

"I'm not going to tell you anything about it," added Bunter astutely. "Smithy wants it kept dark. I'm not going to say a word! I mean there isn't anything on, you know—nothing at all!"

"Bunter's the man to keep secrets," remarked Bob. "Deep, and artful, and wary, and all that! Keeps 'em fearfully dark."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I fancy I'm pretty wide!" said Bunter complacently.

"You are," agreed Bob, "and you'll be wider still when you've parked all those jam tarts."

"The widefulness will be terrific."

"What the thump has Smithy tipped Bunter ten bob for?" asked Johnny Bull, staring at the fat Owl. "Smithy ain't soft, like old Mauly."

"This ten bob never came from Smithy!" answered Bunter. "Smithy told me specially not to mention it to any fellow in the Form, and I'm jolly well not going to! I can keep a secret, I hope."

"Oh crikey!"

"Nothing of the kind was mentioned when I was speaking to Smithy this morning! Besides, I wasn't speaking to him, as I've told you! I never asked him for ten bob on account—"

"On account?" repeated Bob.

"Why should I?" asked Bunter. "If I stand a feed in my study this afternoon, the money won't come from Smithy! I shall simply give my orders here, and the stuff will be sent to my study! That's all!"

"I can see Mrs. Mible sending it!" grinned Bob.

"Well, you will see it!" grunted Bunter. "I can give orders here up to two pound ten, and get the stuff, too! Not on Smithy's account, you know—entirely on my own!" added Bunter cautiously. "Smithy isn't going to tell Mrs. Mible to put it down to him! I'm not going to do anything for Smithy—and as for playing tricks on Quelch, I've never even thought of such a thing. Anyhow, Quelch is going out this afternoon, so it will be all right."

"You're playing tricks on Quelch!" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

"No—and not on Wingate, either!" answered Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Smithy's pretty sick with both of them since his whopping," said Bob. "But he can't have fixed anything up with Bunter! So what is the fat chump talking about?"

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter. "I'm not telling you anything. Besides, there isn't anything to tell, as I've said."

Skinner and Snoop came into the tuckshop.

Billy Bunter waved a grubby, sticky, but hospitable hand, and they joined him with the jam tarts.

Harry Wharton & Co. went to the counter for their own spot of refreshment, considerably puzzled.

They could see plainly enough that something was on, and they were rather concerned for Bunter.

Smithy was the man to make use of anybody in furthering any reckless scheme that came into his wilful mind. But more scrupulous fellows than Smithy did not like the idea of the fat, obtuse Owl being landed in some awful row.

Billy Bunter was still gobbling when the bell rang for third school. It was a rather sticky Owl that rolled away to the Form-room.

At the Form-room door he gave Vernon-Smith a cheery nod, and whispered—in a whisper that was heard by half the Remove:

"It's all right, Smithy; I haven't told anybody."

"Shut up, you fat chump!" hissed the Bounder.

"I say, I haven't, really!" said Bunter, blinking at him. "Not a word, old chap!"

A dozen fellows looked at Bunter and the Bounder.

"Hallo, what's on now?" asked Peter Todd.

"Nothing!" answered Billy Bunter promptly. "Nothing at all, Toddy! We haven't got anything special on for this afternoon, have we, Smithy?"

Smithy gave him a black scowl by way of answer.

"You fat ass!" said Peter. "What the dickens are you up to?"

"Nothing, old chap! There's nothing on, and it's got nothing to do with Quelch, or with Wingate, either!"

"Oh crikey!" said Peter.

Mr. Quelch appeared in the offing, and no more was said. But by that time half the Remove knew that something was on. It was probable that the other half would know by dinner-time.

Billy Bunter had no doubt that he was a fearfully astute fellow at keeping a secret—but his way of doing it was all his own!

NO ROOM FOR BUNTER!

"I SAY, Harry, old fellow—"

Harry Wharton laughed. "Twopence do?" he asked.

"Eh? Wharrer you mean?"

"I mean that's all I've got left!"

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter. "Think I want to borrow any money of you?"

"Yes!"

"Beast! I mean, look here, old chap! I say, you're playing football this afternoon with the Fourth!" said Bunter, blinking very seriously at the captain of the Remove through his big spectacles. "Do you want a really good man?"

"I've got eleven."

"Well, there's a lot of duds in the Remove eleven!" said Bunter. "I'm not satisfied with the eleven, if you are, Wharton!"

"Listen to the man who knows about Soccer!" grinned Bob Cherry.

And there was a chortle in the changing-room.



“Leave it to me, Smithy!” said Bunter ferociously. “I’ll make Wingate cringe! I’ll insult the beast all I know!” “That’s the stuff to give ‘em!” said the Bounder.

Fellows were gathering there, after dinner, though it was not the time for changing. Billy Bunter rolled in, and there was some surprise, as well as entertainment, when he started on the subject of football. That subject did not, as a rule, interest Bunter deeply.

His exploits in the football line were confined to barging about like a frantic porpoise on occasions when practice was compulsory. At other times, Bunter did not waste his powerful intellect on Soccer.

Now, it seemed, Bunter had views on the subject of Soccer and the Remove eleven. The footballers were quite willing to give him a hearing. They had time to laugh before changing.

“Well, I fancy I know something about the game,” said the fat Owl. “Temple’s Fourth Form lot are rather patchy—still, you want to beat them—and I hear that Smithy’s standing out. What about putting a better man in his place?”

“We haven’t a better man, fat-head—but Reddy’s pretty good!” said Harry Wharton. “Redwing’s in—if that satisfies you?” he added, with gentle sarcasm.

“It doesn’t,” declared Bunter.

“Then we shall have to carry on somehow under your disapproval, old fat man,” said the captain of the Remove, shaking his head. “Think we can survive it, you fellows?”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Well, look here, you want to beat the Fourth!” urged Bunter. “To tell the truth, Wharton—”

“Eh?”

“To tell the truth——” repeated Bunter.

“Help!” gasped Bob Cherry.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Gather round for this!” said Johnny Bull. “Bunter’s going to tell the truth. He’s out to break records!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“To tell the truth, I’d like to play this afternoon myself——” hooted Bunter.

“You would!” ejaculated the captain of the Remove.

“Yes,” declared Bunter, “I would!”

“What a pity you never learned to play Soccer, then!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Oh, don’t be an ass!” said Bunter. “I fancy I could play the heads off most fellows here! Put me in as centre-forward, Wharton, and see what happens!”

“Oh crikey!”

“The rules of the game wouldn’t allow that, Bunter,” said Bob Cherry, shaking his head.

“Eh? Why not?”

“The wingers have to be in the field of play,” explained Bob. “Inside and outside right, and inside and outside left, would not be allowed to play in touch. It’s against the rules!”

“You silly ass, wharrer you mean?”

“I mean, with you in the centre, there wouldn’t be room for the wingers in the field. They’d be pushed out into touch. It couldn’t be done, you see!”

“Ha, ha, ha!” yelled all the changing-room.

“You—you—you silly idiot!” gasped Bunter.

It was true that Bunter was fat. But really and truly, he did not fill a football field from side to side—that was an exaggeration! Really and truly, there would have been room for the wingers on either side of Bunter at centre-forward.

“Will you talk sense?” howled Bunter.

“What’s the good?” asked Bob. “You wouldn’t understand it!”

“If Wharton’s too jealous of a better man to stand down for once,” said Bunter crushingly, “I’d be willing to keep goal! What about me in goal?”

“By gum, that’s an idea!” said Bob. “If Bunter could cram into goal, with a bit of a push, nothing would ever pass him. There wouldn’t be room!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Will you put me in goal or not, Wharton?” howled Bunter.

“Haven’t got a shoe-horn big enough to get you in with!” answered the captain of the Remove, with a shake of the head.

“You blithering idiot!” gasped Bunter, while the footballers yelled. “Look here, I’ll play half if you like. You can leave Cherry out—he’s no good!”

“Thanks!” chuckled Bob.

“Well, what do you do on a football field?” asked Bunter. “Just barge about like a hippopotamus! I’ll play in Cherry’s place, if you like, Wharton—or Brown’s? Brown’s

not much good! You don't mind my pointing it out, Brownny?"

Tom Brown of New Zealand chuckled. He did not mind at all. Billy Bunter as a critic was not likely to worry any footballer very much.

"Not at all, old fat man!" he answered. "Carry on!"

"Still, I'm best in the front line," said Bunter. "Who have you got at outside-left, Wharton?"

"Oggy!"

"Well, is Ogilvy anything like me in the front line?" demanded Bunter. "I ask you! Look here, Oggy, do you fancy you're anything like me in the front line?"

"No fear!" answered Ogilvy promptly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But really, I don't mind much where I play, so long as I do play," said Billy Bunter. "That's what I want! I'm a good all-round man!"

"The all-roundfulness is terrific!"

"I'm fearfully keen, you know!" went on Bunter. "You fellows make out that I slack at games! Well, now I'm keen to play, you won't give me a chance. I offer my services," said Bunter, with dignity, "and they are refused!"

"Well, this is a bit sudden, isn't it?" said Harry Wharton. "Only a few days ago you were whopped by Wingate for cutting games!"

"What's up with the fat ass?" asked Peter Todd. "He wouldn't be found dead on a football field if he could help it!"

"Well, I'm keen to play!" said Bunter. "I'm as good as any man in the Remove, I hope!"

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast!" agreed Nugent.

"Shove me in, Harry, old chap!" urged Bunter. "It's really important! I'm simply keen as mustard on Soccer!"

"I'll believe that, old fat chump, when I see you go down to practice without a boot behind you!" answered the captain of the Remove.

"Well, I don't need all the practice you fellows do!" explained Bunter. "Look here, I've simply got to fix up something for this afternoon! If I'm in the Form eleven, that will be all right. See?"

"Not quite!" answered Harry, staring.

"Oggy will stand down for me, won't you, Oggy?"

"I'll watch it!" answered Ogilvy.

"I mean, Oggy's no good, and you can leave him out. I say, you fellows, I wish you'd be serious, on a serious subject like Soccer!" exclaimed the fat Owl irritably. "I want to fix this up, before Smithy starts looking for me—"

"What?"

"I—I—I mean—"

"Well, what do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing! That is, I—I mean—" stammered Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here's Smithy!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the Bounder put his head into the changing-room.

"Bunter here?" asked Vernon-Smith. "I've looked everywhere else

for him— Oh, there you are, you fat ass! Come on."

"I—I—I can't come, Smithy, after all—Wharton wants me to play football this afternoon!" stammered Bunter.

"What?" roared the Bounder.

"You do, don't you, Harry, old chap?" implored Bunter.

"Not in the least."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"I'm waiting for you, you fat owl!" grunted the Bounder. "Are you coming?"

"I say, Harry, old chap—"

"Fathead!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled away from the changing-room in company with the Bounder. And the footballers, sad to relate, immediately forgot his fat existence.

KEPT UP TO SCRATCH!

BILLY BUNTER was not looking happy as the Bounder walked him away.

The fat Owl, in fact, had had time for reflection.

Reflection was not much in Bunter's line; and until the time for action drew near, Bunter had thought chiefly of the munificent reward that was to follow his ventriloquial performance in Quelch's study. On that his fat thoughts had dwelt with happy anticipation.

But now that the hour was at hand, Bunter was worried.

The nearer the moment came for locking himself in Quelch's study and playing a reckless trick on the captain of the school, the less Bunter liked the prospect.

In break he had been as happy as he was sticky; with a ten-shilling note on account to spend at the tuckshop. He was still rather sticky—but not at all happy.

Had that beast Wharton only put him in the Remove eleven for the Fourth Form match it would have been all right! Even Smithy could hardly have expected him to cut a Soccer match for that jape on Wingate.

But Wharton hadn't! Whether it was because he was afraid of being outshone by Bunter as a footballer, or for some other reason, he hadn't.

So there was Bunter, cudgelling his fat brains for some other excuse for getting out of it.

"Wait here!" grunted the Bounder, stopping by one of the old elms in the quad.

Smithy, probably, could guess that Bunter's nerve was petering out, and he did not mean to lose sight again of the fat ventriloquist.

"I—I say, Smithy—"

"Quelch will be going soon!" grunted Smithy. "We shall see him from here! We've got to wait till he's gone."

Bunter would have been willing to wait longer than that. He would have been willing to wait till the end of the term—and longer!

"I—I say, Smithy," stammered Bunter. "I—I say, I—I'm afraid we shall have to—to—to put it off! I—I remember now I was going over

to Cliff House this afternoon to see my sister Bessie. I haven't seen her this term yet."

"How nice for her!" said Smithy.

"Oh, really, Smithy! When a chap's got a sister at school he ought to look after her a bit, you know! I always was an affectionate brother, you know," said Bunter. "We're a very affectionate family."

"Have you seen your minor in the Second this term yet?" asked the Bounder sarcastically.

"Eh? No! I mean, I've been going to!" said Bunter. "Never mind Sammy! But I—I'm awfully fond of my sister Bessie! We played together as small kids," said Bunter touchingly. "I never pulled her hair, and she never scratched my face! We grew in beauty side by side, you know."

"Oh crumbs!"

"You know that beautiful poem, Smithy—it might have been written about our family, really," said Bunter. "It goes, as near as I can remember:

"They grew in beauty, side by side,
They filled the home with glee.
Their mouths were opened, far and wide,
For breakfast, lunch, and tea!"

"Something like that! Ain't it touching, Smithy?"

"Fearfully!" agreed Smithy. "I wonder how long Quelch is going to be?"

"Now I come to think of it I promised Bessie to go over to Cliff House this afternoon! I really must go, Smithy! I'd do anything for you, old chap, except neglect my sister—I can't do that! What do you think she'll feel like if I don't turn up?"

