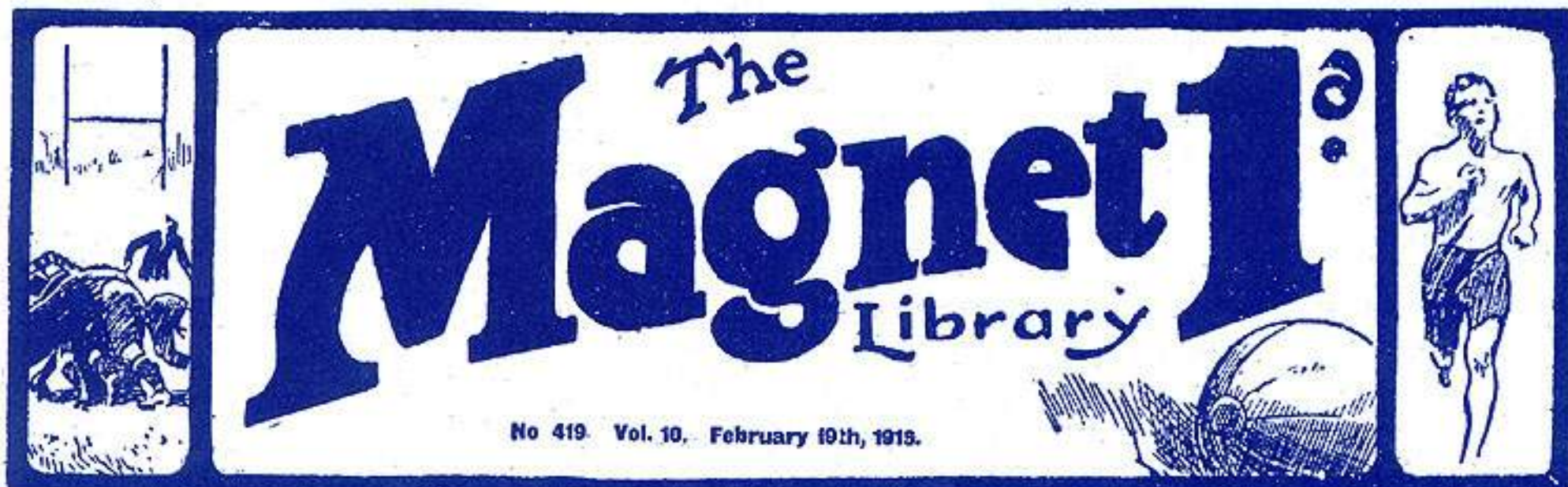


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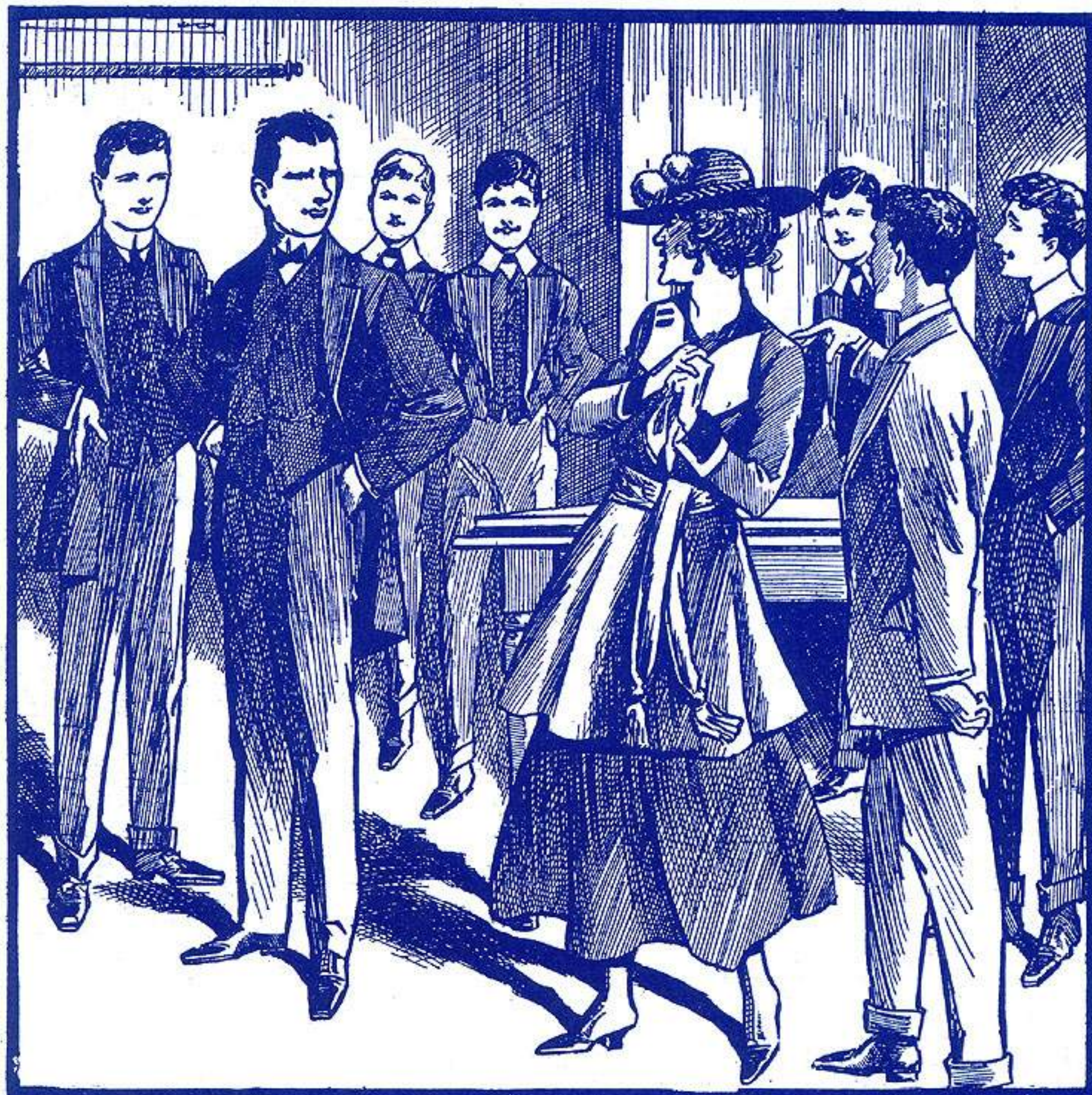
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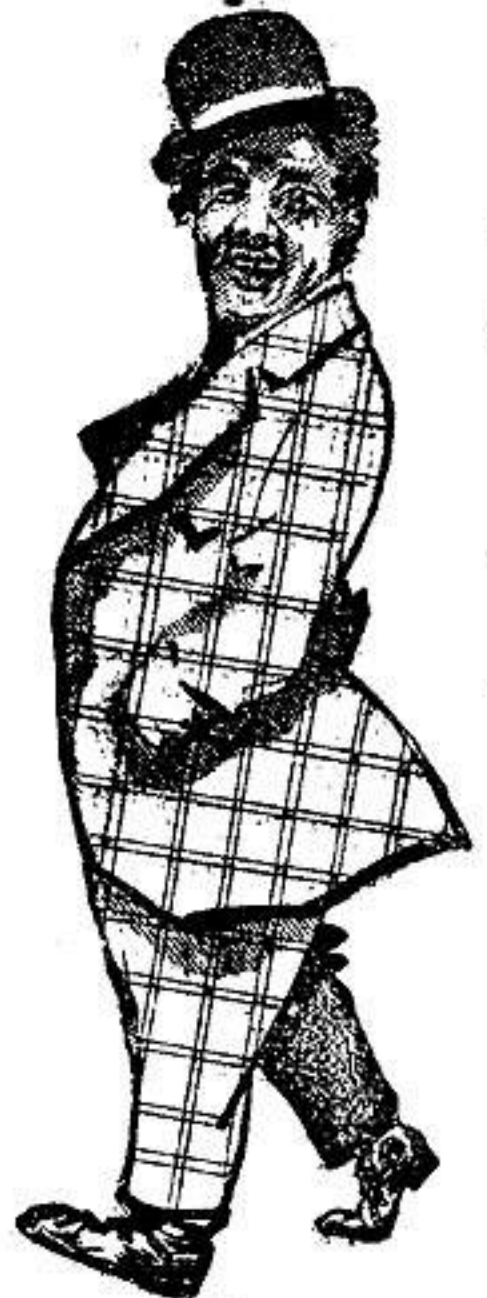
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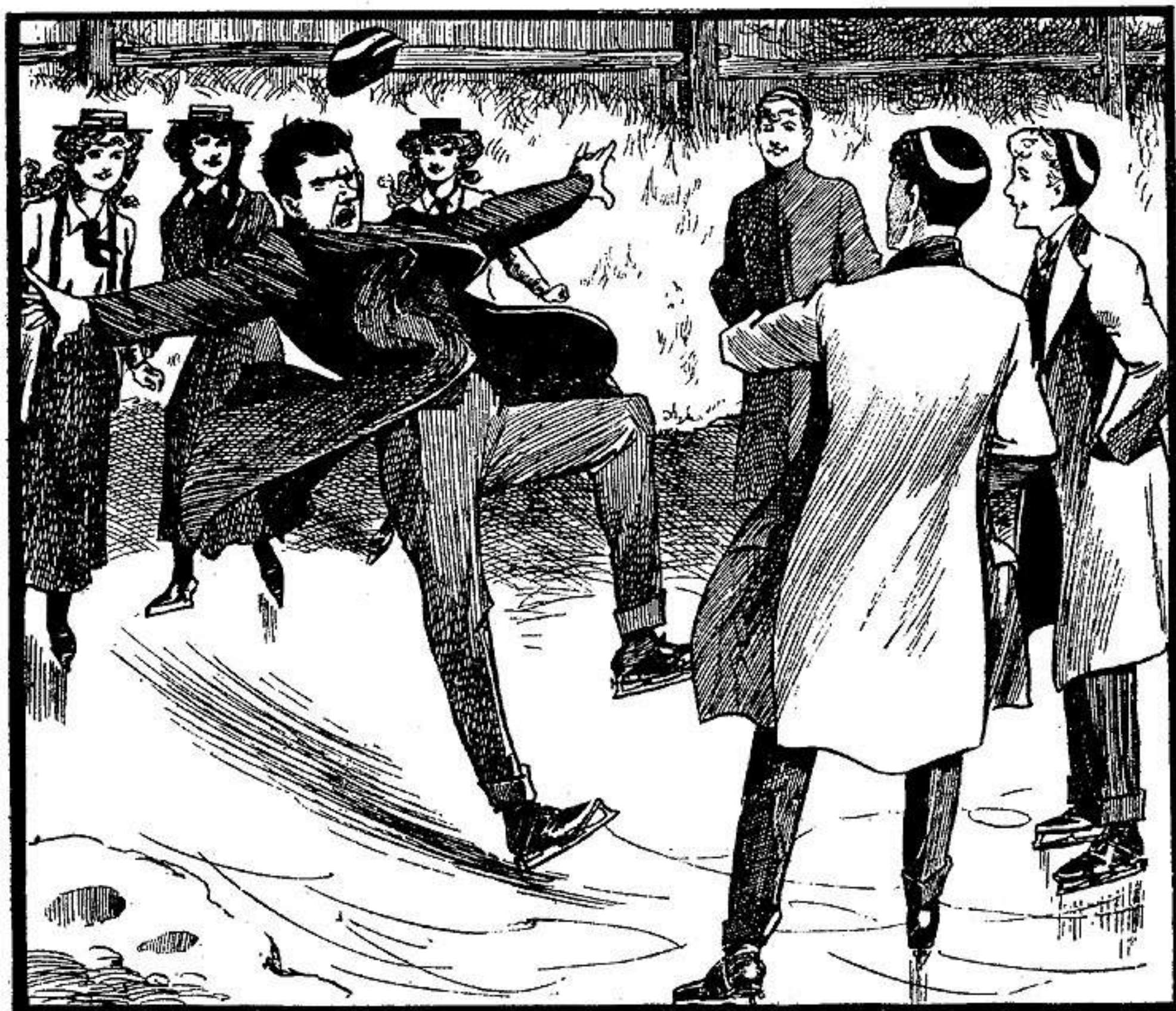


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 to a friend. . .

COKER'S ENGAGEMENT!

A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete Tale of
 Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars School.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



Coker's feet had escaped him this time. The skates shot into the air, and Horace Coker sat down with a bump. "Bravo!" roared Bob Cherry, while the whole party shrieked with merriment. "Now Coker's shown what he can do, we may as well get along. Good-bye, Coker!" "Ha, ha, ha!" (See Chapter 6.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Declined Without Thanks!

"SLACKERS!"

Wibley of the Remove made that derogatory remark.

Wibley looked into No. 1 Study, frowning.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not really look much like slackers at that moment. They had put on their coats

and scarfs, and were evidently going out. It was a fine but bitterly cold afternoon, and a keen wind was blowing from the sea. Harry Wharton and Nugent were taking their skates from a box; Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Squiff and Tom Brown already had their skates hanging from their arms. Only Hurree Janset Ram Singh looked as if he were slacking. He was seated in the armchair, with his feet on the fender, trying to keep

warm. The English winter came a little hard upon the dusky youth from India's sultry clime.

"Slackers!" repeated Wibley emphatically.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "What's the matter with you, Wib? Are you coming out?"

"No," sniffed Wibley; "I'm not coming out."

"It's a ripping afternoon," said Wharton. "The Sark's frozen as hard as iron. Get your skates and come along!"

"Rats!"

"The Cliff House girls are coming," added Frank Nugent, as an extra, irresistible inducement. "Hazel-dene's gone over for them."

"Blow Cliff House!" said Wibley ungallantly.

"Marjorie, and Clara, and Phyllis!" said Johnny Bull. "Dash it all, Wib, you ought to be glad to come!"

Snort—from Wib.

"I can lend you some skates, if you like," said Tom Brown.

"Rats! Slackers!"

"Blessed if I see where the slacking comes in!" said Harry Wharton warmly. "You look more like a slacker, sticking indoors on a day like this."

"What about the play?" hooted Wibley.

"Which play?" asked Bob innocently.

Wibley snorted again.

"There's a rehearsal this afternoon!" he growled. "What price the rehearsal? The comedy's coming off next week, ain't it—the 'Girl with the Golden Hair'?"

"Oh, bless the 'Girl with the Golden Hair'!" said Squiff. "We're going out skating this afternoon. You can rehearse all on your own for once."

"Inky will rehearse with you," said Wharton, laughing. "Inky doesn't like ice."

The Nabob of Bhanipur shivered.

"The icefulness of this esteemed beastly climate is terrific," he remarked. "I will rehearsefully stay in with the sublime Wibley."

There was an ungrateful snort from Wibley.

Wibley was the great shining light of the Remove Dramatic Society. Since Wibley had come to Greyfriars, Harry Wharton had cheerfully yielded to him the management and presidency of that thriving institution.

Wib was not keen on skating, or even footer, or on anything but amateur theatricals. He spurred on the Dramatic Society almost as keenly as Wharton did the football eleven.

As a rule, the juniors were keen enough about the Dramatic Society. But there were other claims. A rehearsal of the new comedy, written by Wibley, had been fixed for that afternoon. But the hard freezing of the Sark put a different complexion on the matter.

Wibley had written that comedy very carefully—round himself. Wibley was a remarkable actor—especially good in feminine parts. "The Girl with the Golden Hair" was specially designed to show off Wib's own wonderful abilities. Wibley took the title-role.

Indeed, some of the junior actors had remarked, with a tincture of dissatisfaction, that the play was all Wib; Wib at the beginning, Wib in the middle, and Wib at the end.

To which Wibley had cheerfully responded that, in writing a play, it was essential to bear in mind the importance of giving every opportunity to the best actor in the cast.

But rehearsals were evidently "off" this afternoon. Skating was on. Hence the frown upon the youthful brow of Wibley of the Remove.

"Slackers!" he repeated. "I've a jolly good mind to leave you fellows out of the cast——"

"Eh?"

"And call on the Fifth-Form Stage Club to help," said Wibley wrathfully. "Coker would jump at the chance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle! Look here, I told you all that the rehearsal was fixed for this afternoon——"

"But you didn't tell us the Sark was going to freeze," grinned Johnny Bull.

"Rats! Slackers! Yah!"

And Wibley stamped away to his study, to go through a "rehearsal" on his own, as the "Girl with the Golden Hair." The chums of the Remove grinned. Amateur

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theatricals were all very well, but not on a keen afternoon when the Sark was frozen, and Marjorie and Clara and Phyllis were coming out to skate.

"Ready!" said Wharton, looking at his watch. "They'll be there at three, so we'd better buzz off. Sure you won't come, Inky?"

The nabob shook his dusky head.

"If my esteemed chums will excuse me, I will remain-fully sit by the fire," he replied. "The coldfulness is felt bonefully by my august self."

"Well, have tea ready at five," said Bob Cherry. "We've got lady visitors coming, you know."

"The tea shall be readyful."

Harry Wharton & Co. sallied forth, in great spirits. They came out of the School House in a merry crowd. A good many other fellows were going out with their skates. Coker and Potter and Greene, of the Fifth, were on the steps of the School House, also with skates. Potter and Greene seemed anxious to be off, but Horace Coker was apparently waiting for someone.

He came towards the juniors as they came out, with a genial expression on his face. Coker was not always genial to juniors. Probably the great Horace had an axe to grind on the present occasion.

"Going out?" he asked.

"Going out?" repeated Bob Cherry. "My dear chap, how did you guess that?"

"Well, as you've got your skates, and your coats on——" said Coker, looking a little puzzled.

"Talk about Sherlock Holmes!" said Bob, in great admiration. "Old Holmes was a fool to Coker! He's deduced that we're going out, simply by seeing our coats and skates. Wonderful, my dear Watson!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker frowned.

"You young sweeps are going out skating?" he exclaimed.

"Right again!" said Bob cheerily. "Isn't it wonderful how old Coker hits the nail on the head every time? He must have deduced that from our skates. You ought to be a detective, Coker."

Coker made a movement towards the festive Bob, but he checked himself. For once, apparently, Coker of the Fifth did not want trouble with the Remove. Generally, the great Horace seemed to go around looking for trouble. So far as the Remove were concerned, he often found it, too.

"Cliff House girls coming, what?" said Coker, with elaborate carelessness.

"Yes," said Harry.

"Good! I'll come with you."

This was a great concession from Coker. It was but seldom that he would have been willing to be found dead, so to speak, in the company of mere juniors of the Lower Fourth.

Sad to say, this generous concession was received with the blackest ingratitude by the juniors concerned.

"Thanks, you won't!" said Wharton tersely.

"What!" ejaculated Coker.

"You see, the ice wouldn't be safe if you took your feet on it," explained Bob Cherry. "It wouldn't stand more than a couple of hundredweight."

"You cheeky young sweep!" roared Coker.

And Coker's geniality and patience both being at an end, he made a rush at Bob Cherry, and grasped him by both ears.

"Yow-ow!" roared Bob. "Rescue!"

Like one man the merry Removites swarmed upon Coker, and in the twinkling of an eye the great Horace was whirled over, and placed upon the steps in a sitting position, gasping for breath. His tie was jerked out, and his cap rammed down his back, and the Removites streamed away to the gates, chuckling.

"Gerooo-woow-wooooh!" gasped Coker.

