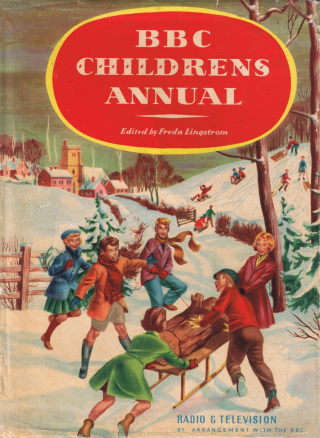


# BBC CHILDRENS ANNUAL

*Edited by Freda Lingstrom*



**RADIO & TELEVISION**

BY ARRANGEMENT WITH THE BBC

# Just like Bunter!

Frank Richards



**B**UNTER!' 'What the dickens-?' Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent exclaimed, together, as they came into their study, No. 1 in the Remove.

They were surprised at what they beheld.

That study, in its owners' absence, should have had no occupant. But it had one: a fat junior who gave them a startled blink through a pair of big spectacles as they came in.

Billy Bunter was alarmed for a moment. But then he looked relieved.

'Oh! Only you fellows!' he said, 'I thought for a minute it might be Quelch! I don't want Quelch to get on to this!'

They gazed at him.

Billy Bunter's occupation in No. 1 Study was surprising. Had they found him exploring the study cupboard, like a lion seeking what he might devour, it would not have surprised them. His present occupation did.

The fat Owl of the Remove was standing by the study table, on which was a bottle

of ink - red ink. From that bottle, Bunter was filling a squirt.

He was spilling and splashing a good deal of the ink in the process. Billy Bunter was what the Greyfriars fellows called cack-handed. His fat fingers were streaked with red: there was a splash of red on his fat little nose, and red ink was sprinkled over the table, and over the books and papers thereon. A Latin prose, which Harry Wharton had almost finished for Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was adorned by a dozen red blots, and evidently required to be written over again: Quelch did not approve of blot! Frank Nugent's Virgil was almost swimming: it looked as if the ink-bottle had tipped over it. Billy Bunter, regardless of such trifles, gurgled at the ink with the squirt.

'I say, you fellows, don't let on about this!' he said, anxiously, 'I don't want Quelch to know it was me.'

'You fat ass!' exclaimed Harry Wharton, 'What are you up to?'



*A liquid stream suddenly shot through the air, and impinged upon his majestic features.*

'Eh? Filling this squirt?' answered Bunter. 'I've borrowed your bottle of red ink, old chap. I knew you wouldn't mind.'

'You've spilled half the ink, you fat chump.'

'Eh?' Bunter blinked round him. 'Have I? Well, that doesn't matter - there's enough to fill this squirt. That's all right.'

'My Latin prose isn't all right, you fat lunatic. Look at it!'

'He, he, he!' Bunter looked at it, and seemed amused. 'I say, old chap, I wouldn't take that in to Quelch! If he saw red ink on it, he might think it was you.' The fat Owl chuckled again. 'Quelch will be fearfully wild when he gets squirted with red ink. What do you think?'

Wharton and Nugent both jumped.

'Quelch!' they gasped, together.

They had gazed at Billy Bunter in surprise. Now they gazed at him in horror. Billy Bunter was well known, in the Greyfriars Remove, to be every imaginable kind of an ass. But that even Billy Bunter could think, or dream, of squirting his form-master with red ink, seemed incredible. Yet apparently it was of that very thing that Bunter was thinking.

'You mad as!' gasped Harry Wharton. 'Quelch would march you right off to the Head for the biggest whopping you've ever had.'

'How's he to know?' grinned Bunter. 'I'm not going to tell him! I've got it in for Quelch, I can jolly well tell you.' Billy Bunter's little round eyes gleamed behind his big round spectacles. 'Think a fellow's going to be whopped for nothing? Quelch made out that I'd had the biscuits out of the box in Common Room - as if I'd touch their mouldy bikkies -'

'And you hadn't?' asked Nugent, sarcastically.

'Oh, really, Nugent! I hope you can take a fellow's word, if Quelch can't!' said Bunter, warmly. 'I told Quelch I never even looked into the biscuit-box, and there were only half-a-dozen biscuits in it, and I never touched one of them. But did he believe me?' Bunter shook a fat head sorrowfully. 'Pretty thick to doubt a fellow's word, I think. But that's Quelch, all over. That's the sort of justice we get here. He said I was untruthful. Me, you know!'