"Fine!" said Smithy.

"What?"

"It will make her feel that life's really worth living, after all."

"You silly idiot!" howled Bunter. "Look here—"

"Like some toffee?"

"Eh? Oh, yes!"

A large packet of toffee comforted Bunter.

While that toffee lasted, Billy Bunter forgot his deep attachment to his sister Bessie at Cliff House, and almost forgot his terrors.

He munched and munched and munched? He grew stickier and stickier and stickier.

But the toffee was gone at last.

Billy Bunter would gladly have been gone, too. But the Bounder was too watchful for that.

"I—I say, Smithy, I—I think—" began Bunter.

"Gammon!"

"Look here, you cheeky beast—"

"Like some bullseyes?"

"Eh? Oh, yes!"

Smithy seemed to have provided himself with lures for Bunter! Once more Bunter found comfort—extracting bullseye after bullseye from the bag and munching and crunching the same.

By the time the bullseyes were finished, two masters came out of the House.

Mr. Quelch, tall and angular,

walked by the side of Mr. Prout, short and stout. They were starting on their walk at last!

The Bounder's eyes gleamed. Once Quelch was off the scene the coast would be clear, and all that Smithy had to do was to get on with it—and see that the fat ventriloquist got on with it. Quelch did not come into the picture at all—Wingate of the Sixth was his game.

Generally the Bounder liked old Wingate more or less, as all Greyfriars fellows did! But Smithy was not a man to forget a grudge.

As a Sixth Form prefect it was Wingate's duty to deal with any junior caught breaking the rules—and the rule against smoking was very strict. For that, Smithy cared nothing.

Wingate certainly could have whopped him, personally, instead of reporting him to his Form-master had he seen fit so to do.

But Smithy was an old offender; and the Greyfriars captain had already whopped him twice that term for the same offence. So on this occasion he had walked him to Quelch. And Quelch had laid it on as if he were beating a carpet.

Wingate would not report Remove men to Quelch again in a hurry if this scheme worked, the Bounder reflected sardonically. And he did not see how it could fail.

If Wingate had ever heard of Billy Bunter's ventriloquism, he had forgotten all about it. Certainly, if he heard Mr. Quelch's voice from Mr. Quelch's study, he was not likely to guess that that voice proceeded from anyone but Mr. Quelch—unless he saw the speaker! And the Bounder had cunningly arranged for that.

Smithy was determined, and very keen! The unhappy fat Owl was neither! He watched Mr. Quelch dismally through his big spectacles as the Remove master came away from the House with Prout.

Both the masters glanced at Bunter.

They did not take any notice of Smithy; but they glanced at Bunter, and a faintly sarcastic expression came over Prout's plump face—and Quelch frowned.

"Bunter!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"How dare you appear in the quadrangle, Bunter, with so dirty a face?!" snapped the Remove master.

Billy Bunter's fat countenance was undoubtedly in need of a wash. Bunter had had a wash that morning—not an extensive one—in the Remove dormitory. He needed another.

Jam tarts galore in break had left their traces on Bunter! Steak-and-kidney pie—and gravy—at dinner had added more! Toffee and bullseyes had given the finishing touches. Bunter really wanted washing!

Quelch might have ignored him—but he did not like that sarcastic expression on Prout's face! Quelch was not going to allow the Fifth Form beak to suppose that he allowed Remove boys to hang about in so slovenly a state! So he barked at Bunter.

"Go into the House at once, Bunter, and wash yourself clean!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "And take a hundred lines!"

"Oh lor'!"

Quelch and Prout progressed onwards to the gates.

Billy Bunter blinked after them with an infuriated blink.

"Beast!" he breathed. "Making out that a fellow ain't clean! Me, you know! Insulting beast!"

"You can do with a wash!" remarked Vernon-Smith.

"It's all your fault!" hissed Bunter. "If you hadn't stuck me here to watch for old Quelch, he wouldn't have spotted me, and I shouldn't have got lines! Now I've got a hundred lines!"

"I'll do them for you—after you've got through in Quelch's study!" said the Bounder. "I can make my writing like yours by imitating a spider crawling over the paper."

"Oh!" said Bunter. "I—I say, Smithy, you—you wait here—I've got to go in and get a wash, and—and I'll join you later—"

"I'll come, too!" said Smithy.

"Don't trouble, old chap!"

"It's a pleasure!" answered Smithy blandly.

"Look here, you beast, I—I'm coming out again!" hissed Bunter. "I'm not thinking of going out by a back door, or anything."

"Come on!" said Smithy.

And he walked Bunter to the House.

Billy Bunter rolled with him—still kept up to the scratch; though whether that ventriloquial performance was actually going to be performed in Quelch's study was still, perhaps, doubtful!

SIX FOR BUNTER!

"**V**ERNON-SMITH!"

"Yes, Wingate!"

The Bounder stopped. He did not want to stop, but there was no choice about that when the captain of the school called to him.

Billy Bunter stopped also—but only for a moment.

Then he rolled on into the House.

"Hold on a minute, Bunter!" called out Smithy.

Bunter seemed deaf!

He rolled into the House, leaving Vernon-Smith with set lips, standing facing the Greyfriars captain. Smithy did not want the fat Owl to get out of his sight; Bunter, on the other hand, was rather anxious to do so! This was his opportunity—and he did not lose it!

"You're not playing football this afternoon, Vernon-Smith!" said Wingate, with a rather suspicious look at the bad hat of the Remove.

"No!"

"Why not?"

"Standing out to give another man a show!" answered Smithy.

"Your captain did not want you?"

"Not specially! We don't have to go all out to beat Temple's lot!" answered the Bounder, with a shrug of the shoulders, "and other fellows

are entitled to a show, if it can be done."

Wingate nodded. That was quite a good explanation, and was more or less in accordance with the facts. At the same time, he did not trust the scapegrace of Greyfriars.

"And what are you doing, if you're not playing football?" he asked.

Smithy breathed hard through his nose. Other fellows were not cross-examined like this by a prefect! But the scapegrace of Greyfriars could hardly complain if he was suspected of intending to kick over the traces on a half-holiday. He was well known to have done so often enough. And Wingate had not forgotten the smokes of the previous day.

But the Bounder answered composedly:

"Wibley's got some of his theatrical stunts on—I'm going to help him."

"Oh, all right!" said Wingate. And he passed on.

Vernon-Smith sneered as he went into the House. It was probable that William Wibley of the Remove, who was potty on theatricals, had some of his stunts on that afternoon; but if he had, Smithy knew nothing about it, and certainly had no idea of joining in the same. If Smithy was questioned, he was quite unscrupulous about the answers he gave.

He went into the House and looked for Bunter. Bunter was not to be seen—and was not easy to find.

The Bounder, with glinting eyes, hunted for him. He did not need telling that the fat junior had lost his nerve and wanted to escape from his compact. Even that tremendous spread, which was to follow the ventriloquial performance, had lost its attraction now that the hour was at hand. Smithy hunted high and low—but he did not think of looking in the right place!

Bunter, while Smithy hunted him, was seated in an armchair, in a study that no junior was supposed to enter without leave! It was Wingate's study in the Sixth!

That was a safe spot—so far as Smithy was concerned. The Bounder was not likely to guess that he was there—or to venture to come there and hook him out, even if he did guess.

Wingate himself was out of the House, and not likely—Bunter hoped, at least—to come back to his study yet awhile.

If he did, Bunter was prepared to spin a yarn to account for his presence there. Wingate was head of the games, and could let a fellow off games practice if he liked. Bunter could ask leave for Saturday—and whether it was granted or not, it was a sufficient excuse for having waited for Wingate in his study!

So the fat Owl sat in Wingate's armchair—ready to jump up if he heard a step at the door! He grinned over his astuteness. Smithy could go on looking for him—and be blown to Smithy! It was like his check to want to drag Bunter into his rows with the captain of the school!

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter suddenly, as the study door opened.

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He bounded from the armchair.

"I—I say, I've only been here a minute, Wingate!" he exclaimed. "I've been waiting for you to come in, and—"

Bunter got all that out before he saw that it was not Wingate of the Sixth who was coming in.

It was Nugent minor of the Second—Wingate's fag.

"Oh!" snorted Bunter. "You!"

He sat down again.

Dicky Nugent stared at him, and placed a parcel on the study table. He had apparently been doing some shopping for his fag-master.

"What the thump are you doing here, Bunter?" he asked.

"Find out!" retorted Bunter.

He did not care a boiled bean for Nugent minor.

"You'll get six if Wingate catches you in his study!" said Dicky Nugent.

"Yah!" was Bunter's elegant rejoinder.

"Well, you leave that alone, that's all!" said Dicky, with a nod towards the parcel he had placed on the table; and he went out of the study.

Bunter blinked at that parcel; something that Wingate's fag had brought in for the captain's tea, later.

Bunter wondered what it contained. Obviously it was eatable, and Bunter was always deeply interested in eatables.

He stepped to the table and unwrapped the parcel.

It contained a large section of cake!

The fat Owl blinked at it with a longing blink. For two or three minutes he hesitated.

But it is well said that he who hesitates is lost!

Had it been a whole cake, even Bunter would hardly have ventured to cut it—there would have been no hope of concealing what he had done; and the consequences would have been too awfully painful.

But it was a wedge cut from a large cake. A slice taken off the end would leave no trace.

That settled it for Bunter. He sorted out his pocket-knife, opened the largest blade, and hacked a slice off the end of the wedge of cake.

One slice would not be missed!

Bunter gobbled that slice with great satisfaction! It was a delicious cake—one of Mrs. Mimbles' best!

Unfortunately, one slice of cake to Bunter was like a drop of water in the mighty ocean. He had really meant to stop at one slice! But that slice having gone on the downward path, he could not resist the temptation to cut another.

Two thick slices cut from that wedge of cake diminished its bulk considerably. Bunter could only hope that Wingate would not notice anything.

He gobbled the second slice with great enjoyment.

Munch, munch, munch!

Gobble, gobble, gobble!

The study door opened.

This time it was Wingate who came in. He stared in blank astonishment at the sight of a fat Removite stand-

ing at his study table, gobbling cake!

"My only hat!" ejaculated Wingate.

"Urrggh!" gurgled Bunter.

Wingate's sudden appearance made him jump, and some of a large mouthful of cake went down the wrong way.

Billy Bunter choked, and gurgled horribly.

"You young rascal!" exclaimed Wingate. "What do you fancy you are up to?"

"Gurrghh!"

Wingate looked round the study for his ashplant and picked it up.

Billy Bunter had been caught fairly in the act of grub-raiding—in the study of the head prefect and captain of the school! This was the limit!

"You young sweep!"

said Wingate. "Bend over that chair!"

"Yurrghh!"

Wingate swished the ash.

"I—I say—urrghh—I—I—" gasped Bunter. "I came here to—to—to—"

gurrgh! I mean I was waiting for you, to ask you if you would—yurrgh! Gurrgh!"

"I'm waiting for you to bend over, Bunter!"

"I—I—I say—yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as the Greyfriars captain, getting impatient, applied the ash to the tightest trousers at Greyfriars School. "Oh crikey! Ow!"

"Bend over!" rapped Wingate.

"Oh lor'!"

Bunter bent dismally over the chair.

Whop, whop, whop!

"Yaroooop!"

Whop, whop, whop!

"Ow! Wow! Yow!" roared Bunter.

"Now get out!" snapped Wingate.

Billy Bunter got out! Squeaks of anguish faded away down the Sixth Form passage.

BUNTER TAKES THE PLUNGE!

"OH! Here you are!" snapped the Bounder.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Smithy was guided to Bunter by his ears!

He had looked in the Rag once without finding the fat Owl there. Passing the door of that apartment again later, he heard sounds of woe from within, and recognised the fat Owl's dulcet tones.

Bunter did not heed him. He was leaning over the big table in the Rag, squeaking dolorously. Wingate had laid on that six with some energy! The fat Owl wriggled and squeaked. He had forgotten all about Smithy. Six on the bags were enough for Bunter to think of.

"Whopped?" asked Smithy.

"Ow! Wow! That beast Wingate!" moaned Bunter.

"I've been hunting you for an hour or more—"

"Ow! I don't care! I've had six! Wow!"

"What the thump has Wingate whopped you for?"

"Nothing!" moaned Bunter. "I—I was just looking at the cake in his study—only just looking at it! Ow! Wow!"

"You've been in Wingate's study?"

"Oh! No! I—I've been looking for you, old chap! I—I couldn't find you anywhere! Wow!"

"You fat, fibbing freak—"

"Beast! Ow! Wow!" Billy Bunter wriggled and squeaked. "It's all your fault, you beast! Ow! That beast gave me six—ow! Wow! I shouldn't have been there but for you—ow! Oh crikey! Oooh! I'd



"Is that you, Smithy, you beast?" came a hissing me out of this

jolly well like to punch his—ow! wow!—head! Ow!"

The Bounder laughed.

"Well, you can't punch Wingate's head," he said. "But there are more ways than one of killing a cat! It will make him sit up no end when he gets a slanging from Quelch!"

"Oh!" said Bunter. "So it will! I'll jolly well make him cringe! I'll be fearfully insulting, Smithy! After all, he won't be able to see me, with the study door locked! I'll make him as mad as a hatter! I can jolly well tell him what I think of him, if he thinks it's Quelch!"

"Of course you can!" said the Bounder encouragingly. That whopping from Wingate seemed to have spurred the fat ventriloquist on and helped him to screw his courage up to the sticking-point. "Wingate will

feel frightfully sick at getting a jaw from Quelch."

"I'll make him sick!" said Bunter ferociously. "Leave it to me! I'll make him cringe! I'll insult the beast all I know!"

"That's the stuff to give 'em!" said Vernon-Smith. "Come on, old bean!"