Harry Wharton & Co. disappeared out of the gates. Coker gasped, and gasped, and gasped, and blinked at Potter and Greene. Potter and Greene were smiling.

"You thumping asses," gasped Coker, "can't you lend a fellow a hand? Groooh! Mum-mum-my cap's down my b-b-back, you silly chumps! Draggitout! Groooh! I'll scalp those young scoundrels. What are you cackling at, you silly idiots? Yooooop!"



"Talk about Sherlock Holmes!" said Bob Cherry, in great admiration. "Old Holmes was a fool to Coker! He's deduced that we're going out, simply by seeing our coats and skates. Wonderful, my dear Watson!" "Ha, ha, ha!" (See Chapter 1.)

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Left Out!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter's big glasses glimmered into No. 1 Study.

The fat junior blinked round the study in surprise. There was no one to be seen.

"Well, of all the rotters!" said Bunter in disgust. "Gone out, and never told me. Beasts!"

Billy Bunter snorted with disgust. It was an unpardonable sin for Harry Wharton & Co. to go out without acquainting the Owl of the Remove with their intentions. Who was to cash Bunter's postal order now—the postal order he was expecting to arrive shortly?

"Rotters!" murmured Bunter. "I—I wonder if there's anything in the cupboard. That beast Cherry was shopping this afternoon at Mrs. Mimble's, and that beast Nugent too. Beasts!"

Billy Bunter trod cautiously into the study.

He had been left out of the afternoon's excursion, but there was compensation if the study cupboard was well supplied with provisions. In that case, Bunter could forgive the Co. for going out—in fact, he would prefer their room to their company. He opened the cupboard door and blinked in, and his little round eyes gleamed behind his spectacles.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"FLOORING FISHY!"

"Oh, crumbs! Gorgeous!"

Bunter's eyes danced. A goodly array was spread before his greedy eyes. There was a pie, and a pudding, and sausages, and ham, and a large cake, and a jar of jam, and several jars of preserves. Evidently No. 1 Study had been laying in a large supply for a special occasion.

As Bunter blinked into the cupboard, a slim form rose from the armchair before the fire, and turned silently towards him. The high back of the chair had screened Hurree Jamset Ram Singh from view.

The nabob grinned.

Billy Bunter started on a plate of jam-tarts. He took one in each hand, and they fairly flew to his mouth. At the same moment, a grip of iron fell upon his collar from behind.

Billy Bunter jumped—and choked. His mouth was full—too full—and in the sudden surprise the jam-tart went the wrong way.

"Gurrrrrrrg!"

Bunter wriggled and gurgled spasmodically. He twisted round, and found a dusky face smiling at him.

"Yooogh!" spluttered Bunter—"groooogh! Leggo, you beast! Yow-ow! I—I thought you were gone out—grooh—I mean I came in specially to have a chat with you, old chap. Yowp!"

"The esteemed Bunter is a lieful fat bounder."

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Oh, really, Inky—groogh! I say, old fellow—Leggo! Can you lend me a pair of skates? Yow-ow! Leggo, you black beast!"

Shake, shake, shake!

"Groogh! I'm chook-chook-choking! Yow-ow!"

"The esteemed fat Bunter should keep his ridiculous paws from the pickfulness and the stealfulness!" purred Hurree Singh, shaking away.

"Yow-wow! Leggo! I was only tut-tut-trying the tarts, to sus-sus-see if they were goo-goo-good!"

"The whopperfulness is terrific. But the esteemed lying Bunter shall have the tarts!"

"Leggo, then! Yow-ow-oh, you black beast—you beastly nigger. Yow-ow!"

Hurree Singh grasped Bunter's wrist, and forced his fat hand to his fat face. The fat and juicy jam-tart was dabbed fairly on Bunter's fat little nose.

It stuck there, and Bunter gurgled and snorted wildly.

"Groogh—snoogh!"

"Now the retirefulness is the proper caper," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh cheerfully. "And if the venerable rotten Bunter comes backfully, he shall have another tart neckfully."

Bump!

Billy Bunter sat down outside the study door and roared. He dabbed the tart from his face, and rubbed the jam off with his handkerchief. The handkerchief was not over-clean to begin with, but it was in a shocking state when Bunter had finished mopping off the jam.

"Yow! You black beast! Wow! I'll jolly well lick you!" bawled Bunter. "You black nigger— Yow-ow!"

There came a chuckle from within the study. Hurree Janset Ram Singh was embracing the fire again, and he did not feel inclined to leave it for Bunter.

"Come out here, you inky-faced bounder, and I'll mop up the passage with you!" roared Bunter.

"Come infully, my esteemed Bunter!"

"Yah! Funk!" bawled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah! You're afraid to come out, you nigger."

"Will not the esteemed Bunter step infully?"

"Yah! Funk!"

"Then I will come outfully!" said the nabob, rising.

Billy Bunter did not wait for Hurree Singh to come "outfully." He slithered down the passage at a great speed, and his footsteps died away. Hurree Singh grinned and dropped into the armchair again.

"Beast!" mumbled Bunter, pausing at the stairs to blink back, and ascertain whether he was pursued. "Rotter! I've a jolly good mind to go back and give that nigger an awful hiding, only—only he ain't worth the trouble! I wonder where those beasts have gone skating? Somewhere along the Sark, of course, Rotters! They know Marjorie will be downhearted if I'm not there. And Phyllis, too—she's awfully taken with me—that new girl at Cliff House. I—I'll ask that beastly nigger!"

The Owl of the Remove crept back cautiously to No. 1 Study.

"I—I say, Inky, old chap—"

"Does the esteemed Bunter require more jam-tarts nosefully?"

"Oh, really, Inky! Where have my pals gone?"

"I have not the esteemed honour to be acquainted with Bunter's estimable pals."

"You know whom I mean, you beast—Wharton and the rest," growled Bunter. "I was really one of the party, only they've forgotten. That rotter Cherry lent me a tanner, and they went while I was having some ginger-pop. I believe it was a rotten dodge."

Inky chuckled.

"I want to find them, Inky, old chap. Which way?" asked Bunter persuasively.

The nabob considered.

"Turn rightfully from the school gates, my esteemed Bunter—"

"Yes, yes."

"And keep straight onfully."

"But—but how far?"

"A mile and a half."

"But that'll bring me to Courtfield."

"Exactfully."

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"Are they in Courtfield?" demanded Bunter.

The nabob shook his head.

"You inky ass, what am I to go to Courtfield for, if they're not there?" roared the exasperated Bunter.

"Because they are not there, my esteemed fat duffer!"

Billy Bunter's very glasses glimmered with rage. He shook a fat fist at the grinning nabob, and slammed the study door with a terrific slam.

"Some other beast will know," he reflected. "I'll ask some other beast!"

The Owl of the Remove proceeded along the passage, looking in at the studies. But the studies seemed to be empty. Nearly everybody was out of doors that afternoon. But a movement within Wibley's study showed that somebody was at home there. Billy Bunter jerked the door open.

"I say, you fellows—"

Then Bunter jumped.

The study belonged to Wibley, Rake, Morgan, and Micky Desmond. None of those youths could be seen—or at least recognised. Bunter's eyes almost started through his spectacles at the sight of a fashionably-dressed young lady, apparently about twenty, who was doing her hair before the glass.

"Oh, crumbs!" ejaculated Bunter.

The young lady turned her face from the glass. It was a fresh and blooming face—not very pretty, perhaps, but decidedly blooming, with masses of golden hair coiled over it.

"Good-afternoon!" said a high-pitched voice.

"Oh, jiminy!" gasped Bunter, blinking at the young lady with round eyes. "Wha-at on earth are you doing here? Are you Wib's sister?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the young lady. "No, I'm Wib!"

"Oh, Wib, you ass!"

"Jolly good, isn't it?" said Wibley. "I'm the Girl with the Golden Hair in the comedy. You didn't know me, Bunter?"

"Oh, yes, I did," said Bunter. "I was only pulling your leg, you know!"

"You didn't!" exclaimed Wibley indignantly.

"Rats! I knew you at once!" said Bunter. "You can't act, Wib. If the fellows had any sense, they'd give me that part in the play. Now, I could make up as a girl splendidly. What you want for that is a good figure, you know!"

"Why, you tubby fathead—"

"Oh, really, Wibley, you needn't be jealous of a chap's figure! Of course, I knew you at once. Girls don't have feet that size, or noses like that, either!"

"You didn't know me!" shouted Wibley wrathfully. "You took me for a girl, you know you did, you fat rotter!"

Bunter grinned. It was always easy to "draw" Wibley by casting aspersions upon his abilities as an actor. It was Wib's tender spot.

"My dear chap," said Bunter, "you can't act. Besides, as a girl, you know—look at your features! Girls don't have features like yours—not unless they've been in a railway accident, you know! Why—Hullo! Why, you rotter—Yarrah!"

The shining light of the Dramatic Society was fed-up. A cushion hurtled across the study, and caught Billy Bunter on the chest. He went out of the study doorway as from a catapult.

Wibley slammed the door. He was exceedingly proud of his success as the "Girl with the Golden Hair," and Bunter's remarks were quite uncalled for. Billy Bunter picked himself up, grunting. He remembered, rather late, that he had called on Wibley for information. He opened the door cautiously.

"I say, Wib, old man—"

"Clear off!" roared Wibley.

"But I say, you know— Oh! Ah!"

Crash! Bunter closed the door just in time, and the

ANSWERS

cushion crashed on it instead of on Bunter. Evidently there was nothing doing. Bunter bestowed a kick on the door, and rolled away disconsolately.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Obliges!

"HERE'S Coker, at last!" yawned Potter.

Horace Coker had gone in to change his collar. It required changing, after the playful attentions of the Removites.

"Well, are we going out to skate, or are we staying here on these blessed steps all the afternoon?" asked Greene, in a tired voice.

Coker was frowning. The dignity of the great man of the Fifth had been ruffled. He was not in a good humour.

"Don't you jaw, Greene!" he said.

"Well, are we going?" asked Potter.

"We're going—in time," said Coker. "Those young villains have cleared off, I see. Did you notice which way they went?"

"Out of gates," said Potter.

"I know that, fathead! I suppose they weren't going to skate on the fountain!" snorted Coker. "I mean, after they went out of gates."

"You see, I can't see through a brick wall!" said Potter politely. "If I could, I'd tell you which way they went, with pleasure. But I can't. Sorry!"

"I suppose they're gone down to the river," said Greene, puzzled. "What the dickens does it matter?"

"But what part of the river?" growled Coker. "That's what I want to know."

"I suppose you don't want to join a party of Lower Fourth fags?" said Potter, with heavy sarcasm.

"I jolly well sha'n't, I know that!" said Greene.

"I don't want to," said Coker. "But I'm going to. The Cliff House girls are going to skate with them."

"Well?" said Potter.

"Well, it's hardly safe for them to skate without a senior to look after them," said Coker. "Besides, I rather like that new girl at Cliff House—Phyllis Something-or-Other."

"Phyllis Growl, isn't it?" yawned Potter.

"No, it isn't. Howell, that's the name."

"Yes, I knew it was Howl, or Growl, or Yowl, or something."

"If you're going to be funny, George Potter——"

"I leave that to you, Cokey, old man! Do you mean to say that you want to go out skating with a schoolgirl?" demanded Potter. "Are you taking to chasing in your old age, you frabjous ass?"

Coker coloured. As a matter of absolute fact, the bright eyes of the fair Phyllis had produced an extraordinary effect on Horace Coker.

As a rule, Coker was quite indifferent on the subject of the gentle sex. True, he had displayed unwonted sheepishness in the presence of a certain fair cousin he possessed. But girls, generally, did not amount to much in Coker's estimation. He sometimes condescended to take notice of the Cliff House girls, in a lofty and condescending manner, such as befitted so great a man. Indeed, he had—unconsciously—furnished Marjorie & Co. with a good deal of merriment. But it seemed that a change had come over the great Horace.

Potter and Greene noted the colour deepening in his rugged face, and they stared.

"The fact is," said Coker, "skating is rather a dangerous sport. I don't think those kids ought to be allowed to take girls on the ice, without a senior to look after them. That's my idea."

"You've never worried about them before," said Greene.

"Well, I've thought of it, and I think it's my duty to keep an eye on them—as a senior."

"Only as a senior?" asked Potter. "Not as a silly ass—not as a burbling idiot, by any chance?"

"Look here, Potter——"

"Well, you can go out skating with a gang of fags and a parcel of schoolgirls, if you like, Coker, but I'm jolly well not going to!" said Potter emphatically. "I'm off!"

"And so jolly well am I!" said Greene, with equal emphasis.

And Potter and Greene walked away, wrathfully, with

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"FLOORING FISHY!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

their skates clinking. Horace Coker stared after them wrathfully. Potter and Greene were always his devoted followers; indeed, it was generally considered marvellous how they stood Coker. Apparently there was a limit, and it had been reached.

"Silly asses!" growled Coker.

The great Coker stood on the steps, somewhat at a loss. His sense of duty as a senior, perhaps, led him to resolve to superintend the junior skating that afternoon. His chums had deserted him, and he did not know in what direction Harry Wharton & Co. had gone. With astounding cheek, the Removites had declined the honour of his company.

Coker had had it all mapped out—how he was going to impress the bright-eyed Phyllis with a wonderful exhibition of skating; how he was going to take her away from the party she belonged to, and appropriate her for the afternoon, show her what a really fine fellow he was, and air himself generally. Phyllis would have a ripping time—Coker had no doubt whatever about that—and he would have a ripping time, and everything in the garden—or, at least, on the ice—would be lovely!

That chipping into the Remove party, and appropriating one of their girl-friends, was an awful cheek on his part did not occur to the mighty brain of Coker of the Fifth. Neither did it occur to him that Phyllis might possibly have some objection to being appropriated.

"Rotten!" growled Coker. "Now, where the thunder are they gone? Somewhere on the Sark—but it might be anywhere for miles! Br-r-r-r! Hallo, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter came out, and stopped as Coker hailed him. He stood ready to dodge, surmising that the senior intended to pull his ear. Coker had what he called a short way with fags. But the great man's intentions were quite friendly now.

"Do you know where Wharton and those young rotters are gone, Bunter? You generally know everything," said Coker.

As a matter of fact, that was one thing that Bunter did not know. But he did not say so.

"My pals have gone out skating, Coker."

"Yes; but where?"

"On the Sark."

"Do you think I suppose they've gone out skating on the Mersey?" snapped Coker. "I know they've gone on the Sark. But where?"

"That's telling," said Bunter calmly.

Coker made a movement towards him, and Bunter dodged. Coker paused.

"Would you like some tarts, Bunter?" he asked.

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter. "I—I mean, I don't mind having a feed with you, old chap."

Coker writhed at the "old chap" from a Remove fag; but he contained himself.

"Well, I'll stand you a dozen tarts if you tell me where they're gone," he said.

"Tuppenny ones?" said Bunter instantly.

"Yes, you Shylock!" growled Coker.

"Come on, then!"

"This way to the gates!" said Coker, as they started off from the steps.

"This way to the tuckshop!" said Bunter cheerfully.

Coker snorted, and followed the Owl of the Remove into the tuckshop. Mrs. Mumble eyed Bunter grimly. The fat junior had already been seeking credit that afternoon—seeking it in vain. It was unavailing to point out to Mrs. Mumble that vast businesses were built up on a system of credit. Perhaps Mrs. Mumble was satisfied with a small business. At all events, she declined to give Bunter "tick."

But Coker's order was promptly attended to. Coker had heaps of money—his Aunt Judy saw to that.

"A dozen tuppenny tarts for this fat rotter!" was Coker's polite and courteous way of giving the order.

But Bunter didn't mind—he had the tarts! He started at once. Coker glared at him impatiently.

"Well, where are they gone?" he demanded.

"Eh! Who?" said Bunter absently.

Bunter was thinking of those tarts.

"Those fags!" roared Coker.

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"Oh, Wharton! I say, Coker, I'm rather dry; I always like ginger-pop with my tarts."

"Where are they gone?"

"I'm trying to remember. I could remember ever so much better if I had some ginger-pop——"

"Give the pig a bottle of ginger-pop, Mrs. Mumble!"

"Yes, Master Coker."

"Now where are they gone, Bunter?"

"Ahem! I say, Coker, what about doughnuts?"

"Doughnuts!" ejaculated Coker.

"Yes. I'll stand you treat when I get my postal-order, you know. I should like some doughnuts after the tarts—— Here, hallo! Wharrer you at?" roared Bunter.

Coker had seized him by the back of the neck.

"Now, tell me where they're gone, you fat spoofer?"

"Yaroooh!"

"If you don't want this ginger-beer down the back of your neck——"

"Gurroogh! Leggo! I'll tell you!" spluttered Bunter.

"They—they're gone——" The Owl of the Remove cudgelled his brains, wondering where on earth Harry Wharton & Co. were gone. He had to tell Coker.

"Well, where?" said Coker grimly, picking up the glass of ginger-beer.

Bunter blinked at it apprehensively.

"Oh, really, Coker, I'm just going to tell you!" he gasped. "They—they've gone down the Sark—I mean, up the Sark—near the island, you know. Near old Popper's island. That's it."

"Oh, good!" said Coker.

He strode out of the tuckshop without wasting another moment on Bunter. The fat junior snorted angrily, and set his collar straight. Then he grinned.

"I wonder if they've gone to the island?" he murmured. "Not likely! Might be a row with Sir Hilton Popper if they did! Anyway, I hope Coker runs into old Popper and gets a licking! Groooogh!"

And, much comforted with that idea, Billy Bunter went on with the jam-tarts and the ginger-pop.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Ponsonby Loses His Cap:

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here we are again!" The chums of the Remove had reached the frozen river, at a distance of some half a mile from Greystriars, down the stream. The Sark, which bubbled and sang among the green rushes in summer-time, was frozen hard, and gleaming in the sun. The Co. put on their skates while they waited for the Cliff House party; but they had not long to wait.

Hazeldene of the Remove, with his sister Marjorie and Miss Clara and Phyllis Howell, came down on the other side of the river, and Bob Cherry's stentorian voice greeted them.

The three girls looked very pretty and charming. Miss Phyllis was looking very vivacious, and her dark eyes were very bright.

"Here we are," said Hazel. "Kept you waiting, what? I've been kicking my heels at Cliff House while Marjorie did her hair."

"Marjorie was doing my hair," said Miss Clara.

"Oh, your hair, was it?" said Hazel indifferently. "I knew it was somebody's mop."

To which Miss Clara rejoined disdainfully:

"Rats!"

"Well, here we are," said Wharton cheerily. "It's a ripping afternoon for skating! Got your skates?"

"I've got 'em," said Hazel. "They gave me the lot to carry."

"Let me fasten 'em for you, Marjorie," said Bob.

"Thank you!"

The skates were soon on, and the three girls glided on the smooth ice. It was a merry party, in the clear, cold, winter afternoon. The ice was perfect. Marjorie and Clara were good skaters, and Miss Phyllis soon showed that she knew how to skate. The sound of merry voices floated over the frozen river, and echoed among the leafless trees.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Highcliffe cads!" said Bob Cherry suddenly, pausing in a figure he was executing.

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Three juniors came speeding along the ice from up the river. They were Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Vavasour, of Highcliffe School. They slowed down as they spotted the Greystriars juniors.

"Greystriars cads!" said Ponsonby.

"Keep off the grass!" said Gadsby. "They're two to one, Pon."

Ponsonby grinned.