'Oh, my hat!'

'Well, he's got it coming!' said Bunter, darkly. 'I ain't going to be called untruthful, and whopped for nothing! Perhaps Quelch will be sorry for himself when he gets the ink, what? He, he, he!'

'Not so sorry as you'll be soon afterwards, you fat ass.'

'He won't know a thing!' grinned Bunter. 'He's taking his usual trot in the quad now - under the windows. I can get him from the form-room window - nobody there after class. You can bet I shall clear off the minute he's got the ink! Who's to know?'

Harry Wharton laughed.

'Everybody who sees you, with red ink daubed on your paws, and on that pimple you call a nose,' he said.

Billy Bunter started.

'Oh! Am I inky?' he ejaculated. 'I - I never thought of that! I shall jolly well get a wash! Quelch isn't going to see any red ink about me. Why, he would tumble at once, if he saw just a spot! You have to be jolly wary, with Quelch!'

'Better forget all about it,' said Nugent. 'I'll watch it!'

'You can't do it, you fat chump!' said Harry Wharton.

'Can't I?' Billy Bunter seemed to think that he could. 'You'll jolly well see! It's safe as houses. Quelch won't know a thing, - except that he gets the ink - he, he, he! He won't begin to guess who did it - unless you take that Latin prose in to him, Wharton - then he might think it was you! He, he, he!'

Billy Bunter slipped the squirt into his pocket, and rolled to the door. Evidently the fat Owl's mind, such as it was, was made up. Few fellows in the Greyfriars Remove would have ventured to "rag" Mr. Quelch: and Billy Bunter, certainly, was not of the stuff of which heroes are made. It was a case of fools rushing in where angels feared to tread! Where there was no danger, Billy Bunter was as bold as a lion: and this extra-

ordinary enterprise, was, in Bunter's opinion, as safe as houses!

'Look here, Bunter -' urged Wharton and Nugent together.

'Can't stop!' said Bunter, 'Quelch will be gone in, and I want to catch him. Don't you fellows worry! It's safe as houses, I tell you. I say, you fellows, fancy Quelch's face, when he gets the ink! He, he, he!'

'Look here -'

'Stop!'

Billy Bunter neither looked there, nor stopped. He rolled away, with a fat grinning face. Bunter had no use for good advice. Bunter was on the war-path, and that was that!

## II

'Oh!'

Mr. Quelch jumped.

In fact, he bounded.



*Like a lion asking what he might devour.*

Never before, in the history of Greyfriars School, had the Remove master been seen to bound like a kangaroo in the quad. Now at least fifty pairs of eyes beheld him bound.

Quelch was taken entirely by surprise. He was walking, meditatively, on the path under the windows. He was deep in thought. He was not, certainly, thinking of the fastest member of his form. He did not notice that the Remove form-room window was open, and never dreamed that a pair of vengeful little round eyes blinked down at him through a pair of big round spectacles. He had forgotten the existence of William George Bunter. Much weightier matters were in his mind. He was thinking, in fact, of Quintus Horatius Flaccus: debating in his learned mind whether the ninth verse of Ode III, Book II, really began with "quo", or whether, after all, it should be "qua". There were cogent arguments on both sides of that important question: and it was the kind of problem on which Quelch loved to ponder in leisure hours.

But as a liquid stream suddenly shot through the air, and impinged upon his majestic features, Quelch forgot all about Quintus Horatius Flaccus. Whether verse nine in that particular Ode began with "quo" or with "qua" he couldn't, at that moment, have cared less. He bounded.

'Oh!' gasped Mr. Quelch, 'What - what - what -?' His hand went to his face. His fingers came away red. He stared at his fingers. He dabbed his face. 'Ink! It - it it - it is ink - red ink - Goodness gracious! What - who - how - upon my word!

Quelch stood almost petrified!

He had been squirted - squirted with red ink! It was unbelievable - incredible - impossible! But it had happened! There was

no doubt that it had happened, for his fingers were red-inky, and red ink streamed down his face. Fifty fellows, from various directions, stared at him. Some of them, sad to relate, were grinning. A form-master with a face glowing redder than a Red Indian's was a most unusual sight in the Greyfriars quad. From the point of view of thoughtless youth, it was also comic.