"I'm ready!" declared Bunter. Anguished twinges from Wingate's ash had done it!

Wriggling, but determined, Billy Bunter rolled out of the Rag with Smithy.

They found Masters' Passage deserted. On that fine October afternoon all the beaks seemed to have gone out. Even Monsieur Charpentier, tempted by autumn sunshine,



...squeak from the slightly opened window. "Get s, you rotter!"

was braving the horrors of fresh air! Nothing could have suited the Bounder better.

But it was not wise to linger in the passage, all the same. And Bunter, as he approached Quelch's door, slowed down.

His brief determination seemed to be petering out as he neared Quelch's study. He slowed and slowed.

"Buck up, you ass!" breathed the Bounder.

"I—I say, Smithy, suppose—suppose Quelch came in?" mumbled Bunter.

"He won't! He's out with Prout till tea-time."

"I—I mean, suppose—suppose Wingate got the door open, somehow?"

"How could he, if it's locked?"

"I—I mean—what I really meant to say was, suppose—suppose Wingate

went round to the window and looked in?" stammered Bunter.

"Why should he?"

"Well, he—he—he might—"

"Here we are!" Smithy opened Mr. Quelch's study door and pushed Bunter in.

Bunter entered that study about as cheerfully as Daniel entered the lion's den of old!

Smithy shut the door. "I—I say, old chap!" gasped Bunter. "I—I might be seen from the quad! I—I don't think much of the idea, really, after all."

"I'll stick this screen by the window—"

"But—but I shall have to open the window if—if I have to call to some chap to fetch Wingate, and—and—"

"I'll open it a few inches ready! Stick this old mortar-board on, and let it be seen—not your silly face under it."

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Safe as houses!" said the Bounder. "All you've got to do is to lock the door after I'm gone and carry on."

"Oh! Yes!" said Bunter. There was a sly gleam in his little round eyes behind his big round spectacles. "Exactly! You—you go, Smithy—don't waste time, and—and—and don't stay anywhere near the study! It—it wouldn't do for you to be anywhere near the spot, you know."

The Bounder breathed hard.

He knew what that meant! Bunter was going to lock the door after him, according to programme; and after he was gone he was going to unlock it again and sneak away!

But Smithy was not likely to be done so easily as that!

He took the key from the study door and inserted it in the outside of the lock.

Billy Bunter watched that proceeding in great alarm.

"I—I say, Smithy, you ain't going to lock me in!" gasped Bunter.

"The door's got to be locked, fat-head!"

"Yes—inside—"

"Outside's safer!" said the Bounder sourly. "I'll come back and let you out, you funky fathead, when you're through! If you don't play up, you stay here for Quelch to find you when he comes in."

"Beast!" gasped Bunter. "I—I jolly well won't—"

Vernon-Smith stepped out of the study and drew the door shut after him.

Bunter bounded to the door. Click!

"Smithy!" howled Bunter. His last spot of courage oozed away as he found himself locked in his Form-master's study. "I say, you beast—I

mean, old fellow—unlock the door, dear old beast—I mean old chap—"

"You're all right!" came the Bounder's voice through the keyhole. "I'll get a fellow round by the window, for you to call to. Carry on!"

"Look here, if you don't unlock that door, I'll jolly well climb out of the window, see?" howled Bunter.

"Better not! The Head's in the quad!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Carry on, you fat clump! It's as safe as houses!"

"Yes—but—"

Herbert Vernon-Smith walked away down the passage, with the key of Quelch's study in his pocket.

Billy Bunter was left gasping. He rolled to the window and peered out under the raised sash.

If there was a master in the quad—especially the Head—he dared not be seen clambering out of a Form-master's study window. He could not see the Head—but he could see Monsieur Charpentier, at a little distance, trotting about with his jerky steps.

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

It seemed to the fat Owl that he was for it now!

After all, was it safe? Wingate, it was certain, would not see him in the study—and was not likely to dream that he was there! And if he got through all right, Smithy was going to do his lines for him and stand him the biggest spread ever!

On the other hand, if he didn't, Smithy was just the beast to leave him locked in the study till Quelch came in—and boot him, over and above, for letting him down! And that beast Wingate had whopped him!

Once more the fat Owl screwed up his courage to the sticking-point. After all, it only needed nerve.

There was a sound of voices on the path outside, near the master's study window.

Blinking out, Bunter discerned Vernon-Smith, walking and talking with Skinner of the Remove.

Somebody had to take the required message to Wingate. Smithy had brought Skinner along for that purpose—quite unknown to Skinner.

They strolled past the window, talking. Now it was Bunter's cue to call to Skinner, adopting Quelch's voice. He gave a fat little cough—his usual preliminary to ventriloquial stunts.

But he hesitated—and the two juniors passed on.

In a few minutes, however, they came strolling back.

Skinner was quite willing to walk and talk with the Bounder; though perhaps he wondered why Smithy preferred to stick to that spot. When they came by again the fat ventriloquist at length made an effort, and made the plunge.

"Skinner!" came a sudden bark from the study window.

The two juniors looked round.

"Yes, sir!" called back Skinner. "I thought Quelch had gone out," he added in a lower voice to the Bounder.

"He seems to have come in again, then!" answered Smithy carelessly.

Skinner stepped towards the window. At the narrow space where the lower sash was partly raised he spotted a mortar-board. He had not the slightest doubt that it was on Mr. Quelch's head.

"Skinner!" came the bark from the study, so exactly like Mr. Quelch's voice that the Bounder himself almost wondered whether Quelch was there. "Please go and find Wingate, and ask him to come to my study at once."

"Yes, sir!" answered Skinner.

He went immediately.

The Bounder, grinning, strolled away. He had got the Remove ventriloquist up to the scratch at last. Billy Bunter, at long last, was going it.

In the study Bunter shut the sash, and grinned.

Skinner had fallen for it without a spot of suspicion. It was safe as houses. What was good enough for Skinner of the Remove was good enough for Wingate of the Sixth. Bunter was going through with this.

It was like the fat Owl to pass at a bound from dubious funk to swelling self-confidence. He was full of beans as he waited for Wingate of the Sixth to arrive at the study door.

Wingate was going to get a jaw from Quelch—a royal jaw—a jaw that would make him cringe. And the lingering twinges of Wingate's ash guaranteed that that jaw would make George Wingate's ears burn when he got it. He was going to comb Wingate's hair for him—and comb it jolly hard!

COMBING WINGATE'S HAIR!

GEORGE WINGATE of the Sixth looked up from a Latin paper, as Skinner of the Remove tapped at his door, and put his head in.

Wingate was better at Soccer than at Latin, and would much rather have been at Soccer. But he was putting in a spot of work, and was not pleased at the interruption.

"Well?" he rapped.

"Message from Quelch, Wingate!" said Skinner. "He told me to ask you to come to his study at once."

"Oh!" grunted Wingate. "All right!"

Skinner departed, having delivered that message in absolute good faith. He had not the slightest doubt that Mr. Quelch had told him to ask Wingate to come to his study. Neither, of course, had Wingate after receiving the message from a junior in Quelch's Form.

He laid down his pen and went.

A minute or two later he was tapping at the door of Mr. Quelch's study, and turning the door-handle.

The door did not open, and he tapped again.

"Is that the locksmith from Courtfield?" came an irritated bark from the interior of the study.

"It is I, sir—Wingate!" answered the Greyfriars captain, in surprise.

The voice from the study was Mr. Quelch's to the very last tone. He

did not doubt for one moment that it was the Remove master speaking.

Wingate could not see through a thick oak door. Had he been able to do so, he would not have beheld the master of the Remove, but a fat and grinning member of that Form.

As it was, he had not a spot of doubt.

"Oh! You!" came Quelch's voice from within. "Do you know whether the locksmith has arrived, Wingate?"

"No, sir. Is something wrong with the door?"

"I should think that that would be clear to you, Wingate, as you cannot open it!" snapped the voice from the study.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" said Wingate.

The captain of Greyfriars smiled faintly. Quelch's voice sounded as if Quelch was irritated by that trouble with the study lock!

"Something has happened to the lock!" barked the sharp voice. "It has jammed—I suppose you cannot force it open from outside, Wingate?"

"I will try, sir."

Wingate rattled and shook the door-handle, and pushed at the door. But the door remained as fast as if it was locked—as, in fact, it was.

"It doesn't seem much use, sir," said the Greyfriars captain.

"I suppose not. It is half an hour since I telephoned for a locksmith to come from Courtfield. It is very annoying."

Wingate smiled again. Courtfield was some miles from Greyfriars School. It was the nearest spot whence a locksmith could be obtained. But really, it was expecting rather a lot to expect the man to arrive in half an hour. No doubt Quelch was very much annoyed, and a little unreasonable.

"Can I do anything, sir?" asked Wingate.

He was wondering why Quelch had sent for him. Quelch could hardly expect a Sixth Form man to be able to deal with a recalcitrant lock.

"No. I sent for you to speak to you, Wingate!" barked Quelch's voice. "As you cannot enter the study, I must speak through the door."

"I will go round to the window if you like, sir."

Billy Bunter nearly ejaculated "Oh crikey!" at that offer. Fortunately he suppressed that ejaculation in time.

"I have said that I will speak to you where you are, Wingate!" came the irritable bark.

"Oh! Very well, sir!"

"I have to speak plainly to you, Wingate. I have hesitated to do so, so far. Now I have decided to speak to you with the utmost plainness. I think it will be better."

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

"I am not satisfied with you, Wingate, and very far from satisfied with the way you carry out your duties as a prefect."

"Indeed, sir!" said Wingate, dryly.

His face was growing grim.

As a Sixth Form prefect, he was answerable to the headmaster, and to

nobody else. Quelch had, in point of fact, no right to send for him to come to his study at all—he could only send a request. He had no imaginable right to call him on the carpet.

Wingate was a civil fellow, and he always treated all members of the staff with proper respect. But he had no intention whatever of allowing any member of the staff to call him over the coals.

If Quelch was so far exceeding his rights and his authority as to do so, Quelch was going to be told where he got off.

"I may say—indeed I must say—that I am extremely dissatisfied," went on the barking voice. "You hear me, Wingate?"

"I hear you, sir," answered Wingate very quietly, "and I suggest that if you have more to say, you should say it to the Head. It is for Dr. Locke to judge whether I carry out my duties as head prefect in a satisfactory manner."

"I do not want any impertinence, Wingate."

"Really, Mr. Quelch—"

"I am alluding, in particular, to your dealings with members of my Form!" went on the bark from the study. "Yesterday you reported Vernon-Smith to me for a trivial offence—"

"You did not seem to think it trivial at the time, Mr. Quelch," snapped Wingate. "I have caned that junior twice already this term for smoking—and on the third occasion I considered it better to let his Form-master deal with him."

"Nonsense!"

"You did not say so yesterday, when I made my report to you," snapped Wingate. "But if you prefer me not to report boys of your Form to you, Mr. Quelch, you have only to say so plainly."

"I think I am saying so as plainly as I can, Wingate. I cannot and will not have my time wasted by trivial officiousness—"

"By what?" exclaimed Wingate.

"Trivial officiousness!" barked the Remove master's voice. "A prefect's duty is not to be continually officious and meddlesome."

Wingate's face crimsoned.

Never, since he had first been appointed a prefect by his headmaster, had he been talked to like this, by any master at Greyfriars.

There were prefects who were sometimes officious, and sometimes a little meddlesome. Loder of the Sixth was one. But Wingate, if he erred, erred rather on the other side.

He was so easy-going that fellows were liable to forget sometimes that he was a prefect at all.

To be called officious and meddlesome by an angry master was really the limit.

"I have considered this matter," went on the Remove master's voice, "and it appears to me, Wingate, that you have some personal prejudice against the boy Vernon-Smith."

"Nothing of the kind!" snapped Wingate angrily. "And you have no right to suggest such a thing, Mr. Quelch!"

"I warn you, no impertinence, Wingate!"

"I think I had better go, sir!"

"You will remain until I have finished speaking to you, Wingate! It appears to me that you dislike this boy Vernon-Smith, and lose no opportunity of finding him out in some trivial fault."

"You are welcome to that opinion, Mr. Quelch!" answered Wingate, his voice trembling with suppressed anger. "I shall certainly never mention that junior's name to you again! You have told me quite plainly enough your wishes on the subject!"

"Very well! There is another matter—an occurrence of this afternoon. I understand that you have caned Bunter, another boy of my Form."

"That is the case."

"And why?"

"I caught the young rascal raiding tuck in my study!" hooted Wingate. "I must point out to you, sir, that such cases are matters for my own judgment!"

"I will not allow bullying, Wingate, so far as boys of my Form are concerned!"

"Bullying!" gasped Wingate. "Did you say bullying?"

"I trust I speak clearly, Wingate. I said bullying. And I repeat that I will not allow boys of my Form to be bullied, under pretext of exercising the powers of a prefect!"

Wingate breathed wrath.

He had always respected Mr. Quelch and treated him with respect. But he was not going to stand this.

"I will listen to nothing further, Mr. Quelch!" he exclaimed. "If you have any more to say, you had better say it to the headmaster. I will answer to Dr. Locke—but I certainly will not answer to you for anything I may have done!"

"I shall certainly complain to Dr. Locke if there is one more single instance of bullying or officious meddling in connection with my Form, Wingate! Other Form-masters may tolerate your high-handed methods—I shall do nothing of the kind! You are, in my opinion, totally unfit for the office of prefect!"

"What?"

"Absolutely unfit to exercise authority. I am so dissatisfied with you, and with your methods, that I definitely forbid you to intervene further in any matter connected with my Form! I will not listen to foolish and officious reports, and I will not allow boys of my Form to be bullied! Bear that in mind!"