"They can't rag us with the girls there, you duffer."

"Well, that's so. Chip 'em!"

And Ponsonby & Co. paused to look on, with the supercilious smiles for which the Highcliffe faces were famous.

Harry Wharton & Co. continued to skate, taking no notice of them. As a rule, they were ready enough for rags with their old rivals of Highcliffe; but the presence of the three girls made them unusually pacific.

"Hallo! Are you skating, Bob Cherry?" called out Ponsonby.

"Can't you see I'm skating?" replied Bob.

"Oh, I see! You call it skating?"

Bob turned a little pink. He was a very good skater, and Ponsonby's remark was quite uncalled-for. But he did not reply.

"Miss Phyllis, that ice isn't safe!" called out Ponsonby. Phyllis looked round.

"It is quite safe, I think," she said coldly. Miss Phyllis did not like Ponsonby.

"Not with Bob Cherry's feet on it," explained Ponsonby.

Miss Howell bit her lip, as Bob's face turned crimson. The Greystriars junior clenched his hand, but unclenched it again.

"Oh, buzz off!" said Miss Phyllis. "Run away, Ponsonby!"

"Eh?"

"Your face worries us," said Miss Phyllis calmly.

Ponsonby's face was a study for a moment. Miss Phyllis glided on, leaving him standing, and Gadsby and Vavasour grinning.

"Cheeky little cat!" muttered Ponsonby. "What are you sniggering at, you silly duffers. Jolly good mind to bump her over on the ice!"

"Here, cheese it!" said Vavasour, in alarm. "They'd jolly soon bump us over, you ass! Don't play the giddy ox!"

"Rats! I'm a better skater than any fellow here," said Ponsonby arrogantly. "They couldn't run me down."

"Better leave the cads alone," said Gadsby. "Look here, if you're going to row with a crowd of them, I'm off."

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour.

"Well, cut off," said Ponsonby. "I'm going to collar that fatheaded Bob Cherry's cap, and take it home to Highcliffe as a trophy."

"Ha, ha! Good egg, if you can do it!"

"You watch me," said Pon.

Gadsby and Vavasour skated on. They intended to watch, but from a safe distance. Ponsonby skated towards Bob Cherry, who was gliding at a good speed along the ice, in the wake of Miss Phyllis.

"I—I say, Cherry!" called out Ponsonby suddenly. "I—I'm going over! Lend me a hand!"

Good-natured Bob whirled round to him. Ponsonby had been chipping him, but Bob would have lent a hand to his worst enemy at any time. Ponsonby was staggering on his skates, and certainly looked like going over. Bob glided quickly up to him, and caught him by the shoulder.

"Steady!" he said cheerily. "Why—what—— Oh, you cad!"

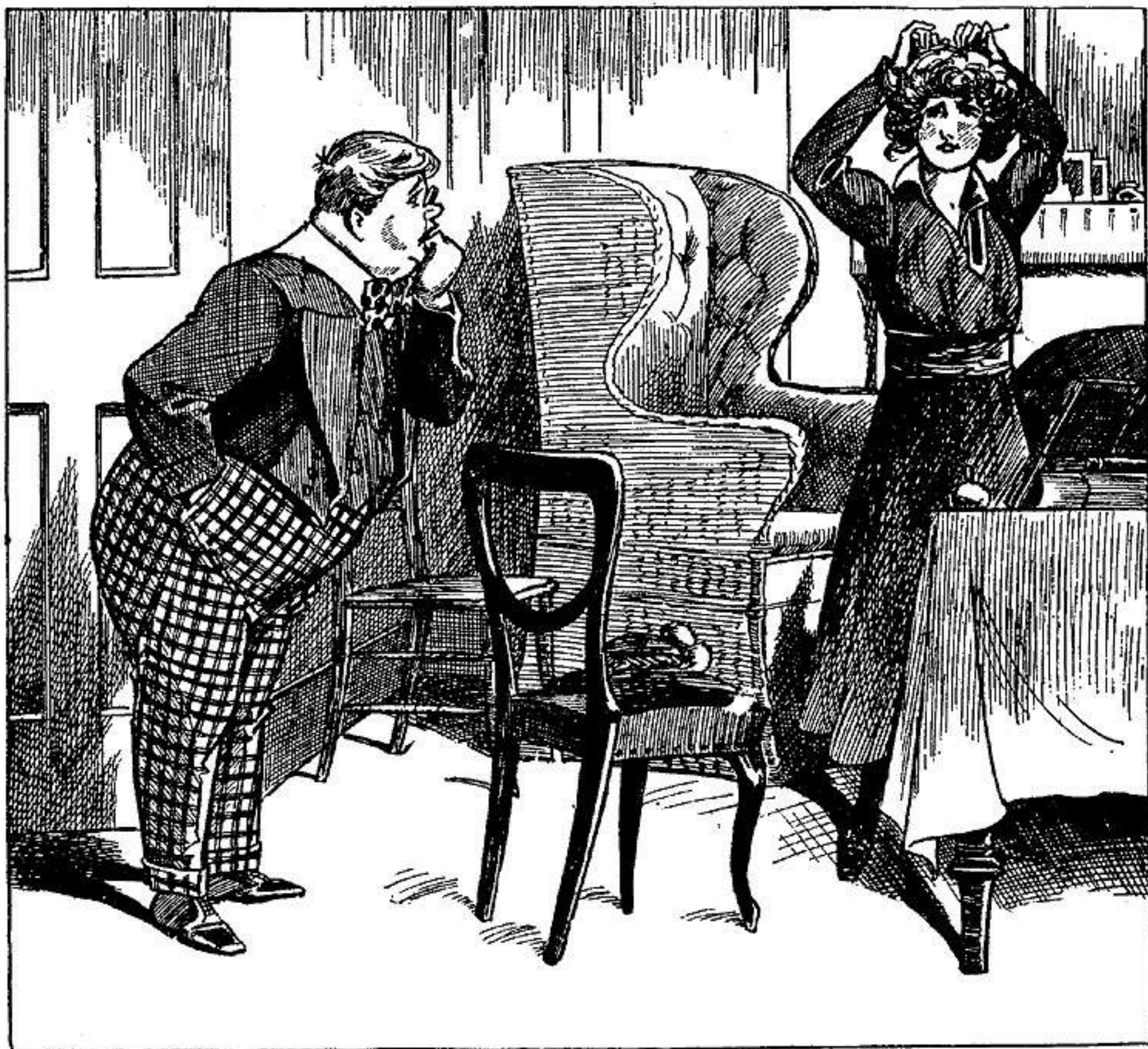
Ponsonby's staggering ceased all of a sudden, as Bob came alongside. He snatched the junior's cap, and smote him across the face with it, and darted away at top speed.

"Yoop!" gasped Bob.

The attack was so treacherous and unexpected that it took Bob quite off his guard. He staggered wildly, and went down with a bump on the ice. He sat up and roared.

"Yow-oop! Collar that cad!"

But Ponsonby was speeding up the river like lightning,



"Oh, jlminy!" gasped Bunter, blinking at the young lady with round eyes. "Wha-at on earth are you doing here? Are you Wib's sister?" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the young lady. "No, I'm Wib!" (See Chapter 2.)

and he was far beyond the clutches of the Greyfriars juniors. Miss Phyllis had looked back. She had seen the action, and Ponsonby came speeding towards her. He had only the girl to pass to escape with the trophy. And he did not anticipate any difficulty in passing Phyllis.

But for once the cad of Highcliffe reckoned without his host.

Bob Cherry floundered to his feet, and dashed in pursuit, though with little chance of success, for Ponsonby was a hundred yards ahead, and going at express speed. Two or three of the juniors followed him.

Ponsonby shot past Miss Phyllis, waving the captured cap in triumph as he went. The next minute he glanced over his shoulder, grinning. Bob Cherry and his chums were far behind. But, to his amazement, Miss Phyllis was in pursuit, close on his track.

"My hat!" ejaculated Ponsonby.

Miss Phyllis' pretty face was very determined. Ponsonby laughed and rushed on; but he soon realised that the pursuer was the better skater of the two. Miss Phyllis drew level. Ponsonby dodged, and the girl followed.

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"FLOORING FISHY!"

"Keep off!" shouted Ponsonby. "What the dickens do you want?"

"I want that cap, and yours, too!" said Miss Phyllis coolly.

"Eh—what? My cap!" stuttered Ponsonby.

"Yes."

"Why, you silly duffer—"

"Duffer yourself!" said Miss Phyllis cheerily. "Now, then—"

Ponsonby dodged again, but he dodged in vain. He circled round and brandished the cap.

"Mind, I shall hit you if you come any nearer!" he exclaimed savagely.

The girl laughed merrily. She was a much better skater than Ponsonby, and could make rings round him on the ice. She came nearer, and Ponsonby made a savage slash with Bob Cherry's cap.

"I could push you over as easily as anything, and you couldn't touch me," said Miss Phyllis cheerily. "You are a duffer! You can't skate for toffee!"

"You're a cheeky little cat!" retorted Ponsonby.

"Thank you! Now for the cap!"

Phyllis made a sudden catch at it, and Ponsonby struck out with the cap, careless whether he hurt the

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fresh young face or not. But the face was not there—Miss Phyllis dodged like lightning. Ponsonby overbalanced himself, and his skates clattered wildly as he sought to recover. In a twinkling the cap was caught from his hand, and then his own cap was jerked from his head. With a cap in either hand, Miss Phyllis skated merrily back towards her friends.

Ponsonby clattered bareheaded, white with fury.

"You little minx!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The enraged Highcliffe junior skated in pursuit, but the sight of the Greyfriars skaters coming up hand-over-fist made him halt. He did not want to encounter Bob Cherry. To skate home bareheaded to Highcliffe was humiliating, but there was no help for it. He turned and fled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Miss Phyllis tossed Bob Cherry his cap, and Bob caught it.

"Thanks!" he said. "Ha, ha, ha! Poor old Pon—licked by a girl! Ha, ha, ha!"

Miss Phyllis laughed, and tossed Ponsonby's cap upon the bank. It was there, if the dandy of Highcliffe chose to fetch it. But he was not likely to choose while the Greyfriars fellows were on the river. He overtook Vavasour and Gadsby, skating towards Highcliffe. His two chums were yelling.

"Rippin', by gad!" shrieked Gadsby. "Where's your cap, Pon?"

"Toppin'," gasped Vavasour. "The fellows'll think you've joined the Hatless Club when we get in, Pon."

Ponsonby snorted.

"Why don't you go back for your cap?" grinned Gadsby.

"Oh, shut up!"

Ponsonby plunged on, in a towering rage. He wanted his cap, but not for any inducement whatever would he have gone back to fetch it. And all the sympathy he received from his comrades was expressed in loud chortling.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

In the Hands of the Philistines!

"**H**UH!"

Coker of the Fifth gave that expressive grunt, as he halted on the river-bank opposite the island.

He had followed Bunter's veracious directions. To do so he had been obliged to trespass on the property of Sir Hilton Popper, an irascible old gentleman with whom the Greyfriars fellows had had many rubs.

But Coker was not bothering about Sir Hilton Popper. He was thinking of the skating party, and the impression he was to make upon Miss Phyllis with his own wonderful powers in that line.

The island rose from the frozen surface of the Sark, grim and leafless and deserted. Coker stood on the bank and blinked at it savagely. There was certainly no sign of Harry Wharton & Co., or the girls of Cliff House.

"P'r'aps they're on the other side of the island," he murmured. "They must be about here—Bunter said so. I suppose he knew—the spying little toad knows everything that goes on. Well, I'll soon see."

Coker sat down on the bank and put on his skates. Then he went out on the ice, to scout round the island.

Coker prided himself upon his powers as a skater. But, as a matter of fact, he had a great deal to learn in that art. When he was upon the ice, his feet always had a disposition to travel in different directions, which was embarrassing to a skater.

Just now his right foot insisted upon advancing at a good speed towards the island, while his left seemed bent upon travelling in a south-easterly direction. Coker saved himself with a plunge, and nearly went over, and shot away across the smooth ice towards the island like an express train.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Coker. "It's jolly slippery!"

It was.

Coker tried to slow down, but he couldn't. He shot at the island like a shell from a mortar. He reached it, and dashed right into the scraggy, frozen bushes. The

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remarks he made as he plunged headlong into the bushes would have done credit to a Hun.

He struggled in the brambles, sputtering and spluttering.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a yell of laughter from three skaters who were gliding up the river towards the island—one of them bareheaded.

Ponsonby & Co. had to pass the island on their way home to Highcliffe, and they had arrived just in time to behold Coker taking the plunge, as it were.

Coker struggled out of the bushes, and righted himself on the ice, carefully persuading his feet to remain together. He glared homicidally at the three Highcliffians.

"Clear off, you cheeky young cads!" he howled. "Do you want me to lick you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Ponsonby & Co. roared. On dry land they would have been very careful to give Horace Coker a wide berth; he could have thrashed the three of them without the slightest difficulty. But on the ice it was a different matter. There they had the upper hand. Coker had enough to do to keep on his feet, without defending himself. Anybody who couldn't defend himself was exactly what Ponsonby & Co. wanted when they were in a ragging humour.

"Come on!" grinned Ponsonby. "Get round the elephant! We'll rag the Greyfriars cad bald-headed!"

"What about those other rotters, though?" said Gadsby, with an uneasy glance back along the river.

"They're not coming up here. It's all right."

To Coker's astonishment, the three Highcliffians bore down upon him, instead of fleeing from the terror of his glance.

Coker shot out on the ice from the island, clattering. Perhaps he was a little out of practice; certainly his skating was a sight for gods and men and little fishes. The Highcliffians clustered round him.

"Go it, Coker!" said Ponsonby encouragingly. "First time I've seen a clog-dance on the ice. Wire in!"

"Do you want me to smash you?" roared Coker. "Clear off!"

But the three juniors had no intention whatever of clearing off. Ponsonby circled round him, glided behind him, and snatched his cap off from the rear. Coker whirled round on him in a fury, and his legs tangled up, and he went down at full length, with a bellow like a bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooogh!"

Coker sprawled on the ice dazedly. His feet and skates flew in the air. In a moment Gadsby was upon him and kneeling on his chest. Ponsonby piled in, and grasped his wrists, just in time to save Gaddy from being enclosed in a grasp to which the hug of a grizzly bear would have been a joke.

"Hold on, all!" sang out Ponsonby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vavasour grasped one of the captured wrists, leaving the other to Pon. Coker was quite helpless now. Strong and burly as he was, he could not wrench his arms free, and Gadsby was kneeling heavily on his chest, pinning him down.

"You young rotters!" bellowed Coker. "Lemme gerrup! I'll smash you! I'll skin you! I'll pulverise you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take it calmly, dear boy," advised Ponsonby. "We don't want to hurt you, unless a twist like that hurts a little——"

"Yow!" yelled Coker, as Ponsonby twisted his arm. "I—I'll—yow-ow!"

He struggled furiously, and the three juniors had all their work cut out to hold him. But he was at too great a disadvantage. They held on tenaciously, and Coker had to give it up. He lay gasping and exhausted under their weight.

Ponsonby, with a cheery grin, proceeded to jerk off his collar and tie. With the tie, Horace Coker's wrists were bound together, in spite of his resistance. Then he was much easier to handle.

"I'll smash you for this!" spluttered Coker.
"Looks lovely, don't he?" smiled Ponsonby, getting off Coker's neck. "Watch him wriggle."
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker did wriggle. With his hands tied, it was utterly impossible for him to get on his feet on the slippery ice. He lay on his back and floundered. If looks could have slain, Coker's glances would have stretched Ponsonby & Co. lifeless on the frozen Sark. But as it was, his furious looks only elicited howls of laughter.

Ponsonby—keeping carefully out of the way of Coker's plunging feet—jerked his waistcoat open, with a jerk that removed all the buttons. Then he took his fountain-pen from his pocket and unscrewed the end. The pen was full of ink, and the ink trickled over Coker's crimson and curious face. It ran in streaks all over his countenance, giving him a curious, zebra-like appearance, which made the Highcliffians shriek.

"What a giddy picture!" chortled Ponsonby. "I'd keep his cap, only the rag is too big for me. He can have it down his back."

"Gerrrrrg!" came from Coker, as his cap was stuffed down his back.

It was followed there by his collar, and it did not feel comfortable.

"Now set him on his feet," said Ponsonby. "I want to watch him skate!"

"Yow-ow! I can't skate with my hands tied," roared Coker.

"Do you skate with your hands?" asked Ponsonby, in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroo! I shall bump over!"

"Well, that will be amusin', won't it?"

Apparently Coker did not think so. But he had no choice about the matter. The three juniors grasped his arms and shoulders, and heaved him—not without difficulty—to his feet. Coker was a good weight.

Crash! clatter! clatter! crash!

"Let go!" said Pon.

"Yow! I shall go over!" shrieked Coker.

"Hallo!" yelled Gadsby suddenly. "Here come those cads! Buzz!"

Down the river was a sound of merry voices. In a bunch, Harry Wharton & Co., and the three girls came gliding along the ice, heading for the island.

Ponsonby & Co. promptly released Coker, and took to their heels—or, rather, their skates. Chuckling with glee, they fled up the river at top speed.

Coker was left to maintain his balance as best he could. He clattered his skates wildly on the ice, and sat down. He had recognised the Greyfriars party. He had come out specially to see Miss Phyllis. Now he was seeing her—and she was seeing him! And Coker would have given a term's pocket-money for the ice to open and swallow him up.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Coker Shows What He Can Do!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"What the merry dickens——"

"Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker sat on the ice, his face crimson with rage and exertion, where it was not black with streaks of ink. The skating party circled round him, staring. It was a peculiar sight.

"Coker!" howled Johnny Bull. "It isn't a Red Indian, and it isn't a Hun. It's Coker of the Fifth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's been in the wars!" chuckled Squiff.

"Ow!" gasped Coker.

"Hallo, grandpa, what did you do in the Great War?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a shame!" said Marjorie, trying not to laugh. "Somebody has been playing a trick on poor Coker."

"Shall we let you loose, Coker?" asked Miss Clara.

"Ye-e-es, please!" stammered Coker.

"His hands are tied," said Miss Phyllis. "Anybody got a knife?"

"Here you are."

"D-d-don't cut it—it's my necktie!" gasped Coker.

"Oh, dear!"

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"FLOORING FISHY!"

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ONE PENNY.

"It was those young Highcliffe cads!" stuttered Coker.
"Ponsonby & Co.!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Do you mean to say that you let three fags handle you like that, Coker?"

"I e-c-couldn't help it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at, you cheeky little beasts," roared Coker. "I'll lick you when my hands are loose. Buck up, Miss Phyllis!"

Phyllis was seeking to untie the knotted necktie, but she paused now.

"Can't you get it undone?" asked Coker.

"Yes."

"Then why don't you—please!" added Coker.

"What are you going to do when your hands are untied?" inquired Miss Phyllis.

"Lick those young rotters, of course."

"Then I sha'n't untie your hands."

"Oh, I say, Miss Phyllis——"

"You're always too previous, Coker, old man!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"I—I say, lemme loose!" mumbled Coker. "I—I won't lick 'em, if you don't want me to, Miss Phyllis!"

"There's a good boy!" said Phyllis.

"Oh!" said Coker.

"Besides, you couldn't lick us, could you, Horace, old chap?" said Bob Cherry. "You couldn't lick a bunny rabbit, on the ice!"