But if there was anything of a comic nature in the incident, it was quite lost on Quelch himself. Under the splashes of red ink, the expression on his speaking countenance rivalled that of the fabled basilisk.

'Ink!' breathed Mr. Quelch, 'Red ink! From a - a - a squirt.'

He cast an inky glare round him. No one was near at hand. He glanced at the open form-room window. That was whence it had come. Some temerarious Remove junior -!

Breathing hard, Mr. Quelch hurried away: anxious to withdraw his red-inky visage from public notice: still more anxious to track the unknown heinous squirter. A reckless fellow handling a squirt loaded with red ink was likely to have traces about him: and Quelch's gimlet-eye was going to search for the merest speck of red ink on any member of his form.

One member of his form, in those very moments, was in a bathroom, with soap and steaming hot water, indulging in an unaccustomed wash. Billy Bunter was not keen on washing: and an extra wash, as a rule, had no appeal whatever for him. But no trace of red ink was going to be spotted on Bunter by a searching gimlet-eye! A wash, and quite a thorough wash, was indicated: and for once, Billy Bunter did not spare the soap: and it was a rather breathless,

and wholly spotless, Barter that emerged at length from the bathroom: grinning all over an unusually clean fat face.

### III

"THAT fat an!" growled Harry Wharton.

"That burbling chump!" agreed Frank Nugent.

Billy Barter had had rather an exasperating effect on the charms of the Remove. Nugent had been busy cleaning up the trail of spilt ink in No. 1 Study. Wharton had a longer task before him: he had to write over again the Latin prose blotted with red ink by the ineffable Owl. He was much more disposed to look for Billy Barter and boost him: but that prose had to be shown up before tea-time: and it could not be shown up sprinkled with ink. So he sat down to his task, the ink splashed paper propped up against the inkstand before him, and set to work writing it out over again.

But that task was still unfinished, when there was a firm and well-known tread in the Remove passage. An angular form appeared in the doorway: and a pair of eyes as keen as gimlets looked into the study.

The two juniors jumped to their feet at once. They gazed at Mr. Quelch. He had washed off most of the ink. But it had been a hurried wash and there were still signs of it about his august countenance. Wharton and Nugent realised that Barter had "done it." Quelch's unusually rosy cheeks told them as much. So they were not surprised to see that there was thunder in his brow. Why he had come to their study they did not know, for a moment. But it dawned on them that Quelch was in search of the squire, and was going to visit every study



*An angular form appeared in the doorway.*

in the Remove: starting with No. 1, as it was the first in the passage.

"Wharton! Nugent! Quelch's voice was deep.

"Oh! Yes, sir! Is - is anything the matter?" stammered Wharton. "I - I haven't quite finished my prose, sir -"

"Never mind that now, Wharton! Some boy in my form has had the audacity, the reckless impertinence, the unheard-of effrontery, to squirt ink -" Quelch broke off suddenly.

The gimlet-eyes had fallen on the Latin prose propped against the inkstand on the study table. Blots of red ink on that paper leaped to the gimlet-eyes.

Quelch looked at it. He stared at it. He glared at it. He had hoped, and indeed expected, to find some trace of tell-tale red ink about the perpetrator of that unheard-of act. The merest speck would have been enough. And here was more than a speck:

here were a dozen blots of red on a Latin prose! The gimlet-eyes fairly glittered at that Latin prose.

Mr. Quelch rustled into the study.

'Wharton!'

'Oh! Yes, sir.'

'What have you been doing with red ink?'

Harry Wharton jumped.

'I, sir! Oh! Nothing, sir.'

'Nothing!' said Mr. Quelch, grimly.

'This paper, Wharton, - your Latin prose, Wharton, - is splashed with red ink. I see that you have been copying it out a second time. No doubt it was blotted with red ink, when the squirt was filled at this table, Wharton.'

'Oh, scion!'

'Wharton!' Quelch's voice was deep and stern. 'Wharton! You have been handling red ink in this study - your Latin prose is blotted with it. I need look no further. You will follow me to your head-master's study, Wharton. The most condign punishment -'

'I-I-I!' stammered Harry Wharton, 'I-I assure you sir, I-I never -'

'Have you been handling red ink in this study or not?'

'No! I-I-I-I certainly haven't -'

'Then who has?'