"You have said quite enough, Mr. Quelch, and I will listen to not another word!" exclaimed Wingate; and he turned and tramped away, his face flaming with anger.

And a fat and fatuous ventriloquist in Mr. Quelch's study grinned as he went.

Billy Bunter was still feeling the twinges of that six from Wingate's ashplant, but he rather thought that he had got his own back now. It was certain that the Greyfriars captain had never had his hair combed like that before!

And it was equally certain that he would not forget it in a hurry.

UNFORESEEN!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH grinned.

He was standing at the corner of Masters' Passage, where he had heard all that Wingate said at Mr. Quelch's door, and caught every word that was barked back from the locked study.

Billy Bunter had carried out his instructions. He had, in fact, improved on them! Spurred on by that six, the fat Owl had taken full advantage of the peculiar position to rub it in!

The Bounder grinned as Wingate passed him, going away from Quelch's door.

Wingate did not even glance at him.

His face was crimson with anger and mortification, and he stalked away in high dudgeon. He had had his hair combed—there was no mistake about that; and it was likely to be a long time before he bothered Quelch again with any more reports of delinquents in the Remove.

Smithy's scheme, extraordinary as it was, had succeeded all along the line.

Wingate of the Sixth was stalking away, nothing doubting that he had been jawed by Quelch, in a mood of angry and bitter resentment.

Quelch, out of gates, knew nothing about it, and was not likely ever to hear anything about it. Certainly Wingate would not speak to him when he came in, or at any other time, if he could help it.

It was quite certain that, after what had happened, Wingate would never speak to the Remove master again on any subject whatever, and that he would avoid Quelch's study like a plague-spot.

So it was, as the Bounder had assured the dubious fat Owl, as safe as houses!

All he had to do now was to wait till Wingate was clear of the spot, and let Bunter out of the study. Neither Wingate nor Mr. Quelch would ever know or suspect the extraordinary prank that had been played.

Wingate having disappeared, the Bounder, grinning, stepped into the passage, feeling in his pocket for the key of Quelch's door.

As he did so, there was a quick, jerky footstep, and Monsieur Charpentier came into the passage.

The Bounder slowed down at once.

It was disconcerting for the French master to come in just then, and Smithy, of course, could not allow himself to be seen unlocking the door of his Form-master's study.

He loitered, waiting for the French master to pass him.

Monsieur Charpentier did so. But he did not go to his own study, as Vernon-Smith expected. He stopped at Quelch's door.

Smithy caught his breath.

That little ass, Mossoo, had come in to speak to Quelch. Apparently he did not know that Quelch was out.

No doubt he had some matter in connection with the French sets to discuss with the Remove master. Or

perhaps he was simply after a chat in the leisure hours of a half-holiday. Anyhow, there he was—tapping at the door of Quelch's study, now occupied by a startled fat Owl!

Fortunately, as the door was locked, Mossoo could not enter and make any awkward discovery.

Smithy hoped that Bunter would have sense enough to keep quiet.

In that case, Mossoo would guess that Quelch was out and suppose that he had locked his study door when he went, as the masters sometimes did. There was nothing suspicious in that.

But Smithy was feeling very uneasy as he watched the French master from along the passage.

Tap!

Having tapped, Monsieur Charpentier turned the door-handle to enter.

The door remained shut, and Mossoo uttered an ejaculation of surprise.

Inside the study, Billy Bunter suppressed a gasp.

He was expecting the Bounder to come back with the key, but he knew that this was not Smithy; Smithy would not have tapped.

Some idiotic beak, who did not know that Quelch was out, had come along to speak to Quelch! It was disconcerting to a fat Owl who was anxious to get away, now that his performance was performed!

However, he had only to wait for that obnoxious beak to realise that Quelch was out, and to pass on.

So, at least, he hoped.

"Mon cher Quelch!" came Monsieur Charpentier's voice, in surprised tones. "You are zero, my dear Quelch?"

Billy Bunter very nearly answered "No!" But even the fat Owl had his fat wits about him in this emergency.

He made no reply. Quelch was out. And if Mossoo was not admitted to the study, surely he would realise that Quelch was out, and go his way?

To the relief of the Bounder, listening anxiously in the passage, Bunter had sense enough not to answer! There was dead silence from Quelch's study.

Tap again!

"Mon cher Quelch!" Mossoo's voice was more and more surprised. "Is it zat ze door he is lock, as he do not open?"

No answer from Bunter.

Why did not the little ass pass on? Bunter in the study and Smithy in the passage could not understand why.

But the little ass did not pass on. He thumped at the door of the Remove master's study energetically.

"Mistair Quelch," squealed Mossoo, "is zere anyzing ze mattair? Is it zat you are cel, sair?"

Silence!

The Bounder breathed hard. It dawned on him that Monsieur Charpentier knew, somehow, that someone was in the study. But how could he know?

Tap, tap! Thump! Bang!

Monsieur Charpentier was getting excited.

He thumped and he banged on the door that did not open.

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"Mon cher Quelch!" he exclaimed. "Repondre! Mon Dieu—ce pauvre Quelch! He must be eel—he must be verree eel—zere is somezing ze mattair, as he do not speak viz himself ven zat I call!"

Thump!
"Mistair Quelch! Zat you speak, je vous en prie!" squealed Mossosoo.

Vernon-Smith hurried to the spot. If this went on, altogether too much attention was likely to be attracted to that study.

"If you please, sir," said Vernon-Smith, "Mr. Quelch is out—he went out for the afternoon with Mr. Prout."

Monsieur Charpentier glanced round at him.

"Vrai!" he answered. "But he come in again viz himself, Smeet."

"I don't think so, sir!" stammered the Bounder. "I'm sure that Mr. Quelch is not in his study, sir."

"But I hear him, Smeet, viz my ears!" exclaimed Monsieur Charpentier. "While I walk in ze quad-rangle, I hear ze voice of Monsieur Quelch from his study window."

"Oh!" gasped Smithy.

He had not guessed that one! But it was simple enough! Monsieur Charpentier, walking on the path by the masters' windows, had heard Quelch's voice, barking in the study, as Bunter talked to Wingate. So he knew that Quelch was there!

He was not likely to suppose that Quelch's voice was there without Quelch—though, in point of fact, it was!

Knowing that Quelch was in the study, Monsieur Charpentier was astonished and alarmed at getting no answer from him. Only some sudden attack of illness, such as a fainting fit, could account for Quelch's silence, to Mossosoo—as he knew that Quelch was there.

Smithy's heart beat unpleasantly. He could not have foreseen anything like this, or guarded against it! It was one of those little things that do happen to disconcert the most carefully laid schemes!

Thump! Bang!
"Monsieur Quelch! Zat you answer me, if it is zat you are able to speak!" squealed the alarmed French master.

"Oh crikey!" breathed Billy Bunter inaudibly.

He had heard the French master's words, and knew now why Mossosoo was so persistent at the door! The little beast was not going away! What Bunter was going to do now was a problem to the fat Owl. He stood blinking at the locked door, with bated breath.

"Smeet!" Monsieur Charpentier turned to the Bounder. He was thoroughly alarmed now, and as excited as a turkey-cock.

"Yes, sir!" gasped Smithy.
"Zere is somezing zat happen to zat pauvre Quelch, in his study, and ze door he is lock! Zat you run—you fly—to ze concierge—ze porter—zat Gosling—you tell him to come of the most rapid, to make to open zis door!"

"Oh!" gasped the Bounder.
He blinked at the French master. If Gosling came, and got that door open, there was going to be a discovery that would have fearfully serious results for Herbert Vernon-Smith and William George Bunter!

The Bounder stood in dismay and hesitation.

Monsieur Charpentier waved excited hands at him.

"Comprenez!" he squealed. "Ce pauvre Quelch—he is eel—he speak not when zat I call—zat you run—you fly—"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Smithy.
Thump! Bang!
"Mon cher Quelch—"

"In the name of goodness, what is all this noise?" Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, came hurrying to the spot. "Monsieur Charpentier, what—"

"Ce pauvre Quelch!" squealed Mossosoo.

"What! Is anything wrong with Quelch?"

"I zink zat he is eel—he answer not when zat I call, and I knock on ze door!"

"But Quelch is out!" said Hacker, staring at him.

"He come back viz himself, sair—I hear him speak in zis study!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Hacker. He tapped at the door. "Are you there, Quelch?"

Silence.
"You are sure, Monsieur Charpentier?"

"Mais oui! J'en suis sure! When zat I walk by ze window, I hear Monsieur Quelch zat speak in ze study—he is zere!"

"It is extraordinary!" said Mr. Hacker. "If he is there, and does not answer, something must have happened to him—a fall, perhaps."

"I am verree alarm," said Monsieur Charpentier. "I have to speak to Mistair Quelch, and it is arrange I come to his study when he come in—and when zat I hear him, I come—I knock—I call—but answer zere is none! Smeet!" He spun round at the dismayed Bounder. "Vy for you have not gone? Je vous dis—I tell you go—run—quick—and call Gosling to come to zis place!"

"Yes, sir!" stuttered Smithy.
He cut off and disappeared—not, however, to call Gosling to get that door open, but to hurry round to the study window and attempt to extract Billy Bunter by that means of egress! That was now the only chance!

NO EXIT!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
Harry Wharton & Co. glanced round in surprise.

After the football match—in which the heroes of the Remove had beaten the Fourth, without the aid of Billy Bunter—the Famous Five were strolling in the quad after leaving the changing-room.

They were, as a matter of fact, thinking of Billy Bunter.

Football having been disposed of, they had leisure to give some attention to less important matters; and they remembered Bunter and his antics.

All the Remove knew that there was something on that afternoon between Smithy and the fat Owl—owing to Bunter's masterly method of keeping secrets.

Harry Wharton & Co. had a fairly clear idea, from Bunter's burbling, that it was some scheme to pay out Wingate—though in what manner the fatuous fat Owl could help in such a scheme, they had no idea.

But it was pretty clear—now they had time to think of it—that whatever the scheme was, Bunter had wanted to back out of it, and the Bounder had been keeping him up to the mark.

So, at the moment, they were wondering where Bunter was, and what he had been up to, and looking round for him—when they were surprised by his fat voice falling on their ears as they passed by masters' studies.

Looking round to see whence that fat voice proceeded, they failed to spot its owner for a moment or two. Then they saw a fat hand beckoning

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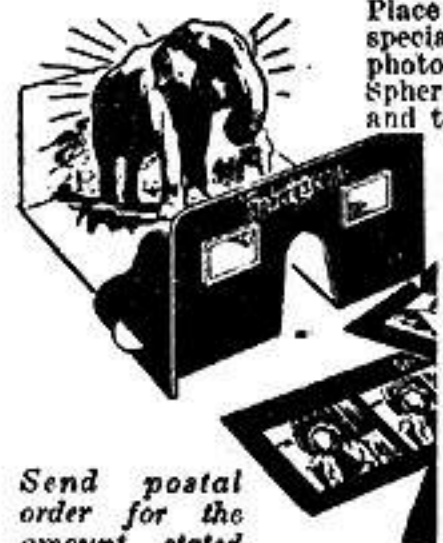
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from a study window that was a few inches open.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Wharton. "There he is!"

"In Quelch's study!" said Bob.

"What on earth is the fat chump doing in Quelch's study?" asked Frank Nugent. "It can't be a rag on Quelch—Smithy wouldn't land Bunter in that!"

"Smithy would land any fellow in anything, when he's got his back up!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows!"

Bunter's voice was a terrified shrill whisper. He wanted the Famous Five to hear, in the quad—but he did not want Monsieur Charpentier to hear, in the passage! He dared not open the window more than a few inches, in case he was spotted from the quad—by a master or a prefect. The fat Owl was in a state of palpitating funk by that time.

The chums of the Remove hurried across to the window.

"Thank goodness I spotted you!" came Bunter's palpitating squeak. "I've been watching you for no end of time, but you didn't come near enough for me to call, you silly idiots!"

"What on earth are you doing in there?" asked Harry.

"Nothing! I say, you fellows, are there any beaks or pres about? I—I want you to help me down from the window if there ain't!"

"Yes, you ass! Stick where you are! There's Capper and Wiggins over by the elms—and Wingate and Gwynne and Loder of the Sixth in the quad!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Can't you go out by the door?" asked Bob.

"Froggy's there!" breathed Bunter. "Listen—you'll hear him bang again—he keeps on banging, the little beast!"

Thump! Knock! Bang! echoed across the study from the door.

It reached the ears of the Famous Five, standing outside the window.

"That's Froggy!" hissed Bunter. "The little idiot thinks that Quelch is here! Oh crikey! And he wants to come in!"

"Why doesn't he, then? Have you locked the door, you pissing ass?"

"Smithy has!" groaned Bunter. "He can't come back with the key while Froggy's there! Oh lor'! Hacker's there, too, now—I heard him! I say, I've got to get out before Quelch comes in! Oh crikey!"

"You awful ass!" said Harry Wharton. "Have you been ragging in the study, or what?"

"Of course I haven't, you fat-head! Think I'd rag Quelch's study? It's all right if I get out! I haven't done anything at all—especially ventriloquism!"

"Ventriloquism!" ejaculated Wharton.

"No! Nothing of the kind! I've done nothing at all—I—I merely came into the study to—to—to— Oh crikey!"

"What on earth has that mad porpoise been up to?" asked Bob Cherry, in astonishment. "He's been up to something in that study."

"It was all your fault, Wharton, you beast!" groaned Bunter.

"Mine!" ejaculated the captain of the Remove.

"Yes, yours! If you'd played me in Soccer this afternoon that beast Smithy couldn't have landed me in this! I've got into this awful scrape now, just because you hate being put in the shade by a better man at Soccer."