"I'll jolly well show you! I—I mean I won't, Miss Phyllis!" stammered Coker. "Oh, thanks. That's all right now."

His hands were free at last. He put them on the ice, and essayed to rise. His skates departed in various directions, and he sat down again. The juniors howled, and the girls strove hard not to laugh, but without much success.

"Yow! Those little beasts put my cap down my back!" mumbled Coker, twisting uncomfortably. "Yank it out, some of you!"

Frank Nugent obligingly yanked out the collar and the cap.

"Is there—is there much ink on my face?" stuttered Coker.

"Well, less than a gallon!" said Wharton.

Coker took out his handkerchief and rubbed his face. Instead of a streaky complexion, he had now a mottled one.

"Is that better?"

"Ha, ha! That depends," roared Bob Cherry. "It's less like a zebra, and more like a Hottentot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help me up, can't you?" yelled Coker. "What are you cackling there for, you cheeky fags? Give me a hand."

"All hands on deck!" sang out Bob Cherry.

Chuckling, the juniors gathered round Coker, and grasped him on all sides. The great Horace was heaved to his feet once more.

"Don't shove me over, you silly little idiots!"

"That's what I like about Coker," grinned Squiff. "He's so jolly grateful."

"Hold me while I get my collar on, you dummies!"

"Oh, dear!" murmured Marjorie.

Coker's way of getting help and acknowledging it struck her as comic.

Coker managed to replace his collar and tie after a fashion, the juniors dutifully holding him the while, to keep his skates from walking away with him.

"There! Now do I look all right?" gasped Coker.

"Ripping!" said Wharton. "A little mottled, perhaps, and the collar's rather rumpled, and the tie looks as if you've been trying to hang yourself, and your features as if they'd been walked on—otherwise, right as rain!"

"Shut up, you cheeky fag!"

"What a nice, polite boy!" said Miss Phyllis. "Are you always as nice as that, Coker?"

Coker blushed.

"Sorry, Miss Phyllis, but these cheeky fags really want a licking, you know. I always believe in giving fags plenty of lickings. You can cut off now, you young rascals!"

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"Thanks," said Wharton. "Are you sure you can stand if we let go?"

"Don't be cheeky."

"Oh, all right!"

The juniors let go, and Coker lurched wildly, and his skates beat a rapid tattoo on the ice. The schoolboys and the schoolgirls crowded back in alarm. It did not look safe to be too near Coker.

"It—it's all right, Miss Phyllis," gasped Coker. "I—I—groogh—I'm a good skater—a first-class—ow—skater!"

"Yes, you look it!" said Phyllis, laughing.

Clatter! crash! Coker righted himself again.

"The fact is, Miss Phyllis, I came out to see you," he said. "Oh, blow the skates! I'm going to take you skating this afternoon."

Miss Phyllis' eyes opened wide.

"I'm skating now!" she said.

"Yes; but you don't want to skate with a gang of fags, I suppose," said Coker testily. "I'm going to take you with me. I'll show you some figure skating!"

Clatter! clatter! Plunge! crash! Coker was nearly down again, but, by a herculean effort, he righted.

"Thank you!" said Miss Phyllis demurely. "I don't think I should like to learn that kind of figure-skating!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker gasped.

"That—that wasn't what I meant. I mean to say—oh, bust the skates!—I mean I'll show you—yarooh, what's the matter with these dashed skates?—you see, I came out specially to take you skating!"

"Well, of all the cheek!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Shut up, Cherry!"

"And you didn't think it necessary to ask me first?" said Miss Phyllis, her cheeks dimpling. "And you knew, of course, that I should run away from my friends at once—what?"

"Yes, of course. It really ain't safe for you to skate with those fags—Yarooh! Blow the skates! I'm going to take care of you—Oh, crumbs!"

Clatter! Clatter! Clatter!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Thank you so much!" said Miss Phyllis, gently as the cooing dove. "But don't you think, perhaps—I only suggest it, you know—perhaps it would be better to learn to take care of yourself first?"

"Oh, come, you know! Look here—Oh, my hat, this ice is extra slippery, I think! If you don't think I'm a jolly good skater, I'll just show you what I can do on the ice—Oh, my hat! Yah!"

Coker's feet had escaped him this time. The skates shot into the air, and Horace Coker sat down with a bump.

"Bravo!" roared Bob Cherry, while the whole party shrieked with merriment. "Now Coker's shown what he can do, we may as well get along. Good-bye, Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the merry party sped along the ice, leaving Horace Coker sitting and blinking after them, trying to get his second wind. Horace did not take Miss Phyllis skating that afternoon.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Potter Thinks It Funny!

BILLY BUNTER was waiting in the doorway of the School House when the skating-party came in to tea. He smiled his sweetest smiles at Marjorie & Co., who did not appear to observe them.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Inky's got tea ready in the study," said Bob Cherry.

"I'm jolly hungry—"

"I say, Bob, old chap—"

"Scat!"

Harry Wharton & Co. proceeded to the Remove passage. No. 1 Study was lighted and cheery. A big fire blazed in the grate, and the table was spread with good things. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, like a dusky ministering angel, had everything ready.

"Beasts!" growled Billy Bunter, blinking after them. "They jolly well wouldn't have found any feed there, but for that blessed nigger! Rotters—Yow-ow! Leggo, Bolsover, you beast!"

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"You silly ass—"

"Oh, is it you, Coker?" said Bunter, blinking at the Fifth-Former uneasily. "I—I say, I hope you found them at the island—Leggo!"

"They weren't there, you fat worm!" said Coker, shaking him forcibly. "You were telling me whoppers!"

"Oh, really, Coker, I know you've met them! I just heard Squiff say he hadn't heard Miss Phyllis laugh so much at any time as she did at you—Yow-ow!"

Coker shook the Owl of the Remove till he quivered like a jelly.

"I'm not going to lick you, you fat toad," said Coker. "I did find them, as it happened. Have the girls come here to tea?"

"Ow! Yes! Ow!"

"Good!"

Coker released the fat junior, and strode on to the stairs. Bunter gasped.

"Yah! Where did you get that face?" he roared. "Where did you dig up that chivvy, Coker? Yah!"

And Bunter beat a strategic retreat before the enraged Coker could get near him. Horace Coker frowned, and went up the stairs. As he made his way to the dormitory Potter and Greene joined him.

They had left him rather huffy that afternoon; but they were all smiles now. It was tea-time!

"Been waiting for you to come in, old chap," said Potter affectionately.

"Huh!" grunted Coker.

"We've been skating, but it wasn't much good without you," said Greene blandly. "We wanted you to show us how to do figures, Coker."

Coker relaxed a little.

"Another time, Greene, old man."

"Well, it's tea-time now," remarked Potter. "Coming to the study?"

"No; I'm going to the dorm, to clean up. I've had a—a—an accident."

"Hard cheese!" said Potter sympathetically. "I'll tell you what, Coker. We'll get the tea while you clean up. Would you like me to run over to the tuckshop for you?"

"I'm not having tea in the study," explained Coker, and he went into the dormitory.

Potter and Greene stood in the doorway and watched him. They liked Coker's company at tea-time; not for the fascinations of his manners or conversation, but because the great Horace generally stood the tea. The funds were low with Potter and Greene that evening, too.

"Better come to the study," said Greene. "Tain't cosy without you, Coker. Besides, we want to hear how you got on with Miss Sally—I mean Kate—that is to say, Phyllis."

Coker snorted. He had not the slightest desire to impart to his chums how he had got on with Phyllis.

"Is it tea with a master?" asked Potter, seeing that Greene was on the wrong track.

"No," said Coker.

"One of the Sixth—"

"Blow the Sixth!"

"Well, if you're going to tea along the Fifth-Form passage, I suppose you can take your friends with you?" "Tain't the Fifth!"

"Not having tea with fags, I suppose?"

Coker blinked round from the washbasin, through water and soap.

"Why not?" he demanded.

"Oh, my hat! Going to tea with fags!"

"Of course, it's a bit beneath the dignity of a Fifth-Former," admitted Coker. "But I believe in taking notice of juniors when they behave themselves. I don't see why I shouldn't go to tea in No. 1 Study, once in a way."

"No. 1 Study!" howled Potter, in astonishment. "Have they been behaving themselves? It's the first time in their history, then!"

"Oh, rats!"

"I see. You're handing out the giddy olive-branch because they bumped you on the steps this afternoon?" said Greene.

Coker grunted, and went on with his towelling.

"Well, I'm not going to tea with fags, for one!" said Potter.

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"Skuse me, mum," stammered Gosling. "But—" "I am Coker's fiancée," said the lady. "Did you not know that Horace was engaged?" "Engaged! Oh, holy smoke!" stuttered Gosling. (See Chapter 12.)

"I haven't asked you!" snapped Coker. "As a matter of fact, I'd rather you didn't, George Potter. Your manners ain't quite polished enough for a lady!"

"For a lady!" yelled Potter. "Oh, scissors! I savvy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" roared Coker, greatly incensed.

"I'm cackling at a silly ass!" retorted Potter, quite reckless now that it was evident that there was to be no tea in the study. "What are you cackling at, Greene?"

"I'm cackling at a frabjous dummy!" chortled Greene.

Coker doubled up the towel, and made a rush at his hilarious chums. They whipped out of the dormitory at great speed. But a minute later Potter put his head in.

"I say, Coker!"

"Well?" snapped Coker, with a glare.

"Have you ordered the engagement-ring?"

Coker did not reply. He charged at the humorous Potter like a bull, and George Potter sprinted down the passage as if he had been on the cinder-path. Coker chased him half-way to the stairs, and then returned, snorting, to the dormitory.

He finished towelling, and adjusted a clean collar and a new tie with great care. Coker was not usually very

careful with his dress—indeed, he was somewhat slovenly—but he could be dressy at times. This was one of the times!

Having adjusted his collar and tie, it occurred to him that the wristbands of his shirt were a little grubby. Off came collar and tie again, and off came the shirt, and a new and spotless one was donned. Then Coker struggled with his stud once more, and the clean collar was replaced, and the tie was tied with the utmost precision.

Then Coker brushed his hair very carefully. Then he changed his boots. Coker could generally be heard coming at quite a distance—his boots were a good size. But in honour of this special occasion he changed into evening shoes—still a good size, but not quite so ponderous.

"Ought a fellow to put a flower in his jacket?" murmured Coker.

The fact that there was no flower available settled that question. Horace Coker took a careful survey of himself in the glass, and was completely satisfied with what he saw there.

Then he descended to the lower passage, heading for the Remove quarters. A yell from the Fifth Form studies came to his ears.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"FLOORING FISHY!"

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry
Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Here he is!"

Potter and Greene and Fitzgerald and Smith major and several more of the Fifth were gathered there, evidently on the watch for him. Coker coloured.

"Faith, he's washed his neck!" exclaimed Fitzgerald.

"His collar's clean!" said Blundell, in tones of wonder.

"Give my regards to Miss Growl!" yelled Potter.

Coker made a rush. The Fifth-Formers, shouting with laughter, bolted into their studies. The humorous Potter was not quite quick enough. As he bolted, Coker's foot caught him. It was very fortunate for Potter at that moment that Coker had changed his boots—very fortunate indeed. But even in a shoe Coker's foot was formidable. George Potter flew headlong into the study and clutched at Greene to save himself, and dragged him down on the carpet with a bump.

Coker glared in at the doorway.

"Do you want some more?" he bawled.

"Yow-ow-ow-wwwop!"

Coker strode away, snorting.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Potter, sitting up—inadvertently on Greene. "I'll scrag the silly ass! I'll—I'll——"

"Gerroff my neck!" said Greene, in a sulphurous voice.

"You thumping chump, gerroff my neck!"

He helped Potter off his neck with a dig of his elbow in Potter's ribs.

"You silly ass!"

"You burbling chump!"

"I'll jolly well scrag him!" howled Potter. "I hope those fags will chuck him out on his neck!" Then he chuckled. "They're pretty sure to, anyway. Fancy Coker—in his old age—Coker mashed—ha, ha, ha!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Coker Comes to Tea!

TEA in No. 1 Study was going strong when there came a tap at the door.

"Come in!" called out Harry Wharton hospitably.

The study was pretty full. Only by a considerable amount of wedging did the juniors succeed in leaving room for their distinguished visitors. Marjorie and Clara and Phyllis were looking very merry and bright. All the juniors were very merry, even Hazeldene, who was sometimes sulky, being in the best of spirits.

The tap at the door was taken to mean that a new guest had arrived, and the merry party intended to make him welcome, crowded as the space already was.

"It's Marky, I suppose," said Bob Cherry. "Come in, Marky! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Coker!"

The juniors stared at Coker.

The rugged features of the great Horace were composed in a genial smile. He seemed to have completely forgotten the bumping on the steps and the chipping on the ice. The juniors, who had fancied for a moment that the great man of the Fifth was on the warpath, were reassured. But they were puzzled to guess what he wanted.

"Hallo, Coker!" said Wharton.

"Excuse my dropping in like this!" said Coker, with a polite bow to the young ladies.

"Certainly, if you'll drop out again," said Johnny Bull.

"The fact is," said Coker, "I've come to tea."

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton. "You—you've come to tea?"

"Exactly! I suppose you know it's not my habit to have tea in a fag study?" Coker intended to be very agreeable, but he was always Coker.

"Quite so," assented Bob Cherry. "They couldn't stand it, could they?"

"The standfulness would be terrifically impossible!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"You cheeky little—ahem! The fact is——"

"Hallo! Room for one more?" asked a cheery voice in the passage, as Mark Linley looked in.

And there was hospitable chorus of:

"Come in, Marky!"

The Lancashire junior came in, and Bob Cherry found half a chair for him. Coker frowned. The distinguished honour of having him to tea in the study ought to have

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overwhelmed the Removites. They should, in the fitness of things, have surrounded him and made a fuss of him, offered him the best chair, and waited on him with becoming humility. They would be well repaid by a few kind words and a nod or two.

Somehow they didn't! Coker was annoyed, and he was a little nonplussed.

"Any place vacant in this show?" asked Wibley, coming along with smears of grease-paint still on his face. Wibley was no longer in the guise of the "Girl with the Golden Hair," but his face still retained some of her complexion.

"Oh, come in!" said Wharton. "I hope you've had a ripping rehearsal all on your own. There's standing-room, if perhaps Coker wouldn't mind putting one of his feet out in the passage."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, make room for Coker!" said Marjorie Hazeldene, taking compassion on the unfortunate Horace. "It's very nice of Coker to come to tea."

"Thank you, Miss Hazeldene!" said Coker. "It's a puzzle to me how you stand the manners of these fags. I've got a proposal to make to you young ladies——"

"Ask mamma!" said Hazeldene.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young idiot——"

"Look here, Coker, chuck it!" said Bob Cherry. "Those things ought to be done in private, if at all. I'm surprised at you!"

"The surprisefulness is terrific!"

Coker turned almost purple.

"I've got a proposal to make——" he roared.

"Well, you're not going to make it here!" said Johnny Bull.

The three girls had reddened, but they could not help laughing.

"I propose that you shall come and have tea in my study!" blurted out Coker, at last. "I'll get a ripping spread, and it's a very comfy study—very! Much better than pigging with these fags, don't you think?"

"Oh, dear!" murmured Marjorie.

"Oh, my hat!" said Miss Clara.

"What a dear, nice, polite fellow Coker is!" sighed Miss Phyllis. "He puts things so nicely. Pigging is such a delightful expression, and so flattering! We are so much obliged to you, Coker!"

"Then you'll come?" said Horace eagerly.

"Oh, no; we won't come!"

"Lemme persuade you," said Coker, in his most persuasive tone. "You can't like having tea with a gang of noisy fags. Now, I say—yoooooop!"

"Dear me! What does he say yooop for?" asked Phyllis, in surprise.

The reason was clear enough. Somebody had bumped a chair against Coker's knees from behind, and the great Coker had collapsed. He sat on the floor and roared.

"Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen!" grinned Wibley.

"Yaroo! What young beast was that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sorry we're short of chairs, Coker," said Wharton politely. "But you needn't sit on the floor. Give him half your chair, Frank!"

"I'll pulverise you!" roared Coker, scrambling up, and quite forgetting in his fury that ladies were present. "It was you, Field, you young villain!"

"Hands off!" roared Squiff.

"I'll pulverise you—squash you! I'll——"

"Rescue!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Keep off, you cheeky fags! I'll——"

"Coker's come to tea. We'll give him tea!" said Bob, and he picked up the teapot, and turned it on Coker.

"Give him some jam, too!"

"And some of the sardines!"

"In the neck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroo! Stop it! I'll—I'll—I'll—oh, my hat! I'll mop up the whole study! I'll smash you! I'll—yawwwp!"

Many hands make light work. Many hands were laid on Coker of the Fifth, and they made light work of him.

WOULD YOU LIKE A DELICIOUS TUCK-HAMPER? SEE THE "GREYFRIARS HERALD," 10.

Horace swung through the doorway, and alighted in the passage with a loud concussion. He hardly knew how he had got there, but he knew he was there. It was painful.

Bob Cherry shook an admonitory finger at him from the doorway.

"Now you buzz off, Coker, and be quiet!" he said. "If there weren't ladies present, we should rag you! We should, really!"

Coker felt as if he had been ragged already.

He scrambled up in the passage, and charged back into the study like an enraged bull. Miss Clara shrieked, Marjorie sprang up, Phyllis laughed. The crowd of juniors lined up to receive the charge, and Coker was grasped on all sides, and hurled forth again.

Bump!

"Oh, crumbs! Oh, my hat! Oh!"

Harry Wharton grinned, and closed the study door. He thought that the tea-party had seen the last of Coker.

He was right. The great Horace was limping away, vowing vengeance. His reception had been far from flattering, and so far as Coker could see, he had done nothing whatever to merit such a reception.

"Well, of all the cheek!" said Nugent. "Fancy even Coker trotting in to carry off our guests under our very noses! Of all the nerve——"

"It is terrific!"

All the tea-party agreed that Coker's nerve was terrific, as Inky expressed it, but they agreed, also, that he had received a lesson that was terrific. But Coker was soon forgotten, and the tea-party finished in merry mood, and then a crowd of juniors walked home to Cliff House with Marjorie & Co.

Horace Coker limped away to his study, where Potter and Greene met him with bland smiles. Coker's look showed how he had been received by the juniors, who, for once, he delighted to honour.

"Well, what are you sniggering at?" demanded Coker. "Look here, I've changed my mind, and I'm going to have tea here. It's a rotten idea feeding with fags—rotten! That little minx was laughing, too!"

"What little minx?" asked Potter blandly.

"Ahem! Never mind! Can't you buzz off to the tuckshop, instead of sniggering there like a Cheshire cat?" snorted Coker.

Potter ceased understudying a Cheshire cat, and buzzed off to the tuckshop with great alacrity. And in Coker's study all was calm and bright—for Potter and Greene, at least. Horace Coker was not quite so calm or bright.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Generous Offer Refused!

"**B**LOW it! How many 'k's' in 'expect'?" murmured Coker.

Wibley of the Remove paused.

It was several days since the skating-party on the Sark. During those days that grand new comedy, the "Girl With the Golden Hair," had been going ahead by leaps and bounds. Fortunately for the Junior Dramatic Society, there had been a thaw.

Skating being out of the question, all the spare time of the Remove chums was put into rehearsals, under the able direction of their stage-and-general manager. Wibley pronounced that the "Girl With the Golden Hair" was going to be a stunning success; as, indeed, how could it fail to be, written by Wibley, and with Wibley in the title-role appearing in nearly every scene?