Mr. Quelch waited for a reply to that question. He waited in vain. Harry Wharton opened his lips - and closed them again. Really, he could not tell Quelch that it was the egregious Owl of the Remove who had handled the red ink, and blotted the Latin prose. Greyfriars men did not give one another away. He stood looking at his form-master in dismay, without speaking, while Nugent looked on helplessly. Quelch waited - grimly.

It was a tense moment.

Then, just as Quelch was about to break the silence, there came a sudden interruption. A fat figure rolled into the study doorway, with a wide grin on an unusually clean fat face - a grin so wide, that it almost extended from one fat ear to the other.

'I say, you fellows!' Billy Bunter chirruped cheerily as he rolled in, 'I say, I got him all right! He, he, he! Squirted the ink all over his chivvy! Did he look a picture? He, he, he!'

#### IV

BILLY BUNTER was full of beans. He was bubbling with satisfaction. He looked on top of the world, as he rolled grinning into No. 1 Study. He did not notice, for the moment, an unusual presence there. He expected to find Wharton and Nugent in No. 1. He did not expect to find Quelch. He did not observe the angular figure, as he grinned at the juniors.

'Got him a treat!' bubbled Bunter, 'I say, you fellows, will he be wild? He, he, he! Mind you chaps don't say anything about me borrowing that bottle of red ink. Quelch will be after that man who squirted him, like a dog after a bone! Bet you he'll be looking all over the shop for a fellow with red ink about him! He, he, he! He won't find any on me! Not a spot! Better not show up that prose of yours, Wharton - he, he, he! You'd have old Quelch on your neck, if he saw that! I say, you fellows, ain't it jolly funny? Quelch all red-inky, and he won't know it was me - he won't know a thing! Did I get him a treat, from the form-room window? He, he, he!'

Bunter chortled explosively.

'I say, you fellows, have you seen Quelch? I expect he's washing that ink off, - he, he, he! Got him right in the middle of his





*The gleeful satisfaction died off Billy Bunter's fat face. He gazed at Quelch in horror.*

features, - he, he, he! And he won't know it was me - couldn't begin to guess! And - OH!

Bunter suddenly became aware of an angular figure, and an expressive face - a very expressive face - staring at him across the study. He jumped. His little round eyes almost popped through his big round spectacles at Mr. Quelch. His plump jaw gaped.

'Oh!' he gasped.

Quelch found his voice.

'BUNTER!'

'Oh, crikey!'

'Then it was you -!'

'Oh, jimmies! The gleeful satisfaction died

off Billy Bunter's fat face, as if it had been wiped away by a duster. He gazed at Quelch in horror. He blinked at him. He goggled at him. 'Oh, lor! I - I - I didn't see you, sir - I - I - I - It wasn't me -!'

'What?'

'I - I - I never!' gasped Bunter, 'I - I didn't! I - I wouldn't! I - I haven't touched red ink to-day, sir, and I haven't just been washing it off. I - I haven't been in the form-room, sir - I - I was in the rack-shop when I was in the form-room, I - I don't know anything about it, sir. I - I never came here to borrow the ink, sir, and never filled my squirt with it - you can ask these chaps, sir - they saw me! I - I never had a

squirt, sir, and - and I lost it last term, and - and it ain't in my pocket now, sir! I - I hope you believe me, sir.'

If Billy Bunter hoped that Quelch believe him, it showed that Bunter was an optimist. The expression on Quelch's face did not indicate anything at all resembling belief.

'Bunter! It was you -!' rumbled Quelch.

'Oh! No, sir! I didn't wasn't - I - I mean I never didn't - I - I mean -'

'You will follow me to your head-master's study, Bunter.'

'Oh, crikey!'

'The most cordign punishment -'

'Oh, lor!'

'Follow me, Bunter!' thundered Mr. Quelch, and he billowed out of No. 1 Study,

And Billy Bunter, so lately grinning with happy satisfaction, but now looking as if he were understudying that ancient king who never smiled again, tottered after him, in the lowest of spirits.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent looked at one another.

'Just like Bunter!' said Harry.

'Just!' agreed Nugent.

'Well,' said Wharton, considerably, 'I won't boost him for giving me this prose to write over again. He will get enough from the Head!'

Billy Bunter, when he was seen again, looked as if he had had enough, and indeed a little over. It was a sad and sorrowful Bunter.

## HOW MANY OF THESE DO YOU KNOW?



ANSWERS ON PAGE 125