"You blithering idiot!" gasped Wharton.

"The least you can do now is to get me out of this! I say, do you think they'd see me if I dropped from the window?"

Harry Wharton glanced round.

Mr. Capper, the master of the Fourth, was walking in the quad with Mr. Wiggins, master of the Third. Probably they were going to walk till tea-time in Common-room. They were not near at hand, and they were not looking towards the studies; but there could hardly be any doubt that they would take notice, if a master's window opened and a fat junior rolled out! Really, it was the sort of thing to attract attention!

In another direction, Wingate and Gwynne of the Sixth could be seen. Wingate had a grim and clouded face and was in earnest conversation with his Sixth Form pal.

He looked as if something had happened to disturb and disgruntle him that afternoon, and no doubt he was telling Gwynne about it.

Loder, Carne, and Walker were also to be seen in the quad. They were all prefects.

Dozens of other fellows were visible—but they did not matter. Nobody mattered, but masters or prefects! But there were altogether too many beaks and pres about for a fellow to venture to scramble out of the window of a master's study!

"You'll be seen, you fat ass!" said Harry. "Better stick where you are for a bit—Quelch won't be in yet awhile—"

"The coast will be clear when the bell goes for tea!" said Bob.

"But Quelch will come in to tea!" groaned Bunter. "I can't stick here till Quelch comes in."

"Well, if you're seen getting out of that window, it will be mentioned to Quelch, you can bank on that!" said Johnny Bull. "Quelch will know you've done it—whatever it is you've done!"

"I—I haven't done anything!"

"You parked yourself in Quelch's study—for nothing at all!" grunted Johnny. "Well, Quelch may believe that—if you tell him. I wouldn't bank on it, though."

"The believfulness will probably not be terrific!" murmured Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

"If you've really done nothing, Bunter—" said Harry doubtfully.

"I—I haven't, old chap! Not a thing!" groaned Bunter.

"You're all right, then. Quelch won't bite your head off for being in his study if you've done nothing."

"Oh, yes! But—but he might think it was me!" groaned Bunter. "I mean to say, if I'm copped in his study Wingate's sure to hear—"

"What on earth has it got to do with Wingate?"

"Oh, nothing! Still, if he heard that Quelch had copped me in this study, think he'd guess that it wasn't Quelch talking to him through the door?"

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"Not that I did it, you know! I—I can't imitate Quelch's voice—I—I couldn't if—if I tried! You fellows know that, as you heard me do it yesterday in my study—"

"Oh crikey!"

"But if it came out that I was here, Wingate might guess that it wasn't Quelch who was slanging him through the door!" groaned Bunter.

"You've been slanging Wingate?" gasped Bob.

"Oh, no! I haven't said a word! Why should I? Still, he might think I had, if he knew that it was me here and not Quelch! I—I say, you fellows, kik-kik-can't you get me out of this somehow?" moaned Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here comes Smithy!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith came in sight. He hurried along breathlessly to the window outside which the Famous Five stood in a group.

From the narrow aperture where the lower sash was raised a few inches came a hissing squeak.

"Is that you, Smithy, you beast? Get me out of this, you rotter! You've landed me in it—now get me out of it, you swab!"

The Famous Five all looked at Smithy! They had a glimmering now of what had been happening while they were at football.

The Bouncer took no heed of them. He glanced round, with an anxious brow, and then spoke in a low voice at the window.

"Keep doggo, Bunter! You'll be seen if you get out now! I'll tip you when there's a chance!"

"Beast!"

"Shut up, you fat fool!"

"What is it you've landed that fat duffer in, Smithy?" asked the captain of the Remove very quietly.

"Find out!" snapped the Bouncer.

"I say, you fellows, I know how," came an eager whisper from under the window-sash. "I say, suppose you go up to the studies and shout 'Fire!'"

"What?"

"If you go up to the studies and shout 'Fire!'—everybody will come, and then I can get out, see?" breathed Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were willing—more than willing—to help the hapless fat Owl out of his awful scrape. But they were not willing to go up to the studies and shout "Fire!" Not quite!

"I say, Smithy—"

"Better keep quiet, you fool! Hacker's outside the door, and he's got jolly sharp ears!"

"Will you go up to the studies and shout 'Fire!'" hissed Bunter.

"No, idiot!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut that window, quick!" breathed Bob Cherry.

"Shan't! I—"

"Here comes Mossoo, ass!"

"Oh crikey!"

The window shut tight.

The Bouncer faded out of the group. Mossoo had sent him to call Gosling—which he had no intention of doing! He did not want to meet Mossoo!

The French master came whisking up, panting with excitement, and found the Famous Five there—looking across the quad with their backs to Quelch's window, and to all appearance quite uninterested in that window!

WAY IN!

TAP, tap, tap!

Monsieur Charpentier had to stand on the tips of his toes to reach the study window across the broad stone sill.

He tapped on the lower panes with an energy that almost cracked the glass.

Tap, tap, tap!

"Mistair Quelch!" squeaked Mossoo. "Ouvrir la fenetre! Zat you come to ze vindow, isn't it?"

The occupant of Quelch's study was not likely to come to the window, with Mossoo tapping on it!

There was a screen standing across the window inside, screening the interior from view. On the other side of that screen palpitated a fat Owl!

Harry Wharton & Co. stood silent—exchanging expressive glances. Other fellows began to gather at the spot, becoming aware that something of an extraordinary nature was going on.

"What on earth's biting Froggie?" asked Peter Todd, staring at the dapper figure of the French master, tiptoeing at the window.

"Potty?" asked Skinner. "If he wants Quelch, why don't he go to his study?"

"Quelch is out!" said Hazeldene.

"He's in his study!" answered Skinner. "He spoke to me from his window half an hour ago."

"Quelch did!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Yes, Quelch! He sent me to call Wingate—he wanted to see him for something," answered Skinner. "He's there all right."

"Oh crikey! Sure it was Quelch?" gasped Bob.

"Eh? I suppose I know Quelch's bark by this time!" said Skinner, staring at him. "I hear it often enough in the Form-room."

"You didn't see Quelch?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Only his mortar-board! He had the window only a few inches open! What about it?" asked Skinner. "It was Quelch—he's there now."

The Famous Five made no rejoinder to that. They knew that Quelch must still be out of gates, as Billy Bunter was in the study. Obviously the fat Owl had been

ventriloquising there; it must have been Bunter who had spoken to Skinner from the window.

They could see now what had happened—the whole scheme was clear enough. But it was not, evidently, going according to plan. The fat ventriloquist had not been able to escape after his performance, and he was now a prisoner in the study—with Hacker at the door, and Mossoo at the window. There was no other way of escape for the fat Owl—unless he climbed up the chimney!

"Mon cher Quelch!" Mossoo was squealing, as he tapped again and again at the window. "Ouvrir donc!"

But there was no answer from the study.

Having failed to get in, or get an answer, at the door, Monsieur Charpentier had come round to the study window, in hope of better luck there! But he was getting no better luck.

"Here comes Wingate!" murmured Bob.

The Greyfriars captain, his attention drawn at last, came over to the spot. More and more fellows were gathering now—the crowd was thickening.

"Is anything the matter, Monsieur Charpentier?" asked Wingate.

Mossoo blinked round at him.

"Mais oui! But yes! Ce pauvre Quelch—he is eel! He is verree malade! Zere is somezing verree mooch ze matter. He open not ze door—and he answer not when zat I call, when zat I knock! Ce pauvre Quelch—that poor Quelch—he is zere, and he cannot speak!"

Wingate stared.

"He was all right a short while ago, sir—he was talking to me through his study door!" he said.

"C'est ca—c'est ca—I hear ze voice from ze vindow, when zat he talk, and I go to speak to him, but he open not ze door—he answer not—"

"The door will not open, sir!" said Wingate. "Mr. Quelch told me that there was something amiss with the lock, and he cannot open it from inside—he has telephoned for a locksmith to come and open it for him."

"Oh!" breathed Bob Cherry. "That was the dodge, was it?"

"Oh! I did not know zat, Wingate!" said Monsieur Charpentier, in surprise. "But why zen do he not answer when zat I call, if he is not malade? Also Hacker he call, and zere is no answer!"

"That's very extraordinary!" said Wingate. "He cannot have left the study, as the door could not be opened! He must be there! I don't understand this—"

"He must be eel—malade—"

Wingate looked quite puzzled.

He was not feeling cordial towards the Remove master—after that jaw through the door that would not open! He was feeling angry and resentful. But if Mr. Quelch had been overcome by a sudden illness, he

was ready to help. And really it looked as if only that could account for the dead silence from

Quelch's study, when Quelch was known to be there!

Wingate tapped on the window—which he reached much more easily than the little French master.

Tap, tap!

"Mr. Quelch," called out Wingate, "will you please answer! Please let us know if anything is the matter."

No reply!

Wingate's voice could easily be heard through the window, and through the study; indeed, it could be heard by Mr. Hacker in the passage beyond, and by two or three other masters, who had now joined Hacker there.

Quelch, in the study, must have heard! If so, he did not heed! Not a sound came in reply.

Wingate's face grew very grave. He forgot anger and resentment now. It was hardly possible to suppose that Mr. Quelch was deliberately refusing to reply when anxious voices called to him from door and window! If he did not answer, it could only be because he was unable to do so.

"By gum! Can the old bean have fainted?" whispered Skinner, in the crowd of curious juniors.

"Fainted! Quelch?" said Peter Todd. "Not like the old bean!"

"Well, what's happened to him, then?"

"Goodness knows!"

It seemed almost impossible to imagine Henry Samuel Quelch fainting! Quelch was rather elderly, but he was hard as nails. A fainting fit certainly would have accounted for his amazing silence. But the fainting fit itself was hard to account for!

"Something's happened to him since he was talking to Wingate!" said Skinner. "He can't be doing this for fun!"

"Oh, my hat! Not likely!"

That was a still less probable theory! Quelch was not likely to faint; but he was even less likely to cause all this excitement for fun!

Wingate tapped again, and called again—loudly. But the result was the same—dead silence from within.

"Something must have happened," said the Greyfriars captain. "The study must be got into somehow."

"I have send Smeat to call Gosling to break in ze door!" said Monsieur Charpentier. "Ze door he must be force."

"It would be quicker to break a pane of the window!" said Mr. Capper. Capper and Wiggins were on the spot now. "Break a pane, Wingate, and unfasten the catch. If Quelch is unconscious, he must have immediate help."

"C'est ca—c'est ca!" exclaimed Monsieur Charpentier. "Zat you break one glass viz an elbow, and enter by ze vindow."

"Certainly!" said Mr. Wiggins. "Lose no time, Wingate! That is, of course, if you are certain that Mr. Quelch is there!"

"There's no doubt about that, sir," said Wingate. "He spoke to me from his study—and Monsieur Charpentier heard him also—"

"Mais oui! Mais oui! Ce pauvre Quelch—he is zere viz himself—"

"Then lose no time, Wingate," said Mr. Capper. "This may be very

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was ready to help. And really it looked as if only that could account for the dead silence from



“I—I should have been sacked, Wingate,” muttered the Bounder repentantly. “You’ve let me off—I don’t know why! I—I say, I’m really sorry, Wingate!”

serious—indeed, it must be very serious!”

“Very well, sir!”

It was clearly the best thing to be done in the strange and alarming circumstances.

Wingate drew back his elbow and knocked in the middle of a pane.

Crash! Smash!

Broken glass scattered on the window-sill and inside the study.

There was a buzz of deep excitement in the watching crowd. Now the way was open to enter the study and ascertain what had happened there. Wingate thrust an arm through the aperture in the broken pane to reach to the catch and unfasten the window.

“Poor old Bunter!” breathed Bob Cherry.

The fat Owl’s game was up now! Only Harry Wharton & Co. knew, so far, that it was Bunter in the study. That startling fact was about to be revealed to the whole staring crowd.

THE PRISONER OF THE STUDY!

BILLY BUNTER palpitated. The fat junior’s podgy heart sank almost into his boots at the crack and smash of the breaking window-pane.

Up to that moment, the unhappy Owl had hoped that there was going to be a chance somehow of getting out of that study before Quelch came back from his walk with Prout. The crack of the window-pane sounded like the knell of doom to his fat ears.

Behind the screen that stood two or three feet back from the window, Billy Bunter’s fat knees knocked together.

What was going to happen to him when he was found there? Wingate would know who had slanged him through the door; Quelch would know all about it as soon as he came in—and the prospect almost made Billy Bunter’s fat brain reel. This meant a flogging from the Head, at least—very likely the sack for both himself and Smithy. It would serve Smithy right—but that was cold comfort for Bunter.

But as he heard a groping hand at the window, groping for the catch, the fat junior pulled himself together. He derived a sort of nerve from sheer excess of funk. He had one card to play—if he had the nerve to play it! He could not be seen—the screen hid him from outside view! And Quelch’s voice was still at his disposal!

He gave a fat little cough and screwed up his courage. And Wingate, as he groped through the broken pane for the window-catch, was startled by a barking voice from the study—so long and mysteriously silent. Bunter, invisible himself, was watching through a crack in the screen.

He was hardly three feet from Wingate, now kneeling on the window-sill. A minute, or less, and the Greyfriars captain would have the window open, and would be stepping into the study. Billy Bunter dared not let it come to that!

“Wingate!” came a sharp, barking voice which everybody who heard it recognised as Mr. Quelch’s. “How dare you!”

Wingate gave so startled a jump that he almost fell off the window-sill.

There was a howl of excitement from the watching crowd.

Quelch’s bark came sharply and clearly through the broken window.

“That’s Quelch!” gasped Skinner. “Hear him?”

“Mon Dieu!” ejaculated Monsieur Charpentier. “Zat is Mistair Quelch! But if he speak now, why he not speak before?”