Wibley was calling on Coker of the Fifth.

In the comedy, as written by Wibley, a Prussian character was introduced—supposed to be a big, fat, clumsy duffer, who was the butt of the piece. According to Wibley, the part of Herr Humpstein could be played best of all by a chap who was as big an idiot as Humpstein was supposed to be. He had, therefore, thought of Coker.

Hence his visit to the study of the great man of the Fifth. He was going to offer Coker the part.

But he paused in the doorway. Coker was alone in the study, and he was busy. Coker was seated at the table, pen in hand, with a letter before him. He was writing the letter; but he had had to stop to wrestle with that difficult problem, how many "k's" to put in "expect."

Coker was not strong on spelling. He favoured his

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own variety of orthography, and, indeed, found fault with the spelling in the newspapers, which did not in the least agree with his own. Mr. Prout, his Form-master, was frequently satirical on the subject of Coker's spelling; and sometimes asked Coker what he was doing in the Fifth Form at all, when he spelt like a very backward fag in the Third. Coker confided to Potter and Greene that Mr. Prout was a very ignorant man, and that he tried to cover up his ignorance by getting at a fellow who knew better.

"Lemme see, only one 'k,' I think," Coker went on murmuring. "No, two—e-k-s-p-e-k-t—no, that's not right; that looks like Russian. Is there an 'x' in the blessed word? Yes, I remember now—e-k-s-p-e-x-t. That's it."

Wibley grinned, and coughed. But Coker did not hear his cough. His attention was glued upon his letter; evidently a very important letter. He went on murmuring aloud as he scrawled:

"I shall expect you at three, and I will have the trap ready and waiting at the bridge. You can bring Marjorie or Clara if you like, Phyllis."

Wibley jumped.

Coker was writing to Phyllis Howell!

"Well, my only hat!" ejaculated Wibley.

Coker heard that, and he looked round quickly. Quickly, too, he threw a sheet of blotting-paper over his letter. He frowned at Wibley.

"What do you want, you cheeky fag?"

"Ahem! Just a word or two, Coker——"

"Buzz off; I'm busy!"

"It's about the play!" explained Wibley.

Coker thawed a little. It was a standing grievance with Coker that the Remove Dramatic Society was a most successful institution, while the Stage Club he had founded in the Fifth generally seemed to hang fire. Perhaps that was because Horace Coker took all the principal parts.

Many a time and oft had Coker, in the kindness of his heart, offered to play leading gentleman in the Remove plays; and each time he had been declined with utter thanklessness.

But Coker was not a fellow to bear malice. If the cheeky fags had come to their senses, Coker was willing to meet them half-way.

"You want me?" he asked.

"That's it," said Wibley. "You're really the only chap to fill the bill, Coker."

Coker smiled genially.

"Well, you're a set of cheeky little sweeps," he said. "But, dash it all, I believe in helping the fags, to a certain extent! The title-role, of course?"

"Well, the title-role is a girl part," said Wibley. "You wouldn't be much good in a girl part, Coker. Your—your commanding presence would be rather out of place, don't you think?"

"I don't want a girl part, of course," said Coker. "But there's a hero, I suppose."

"Ahem—yes! But, really, the part I'm thinking of for you puts that quite in the shade. Your part appears in more than half the scene, and is fairly a corker. Wharton's taking the hero part, but that's quite—quite secondary."

"Well, what's my part like?"

"A Prussian character—Herr Dummkopf Humpstein——"

"Prussian!" said Coker, frowning.

"It's the comedian part," explained Wibley. "You're awfully comic, Coker——"

"What!"

"I—I mean, you've got a wonderful gift of humour——"

"Well, that's so. Serious parts suit me better, though. I've really got what may be called a tragic genius," said Coker thoughtfully. "Othello or Hamlet is really my mark."

Wibley controlled his feelings manfully; though the tragic genius was almost too much for him.

"You see, it's a comedy," he said. "We're giving old Spokeshave—I mean, Shakespeare—the go-by for the

present. Like Bernard Shaw, you know, we want something better than Shakespeare. So I've written the comedy myself—ahem! This character Humpstein has a very fat part. It's a real shriek!"

"Hardly dignified enough for me, I think."

"But the audience will simply rise to it—the way you do it," urged Wibley. "You come on in half the scenes. The fellows chuck you out of a window in one scene——"

"Eh?"

"You come an awful cropper, you know. The audience will simply howl at that!"

"Will they?" said Coker.

"Yes. In another scene, you have your hair shaved off close to your head——"

"Hey?"

"And in another scene, they paint your face sky-blue——"

"Do they?"

"In the final scene, you're fastened up in a box, and carried out, and they keep on dropping the box——"

"What!"

"The audience will simply yell, you know."

"And what about me?" roared Coker.

"Eh! Oh, I dare say you'll yell, too! But think what a ripping part!" said Wibley eagerly. "We want a big, clumsy sort of ass like a real Prussian—I—I—I mean, we want a fellow with a commanding presence like you, Coker. In the scene with the Girl with the Golden Hair, you have to act like a Prussian pig. Easy enough for you——"

"Why, you——"

"And the Girl with the Golden Hair—that's me—smacks your face right and left, you know, and then the hero comes in and jumps on you, and then you're shoved with your head in the coal-box——"

Coker rose to his feet.

That enticing description of the part assigned to him did not seem to attract him, somehow. There was no doubt that it would be funny, from the point of view of the audience, and that was all Wibley was thinking of. The keenest actor in the Remove was not anxious to take

the part, as designed by the humorous Wibley. Coker wasn't anxious, either.

"And the Cliff House girls are coming to see it," said Wibley, as a crowning inducement. "Miss Phyllis will be there. Think how she'll enjoy it when she sees your head shoved into the coal-box—real coal, you know! Why, whatter you at, you silly idiot? Yarooop!"

Wibley's tempting description was cut short, and he went flying through the doorway. He sat in the passage and stared at Coker.

"Wharrer marrer?" he gasped.

Coker did not explain what was the matter. He commenced operations with his boots, and Wibley fled. Coker returned to his letter—getting on with it famously now he had settled how many "k's" there were in "expect."

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter the Go-Between!

"H AS Coker taken it on?" grinned Bob Cherry, when Wibley returned to No. 1 Study, limping and gasping.

"Yow! No. The silly beast cut up rusty!" groaned Wibley.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I told him exactly what the part would be like, and he could see for himself that it would be simply a shriek," said Wibley wrathfully. "The silly ass ought to have been glad of the chance. You'll have to take the part, after all, Bob."

"It will have to be altered a jolly good deal before I take it, then," chuckled Bob Cherry. "You're not smacking my face and shoving my head into a coal-box, old scout!"

"But think of the audience——"

"I'll tell you what," said Bob. "It's a funny scene, and a pity to miss it——"

"That's it, exactly," said Wibley eagerly.

"So, if you like, I'll shove your head into the coal-box——"

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With a cap in either hand, Miss Phyllis skated merrily back towards her friends. Ponsonby clattered bareheaded, white with fury. "You little minx!" he roared. (See Chapter 4.)

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Wibley peevishly.

"We'd better tone the scene down a bit, then," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "I'm sorry Coker wouldn't take it on. We'd have given him the time of his life."

"The silly ass!" growled Wibley. "He's just the fellow for the part; and it wouldn't have mattered if he'd been damaged a bit. The silly duffer was writing to Phyllis Howell when I got there!"

"Writing to Phyllis!" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"Yes; asking her to meet him round the band-stand, or something."

"Great Scott!"

"What an awful nerve!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"The silly ass is mashed!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Fancy old Coker! What the dickens will Phyllis think!"

"She'll think he's potty, I suppose," said Wharton, frowning. "Dash it all, Coker ought to have more sense

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—in the Fifth Form, too! He ought to be jolly well ragged!"

"And we can't chip him about it, because it would make the fellows talk about Phyllis," said Bob. "Are you sure he was writing to our Phyllis, Wib? There are lots of Phyllises, you know."

"Of course he was!" said Wibley. "He was mumbling over the letter aloud, and I couldn't help hearing him. He's asking her to go for a drive or something. And Phyllis only thinks he's a born idiot."

"She's right there."

"The awful chump!" exclaimed Wharton. "He ought to have a lesson."

"And we ought to give him one," said Bob Cherry. "Look here, he oughtn't to be allowed to send that letter. Why, it would get Phyllis into a row with old Miss Primrose, if it came out. Miss Primrose wouldn't know that Phyllis hadn't encouraged the silly duffer to make a chump of himself."

Wharton nodded thoughtfully.

"It's too fatheaded," he said. "Likely as not Miss Primrose will open the letter, seeing it's in a fist like Coker's, and she may come and complain to the Head about it. It would be rotten for Phyllis, considering that she doesn't even know the fathead. Coker hadn't thought of all that. The letter ought to be stopped."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, buzz off, Bunter!"

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter appeared in the study doorway, nearly doubled up with merriment. His fat face was almost in convulsions.

"What are you he-he-heing about?" demanded Wharton.

"He, he, he!" shrieked Bunter.

"What's the joke?" roared Bob.

"He, he, he!"

Bob Cherry rushed upon the Owl of the Remove, grasped him by his fat shoulders, and jammed him against the study wall. Bunter gasped.

"Now, explain what the he-he-he is about!" growled Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—he, he, he!—it's Coker! He, he, he!"

"What about Coker?"

"He, he, he! This letter. He, he, he!"

"What letter?"

Bunter, nearly in hysterics, held up a letter. The flap of the envelope was open.

"Coker's letter?" asked Wharton.

"Yes, rather! He, he, he! Coker's asked me to take it over to Cliff House—he, he, he!—and deliver it into Miss Phyllis's hands—he, he, he! Not into anybody else's hands—he, he, he!"

"You've opened it, you fat rotter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! It came open quite by accident. I wondered what Coker wanted to write to Miss Phyllis for—he, he, he!—I mean, it happened to come open, and I happened to see—he, he, he!"

"You fat, spying bounder!"

"Oh, I say, you fellows! I say, it's quite lovey-dovey—Coker's smitten—he, he, he! He's tipped me to take it over, so I've got to take it—he, he, he! Fancy old Coker! He's afraid old Primrose might see it if it went by post. He, he, he!"

"Just like Coker to let you get hold of it!" growled Bob. "If he'd had the sense of a bunny rabbit, he'd have guessed you'd open it!"

"I say, you fellows, I'll read it out if you like——"

"No, you won't, you fat rotter!"

"Jolly good idea to chuck it in the fire," said Nugent.

"But I suppose we oughtn't to touch Coker's property. He has a right to play the giddy ox."

Harry Wharton nodded, frowning. Coker's cheek, and Coker's fatheadedness, were exasperating enough, but the juniors had no right to touch the letter.

"Well, I'm going to take it," said Bunter. "I'll read it out first, if you like. It's funny. Oh, crumbs! I tell you——"

"Shut up!"

There was a tap at the open door.

"May I come in?" said a sweet voice.

The juniors spun round. Miss Phyllis's pretty and demure face was looking in at the doorway.

The juniors all reddened. Phyllis looked at them rather curiously.

"I've just run over on my bike," she said. "I'm looking for Hazel; I've a message for him from Marjorie——"

"I—I say, trot in, Miss Phyllis," said Bob. "Bunter's got a—ahem!—a letter for you——"

"A letter for me!" said Phyllis, in surprise.

"He, he, he! Here it is, Miss Phyllis. The—the envelope came open by accident; I'm sure you don't mind. This'll save me going over to Cliff House. I say, you fellows, don't mention to Coker that I gave it to Miss Howell here, or he may think I haven't earned the half-crown, you know."

"Go and eat coke!" growled Bob.

Billy Bunter departed from the study chuckling—to tell, as a great secret, Coker's unfortunate state to every fellow who would listen to him.

Miss Howell took the letter, wondering.

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There was no superscription on the envelope. Coker had trusted to Bunter to place it in the right hands. Miss Phyllis drew out the letter and unfolded it.

"I don't know the writing," she said. "It is very odd that Bunter should have a letter for me."

"The oddfulness is terrific, esteemed miss."

"Will you excuse me; I will read it now?" said the girl, surprised and curious.

The juniors stood silent while Miss Phyllis read the letter. They were wondering how on earth she would take it, and longing to kick Coker for his fatheadedness. They watched the girl's face uneasily.

Miss Phyllis's first emotion seemed to be astonishment. Her eyes opened wide. Then she frowned, and for a moment she looked as angry as the chums had ever seen her look—angrier, in fact. Then her cheeks dimpled, and she smiled—perhaps Coker's orthography had had its natural effect. The smile became a laugh, and Miss Phyllis shrieked:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Phyllis is Not Pleased!

"O H, dear!" said Phyllis.

"I—I say, we're sorry for this!" said Wharton awkwardly. "We don't know what's in the letter, of course, but I know it's some rot. Coker can't help being a born idiot, you know."

"He is a terrific chump, august miss."

Phyllis laughed.

"I have never heard of anything so ridiculous!" she said. "Coker has written this, and he has asked me not to mention it to anyone. He must be very stupid to think I shall keep his nonsense a secret." She flushed a little. "I ought to give it to Miss Primrose, but there would be a fuss. I have a good mind to box Coker's ears. I insist upon you all reading the letter."

She threw it on the table.

"If you really wish——" began Wharton.

"Certainly I do. I want you to understand that I haven't given Coker any reason to be so silly."

"Oh, we know that, anyway!"

The juniors looked at the letter. They could not help chuckling as they read it; it was an effusion worthy of the great mental powers of Horace Coker:

"Dear Phillis,—I diddnt have a chance of speaking to you the other day. I think you are a stunning girl, I do reely. This is the ferst time I have bene in love, ekscepting my cussin. I hoap you think of me sumtimes.

"I am gowing to take you for a drive on Wensday afternoon. Of coarse, you must kepe it dark, and not say a word to a sole. I am gowing to have the trapp from the Anker, and I will let you drive if you like, Phillis, my deyr. I will mete you at the brije on the Sark. Don't fale. I shall ekspekt you at three, and I will have the trap reddy and wating at the brije. You can bring yore frends if you like, Phillis, but I would mutch rather you came aloan.—Ever and ever your oan, HORACE."

"Well, of all the frabjous idiots, Coker is the frabjousest!" commented Bob Cherry.

"Is that how they spell in the Fifth Form?" asked Phyllis, smiling.

"Ha, ha! Only Coker!"

"I have never heard of anybody being quite so silly!" said Phyllis. "It would be insulting if it were not so silly. If I were a boy I should punch Coker's head."

"I'll punch it, if you like," suggested Bob.

Miss Phyllis shook her head and laughed.

"No, no! But I am very annoyed, and it would serve Coker right if I sent this letter to his headmaster."

"Oh, my hat! Poor old Coker!"

"But I can't do that—I don't want him to get into trouble for his nonsense," said Phyllis. "But he ought to be punished somehow. He ought to learn that he must not write to a girl like this."

"The silly duffer doesn't mean any harm," said Wibley. "It's only his fatheadedness, you know."

"I know; but it's very annoying, all the same. I have a very great mind to box his ears!"

"What I like about Coker is his beautiful politeness!"

remarked Nugent. "It doesn't occur to his mighty brain that Miss Phyllis mightn't like to go on that giddy drive. He's going to take her—that's how he puts it. Coker's so tactful!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't suppose any girl would accept an invitation put like that, even if she liked Coker very much," said Phyllis, laughing.

"Ha, ha! That hasn't occurred to Coker. Coker is like Sir Oracle, 'When I ope my mouth, let no dog bark!'" chuckled Bob.

"I leave the matter to you fellows," said Phyllis.

"To us?" said Harry.

Miss Howell nodded emphatically.

"Yes. I don't mean I want you to punch Coker—that is too rough. But you ought to deal with him somehow, and stop him from—playing the giddy ox, I think you would call it."

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"As he belongs to Greyfriars, it is up to you," said Phyllis. "I leave the silly duffer in your hands."

"Rely on us!" said Bob.

"Now I must see Hazel. Where is he?"

"I'll take you to find him," said Nugent. "I think he's in the quad."

"Thank you!"

Nugent walked out with Phyllis, and the letter was left lying on the table. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another.

"Up to us!" remarked Wharton.

"The upfulness is terrific!" said Hurrec Singh. "The esteemed miss is quite infuriated."

"Not infuriated, you inky duffer—only ratty!" said Bob.

"Well, it's enough to make any girl infuriated," said Harry, laughing. "Coker can't see that it makes Phyllis look a duffer as well as himself. He ought to have a severe lesson. Phyllis expects us to give him one."

"We could go to his study and bump him."

"Ahem! Punching is barred."

"Isn't that just like a girl?" said Bob. "Now, punching Coker's head would do him a lot of good—heaps of good!"

"That letter had better be burned, I suppose," said Harry, taking it up.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Wibley.

"No good leaving it about, Wib. Miss Phyllis has left it to us," said the captain of the Remove.

"I've got a wheeze!"

Wibley's eyes were gleaming. The chums of the Remove knew that gleam. They bestowed their attention upon Wibley.

"A wheeze for teaching Coker not to play the giddy ox?" asked Bob.

"Yes, rather."

"Get it off your chest, then."

"There's no surname on that letter, you see," said Wibley. "The cheeky ass calls Miss Howell by her Christian name."

"Yes; he wants bumping for that."

"But, don't you see, that letter might be addressed to any girl named Phyllis," said Wibley eagerly. "Phyllis isn't an uncommon name. Any girl's name might be Phyllis."

"I suppose it might," said Wharton, puzzled. "What the merry dickens are you driving at, Wib?"

"Well, suppose Bunter had made a mistake, and delivered that letter to the wrong Phyllis?" said Wibley.

"But he didn't."

"I'm supposing he did, fathead! And suppose the wrong Phyllis was a regular scorcher—say, a young lady of about forty, who was jolly keen to get engaged—"

"What?"

"And suppose she took that letter as a proposal—"

"Eh?"

"And came here to be engaged to Coker—"

"What the thunder—"

"Don't you see?" shrieked Wibley.

"Blessed if I see!" said Bob Cherry, shaking his head. "Sounds to me as if you're potty. Do you know another Phyllis like that?"

"Yes, fathead!"

"Do you, by Jove! Phyllis who?"

"Phyllis Wibley!"

"Your sister?" asked Bob.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"FLOORING FISHY!"

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ONE
PENNY.

Wibley glared.

"No, you silly ass! No, you frabjous dummy! No, you wall-eyed chump! Do you think my sister's like what I've described, you owl? Do you want a thick ear, you booby? Besides, my sister's name ain't Phyllis."

"Then what the dickens do you mean?"

"Me!"

"Oh, he's potty!" said Bob. "Fairly off his chump! Your name ain't Phyllis."

Wibley almost danced with excitement.

"You owl! Can't you see? Ain't I the Girl with the Golden Hair in the play? If I can make up as a pretty girl, can't I make up as a plain one?"

"Oh!" gasped the juniors.

"You?" yelled Bob.

"Yes, ass! Yes, chump! Do you see now? On Wednesday afternoon, a girl with a face like a kite comes here and claims Coker—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Me, of course. Coker won't know me from Adam. And she—I mean me—has this letter to prove her claim—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Everybody knows Coker's fist—and especially his spelling. The letter will prove it. Everybody will know that Coker has been sending a spoony letter to the new Phyllis, and so there won't be talk about our Phyllis—don't you see? We're going to invent a new Phyllis for Coker's especial benefit."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

Bob Cherry sat down in the armchair, and kicked up his feet and roared. He was picturing the expression on Horace Coker's face when he received a visit from the wrong Phyllis—and at Greyfriars, instead of on the Sark bridge.

"Ripping!" gasped Wharton. "Oh, Wib, you're a giddy genius! That will prevent any tattle about our Phyllis."

"Exactly. Coker wouldn't have the nerve to tell all Greyfriars that he'd been trying to mash a schoolgirl at Cliff House. So when the yarn gets round about Coker and Phyllis—Bunter's spreading it already—it will be supposed to be another Phyllis altogether—and the proof will be, that she comes to Greyfriars to claim Coker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

No. 1 Study rang with mirth. Nugent came in, looking astonished. But as soon as he learned what was toward, he added his yell to the rest. Squiff and Peter Todd and Tom Brown were drawn to the study by the loud explosions, and they roared, too, when they were told.

"But keep it dark," said Wharton, wiping his eyes—"keep it awfully deadly dark. Coker mustn't know—not till Phyllis II. arrives."

And it was kept awfully deadly dark; and in the strictest secrecy the chums of the Remove made their preparations for the advent of Phyllis II.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Visitor for Coker!

COKER of the Fifth was noticed to be looking particularly chippy when he came out after dinner on Wednesday. Potter and Greene concluded that he had had another whacking remittance from Aunt Judy, and nothing could exceed their affectionate devotion to Coker.

"Ripping afternoon for a little run, Cokey!" Potter remarked. "Coming out, I suppose?"

"I'm going up to change my things," said Coker.

"Like any help?"

"Well, you might come and give a chap your opinion about a new necktie."

"Right you are, old fellow!"

Potter and Greene accompanied Coker to the Fifth-Form dormitory. Coker proceeded to change into his Sunday attire, somewhat to their surprise.

"What about having a car out?" suggested Greene.

"I don't approve of having cars out for amusement in war-time," said Coker. "Cars ought to be used wholly for taking out the wounded."

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Well, that's right enough," assented Greene. "What about a trap?"

"Yes, I'm going to have a trap."

"Good! I'll cut down to the Friardale Arms and order it, if you like."

"That's all right; I've ordered one from the Anchor."

"That's a good way from here," said Potter, in surprise. "What's the good of ordering a trap to come here all the way from Pegg?"

"It's not coming here."

"Oh! We're going to meet it on the road—what?"

"I'm going to meet it," said Coker. "I've got a rather special engagement this afternoon, you fellows. Sorry I can't ask you to come."

"Oh!"

"What do you think of this necktie?" asked Coker, turning round from the glass.

Potter grunted.

"Look here, Coker, if you're throwing over your old pals to go off with somebody else, you'd better say so!"

"Tain't that," said Coker. "But there are occasions when a chap's pals would be in the way. Two's company, you know."

Potter and Greene jumped simultaneously.

"Oh, my hat! A lady in the case!" howled Potter.

"You needn't jaw it all over Greyfriars!" said Coker, frowning. "That's it, as a matter of fact. What do you think of this necktie?"

"Looks rather bilious," said Potter coolly. Potter was not disposed to ladle out soft sawder for nothing. If Coker's excursion for the afternoon did not include himself, his interest in it ceased immediately.

"Well, this one, then?" said Coker.

"That! Oh, that looks sea-sick!"

"Look here, Potter—"

"Excuse me, Coker, I'd rather not. My eyes ain't strong," said Potter, and he walked out of the dormitory.

"What has that silly ass got his back up about?" said Coker. "I say, Greene, what do you think of this necktie?"

"Horrid!" said Greene. And he followed Potter.

Coker snorted. Thus deserted by his faithful chums, he proceeded to select a necktie on his own judgment. When he came out of the dormitory, he presented quite a resplendent appearance. He was unusually neat and natty from head to foot—his boots shone like silver, his trousers were creased, his waistcoat did not lack a single button, his tie was straight, his collar spotless, his hair nicely parted in the middle and well brushed. In short, he was scarcely recognisable as Coker of the Fifth.

There was a general exclamation of admiration from a group of juniors in the lower passage when he came down. Bob Cherry shaded his eyes with his hands, as if dazzled by the vision of beauty that had burst upon him.

"It's Coker—in a clean collar!"

"Bedad, he's washed his ears!"

"And combed his hair, by gum!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Wherefore this thusness, Coker?"

"The thusness is terrific, my esteemed fatheaded Coker!"

"Oh, chase me!" ejaculated Squiff.

Coker frowned at the merry Removites. He was tempted to charge them, but he refrained. He did not want his natty clobber to be made dusty or rumpled. He was dressed to kill. He sauntered on with nose in the air, affecting to be ignorant of the remarks of the juniors.

He stopped in the doorway to look at his watch. At three he was to be at the Sark Bridge; he had no doubt whatever that Miss Phyllis would be there. That any girl would neglect an invitation from so sublime a person as Horace Coker did not even cross his mind.

Certainly there had been no reply to his letter, but silence gives consent. Coker hadn't the least doubt about that, in this case at least.

He had to kill time for half an hour. As a matter of fact, the next half-hour was to be more busily occupied than Coker dreamed.

As he lounged in the doorway of the School House Removites gathered from far and near. The Famous Five never lost sight of Coker. Squiff and Tom Brown

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and Hazel and Bulstrode and Mark Linley, and several more fellows, were with them. Wibley was not there, certainly; but Coker was not likely to observe whether Wibley was on view or not.

"Hallo! Not starting yet?" said Potter sarcastically, and the dazzling Horace looked out into the quadrangle.

"Not yet," said Coker.

"Sure she's coming?" sniggered Potter.

"Oh, dry up!"

"I didn't know you were interested in philanthropy in connection with the blind," said Potter thoughtfully.

"Eh? What put that into your head?"

"Isn't she blind?" asked Potter, in astonishment.

"Blind? No."

"Oh! I thought she must be," said Potter blandly.

Coker frowned wrathfully, and Potter backed away, grinning. There was a chuckle from the juniors round the steps. The cab from Friardale had turned in at the gates, and stopped outside the porter's lodge.

A young lady descended from it. Gosling came out of his lodge, and stared rather hard at the young lady.

She was somewhat slight in figure, but her feet were a good size for a young lady. Her attire was fashionable and somewhat conspicuous. Most of the colours of the rainbow were blended in it, with an effect which rivalled that of Joseph's celebrated coat.

Her face did not look exactly youthful, there being a suspicion of crows' feet and certain well-marked lines on it; but the complexion was decidedly fresh, as fresh as cosmetics could make it. A dark shadow on her upper lip hinted of an incipient moustache.

Her eyebrows were thick and dark, contrasting with her bright red cheeks, and her eyelashes were so jetty as to hint of dye.

Gosling blinked. What this extremely flighty-looking young lady could want at Greyfriars puzzled him. However, he touched his hat.

The young lady gave him a sweet smile, disclosing a black patch in her upper teeth, where, apparently, a tooth was missing.

"Is Horace here?" she asked tremulously.

Gosling started.

"Horace, mum?" he ejaculated.

"Yes. Horace Coker."

"Oh, Master Coker! But—but you ain't his mother, mum?" said the puzzled Gosling.

"What? You rude man, what do you mean?" exclaimed the lady indignantly.

"Skuse me, mum!" stammered Gosling. "But—"

"I am Coker's fiancée," said the lady.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Did you not know that Horace was engaged?"

"Engaged? Oh, holy smoke!" stuttered Gosling.

"Has he never talked of Phyllis?" said the young lady shyly.

"Phyllis? My 'at!"

"Take me to my dear Horace! Tell him that Phyllis Montmorency has come!"

"Look 'ere, mum! Wot I says is this 'ere—"

Miss Montmorency did not wait to listen to Gosling. She hurried across the quad towards the School House, leaving Gosling gaping.

"Well, my word!" gasped Gosling. "My honly 'at! If this 'ere don't take the bun! The young rip! Hengaged—hey? Wot'll his Form-master say? Wot'll the 'Ead say? Oh, crikey!"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

Coker's Fiances!

"HORACE!"

Coker jumped.

He, as well as all the other fellows gathered round the School House door, had watched the progress of the flamboyant young lady across the quad with some curiosity.

She arrived at the School House steps, and came straight at Coker. He was about to step aside and allow her to pass in, when she addressed him.

"Horace!"

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"Hallo!" said Coker, in astonishment.

"Dearest Horace!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Potter. "Coker, old man, this is rather thick! You ought to keep this kind of thing out of gates!"

"What do you mean?" roared Coker angrily. "Madam, what the dickens are you calling me Horace for?"

"Dear boy!"

"What?"

"Are you angry with your own Phyllis for coming here?" said the young lady tenderly.

"Phyllis?" stuttered Coker.

"How sweet that name sounds from your dear lips, Horace!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

Miss Montmorency certainly appeared to be a very bold young lady. She had no hesitation whatever about betraying her tenderness in public.

"Great Scott!" gasped Greene. "Oh, Coker!"

"What-at does she mean?" stuttered Coker. "Look here, ma'am, if this is a joke——"

"My own Horace!"

"Better get your lady-love out of sight, Coker, you ass!" whispered Potter. "Think if old Prout should come out! Dash it all, Fifth-Formers ain't allowed to carry on these games!"

"You silly ass! I——"

EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

"Come inside, ma'am!" said Potter, really concerned for his friend. "Please come in! Come in, and sit down!"

"Thank you so much! Come, Horace!"

"I—I—I——"

"Dearest Horace, aren't you glad to see your little Phyllis?"

"You ain't Phyllis!" hooted Coker.

"What is my love excited about?"

"Your love! I ain't your love!" shrieked Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, Coker!"

"Come in, Coker, you ass!" hissed Potter. "Do you want to be called before the Head? Get her out of sight quick!"

"But—but I don't know her—I don't——"

"Don't spin that yarn to me, you duffer; I know all about it! You must be mad to bring her here."

"I didn't—I wasn't—I never——"

"Oh, I see! You were going to meet her out, and she's come here. Well, now she's here, get her out of sight," whispered Potter.

THE MOST STUPENDOUS SENSATION OF MODERN TIMES!

Another FRANK RICHARDS Threepenny Book!

I have great news for my Magnetite chums this week—news which should arouse them to the highest pitch of excitement.

So colossal was the success attained by "SCHOOL AND SPORT," the great Frank Richards masterpiece, that I have persuaded our inimitable author to produce yet another story for the "Boys' Friend" 3d. Library.

Coming Soon!

There is to be no long wait this time. On Friday, March 3rd, this gigantic treat will be obtainable; and you will all admit that never before has such a rousing story of school life been written. From "Chapter One" to "The End" the interest never flags; and many hours of breathless entertainment will be ensured by buying this wonderful book.

Can You Guess the Title?

So far as the title of the forthcoming story is concerned, I will not let the cat out of the bag this week; but clever readers will find out what it is by solving the following acrostic:

"My first a town in France will be,
My second an island over the sea.
My third is gained for valour great,
My fourth is a famous man of State.
My fifth is a word which means "instead,"
My sixth you work out in your head.
My seventh is a creature known to bray,
My whole is the title, so fire away!"

Order To-day To Save Delay!

The urgency of ordering at once cannot be impressed too strongly upon the minds of my reader-chums. Don't say,

"Oh, I'll wait till March 3rd, and then get a copy from my newsagent." Possibly that newsagent may not have one. Thousands and thousands of readers were disappointed because they failed to obtain "SCHOOL AND SPORT" when it was issued. It was entirely their own fault, for they should have given due heed to my hint about ordering in advance. Don't be among the disappointed ones, therefore, but go to your newsagent to-day and insist upon his reserving you a copy of the "Boys' Friend" 3d. Library No. 328. That is the only way!

Splendid Stories Still Obtainable!

On going to press I learn from my Publishing Department that there are still a few copies of No. 288, "THE BOY WITHOUT A NAME," and No. 319, "SCHOOL AND SPORT," both by famous Frank Richards. Four penny stamps will bring you either of these masterpieces by return.

They are stories which have made history, and will help you to beguile many a leisure hour. Write for them to-day!

Rally Round, Readers!

In conclusion, let me urge you, one and all, to give the coming book your heartiest support. Show Mr. Frank Richards how highly you appreciate his efforts by gaining for the story a record sale. Tell all your chums—big, small, old, and young—to order at once from their newsagent.

The "Boys' Friend" 3d. Library, No. 328!

"But I wasn't——"

"Rot! You told me about it in the dorm."

"But, I tell you, she——"

"Fathead! Do you want Prouty on your neck? Come into the Rag."

Coker, in almost a dazed state, allowed Potter to drag him in. He was half led and half dragged into the Rag. Quite a little army followed. The young lady had drawn a crowd to the spot, and all the fellows were curious to see the developments of this strange affair.

That Coker was mashed, that his mash bore the name of Phyllis, was common talk already—owing to Potter and Greene and Billy Bunter.

But the fellows had supposed that it was Phyllis Howell of Cliff House whom the great Coker had cast sheep's eyes upon.

Evidently that was a mistake, for here was the real Phyllis!

"The awfully deep bounder!" said Fitzgerald of the Fifth. "The gammoning gossoon! He's been spoofing us intirely. Fancy Coker being spoons on a giddy barmaid, and pretending it was a schoolgirl!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And fancy bringing her here!" howled Temple of the Fourth. "That takes the biscuit!"

"Coker didn't want her here," grinned Greene. "He arranged to meet her out this afternoon and take her for a drive. She's come here instead."

"And poor old Coker's floored. Ha, ha, ha!"

"The floorfulness is terrific!"

Coker did not heed the amazed remarks and loud laughter. He hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels. Certainly he had arranged to meet a Phyllis that afternoon. But most assuredly it was not this highly-coloured Phyllis. But there she was, claiming him! And Coker leaned on the table in the Rag, and gasped with astonishment and dismay.

"I do not understand this, Horace," said the young lady severely. "Am I to understand that you are displeased by my coming here?"

"Sure he's delighted, ma'am," said Fitzgerald. "That's only Coker's way of showing his deloight."

"Horace!"

"I—I—I—who are you?" yelled Coker. "I tell you, I don't know you."

"Dearest Horace, did I do wrong in coming here?" said the young lady, with a look of distress. "Is it possible that you have not announced our engagement?"

"Engagement!" shrieked Potter.

"Coker's engaged!"

"Oh, Coker!"

"I forbid the banns!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Coker ain't in his right mind."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, ye cheeky fags," said Fitzgerald. "Can't ye be civil to a lady—and especially a lady that's engaged to Coker?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker found his voice. He had wondered whether he was dreaming, and would wake up in the dormitory. But it was no dream; it was an awful reality.

"I—I tell you, I don't know her!" yelled Coker furiously. "It's a game; it's a trick! I've never seen her before!"

"Oh, Horace, my darling, unsay those cruel words!"

"Rats! Bosh! Bunkum! Who the thundering dickens are you?" roared Coker.

"Dearest Horace, have you forgotten your little Phyllis?"

"You're not Phyllis!" shrieked Coker.

"Ho, ho! So there is a Phyllis, anyway!" chuckled Fitzgerald.

"Mind your own business! Go and eat coke! Keep away!" yelled Coker, as the young lady advanced upon him with outstretched arms.

"Horace, my own!"

"Yow-ow! Keep off!"

"Kiss me, Horace!"

"Yurrooogh! I won't! Lemme alone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker almost collapsed, as the young lady threw her arms round his neck, and fairly hugged him. He struggled wildly to escape, while the Rag rang with laughter. Bob Cherry, almost choking, slammed the door. He did not want that interesting scene to be spoiled by the arrival of a master.

"Leggo!" shrieked Coker, in a muffled voice. "Leggo! If you kiss me, I'll punch your head—I will, really! Groooogh!"

Hardly aware of what he was doing at that terrible moment, Coker shoved the young lady off. She tottered back, and Harry Wharton caught her. There was an indignant shout from the crowd in the Rag:

"Shame!"

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER. Rough on Horace!

"O H, Coker!"

"Hold me!" murmured Phyllis II. "Oh, dear! I shall faint!"

"Sit down, ma'am!"

"Thank you, my dear little boy! Oh, Horace—Horace!" wailed the young lady, as she sank into the chair. "How can you be so cruel to your own Phyllis? Did I do wrong in coming here? Are you ashamed of poor little Phyllis before your friends? Horace, I could not wait till three o'clock. Had I not a right to believe that you would be delighted to see me? Horace, you have broken my heart!"

"Shame!"

"Well, you are a brute, Coker!"

"That ain't the way to treat a lady you're engaged to."

"I'm not engaged!" roared Coker frantically. "Do you think I'm such a silly ass, when I ain't seventeen yet? I tell you, I've never seen that hysterical idiot before!"

"Horace!"

"Shame!"

The young lady was sobbing now. Her eyes were dry; perhaps her grief was too deep for tears. But she was sobbing.

"He disowns me, after all his promises! Horace, how could you?"

"Tain't true!" bellowed Coker. "I've never seen the minx before! I give all you fellows my word——"

"Dash it all, can there be any mistake?" said Potter uneasily. "Look here, Coker, you know you said you were going to meet a lady this afternoon."

"'Twasn't that one!"

"So you've got a lot of affairs like this going on at the same time, have you?" exclaimed Bob Cherry indignantly. "You awful Don Juan!"

"You cheeky little beast, nothing of the sort! I've never seen that woman before. I don't know her from Adam!"

"Oh, draw it mild, Coker!"

Sob, sob, sob!

A Grand, Long, Complete Story,

**FLOORING
FISHY,**

By FRANK RICHARDS,

Will appear Next Week.

"It—it must be a mistake," said Coker, calming down a little. "A horrid mistake."

"Are you sure this is the right Horace, miss?" asked Potter.

"Do you think I don't know my own darling Horace?" sobbed the lady. "Dares he to say that he has never whispered sweet and loving words to his own Phyllis Montmorency?"

"Never!" roared Coker.

"Unfaithful heart!" Miss Montmorency checked her sobs. "But there is a law to punish a trifier with loving hearts! Wretch! Beware of an action for breach of promise!"

"Serve him right, too!"

"Make him pay damages, miss!"

"Breach of promise!" stuttered Coker. "Don't I keep on telling you that I've never seen you before?"

"False heart, I have your letter!"

"Mum-mum-my letter!"

"You've got a letter from Coker?" gasped Potter.

"Yes—yes; written in his own dear hand!"

"Well, that settles it," said Fitzgerald. "Coker, ye're acting like a dirty blaggard!"

"She hasn't got a letter!" shrieked Coker. "I tell you, I've never seen her before, and I've never written to her!"

"Sure she says she's got a letter——"

"It's a lie!" howled Coker. "Let her show the letter, then. You fellows all know my writing."

"Sure we do! Have you any objection to showin' the letter, ma'am?"

"I will show it, if only to prove his falseness," sobbed Miss Montmorency. "But do not let him take it; I shall need it for my action for breach of promise."

"We'll take care of that, ma'am."

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

"And his spelling," said Fitzgerald.

"No mistake about it! What have you got to say now, Coker?"

Coker had listened to the letter like one in a dream. It was certainly his letter, written to Phyllis—but not this Phyllis! By some extraordinary freak of Fate it had got into the hands of the wrong Phyllis! But, of course, nobody present was likely to believe such an explanation for a moment.