“Mr. Quelch!” gasped Wingate.

Kneeling on the sill, he withdrew his arm from the aperture in the glass and peered into the study.

All he could see, however, was the tall screen that stood across the window within.

“What does this mean, Wingate?” came the barking voice from the unseen interior.

“Eh?”

“How dare you break a pane in my window! How dare you climb on my window-sill! I shall report this extraordinary conduct to your headmaster, Wingate!”

“But, sir—” gasped the astounded Wingate.

“Go away at once! How dare you make this disturbance? I have told you already, Wingate, in the plainest language, that I am seriously dissatisfied with you! Now you dare to

play this extraordinary prank at my window!"

"But I—I—I—" stuttered Wingate, "I—I thought—"

"I shall place this matter before your headmaster! You have actually broken my study window!"

Wingate, with a knitted brow, dropped back from the sill. Concern for Quelch had changed back to deep and resentful anger.

But Mr. Capper stepped to the window and spoke through the shattered pane.

"My dear Quelch!" he said. "You must not blame Wingate. It was upon my advice—indeed my instructions—that he broke a pane, in order to unfasten the window and enter."

"Nonsense!"

"What—what did you say, Quelch?" stammered the master of the Fourth.

"Nonsense!"

"Really, Quelch—"

"I will not be disturbed in this extraordinary and unheard of manner," barked the sharp voice from behind the screen. "I am surprised at you, Mr. Capper—very much surprised indeed."

"Indeed!" retorted Mr. Capper, getting angry himself. "You are not the only person surprised here, Mr. Quelch! You have surprised—and indeed alarmed—everyone. May I ask why you have refused to answer continual calling and knocking, and thus given the impression that you had been taken suddenly ill, and were in need of assistance?"

"Nonsense! I do not desire to be disturbed—I am very busy! I have

no time to waste, Mr. Capper, if you have!"

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Capper.

He stepped back from the window, with a very red face.

"Je ne comprends pas!" exclaimed Monsieur Charpentier. "Mon cher Quelch—my verree dear Quelch—you make me to zink zat you are eel—"

"Nonsense!"

"But, mon cher Quelch, I am verree much alarm—I zink zat you are verree eel, as you do not answer viz yourself when zat I call and knock—"

"Please go away, and do not disturb me further!" snapped the sharp voice from behind the screen. "I desire to hear no more."

"Mais, mon cher Quelch!" gasped the French master.

"Go away!"

"Mais certainement, if you vish—but I zink—"

"Will you go away and leave me undisturbed, Monsieur Charpentier! And tell all those boys to go away—I will not have an impertinent crowd gathering under my study window."

"Je m'en va, monsieur!" snapped the French master, very much offended, and he stalked away as red as a turkey-cock at that unexpected and unpleasant rebuff from his dear Quelch.

Mr. Capper and Mr. Wiggins exchanged an eloquent look, and walked away together. They were wondering a little whether Quelch was quite in his right mind—his conduct was so very extraordinary.

The crowd of fellows retreated to

a little distance from the study window. But they did not go very far away from it—and they kept their eyes on it. Quelch's study seemed to draw them like a magnet.

"Has he gone off his rocker, you fellows?" asked Skinner.

"Blessed if it doesn't look like it!" said Peter Todd. "He refuses to say a word, till he's made everybody believe that he's ill, or in a fainting fit or something, and then—"

"Quelch must be as mad as a hatter, to carry on like this!" said Ogilvy. "Must be bats in the belfry!"

"Somebody ought to tell the Head!" remarked Russell. "The Head ought to know, if Quelch has gone batchy."

"The batchfulness is probably not terrific!" murmured Hurrec Janset Ram Singh.

"What's he doing it for, then?"

"I guess it's the bee's knee!" remarked Fisher T. Fish.

The Famous Five remained near the study window. Knowing how the matter really stood, they were anxious to help Bunter to escape if opportunity offered.

But there was not a ghost of a chance of getting Bunter out of that window unscen by at least fifty pairs of eyes.

Neither was there a ghost of a chance at the study door.

Herbert Vernon-Smith walked in a casual sort of way into Masters' Passage in the hope of being able to use the key. But there was no hope.

Beaks were no longer calling or knocking at Quelch's door. But the passage seemed to be quite thickly populated! Half a dozen masters were in the passage, discussing, with expressive faces, the amazing conduct of Mr. Quelch.

The Bounder gave them one glance, and departed again, the key still in his pocket.

There was no escape for the fat Owl, and it looked as if he had to stay there, a prisoner in the study, till Mr. Quelch came in. And what was going to happen when he was found there made even the iron-nerved Bounder feel a sort of cold chill trickle down his spine.

Billy Bunter, in the study, peered round the screen, and saw through the window innumerable faces in the offing. He listened at the door and heard the voices of the beaks in animated discussion.

Escape in either direction was impossible. He had staved off discovery—but he had only staved it off! In desperation the fat Owl blinked at the study chimney.

It was a large, wide, old-fashioned chimney. There was no fire in the grate.

Bunter blinked at it, thought of the soot, and shuddered. He dared not be found there when Quelch came in. But the study chimney was a last resource—a very last and very desperate resource.

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS!

MR. QUELCH stared. He was surprised. And his surprise soon changed to annoyance.

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Walking in with Mr. Prout in time for tea, the Remove master found himself the cynosure of all eyes.

In the ordinary way, Mr. Quelch would have walked in and gone into the House without attracting any special attention. Most fellows, if asked, would not have been able to say whether Quelch had come in or whether he hadn't.

But now—
If Mr. Quelch had been the ghost of a Form-master, his appearance could not have caused a greater sensation, or drawn more amazed and concentrated attention.

Fellows who saw him did not merely gaze at him—they did not merely stare at him! They gaped at him—they goggled at him—they fairly opened their eyes and their mouths and goggled at him in open-eyed, open-mouthed astonishment.

"Quelch!" spluttered Skinner, who was the first to spot him.

"Quelch!" howled Peter Todd.

"Quelch!" roared Coker of the Fifth.

"Quelch!" howled Hobson of the Shell.

"It's Quelch!"

"Or his ghost!"

"Oh, great pip, look—it's Quelch!"

Amazed voices buzzed on all sides.

Quelch knitted his brows. There was no occasion whatever, so far as Quelch could see, for every Greyfriars man who saw him to jump almost out of his skin at the sight of him.

Mr. Prout was surprised, too! Prout stared, while Quelch glared.

"What ever is the matter, Quelch?" asked the Fifth Form master.

"I have not the slightest idea," answered Mr. Quelch, with a deep frown. "Skinner! Come here, Skinner! What do you mean by staring at your Form-master in that extraordinary manner?"

"Ain't—ain't you in your study, sir?" gasped Skinner.

"What?"

Really, it was rather an extraordinary question as Quelch, obviously, was not in his study, as he was standing there in the quad in front of Skinner. But Skinner was so amazed at the sight of him that he hardly knew what he was saying.

Quelch was—or had been—in that study. Everybody knew that he could not have left it without being seen by everybody. Yet here he was, walking in with Prout! It was enough to make a fellow jump.

Mr. Capper hurried up.

"Quelch!" he exclaimed. He, like the rest, gazed at Mr. Quelch with almost unbelieving eyes. "Quelch! It—it is you! But how—"

"Certainly it is I, Mr. Capper! Will you kindly explain what you may possibly mean, and what is the cause of all this extraordinary excitement!" exclaimed the Remove master acidly.

"But—but you were in your study!" exclaimed the bewildered master of the Fourth. "How in the name of all that is inexplicable did you get out of your study, Quelch?"

"How did I get out of my study?" repeated Mr. Quelch blankly. "I walked out at the door, Mr. Capper.

Do you imagine I stepped out of the window, or what?"

"But—but when—" gasped Mr. Capper.

"When? About three hours ago!" snapped the Remove master. "What does it signify, Mr. Capper?"

"Three hours ago, Quelch!" gasped Capper. "Less than half an hour ago I was speaking to you at your study window—"

"Really, Mr. Capper—"

"I repeat, Mr. Quelch—"

"If that is a jest, Mr. Capper, I see no point in it whatever!" said Mr. Quelch, with acerbity; and he walked on, leaving Capper staring, with popping eyes.

Amazed eyes watched him. Fellows crowded up from all directions at the news that Quelch had come in—Quelch, who was in his study, and whom everybody knew to be in his study.

The Remove master, with a glinting eyes and a heightened colour, marched on through two lines of staring, astounded faces.

"Mr. Quelch!" It was Wingate this time. Wingate of the Sixth rubbed his eyes when he saw Quelch. It seemed to him that they must be deceiving him. "Mr. Quelch!"

"Well, Wingate?" said Mr. Quelch in a grinding voice. "What do you mean? What does all this mean? Is there anything unusual or astonishing, Wingate, in the sight of a member of Dr. Locke's staff in the quadrangle of Greyfriars School?"

"Yes!" gasped Wingate. "I don't understand. Nobody has seen you leave your study. How—how did you get out?"

"How did I get out? Are you in your senses, Wingate?"

"I hope so, sir! I can't understand this. Half an hour ago you were in your study, and no one saw you leave—"

"I have not been in my study for three hours, Wingate! Will you explain what you mean?"

Wingate fairly staggered.

"Mr. Quelch! Not much over an hour ago you sent for me to come to your study—"

"I did nothing of the kind!"

"Mr. Quelch!"

"Is this some absurd jest, or what?" snapped Mr. Quelch. "I have been out of the school for the

last three hours, in company with Mr. Prout."

"Really, sir, as you talked to me from your study—" exclaimed Wingate.

"Do not be absurd, Wingate!"

"This is extraordinary!" boomed Prout, who was listening in great astonishment. "You seem to be making some extraordinary mistake, Wingate. Mr. Quelch walked out with me early in the afternoon, and we have only just returned."

"Impossible, sir!" gasped Wingate.

"What?" boomed Prout. "What did you say, Wingate?"

"Then who is in Mr. Quelch's study?" stammered Wingate. "Someone is there, whom I have supposed to be Mr. Quelch—whom everyone has supposed to be Mr. Quelch! Mr. Quelch, did you not send Skinner of your Form to call me to your study?"

"Certainly I did not!" Quelch's gimlet eyes gleamed round. "Skinner!"

"Yes, sir!" stammered Skinner.

"Did you take Wingate a message purporting to come from me, Skinner?" thundered the Remove master.

"Yes, sir!" gasped Skinner. "You told me to."

"You have the audacity to make such a statement, Skinner—"

"You did, sir! You called me to your study window not much over an hour ago, and told me to tell Wingate to come to your study," stammered the bewildered Skinner, "so I went and told him."

"How dare you say so, Skinner?"

"You did, sir! Smithy was with me and heard you!"

Skinner looked round for Smithy to corroborate his statement; but the Bounder was not to be seen.

"I am sure Skinner acted in good faith, sir," said Wingate, "for when I came to the study I certainly believed that you were there. You spoke to me through the door—at least, I supposed that you did. If it was not you, it was somebody whose voice is exactly like yours, and I don't know of anybody at Greyfriars—"

"Through the door!" repeated Mr. Quelch. "Do you mean to say that there was some person in my study whom you did not see?"

(Continued on next page.)

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"I could not see into the study, of course, sir, as the door was shut."

"Were you so stupid, Wingate, as to suppose that I should speak to you through a closed door?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"You explained to me that the lock had jammed and the door could not be opened—"

"Upon my word!"

"You told me you had telephoned for a locksmith from Courtfield, and asked me if the man had come—"

"You are aware now, Wingate, that I did nothing of the kind, as I was not in the study and have been absent from the school all the afternoon."

"Yes, sir, I—I suppose so—but—but somebody did—somebody was—somebody is—"

stuttered the Greyfriars captain. "There was somebody—and he's still there—"

Mr. Quelch's lips shut like a vice. "It appears," he said, "that some strange and extraordinary trick has been played during my absence. There was certainly nothing the matter with the lock on my study door when I went out. Obviously that was a subterfuge—a trick for keeping the door shut—"

"Oh!" gasped Wingate. "It is inconceivable to me, Wingate, that you could mistake another person's voice for mine—"

"Plenty of others made the same mistake, sir—Monsieur Charpentier, Mr. Capper, Mr. Wiggins—"

"Certainly!" said Mr. Capper.

"Undoubtedly!" said Mr. Wiggins.

"I fail to understand this!" said Mr. Quelch. "But it appears that there is some person in my study who has given the impression that I was there. I shall go to the study at once, and that person must be secured. Wingate, kindly remain by the window and see that he does

not escape in that direction, while I go to the door."

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

Wingate of the Sixth went to the study window—about fifty or sixty fellows streaming after him. The mysterious occupant of Quelch's study, whoever he was, had no chance of escape in that direction.

Mr. Quelch, with a grim face, marched into the House with a crowd at his heels.

Somebody was in his study. It was not Quelch, because it couldn't be—everyone knew that now. Who it was was a most intriguing mystery—known only to the Bounder and the Famous Five. Whoever it was, his game was up now.

Mr. Hacker, in Masters' Passage, almost fell down at the sight of Quelch coming in with long strides. His eyes bulged at the Remove master.

"Quelch!" he gasped.

"Yes, Mr. Hacker—"

"But—but I have not left this passage—you did not come out of your study by the door!" exclaimed the astonished Acid Drop. "Is it possible, Quelch—is it imaginable—that you left your study by the window?"

"It is not, sir!" almost roared Mr. Quelch.

"Then how—"

"It is some other person in my study!" snorted Mr. Quelch. "I fail to understand how anyone, not utterly stupid, can have supposed that it was I!"

"Some other person—who—"

"That is what I am about to discover, sir!"