"I—I say, give me that letter!" stammered Coker. "That's mine!"

"No jolly fear!" said Fitzgerald. "The letter's this lady's property."

"He will destroy it!" cried Miss Montmorency. "I require it for my lawyers, to bring an action."

"You're in for it, Coker!"

"Give me that letter!" yelled Coker. "It wasn't written to her."

"What! How did she get it, then?"

"I—I don't know."

"Well, draw it mild and own up."

"I—I gave it to Bunter to take to—to—to somebody else. The fat idiot must have given it to her by mistake."

"Rot!"

"Where's Bunter?" roared Coker.

But Bunter was not there. Bunter had been taken out for a little walk that afternoon, especially, by Tom Brown.

"Give me the letter!" sobbed Miss Montmorency, and

"THE SECRET OF THE SEAS!"

THE GREATEST STORY
OF MODERN TIMES.
BY DUNCAN STORM

IN "THE BOYS' FRIEND," 1d, OUT TO-DAY.

"There isn't any letter!" raved Coker.

"Oh, shut up, Coker; here it is."

"Wha-a-a-at!"

There it was! Miss Montmorency fumbled in her bag and produced the letter. She handed it to Fitzgerald.

"Read it, every one of you!" she said brokenly. "He has broken my heart, but his falseness to his own Phyllis shall be known to all."

The Greyfriars fellows crowded round Fitzgerald to read. And they read, in Coker's unmistakable hand, and still more unmistakable spelling:

"Dear Phillis,—

"I diddnt have a chance of speaking to you the other day. I think you are a stunning girl—I do, reely! This is the ferst time I have bene in love, ekscepting my cussin. I hoap you think of me sumtimes.

"I am gowing to take you for a drive on Wensday afternoon. Of coarse, you must kepe it dark, and not say a word to a sole. I am gowing to have the trapp from the Anker, and I will let you drive, if you like, Phillis my deer. I will mete you at the brije on the Sark. Don't fale.

"I shall ekspekt you at three, and I will have the trap reddy and wating at the brije. You can bring yore frends if you like, Phillis, but I would mutch rather you came aloan.—Ever and ever your oan,

"HORACE."

It was proof positive. Fitzgerald read the letter aloud for the benefit of the fellows who were not near enough to see it.

"Flirtatious beast!" said Potter.

"That's his fist!" said Greene.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"FLOORING FISHY!"

Fitzgerald gave it to her at once. "I—I will go, since my darling does not love me any longer. Oh, Horace, how could you be so cruel!"

"I—I say! I—I——"

"Don't be an ass, Coker," whispered Potter in Coker's dazed ear. "Better make it up with her, you ass. You don't want an action for breach of promise, do you? Make it up now, and squirm out of it afterwards, if you can."

"I tell you I don't know her!"

"Oh, if you're only going to tell whoppers——"

Miss Montmorency tucked the famous letter safely into her bag. Then she rose to her feet, and held out her hands to the enraged Coker.

"Horace—once more, my own Horace—will you be kind to your darling Phyllis?"

"I tell you——"

"Come to my arms, Horace, and all shall be forgiven."

"I won't!" yelled Coker. "I tell you——"

"Don't you love me any longer?" sobbed Miss Montmorency.

"I tell you I—I've never seen you before!"

"And you've written like that to a lady you've never seen?" said Fitzgerald. "For goodness' sake, draw it mild!"

"I didn't write—I mean——"

"It's your own fist."

"And your own spelling!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Horace, for the last time—I will forgive you all—all, for one tender word!"

"There's your chance, Coker. Play up!"
 "You silly asses! I tell you—"
 "Then beware!" cried Miss Montmorency. "Your have scorned me, but beware! There is a law to punish you. I will go—I will never look again upon the face that was once so dear; but those lips, that vowed—"
 "They didn't! I didn't—"
 "But beware! You will next hear from my lawyers."
 Miss Montmorency swept to the door. Fitzgerald politely gave her his arm, and she departed. Coker staggered against the table, overcome. Every eye was upon him, with merriment or scorn in it. Certainly the young lady was rather old for Coker—in appearance, at least—and certainly a young lady who became engaged to a schoolboy did not deserve much sympathy. But the fact remained that Coker was a reckless Don Juan, a ruthless Lothario, a trifier with tender hearts. Coker read condemnation in every face, and his brain whirled. He wondered whether he had, in some moment of lunacy, really become engaged to the wrong Phyllis.
 "I tell you fellows it's all rot!" he gasped. "She's mistaken—or spoofing. She's stolen that letter somehow—"
 "Rats!"
 "Rot!"
 "Draw it mild!"
 "I'll prove it!" yelled Coker, as a new and illuminating idea came into his mind. "I'll prove it. Miss—I mean the lady that letter was written to, is meeting me this afternoon on the Sark Bridge at three. I was going to keep it dark, but just to prove that this is all rot I'll let you fellows come and see."
 "Done!" said Bob Cherry.
 "Sure, we'll come, if only to prove what a fearful fibber you are," said Fitzgerald.
 "What-ho! We'll all come!" chuckled Squiff.
 And quite an army followed Coker from the Rag

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER. Poor Old Coker!

MISS MONTMORENCY had disappeared in the cab. She was never seen again.
 But as Coker of the Fifth, with a crimson face and a furious brow, strode ahead of the army of Greyfriars fellows, and crossed the footpath towards the Sark Bridge, Wibley of the Remove came out of a barn and joined them.
 Wibley was in his own clothes, and looked his usual self, save for a smear or two of grease-paint that lingered about his ears.
 "Hallo! What's on?" asked Wibley cheerily.
 "Ha, ha, ha! Have you seen Miss Montmorency?" shrieked Bob Cherry.
 Wibley grinned.
 "Yes, she left the cab half-way to Friardale, and— and disappeared. But where are you all off to?"
 Harry Wharton explained, and Wibley roared. The army arrived on the Sark Bridge. It was past three, and the trap from the Anchor was waiting there. But there was no sign of a young lady.

"Well, where is she intirely?" asked Fitzgerald sceptically.
 "She—she hasn't come yet," muttered Coker. "We'll have to wait."
 "Nice for her if she did come, and found this giddy brigade here to look at her!" murmured Bob Cherry.
 Coker, in his agitation and excitement, hadn't thought of that.
 They waited.
 Half-past three rang out from the distant village. Still there was no sign of the young lady.
 "Rather late, what?" said Potter, with a chuckle.
 "Ye-e-es," said Coker.
 "Hallo, hallo, hallo! We shall have to be off to Cliff House," said Bob Cherry. "We promised Marjorie and Miss Howell to be there at four."
 Coker looked round with a glare as he heard Bob's remark.
 "You promised whom?" he stuttered.
 "Marjorie and Miss Howell," said Bob innocently.
 "They're coming out on the cliffs with us. Ta-ta, Coker; let us know when you get a writ for a breach of promise!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Harry Wharton & Co. streamed off, laughing. Coker's face was a study.
 "Well, when is that young lady coming?" asked Potter sarcastically.
 "I—I—she—I—she—can't be coming," stammered Coker. "I—I suppose it's all off. Oh, my hat!"
 "And you've brought us all this way to spoof us?" said Fitzgerald wrathfully. "I knew ye were cramming all the time!"
 "I—I tell you—"
 "Oh, don't tell us any more whoppers, Coker. You've told whoppers enough to the young lady ye're engaged to!"
 "I'm not engaged!" shrieked Coker. "You silly idiot—"
 "You're engaged, Coker, and I hope you'll get done for damages for breach of promise. You're a triflin' villain, and a smashing idiot, and a spooney lunatic, and ye ought to be ashamed of yourself. And you want a jolly good bumping to tache you more sinse."
 "Yes, rather—bump him!"
 "Look here— Yaroooooh!"
 Bump! Bump! Bump!
 The Greyfriars crowd departed, leaving Horace Coker sitting on the bridge gasping for breath, and in a perfectly Huunish temper.

There was a merry tea-party at Cliff House. Marjorie and Clara and Phyllis shrieked over the story of Coker's engagement.
 All Greyfriars shrieked over it, too. For days and days afterwards Coker's name could not be mentioned without laughter. Meanwhile, the great Horace did not feel like laughing. He was in daily expectation of receiving a writ for breach of promise, founded on the evidence of that unfortunate letter. How was he going to explain it to the Head, to his people, to Aunt Judy? In those unhappy days Coker bitterly repented him of having played the "giddy ox," and sincerely wished that he had never seen the bright eyes of Phyllis Howell.
 But the days passed without the dreaded writ arriving, and it was not for a week or more that the true identity of "Miss Montmorency" leaked out; and then Greyfriars indulged in a fresh eruption of merriment at the expense of the unfortunate Coker. When Coker learned the truth he sped to No. 1 Study for vengeance—and departed again in a series of heavy bumps along the Remove passage. But Coker had learned a lesson, and he swore a solemn swear never, never to write a love-letter again. "The Girl With the Golden Hair" was postponed by the Remove Dramatic Society, another comedy from the fertile pen of the humorous Wibley being played in its place, with great success and roars of laughter. Its title was "COKER'S ENGAGEMENT!"

THE END.

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THE FIRST LONG INSTALMENT OF OUR GREAT NEW ADVENTURE SERIAL STORY.



: : By : :

T. C. BRIDGES.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Shark.

"Nothing but catfish!" growled Dick Daunt, as he jerked the hook out of the mouth of another of the black, slimy, hideous-looking fish, and, knocking its head against the gunwale, flung it overboard.

"Say, I guess that must be about the forty-seventh you've caught, Dick," responded the other occupant of the boat—a lean young American, with a face as clean-cut as a Red Indian's, and a complexion so burnt by wind and sun that it resembled well-tanned saddle-leather. "Ain't it about time we got the hook up and shifted?"

"What's the use?" retorted Dick, whose rather thin face bore an expression of weariness and disgust such as Dudley Drew had rarely seen upon his partner's features. "It's the same everywhere else in this beastly creek. The only thing is to get out to sea and try for sheep's head or crevalle."

Drew looked doubtful.

"I reckon we'll have to pull a mighty long way," he answered. "There isn't a mite of wind."

"Oh, I'll pull!" said Dick. "We've simply got to have some fish for supper. 'Pon my Sam, I can't look a tin of bully-beef in the face any longer!"

Drew's reply was to begin pulling up the anchor.

As soon as he got it home the tide took hold of the clumsy boat and began to set her up on the creek. Dick got a grip of the oars, and, turning her, set to pulling the other way.

The water was like brown glass, and, although it was late October, the sun beat down mercilessly. If there was any breeze, the lofty walls of cypress and cabbage-palmetto which rose on either side cut it off. Perspiration streamed down Dick's face as he wielded the heavy oars.

Dudley shifted up on to the thwart behind him.

"You give me one of 'em," he said quietly; and though Dick objected, he insisted. Under the double drive the boat moved much more rapidly.

Presently the creek widened, and the trees grew thinner. A number of them, torn from their roots or broken short off, lay in the water.

"Say, but that hurricano has played thunder down here!" observed Dudley.

"I wouldn't have minded that if it had left our place alone," said Dick Daunt bitterly. "It makes me fairly sick to look at the wreck it's made of everything! I was round again this morning and counted. There are only thirty-seven cocoa-palms left out of the whole three hundred; and as for the

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orange-trees, it will be all of three years before we get a crop again."

"It's pretty bad," assented the other gravely.

"What I want to know," continued Dick, "is what we are going to do about it? You know jolly well, Dudley, that it will cost us a matter of three hundred dollars to replant and put things to rights. Then we've got to live for the next three years until we get a crop. And we haven't more than sixty dollars between us. What's to be done?"

"I reckon that's just what I've been saying to myself ever since the day it happened, Dick. We're up against it. That's a sure thing."

"But see here," he continued, "this isn't any time to be chewing the rag. After supper we'll have it out, and if you've a mind to let go and set to some fresh job—why, I'm not going to do any kicking."

Dick was silent. He realised that Dudley was right. Also he felt somewhat ashamed. It was true that he had put money into the neat little place which lay near the shore of Lemon Bay, but it was Dudley who had made it. Four years' hard work under the tropic sun the young American had put into the place. He, Dick, had only been on it a year. He knew how Dudley loved it, and fully realised what a wrench it would be for him to give it up. What business had he got to grouse when Dudley took it all so quietly?

By this time the boat had crossed the bar, and was out on the placid surface of Lemon Bay. There was hardly a ripple on the mirror-like blue. It was difficult to believe that only four days earlier this same pond-like sea had been thundering on the white beach in breakers as high as houses, while the foam-flakes had been driven hundreds of yards inland through the forest.

A sudden tremendous splash made him start, and he was just in time to see something resembling a six-foot bar of silver rise out of the sea, hang poised an instant in mid-air, and disappear again with a sullen plunge.

"Tarpon!" he shouted. "Great luck, Dudley! Mullet must be in the bay."

"That's so!" replied Dudley quietly. "I guess we'll anchor right here and try our luck."

He flung over the anchor, and the boat swung to it with her bow pointing seawards.

Her crew hastily baited the hand-lines and flung them out; and inside two minutes were pulling in bright-scaled mullet as fast as they could handle the lines. The fish averaged about a pound in weight, and were in splendid condition.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"FLOORING FISHY!"

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry
Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

The shining pile grew rapidly.

"We'll have plenty to take over to Port Lemon," said Dick. "Old Ladd, the storekeeper, ought to give us a good trade in exchange for these."

At this moment there came a tremendous jerk at Dudley's line. He pulled hard; then, all of a sudden, the line went slack, and when he hauled it in hook, snood, and all were gone.

"Blame the luck!" he exclaimed, in a tone of deep annoyance. "It's a shark! I guess that's finished our sport this journey."

"No; by Jove, I'm not going to stick that!" returned Dick emphatically. "The shark-line's aboard, and if we bait with one of the bigger fish the chances are we'll have the beggar!"

"And be towed all around the bay!" returned Dudley drily.

"Never mind! The mullet will come again. Besides, I want a shark. We're in need of some oil for our boots and harness."

As he spoke he was baiting a thing the size of a meat-hook. There was three foot of steel chain attached to it, and to that again a long coil of stout line.

In a minute or two all was ready, and he threw it out. Dudley had got in his mullet-line. It is no use fishing when sharks are about.

Five minutes or more passed slowly; then the shark-line began to move slowly and jerkily over the gunwale. Dick watched the line with eager eyes. Dudley was quietly raising the anchor.

Foot by foot it stole away, then suddenly began to run out rapidly. Dick, who had risen to his feet, got tight hold of the line with both hands and gave a fierce jerk.

"Got him!" he roared triumphantly, and, springing forward, made the line fast with a couple of turns around a cleat in the bow.

Instantly the line was taut as a fiddle-string, and the boat, pulled by the unseen monster below, began to forge rapidly ahead.

"A big one!" said Dudley briefly, as he slipped into the sternsheets and took the tiller.

The pace of the boat increased. She was heading straight out to sea. A great black triangular fin showed up on the surface and went cutting through the water at a furious rate.

For nearly half an hour this went on, and still the great brute showed no signs of tiring. Dudley glanced back towards the shore, now quite three miles away.

"Looks like we were bound for Cuba," he observed, in his dry way.

Almost as he spoke the shark turned southwards, parallel with the coast.

"Don't worry!" Dick replied. "He's going to give us a free ride to Port Lemon."

Another ten minutes and the pace slackened perceptibly. Dick began to haul on the line; but this started his shark-ship up afresh, and he spurted hard for nearly a mile.

Then he slacked up again.

"Mighty nigh time to lance him," said Dudley. Dick nodded, and picked up from the bottom of the boat a stout six-foot length of bamboo armed at the end with a sharp steel point.

The shark had almost stopped, and was beating the surface with his tail. Dudley took the oars, and pulled quietly up alongside.

Dick was ready. The lance-head flashed in the sunlight as it clove the air, and, aimed to perfection, was buried deep in the steel-grey body.

A sheet of spray flew over them, the boat rocked in the waves caused by the monster's struggles, and the blue water turned pink with blood.

"That was a mighty good lance, Dick," said Dudley. "I don't reckon we'll have a lot more trouble."

But a shark takes a lot of killing. The wound seemed to galvanise the huge brute into fresh energy, and off he went again at the rate of knots, and now heading straight back towards the coast.

But the spurt did not last very long, and presently Dick was able to get his lance to work again. This time he finished the job, and the long torpedo-shaped body floated motionless on the surface.

"Told you he'd take us in again," said Dick, with a laugh, and pointing to the shore, not half a mile away. "We'll beach him, chop out his liver, then slip along to Port Lemon. We can sell or swap our mullet, and get back in time to catch some more for supper."

"Seems a pretty slick programme!" drawled Dudley. "But I'm right with you."

The tide helped them in; they beached the boat, and, hauling the shark ashore, set to work with the big flinching-knife which they always carried.

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Well practised as he was in this kind of work, it took Dick only a very short time to rip the great carcase open, and the huge liver, reeking with oil, was taken out and lifted into the boat.

"Wonder if he's got anything else inside him?" said Dick.

"I reckon not. He's hardly large enough to be a man-eater," answered Dudley.

"I'll just have a look. It won't take a minute," Dick said, as he stooped and inserted the knife again.

The skin, harsh as sandpaper, ripped with a grating sound, and then the knife rang on something hard and resonant.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Dick. "Here's treasure trove!" And thrusting in his hand, he drew out a bottle.

Dudley laughed.

"Say, Dick, he must have been kind of hungry to go lunching on empty bottles."

"It isn't empty," declared Dick, as he held up his find. "It's corked."

"Corked, is it? Let's hope it's ginger-pop inside! I could do with a little liquid refreshment. Here's a cork-screw."

But Dick had already solved the problem of opening the bottle by knocking off its head with the back of the flinching-knife.

"Empty," he said. Then, with a start: "No, by Jove! There's a paper inside!"

"The mischief, you say? Have it out, Dick! Here's the start of a dime novel. Strange manuscript found in the stomach of a tiger-shark!"

"It's manuscript, all right!" Dick's voice betrayed more than a little excitement. "It's a letter."

"A letter! Read it right out, Dick!"

The sheet which Dick had taken from the bottle was coarse, whity-brown paper, the kind used in country stores for wrapping parcels. It was rolled in a cylinder, and Dick smoothed it out carefully.

"Wait a jiffy! How does it go? Ah, this is the right way up! My aunt, what a fist! Looks as if a spider had fallen in the inkpot, and tried to dry himself on the paper afterwards. All right; don't get impatient! I've got it:

"To anyone who picks up this bottle,—I, Matthew Snell, having lost my boat in the great storm of October 16th, am marooned, and in danger of starving on an unnamed island in the Keys. I will richly reward any person who will bring me food and take me off. The island lies, so far as I have judged the distance, sixty-three miles south-east by south of Cape Saturn. It can be known, when sighted, by the two small peaks on the north-west, the northerly hill being bare of trees.

"Signed this seventeenth day of October.

"MATTHEW SNELL."

For several seconds after Dick had finished this remarkable screeed, the two young fellows stood staring at one another in complete silence.

Dudley was the first to speak.

"Some tourist chap wrote that for a joke, I reckon, and tossed it overboard from a steamer."

But Dick seemed hardly to hear. His brows were creased, his lips tightly closed. He appeared to be trying to remember something.

"Snell," he muttered—"Matthew Snell." And then suddenly: "By Jove, I've got it! That's the very chap that Ladd told me of somewhere about three months ago."

"Ladd! What's he know of him?"