Mr. Quelch rapped sharply on his study door after wrenching at the handle.

Bang!

"Admit me at once!" thundered

the Remove master. "Do you hear? Admit me! Open this door instantly!"

There was no answer from the study.

Mr. Quelch's eyes glinted, and he breathed hard and deep.

"The door is locked," he said. "It will be necessary to obtain another key. Mr. Hacker, will you kindly see that no one leaves this study while I am gone?"

"Certainly, sir!"

Quelch hurried away. A swarm of eyes were on the study door while he was gone.

In a few minutes he returned—with a duplicate key in his hand.

The crowd watched him with almost bated breath as he inserted the key into the lock and turned it.

"That's torn it!" whispered Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton nodded.

The game was up now for the hapless fat Owl. The study door was thrown wide open.

Mr. Quelch marched into the study. A crowd crammed the doorway, staring after him. And then there was a general gasp of stupefaction.

The study was empty!

BILLY BUNTER DROPS IN!

"OH!" Mr. Quelch stood in the middle of the room, looking round him. His gimlet eyes glinted round in all directions, seeking the mysterious occupant of that study.

No one was to be seen. He drew the screen away, and pushed it against the wall. That revealed the window, with George Wingate's face looking in at the aperture in the broken pane, and a sea of other faces round him.

Innumerable eyes at the window—innnumerable eyes at the doorway—stared into that study—beholding only Mr. Quelch!

"Where—" breathed Bob Cherry. "The wherefulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Wingate!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "You have not allowed anyone to leave by the window while I was getting the door open?"

"No, sir!" answered the Greyfriars captain from the quad.

"Someone is here—or was here!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker from the doorway. "On that point, there is no possible doubt!"

"Mais, c'est ca!" squealed Monsieur Charpentier. "He is here—zat is one deadly cert, sair! Viz my own ears I hear him to speak!"

"Then where is he?" rapped Mr. Quelch sourly. "I fail to see anyone in this study. The door was locked—the key gone! No doubt it was locked from outside, and the key taken away! No one is here!"

"Someone must be here!" gasped Mr. Hacker. "He must be concealed somewhere in the study! It is absolutely certain, Mr. Quelch, that someone was in the study—"

"Someone," said Mr. Capper, "who spoke in a voice so exactly like yours.



Meet all your Schoolboy Favourites in this Grand Gift Book!

You can in the pages of The HOLIDAY ANNUAL! For many years boys have been meeting Billy Bunter (the amiable ass who is the world's fattest and funniest schoolboy), Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's, and the other famous schoolboy favourites.

This year's 232-page issue is packed with good things—it's thrills, laughs and adventure all the way! Colour plates, and illustrations galore—all for five bob!



The Greyfriars HOLIDAY Annual

Of All Newsagents and Booksellers 5/-.

Quelch, that I had no doubt that you were the speaker."

"Et moi aussi!" exclaimed Monsieur Charpentier.

Quelch gave a grunt.

"I fail to understand this!" he said. "I fail entirely to understand this! If there is anyone in this study, kindly point him out to me!"

"There was certainly someone, sir," said Wingate, "and he cannot possibly have escaped from the room."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch. "In that case I shall be glad—very glad to see him. At the present moment, I see nothing of him!"

Mr. Hacker stepped in and began to search the study.

Harry Wharton & Co., and a crowd of fellows behind them, stared in at the doorway, dumbfounded.

The fat Owl of the Remove was there. They knew that he was there—that he must be there. But if he was there, he was invisible. Billy Bunter, really, could not have dissolved into thin air!

But if he hadn't, where was he?

The mystery of Quelch's study had not only deepened—it seemed to have grown impenetrable! The Famous Five said nothing. They hoped, for Bunter's sake, that he would somehow remain undiscovered. But they knew that he was there—because he simply had to be there!

But if he was there, Hacker failed to root him out. Really, there was no hiding-place in the study where a fellow could hope to remain concealed if he was looked for. But the mysterious person, if he was there, was hidden deep!

"Oh, gum!" Bob Cherry breathed suddenly.

His eyes were on Quelch's fireplace.

The fire in the grate was laid, ready for lighting, but it was not lighted. On the combustible materials in the grate, Bob had spotted a sprinkle of soot. And he suddenly understood how the mysterious denizen of the study had vanished so mysteriously.

"Oh!" breathed Harry Wharton, as his glance followed Bob's.

"The terrific ass!" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent said nothing. They hoped that other eyes would not observe that sprinkle of soot in the grate. It was, if observed, a clue to the extraordinary refuge of the hapless fat Owl.

Bunter was parked in the chimney!

There was no escape for him above. He could not possibly have climbed the chimney and squeezed out of the chimney-pot. He was hiding in the chimney—no doubt hoping that the coast would clear, and give him a chance of getting down again and escaping.

The Famous Five watched anxiously. If nobody else guessed, there was a chance for Bunter yet. And nobody seemed to think of the chimney as a possible refuge for the mystery-man. Really, it was not an attractive refuge. Only an absolutely terrified and desperate fat Owl could have been driven to such a resource.

"Well," rapped Mr. Quelch at last, with irritated impatience, "can you see anyone in this study, Hacker?"

"I cannot," said Hacker. "I am quite at a loss! That someone was here is certain—and how he can have eluded us—"

"Zere was one voice," said Monsieur Charpentier. "I see no vun, it is verree true, but zere was one voice—"

"Certainly there was someone here," said Mr. Capper. "I myself spoke to him, and supposed that it was you, Mr. Quelch!"

Snort from Quelch.

"The voice, sir, was exactly yours!" exclaimed Mr. Wiggins.

Another snort from Quelch.

"No one is here," he said. "The window was shut and watched—the door locked and also watched. No one can have escaped from the study—and no one is here! I can only say— Goodness gracious, what is that?"

"Atchooooooooh!"

It was a sneeze.

Mr. Quelch gave a jump.

Hacker stared round.

That sneeze seemed quite near at hand. But it was not one of the masters in the study who had sneezed. There was a dead silence for a moment. Then—

"Urrgh! Aytishoooooh! Atchooooh! Oooop! Aytishoooooh!"

It was a loud, reverberating sneeze. It fairly roared. It was a gargantuan sneeze. It bellowed.

"What—" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Who—"

"Aytishhhoo!" came the sneeze again. "Oooooooogh! Atchooooh!"

Billy Bunter had struggled hard, and struggled long, against that sneeze. But there was soot in his fat little nose, and hard as he struggled against it, the sneeze was not to be denied. When, at length, it overpowered Bunter, it came all the more powerfully from its suppression. It was almost like a blast on a foghorn!

"Aytichoooooooh!"

A cloud of soot descended from the chimney.

Convulsed by that gargantuan sneeze, the unhappy fat Owl was losing his grasp on the brickwork of the interior. Soot descended in a shower.

"Oh!" gasped Hacker. "The chimney—"

"The—the chimney!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Aytishoooooooh—oop!"

There was a slithering sound in the chimney. Something that looked like a mass of soot tumbled out. It squeaked as it bumped on the grate, and squeaked again as it rolled over on the floor.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob.

"What—" stuttered Mr. Quelch. "Who—who—who is that? Who—"

"Grooogh!"

The mass of soot sat up. Two little round eyes, blinking with soot, blinked behind soot-blackened spectacles.

Billy Bunter was not to be recognised! He had collected too much soot for that! He was clothed in soot, swathed in soot, smothered with soot, buried in soot! Only by its rotundity could that figure have

been identified as William George Bunter's!

"Gurrgh!" gurgled Bunter. "Urrgh! Atchooh! Oooooogh!"

"Who are you?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Aytishoooooooh!"

"Answer me!"

"Gurruugh!"

"It is—I—I think—I think it is Bunter!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Bunter! Explain yourself! What have—"

"Urrgh! 'Tain't me, sir!" gurgled the sooty object. "Oh crikey! Oooooogh!"

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

"Bunter!"

"That fat ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch glared round at a yelling mob in the doorway.

"Go away!" he barked. "Go away at once! How dare you! Go away!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd in the passage faded away—howling with laughter.

Billy Bunter would gladly have faded away also. But there was no fading away for Bunter!

UNEXPECTED!

"SMITHY!"

"Well?" snarled the Bounder.

Harry Wharton & Co. came into the Rag.

Vernon-Smith was there—not in an enviable mood. He scowled blackly at the Famous Five as they came in, and Harry Wharton spoke to him.

Perhaps he guessed what was coming. Five faces had very determined and rather grim expressions on them.

"They've got Bunter!" said Harry.

"They're welcome to him!" sneered the Bounder.

"Well, what are you going to do?"

"Find out!"

"That won't do!" said the captain of the Remove quietly. "You put Bunter up to playing the fool in Quelch's study—and I've a pretty clear idea why. The fat ass will get it in the neck now—and it's up to you, Smithy!"

"Have you come here to tell me that?" sneered Smithy.

"Yes," said Bob Cherry. "We've come here to tell you exactly that, Smithy! You've landed that fat chump in this, and every man in the Remove knows it! You've got to get him out!"

"It's the sack!" muttered Smithy. "It's only a flogging for that fat fool, but—as soon as Wingate knows—I get it right in the neck!"

"It's too late to think of that!" said Harry.

"Is it?" sneered the Bounder. "Well, I'm thinkin' of it—and thinkin' pretty hard, too! I'm not pinin' to leave Greyfriars. As soon as Wingate tells Quelch what was said to him through the door, I don't know what will happen to Bunter; but I know what will happen to me—if I'm in it!"

"Bunter will let it out, you can bet, if you don't!" said Nugent.

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The Bounder gave a scoffing laugh. "You couldn't deny it, Smithy!" said Johnny Bull.

"Couldn't I?" sneered Smithy.

"My esteemed Smithy—" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, shut up!"

Harry Wharton compressed his lips.

"You can't leave it all on Bunter, Smithy!" he said.

"I can if I choose."

"But you won't choose," said Harry. "You're not such a rotter as that, Smithy. You couldn't be such a cur! Don't talk rot—you know what you've got to do, and you know that you're going to do it. Why not get on with it?"

The Bounder gave him an evil look, and stalked out of the Rag.

He went to the door of the House, to go out into the quad.

But he paused there.

There was a struggle in Vernon-Smith's mind.

The whole scheme had been a ghastly failure. Wingate knew now, or would soon know, whose had been that voice in Quelch's study. Quelch, as yet, knew nothing of that—he only

supposed, so far, that Bunter had been playing fatuous tricks in his study. But as soon as he knew—what then?

If it was left on Bunter, Bunter would be flogged, at least—and he might be sacked. But there was no doubt what would happen to Smithy, if his part in the affair came to light. Bunter's well-known fatheadedness might cause him to be dealt with more or less leniently; but there was no such excuse for the bad hat of the Remove. The chopper would come down on Smithy—and it would be the finish for him at Greyfriars.

It was not the first time by many a one that his headstrong temper had led him into such a scrape. But lessons were lost on the Bounder of Greyfriars—he was no sooner out of one row than he plunged headlong into another.

What was he going to do?

At the bottom of his heart, Smithy knew, as Wharton knew, what he was going to do! He could, if he chose, stand aside and leave it all on the wretched Owl! But that was not a choice that Smithy could make.

He had to get his dupe out of this, at whatever cost, and he knew it.

He hesitated long, but he turned at last, and made his way to Mr. Quelch's study.

He arrived there, to find Wingate of the Sixth at the door.

Wingate glanced at him.

The Bounder gave him a sardonic grin.

"You're going to see Quelch, Wingate?" he asked.

"Yes!"

"So am I!"

"Wait, then!" said the Sixth-Former.

The Bounder laughed.

"We may as well go in together!" he answered. "I've got something to tell Quelch, as well as you, Wingate. Same subject."

Wingate gave him a sharp look.

"Does that mean that you had anything to do with Bunter's silly trickery in this study?" he asked.

"Yes, lots!"

"You can come in, then!"

Wingate tapped at the door and entered.

Vernon-Smith followed him in.

(Continued on page 28.)



COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"GRAND stuff, these MAGNET yarns!" says the first letter I have opened this week, which comes from a reader who lives at Hastings. Yes, and I can assure him that they're going to remain "grand stuff."

If you could only see the yarns I've got in store—but, there, you'll see them all in due course, and you'll thoroughly agree with me. I flatter myself that in Mr. Frank Richards I've got the best school-story author for the MAGNET. If there's anybody else who can spin a better yarn than "F. R.," I'd like to meet him!

The next letter to hand comes from John Crabtree, of Sidcup, who has taken the MAGNET for the last ten years, and tells me that he has never missed a copy—and does not intend to miss one, although he has just been "called up" under the Militia Scheme. Best of luck to you, John. You can't have a better pal than the jolly old MAGNET!

This week, chums, I've got a tip for you; and a good one, too. Those of you who do not read our companion paper, the "Gem," should make a point of getting a copy at once. This week there is a powerful new yarn of St. Jim's in the "Gem." It's entitled: "Gussy Puts His Foot In It!" and tells of the exciting adventures of

Tom Merry & Co.; of St. Jim's. In this issue you will also find a rattling fine story of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, under the title of "The Greyfriars Lunatic!"

To those of you who did not see my notice in last week's issue urging readers to place a regular order for the MAGNET with their newsagent, I am repeating it again here.

To make quite sure of getting your copy of the MAGNET regularly each week you can do one thing to help.

Wood pulp, from which paper is made, comes from overseas. Ships bringing it may be sunk, or available cargo space may be needed first for more urgent things, such as food. In order to avoid any wastage of paper, we have had to tell newsagents to order only the exact number of MAGNETS that they want from us every week, and no more. If more are ordered than are actually required they will remain unsold, and will be a dead loss to the newsagent.

So, if you haven't already given a regular order for the MAGNET, will you please do so at once? Your newsagent will deliver it, or keep a copy for you each week. By giving an order you will make quite sure of your MAGNET, and will greatly help

your newsagent. There is an order form which you can use immediately on page 28 of this issue. ORDER YOUR MAGNET TO-DAY.

THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL"

This most popular Annual is on sale everywhere, and for the moderate sum of five shillings you will have a feast of delight which will bring pleasant hours for some time to come. This year's volume, which is better than ever, is selling like hot cakes! Get a copy before it is too late. If you haven't managed to save up the five shillings yet, ask your newsagent to reserve you a copy until you have got the full amount. He'll be only too pleased to oblige you.

"THE BLACK PRINCE OF GREYFRIARS!"

This story arranged for next Saturday shows Mr. Frank Richards at his very best. Many weird and wonderful characters have joined up at Greyfriars in the past, but the latest addition—Prince Bomombo, from Bongoland—to give him his full name, is the queerest of them all. And what's more, he doesn't speak English. Can you imagine the amazing situations that arise? Wait until you meet this wild and woolly new boy next Saturday. The "Greyfriars Herald" for next week is better than ever. There's no lack of talent, when it comes to writing stories, articles, and poems in the Greyfriars Remove.

A final word. Sign the order form on page 28 of this issue, hand it to your newsagent, and thus make sure of next Saturday's MAGNET and all subsequent issues of the old paper. Cheerio, chums,
YOUR EDITOR.

The GREYFRIARS HERALD

(Continued from page 2.)

Skinner. "He gave me six for smoking this morning!"

The limit was reached when the following appeared on the board—

"The boy who has taken my CRIB TO SÜETONIUS is commanded to return it at once to enable me to check my scholars' exercises.—H. S. QUELCH, Master."

Quelch's face was white and his eyes gleamed like points of fire when he took us in class to-day. I said to Skinner afterwards:

"Look here, you rotter, you might give me a hand to spot the brute who's doing this. He must be a pretty good forger, and you're the only chap I know who can imitate writing. Can't you think who can have ragged Quelch like that?"

"Don't talk to me of Quelch," growled Skinner. "You saw how he whopped me yesterday. Let him get on with it."

However, I think I'm on to the criminal. Stott had inkstains on his fingers just now. Let him beware! The keenest eyes on the HERALD staff are watching him, and if he does it again, I shall know what to do!

THE UNSUNG HERO!

By DICK PENFOLD (of course!).

Some men do not care a button
For war and death and things like that,

But I have sometimes said to Dutton:
"Come and have a chat!"

Some boys stand on decks when
burning,
Some men rally round the flag,
But I have sometimes started
learning
Virgil in the Rag!

Some men tackle armed marauders
In the far off Khyber Pass,
But I've cashed Bunter's postal
orders
Like a silly ass!

Some men have conveyed dispatches
Through the enemy, I've heard,
But I have refereed the matches,
Second versus Third!

Some men have been fond of fighting
One small ship to fifty-three,
But I have bravely gone on writing
Yards of poetry.

Some bestrode the world like Cæsar,
Then wrote books on it for luck,
But mine's a bigger task than these
are—
I must learn the muck!

MARK LINLEY'S

Remarkable Forecast.

GREYFRIARS — A.D. 2000

I am seventy-six years old. No, not really, of course, but in imagination. I realised my ambition and

became a doctor when I left Greyfriars nearly sixty years ago. Since then I have been studying rare diseases in Darkest Africa, and I know nothing of English life in this year 2000 A.D.

My air liner from Africa lands me on a broad stretch of concrete, broken by a chain of pill-boxes, stairways, ventilators, etc. I wait for a gyro-taxi to take me to London. These gyro-taxis rise and descend by means of gyroscopic screws. Finally, I ask a schoolboy who travelled in my liner:

"How do I get to London, my boy?"

"Why, this is London," replies the boy, amazed. "Take the elevator to Piccadilly. I'm going that way. Come on, sir."

He takes pity on an old man and leads me to the nearest staircase, which proves to be an elevator moving downwards. A hundred feet down we reach an imposing street, leading to a park. It is all bright and clean and sunny, though where the light is coming from I can't make out. It was dull and cloudy on the surface.

"Where's it coming from?" exclaims the boy, as I ask timidly. "Why, from the sun, of course. Golly, don't you know where we get our light?"

"But there is no sun to-day."

"Well, what of it? There was some yesterday, wasn't there? They store the sunlight in things like gasometers—sola-voirs, we call 'em—and send it out like street lighting. Surely you know that?"

"But is all London built underground?"

"I should jolly well think so. Our history says they built cities on the surface years ago. Must have been a set of jugginses. Why, the bombing-planes wiped 'em out in no time. Besides that, they had to put up with what weather came along. We make our own weather down here and get it on the television each morning. If they say it'll rain from eleven to half-past, it docs. They broadcast vapourised rain and condense it. Besides that, all the air is sterilised now. No soot or germs in our air, I can tell you."

"Not even petrol fumes?"

"Petrol!" gasped the boy. "You must be a funny old josser. Don't you know the world ran out of petrol years ago? Everything's driven on samnium these days."

"Samnium?"

"Don't tell me you haven't heard how Professor McPottie discovered

samnium? Why, it's one of the ninety-three elements, like lead and iron. There were two elements which hadn't been discovered in your time. Samnium's one of 'em. It's like radium, only a lot more powerful. A piece about the size of a pea can drive an air liner for over a year. No fumes to that stuff, I can tell you. Well, good-bye, sir. I'm going to school, down at Greyfriars, in Kent, and I must get the Belt here."

"Stay!" I exclaim hurriedly. "I am an old Greyfriars boy. I'd like to see the old school again. May I come with you?"

"Oh, rather, sir. This way."

We go down another elevator, and to my amazement we alight on a platform, something like the old Underground platforms, but facing a tunnel at least two hundred yards wide. This tunnel is filled with belts moving at different speeds in the same direction. The middle belt of all is travelling very quickly and is furnished with seats. We step on the first belt, which is very slow; from that we step to the next belt, which is quicker—and so on, until we arrive at the express belt in the middle. It is quite a simple task, as each belt is travelling only a little quicker than the one before it.

Having whizzed along this platform-bordered tunnel for about ten minutes, we reverse the procedure and get off at what my companion tells me is Charing Cross Station. But what a difference! The trains are rocket-shaped monorail cars which travel at 200 miles an hour. The country outside the windows is just a blur as we shoot along.

"And how do you like Greyfriars?" I asked my young friend.

"Oh, all right. The beds are pretty comfortable, and the nurses are quite decent—so are the docs. I was only there a fortnight last term—for my geography operation. I'm having maths this time. It's pretty beastly, I believe—you're under the cerebrator for an hour a day."

This is all Greek to me, but I have no time to say more before we are at Courtfield. A gyro-taxi takes us to Greyfriars, and that, at any rate, looks the same as usual. There are a few new buildings of the sanatorium type, but mainly it is the same. I exchange a few words with Gosling, and then walk into the House.

"Hadn't I better see the doctor?" I ask my companion.

"Which one? There's dozens of 'em. Here's the Head Surgeon. You'd better see him." And he runs off to join a crowd of fellows who are playing air-ball. I watch him put on his arm-wings and flap into the air like a chubby bat. The ball, about the size of a footer, is floating in the air—in fact, the game reminds



me of water-polo played in the air instead of water. The lactolite arm-wings are good for sport, but rather slow of travel—like cycling in my old days.

The Head Surgeon is quite affable when I explain who I am, and he shows me round the class-rooms. There are no Forms, but only stages. In the Fifth-stage class-room, which I enter first, I get a shock. The benches and desks are gone. In their place are a dozen beds grouped round a big white-enamel and rubber-tube machine full of surgical and electrical apparatus.

Wires run from the machine to the heads of the scholars in bed, where a delicate electric needle is driven into

the skull. The scholars are quite insensible, and a nurse is standing beside each one, feeling his pulse. A doctor in a white coat is speaking in a low voice into a sort of microphone.

"By our agreement that the law of indices is general," he intones, "we find that the half-power of two is the square root of two—" And so on.

"The maths class!" whispers the Head. "The boys are put to sleep by means of that violet ray over each bed; and the cerebrator machine fixes the words in their brain for the rest of their lives. Quite simple, you see!"

"And how long does the lesson last?"

"Just an hour. After that they

recover consciousness, but remain in bed for two days. Then they get up for the rest of the week and play games. They have an hour a day to begin with, but at this stage we have to be careful."

"Is there any preparation or impositions?"

"My dear sir, of course not. A boy doesn't learn lessons now. They are put straight into his brain by the machine. He can't forget things."

I look around this Greyfriars Hospital. It is all so simple. One operation—and a lesson is finished for ever. And—silly old fogey that I am—I give a little sigh.

A little sigh for Quelch and his cane again!

THE BOUNDER'S DUPE!

(Continued from page 26.)

Mr. Quelch glanced at both of them.

Bunter was not in the study. Bunter had been dispatched to clean off the soot before his Form-master dealt with him; and the unhappy fat Owl was now busy with hot water and soap. He had left a good many traces of soot in the study—and he had left Quelch with a frown on his brow that was like unto the "frightful, fearful, frantic frown" of the Lord High Executioner.

"Come in, Wingate!" said Mr. Quelch. "You understand now, of course, that it was not I who was in this study when you were called here?"

"Yes, sir!" answered Wingate. "I understand that now, and I am very glad of it."

"Why are you here, Vernon-Smith? I have not sent for you."

Mr. Quelch gave the Bounder a gesture of dismissal.

Smithy did not heed it.

"I have something to tell you, sir, about what happened in this study this afternoon!" he said. He spoke coolly, almost in a drawl. "It was I who put Bunter up to it."

"Wha-a-t?"

"Bunter isn't the man to blame, really!" said the Bounder, in the same cool tone. "Bunter hasn't sense enough to go in when it rains! He would have backed out, too, only I kept him up to the mark."

"Vernon-Smith!"

Wingate of the Sixth said nothing. He stood staring at the Bounder.

"And what was your object, Vernon-Smith in inducing that utterly stupid and foolish boy to play such insensate tricks?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, his gimlet-eyes glinting at the scapegrace of his Form.

"Only Bunter could do what I wanted, sir! I dare say you've forgotten about his silly ventriloquism—but that was why! I got Bunter to do it, because he can imitate anybody's voice—and I made him send for Wingate, and talk to him through the door, letting Wingate think that it was you, sir."

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

"Only it happened that he couldn't get out of the study afterwards—and that dished the whole thing!" said the Bounder. "But it's only fair to put it on me, sir—not on that duffer!"

Mr. Quelch drew a deep, deep breath.

"Bunter will certainly be punished for having done anything of the kind," he said, "but I quite understand that you were chiefly to blame, Vernon-Smith. Do you mean to tell me that you planned all this absurd and disrespectful trickery for the sake of a foolish prank on a Sixth Form prefect?"

The Bounder did not answer that. He glanced at the Greyfriars captain.

"Get it over, Wingate!" he said. "You know all about it now, and you know what's coming to me. Get it over."

Mr. Quelch gave him a sharp look, and then looked at Wingate.

"I fail to understand all this," he said. "So far as I can see, a foolish prank has been played. You were deluded into believing that I was in the study, Wingate—"

"Yes, sir!" said Wingate slowly. "I believed that it was you speaking from the study, and—and—"

"And what?" asked Mr. Quelch. "Nothing of any consequence, I suppose, can have been uttered by that foolish boy?"

The Bounder's heart beat unpleasantly. Wingate was very slow to answer. Smithy was cool.

Wingate's answer came at last.

"Only some nonsense, sir! I was surprised to hear it from you—but now that I know how the matter stands, it is of no consequence!"

Vernon-Smith blinked at him. If that was all that Wingate was going to say—

"Quite so!" said Mr. Quelch. "Now, Vernon-Smith, in view of your admission that you were the prime mover in this absurd trickery, I shall deal with Bunter leniently. Neither, in the circumstances, do I care to punish you so severely as you deserve. You will take five hundred lines!"

The Bounder hardly heard him.

His eyes were fixed on the Greyfriars captain. He could hardly believe that Wingate was going to say nothing.

"Leave my study, Vernon-Smith!"

"Oh!" stammered the Bounder.

He left the study, almost like a fellow in a dream, and went down the passage. He had gone to Quelch's study, fully expecting to be taken to the Head and sacked. Why had Wingate let him off?

He waited at the corner of the passage till the Greyfriars captain came away from Mr. Quelch's study.

Wingate gave him a grim look.

"You young rascal!" he said.

"I—I should have been sacked, Wingate!" muttered the Bounder. "You've let me off—I don't know why! I—I say, I—I'm sorry! I'm really sorry, Wingate!"

The Bounder spoke with real sincerity. This was the fellow on whom he had planned to wreak his grudge—this fellow, who had let him off.

Wingate gave him a nod and passed on.

The Bounder went slowly back to the Rag, where he found Harry Wharton & Co.

"Got it over?" asked Bob.

"Yes! It's all right! Wingate's a brick!" said Smithy. "By gum! I ought to be kicked! I could kick myself!"

"I'll do it, if you like! Turn round!"

"So you're not on old Wingate's trail any more?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"No. I've been a silly ass!"

"And so say all of us!" agreed Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter was surprised, and relieved, to receive from his Form-master only a jaw, and fifty lines. That was, for the fat Owl, quite an unexpected and happy ending to the mystery of Quelch's study!

THE END.

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss next week's scream of a yarn starring your old favourites—Harry Wharton & Co. It's entitled: "THE BLACK PRINCE OF GREY-FRIARS!" Have you filled in the Order Form on page 23 yet? If not, do it now!)