"He and I were having a yarn that night we got caught in a breeze, and had to stay the night at Port Lemon. Yes; I remember it all now. He told me that an old man named Snell had been in only the day before, and bought a lot of stuff. He'd been in half a dozen times or so during the past two years. Came in a rubbly old sailing-boat, and always got about the same lot of stuff. And the rum thing about it was, he always paid in gold-dust."

"Gold-dust!" exclaimed Dudley, roused for once! "Gold-dust! Say, he's crazy! There isn't no gold-dust in Florida, or any of the Keys, either."

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Cray on the Job.

"That's what he said, anyhow," returned Dick obstinately. "And if you don't believe me, you'd better ask him!"

"We'll do that, right now!" answered Dudley emphatically. "We're only two miles from Port Lemon, and I guess we'll have the truth out of old man Ladd before we're an hour older."



"It's a manuscript all right!" Dick's voice betrayed more than a little excitement. "It's a letter!"
"A letter!" exclaimed Dudley. "Read it out, Dick!" (See page 24.)

A little breeze had sprung up, just enough to fill the sail, and with this on the beam, they made good time to Port Lemon, where they tied up at the long timber-built pier, and went ashore, each carrying a string of fish.

The place was only a village, just a few frame houses dumped down in a clearing of a dozen acres behind the broad, white beach. The boys were pretty well known in the place, and several men shouted greetings from the verandahs, and more than one asked them to stop.

But, eager to see Ladd; they excused themselves, and hurried on to Ladd's store. This was a great barn of a place, with long counters running up each side, and behind them shelves fixed against the matchboarded walls, and loaded with every sort of goods, from tinned tongues to tea-pots, and from women's hats to men's boots.

"Hallo, boys!" came a great booming voice, and Ladd himself stepped forward to greet them.

Ladd was little more than five feet tall, and looked as broad as he was high. He had a huge red face, a long red

beard, and a thick crop of the most flaming red hair that ever was seen. He was so fat that he waddled rather than walked, and, in spite of his fat, was always fit and always cheerful.

"Hallo, boys! I been reckoning I'd see you pretty soon. Got some fish for me? Them's fine mullet! Where did ye get 'em?"

"Opposite our place," Dick answered. "Got a shark, too!"

"Did ye now? Waal, you lay them fish down over in the ice-box here, and ye can have two dollars' worth of trade for 'em. Guess that storm served you pretty bad, didn't it? You'll be wanting some new stuff up along your place. What kin I do for you?"

"Give us five minutes in your office," cut in Dudley. "Dick, here, has something to ask you."

Ladd looked a little surprised.

"Secrets—eh? Waal, there ain't a lot o' folk here this minute"—looking round the empty store—"and it's cooler

here than in the office. What's the matter with having it out here?"

"All right. It won't take long," said Dick. "Do you remember telling me about an old chap called Matthew Snell?"

"Matt Snell! You bet I do! That old scarecrow as comes in from the Keys in a boat that looks like it might have been made out o' the wreck o' the Ark!"

And paid for his grub in gold-dust?" questioned Dick.

"That's so. Though where he got it beats me. I guess he's the first man as has found dust anywheres nearer than Cuba. They do say there's gold over there, but as for them Keys, I never heard tell of any gold except Spanish treasure and such like."

"But it was dust?" put in Dick.

"You can bet your life on that, son! I been West, and I know dust when I handles it. And that was a mighty good sample. About twenty-two carat, as I sold it."

Dick glanced at Dudley. He was staring at Ladd with a look of the keenest interest.

"But say," went on Ladd. "What's the trouble? What makes you two fellers so interested all of a sudden?"

Again Dick looked at Dudley, and Dudley nodded.

"Don't you tell if you don't want to," said Ladd.

"But I do want to," replied Dick. "Only I'll ask you to keep dark about it for the present."

"Oh, I'll do that! I'll be mum as an oyster," asserted Ladd, with a fat chuckle.

"Then read this," said Dick, handing him the letter.

Ladd did so, and for once his big face assumed a solemn expression.

"Gee, but this sounds like business!" he remarked. "Where did yo get it?"

"Out of the shark," Dick told him.

"And what are ye going to do about it?"

"Take a trip across," answered Dick briefly.

Ladd nodded.

"I guess it's worth it. Reckon your boat's big enough?"

"Yes; if the weather holds up."

"It's likely to be fine quite a spell after that storm."

"But I reckon we shall want some stores, Mr. Ladd," put in Dudley. "That storm's pretty near broke us."

"I'll go you," said Ladd. "If you gets the reward the old feller shouts about—why, you can square up. If you don't—why, that'll be all right. I guess I've had right smart profit out of Matt Snell the times he's been dealing along with me."

"Thanks! That's awfully good of you!" answered Dick warmly. "We'll get off."

Dudley nudged him, and he pulled up short, and looked round in surprise.

Then he saw the reason why Dudley had checked him.

It was not a pretty reason. The man who had just entered the store was the human image of a turkey-buzzard. He had the same small head at the end of a long, scaly-looking neck, and he carried it forward just as does that unclean scavenger of the tropics. His thin, hooked nose was extraordinarily like a buzzard's bill. His skull was bare as a billiard-ball, and a long fringe of dirty-looking hair hung down over his greasy coat-collar. To make the resemblance more complete, he had just the same shuffling walk as the bird which he so faithfully copied.

He was Ezra Cray, Yankee by-birth, but with only one Yankee trait in his character. That was meanness. As Ladd had often said: "That feller Cray is so cussed mean, I wonder he don't steal the clothes off of his own back."

"How d'ye, Ladd?" he remarked in a harsh, croaking voice.

"And what do you want?" demanded Ladd, openly hostile.

"I wants some stores when you got time to attend to me," snarled Cray, with an attempt at sarcasm.

"Hav you got the money to pay for 'em?" inquired Ladd.

For answer, Cray took a wad of greasy five-dollar bills out of his pocket, and slammed them down on the counter.

"I got the money if you got the goods!" he snapped.

Dick cut in:

"Then we'll be getting home, Mr. Ladd. Thanks for what you've told us. We'll be round first thing in the morning for the stuff."

"Right, boys!" said Ladd cheerfully. "I guess we can fix it up all right. Good-night to you!"

"That chap Cray gives me creeps!" remarked Dick, as they clambered into their boat again.

"In fact, he's a reptile," allowed Dudley; "the worst around these parts."

"They say he's in with that moonlighting crowd up the creek," said Dick. "Those chaps that run the distillery up in the swamps."

"That's what Sheriff Anderson says, anyway," replied Dudley; "and I reckon he knows."

"Say, Dick," he continued, "you fixed up mighty quick to go to this island."

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Dick stared.

"Didn't you want to go?"

"You bet. But it means leaving our place to look after itself for maybe a week. You can't count on getting help round this time of year."

"What is there left to look after?" asked Dick, frowning.

"Mighty little," replied Dudley, with a sigh. "All the same, this business is pretty much of a gamble."

"Just so. And if it turns up trumps, and we find the old boy, that reward he offers may just set us on our legs again. A handful or two of that dust will go a long way to repairing the damage. And we might be able to buy a bigger boat, and work the fishing properly this winter."

Dudley nodded.

"That's so. All right, Dick. We'll get to it, then."

Get to it they did. That night they overhauled the boat, rove some new running tackle, mended a hole in the ancient mainsail, and got their gear together. Before daylight next morning they were afloat again, and at six were back at Port Lemon.

Early as it was, Ladd was waiting for them. He put a thick finger to his lips, and beckoned them inside the store.

"Say, boys," he said, in a low voice, "I'm afeared you're in for a heap o' trouble. That there fellow Cray is on the job."

The Island.

"Cray on the job?" said Dick sharply. "You don't mean to say you've told him?"

"Me tell! What d'ye take me for?" retorted Ladd, his red beard fairly bristling.

"Sorry! I ought not to have said that. But you say Cray is on the game. How can that be? I vow he didn't overhear us yesterday."

"I don't reckon he did. And how in thunder he got wise beats me like it does you. All I knows is that the skunk was in here arter you left, buying stuff for a cruise, and paying for it in good money."

"He may be on a trip after turtles," suggested Dick.

"You wait, young feller. Bernard J. Ladd may be fat, but he ain't a fool. I sorter suspicioned something, and arter he left I slipped out around the back and follered him down to the beach. He was a-loading the stuff on that big centre-board o' his, and along with him was that all-fired rascal Seth Weekes."

"The moonlighter?" exclaimed Dick.

"That's right; the boss o' that gang. I got down behind another boat, and 'twas dark by then, so they didn't see me, and I got a chance to listen. Wasn't much as I could hear, for they talked mighty quiet, but I'm a Dutchman if I didn't hear Snell's name spoke, and more'n once, too."

"The mischief!" muttered Dick. "What's to be done?"

"Done!" repeated Ladd. "Why, get to it, boys! They ain't started yet. I been watching, and there ain't a soul been down to the boat this morning. I reckon they're waiting for some more o' their dod-gasted crowd from up the swamps there. Now, I got all the stuff ready for you, and all you got to do is tote it down. Then you turns round as if you was a-going right home again, and so soon as you're round the point you makes away for this here island."

The two boys exchanged glances.

"He's right," said Dick.

"That's so," replied Dudley quietly. "And even if they do get off soon, we ought to outsail them. In this light breeze we can do a sight better than they can."

"That's right," declared Ladd. "Now here's your stuff, all done up in sacks. Go straight on down to the beach leisurely like. Don't hurry. Act just like you was going home. And say," he went on quickly, "you got a gun along?"

"Yes. I've got my forty-four repeater," said Dudley, "and Dick here has his scatter-gun."

"That's all hunky. Likely you'll need 'em before you're through. You mind this. The law don't run on them Keys—at least, not anything to signify—and it's the chap as gets the drop first as comes out top dog."

He stooped and lifted a sack on to the counter, and then a second. They were heavy, too—each a good load for a man.

"Guess you'll find all you need in there, boys. Good luck to you, and pockets full of dust!"

He gave them each a grip that was like a bear's, and they marched off down to their boat.

The morning breeze was right off the land, and as soon as they were half a mile out they began to feel it. The cat-boat lay over, and a slim feather of foam began to curl up on either side, under her prow.

Dudley looked back.

"We've stolen a march on them, Dick. There's not a soul around on the beach yet."

Hour after hour the breeze held. By nine the coast of Florida was hull down, and they were driving steadily south-eastwards over the wrinkled swells of the Gulf of Mexico. Neither knew much about navigation, but they had a compass, and, in any case, were able to set a course by the sun.

So the long afternoon wore on, and still there was no sign of land.

Dick looked at the sun.

"It will be down in an hour," he said, rather gloomily, "and there's not a ghost of a sign of the island."

Dudley got up, and, standing in the bows, clinging to the forestay, stared round the horizon. At last he turned to the other.

"I believe I can see something. I don't know what it is, but it looks mighty like land. Over there!"

He pointed as he spoke, and Dick slightly altered his course. Within another quarter of an hour Dudley was able to say definitely that it was land of some sort.

Their spirits rose, and they held on, close-hauled as possible.

But now—as almost always happens at sunset in tropical seas—the wind began to fall, and soon the cat-boat was bumping heavily in the smooth swell, her sails slatting aimlessly against the mast.

"It's all right," said Dudley, still cheerful. "We'll get the night breeze after a bit. Then we'll make it. And now I reckon it's 'most supper-time."

Tinned tongue, more biscuits, and a can of fruit in syrup did them no end of good, and as they ate they watched the sun, a huge globe of crimson, dip slowly behind the placid sea.

But it was another hour before the night breeze began to blow, and now it was nearly dark.

Then came a real misfortune. Slowly but steadily a bank of cloud began to rise, and behind its great, grey veil the stars vanished, leaving them lost upon a pitch-dark sea. The breeze began to stiffen again, and Dick, at least, became very anxious indeed.

"We'll have to get a reef in, Dudley," said Dick at last, after a squall which had nearly buried the low-sided craft.

At that very moment Dudley gave a shout:

"Watch out, Dick! Breakers just ahead!"

Dick flung her over on the other tack with lightning speed. "Geo whiz! But that was close!" exclaimed Dudley, pointing to a tumble of white foam roaring on rocks hardly a biscuit's throw to starboard. "I guess this is the island, all right."

The wind had steadied a little, but the thunder of the surf was terrifying.

"I believe I'll drop the peak," said Dick. "But goodness only knows how we'll ever make a landing."

"Breakers to port!" was Dudley's alarming reply. "Put her over, quick, Dick!"

Dick obeyed like a flash. Only just in time, for now leaping crests were visible through the gloom about fifty yards on the port-side.

"We're right in the middle of it!" growled Dick.

Yet, in spite of the imminent peril on both sides, his hand was steady as steel on the tiller. Given somewhat to grousing at small misfortunes or discomforts, Dick Daunt could always be relied on in a really tight place.

Dudley was standing up, staring out ahead.

"We're sure in the middle of all kinds of reefs, Dick. Keep her as she goes. Seems there's some sort of a channel ahead."

A moment later he had to shout to Dick to luff again. And now all around the waves were breaking white. The boat had run into a very tangle of reefs. It seemed out of the question to ever extricate her.

Ten minutes passed. They seemed like ten hours. Then came a triumphant shout from Dudley.

"We're through, Dick! We're through, old son!"

Dick heaved a deep sigh.

"And where's your blessed island?" he grunted.

The words were hardly out of his mouth before the cat-boat took ground with a shock that sent Dudley sprawling.

He picked himself up.

"You've found it all right," he said drily.

Dick had the sail down in half no time.

"It's only sand!" he gasped.

"Yes; and I guess that's the beach right ahead," answered Dudley. "We haven't a lot to kick about after all."

As he spoke he jumped out into the water. Dick followed his example, and together they pulled the boat up. The tide was falling, and they soon had her high and dry. They anchored her firmly, carrying the hook a good way up the beach, then dropped down under her lee. They were both pretty well played out.

"We don't even know whether this is the right island!" grunted Dick, as he wrung the water out of his trousers, which he had pulled off for that purpose.

"I'm willing to gamble it's the right one," laughed

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EVERY
MONDAY.

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

Dudley. "But we can't be sure till morning. Meantime, I reckon we'd better roll up in our blankets and take a snooze."

The advice was good, and within a very few minutes they both were stretched on the sand sound asleep. They were dog-tired, and neither moved until the sun, blazing full in their faces, roused them to the fact that the day was nearly an hour old.

Dudley was first on his feet.

"There are the two hills, Dick!" he exclaimed, with a touch of excitement such as he seldom showed. "We're all right!"

"That's a good job," Dick answered, sitting up and rubbing his eyes. "Don't see the old man, I suppose?"

"Not a sign of him. But I guess he wouldn't be looking for us here. Great Scott! Look at the reefs we came through!"

"Bother the reefs!" said Dick. "I saw enough of 'em last night. What I want to see now is my breakfast!"

"It won't be long," smiled Dudley, who was already collecting driftwood for a fire.

Hot coffee and fried flying-fish tasted delicious, and having finished their meal, they unloaded their stores, and cached them in the sandbanks behind the beach, covering them over carefully lest Cray's party might arrive.

"What about the boat?" asked Dick.

"We can't cache her; that's one thing sure," said Dudley. "I guess she'll be all right where she is. Cray won't try in through those reefs, even if he does come along. Anyhow, we ought to see his crowd from the hill if they're anywhere on the horizon."

Dick nodded.

"Right you are! Now for the old man. We'd best go up the hill first, hadn't we?"

Dudley agreed, and they started. Behind the beach was a belt of thick scrub composed of saw-palmetto and bamboo vine, wicked stuff to force a way through. Also, it was haunted by rattlesnakes, from one of which Dudley had a very narrow escape.

Inland the ground rose and the scrub turned to forest.

"This isn't any coral island," said Dick, as he glanced down at the rich, loamy soil.

"Not it! You don't get hills on the ordinary Keys. I reckon this is the top of some old volcano that got licked up out of the Gulf a few thousand years ago. And say, Dick, there's always metals in this sort of rock."

"Then the gold-dust might have come from here after all," said Dick.

"Not a mite of a reason why it shouldn't. Hallo! A creek! Maybe this is the one he washes the dust out of."

"Let's go up it, then."

They did so, and presently found distinct signs of man's handiwork. A dam had been built across the rivulet, and its course turned. There was a shovel sticking in the ground.

"And here's a path!" exclaimed Dick suddenly.

He turned quickly up it, and Dudley followed. They were both getting really interested. The path wound through the thick trees for a couple of hundred yards, and opened quite suddenly into a small clearing, roughly fenced, where corn and sweet potatoes were growing. In the middle was a small log hut thatched with reeds. The chinks were cemented with clay.

"Got it at last!" exclaimed Dick, running forward.

The door was open. He went straight in, but the room was empty.

"Mr. Snell!" he cried. "Mr. Snell!"

There was no reply.

"He must be out around somewhere," said Dudley. "Guess we'd better go and look."

"I suppose we had," replied Dick slowly. "Still, it's a bit odd that he's not here or at his diggings."

They started out, and, by Dudley's advice, went first to the top of the nearest hill. From here they got a view of the whole island. It was quite small—only about two miles long by a mile to a mile and a half wide.

Dick scanned the horizon. The sea was empty.

"No sign of Cray's crowd, anyhow," he said with some satisfaction.

"Nor of Snell, either," rejoined Dudley. "I wonder where the old fellow's got to?"

"We'll have a look round, anyway," said Dick, turning.

They searched all day, they covered the whole island, they fired shots, they lit a big fire. At dusk, utterly tired out, they crawled back to the shack.

"This beats all!" said Dudley. "The old boy's vanished into thin air."

(Another long instalment of this splendid new serial story next Monday. To avoid disappointment order your copy early.)

MY READERS' PAGE

OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE BOYS' FRIEND," 1d., Every Monday. "THE GEM" LIBRARY, 1d., Every Wednesday. "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d. COMPLETE LIBRARY. "THE PENNY POPULAR," 1d., Every Friday. "CHUCKLES," Price 1d., Every Saturday.

The Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums, at home or abroad, and is only too willing to give his best advice to them if they are in difficulty or in trouble. . . . Whom to write to: Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

For Next Monday:

"FLOORING FISHY!"

By Frank Richards.

Next Monday's grand long complete story of famous Greyfriars School is a winner all the way, and will be hailed with universal delight by my myriads of chums. Fisher T. Fish, the Yankee junior, having been sat upon by Mr. Quelch, determines to get even with the gimlet-eyed Form-master, to whom he sends a series of anonymous and threatening letters. Things reach such a pass that it is necessary for Mr. Quelch to call upon Ferrers Locke, the detective, for assistance in clearing up the matter. The young investigator soon succeeds in

"FLOORING FISHY,"

and a very warm time indeed ensues for the unscrupulous Yankee.

OUR STORY COMPETITION.

More Names of Lucky Winners.

In addition to the readers whose names were published on this page last Monday, the following competitors have been awarded consolation prizes in connection with the competition:

Kenneth Shirley Smith, Sunnyside, Station Road, Hendon, N.W.
Lindsay Anderson, 17, Thomas Street, Eighton Banks, near Gateshead-on-Tyne.
Miss Marjorie Birch, Marden Villas, Croydon Road, Caterham Valley.
Rod W. Walkington, 8, Leatham Road, Shiregreen, Sheffield.
Alfred Whybrow, 79, Kidd Street, Woolwich, S.E.
Arthur Dawson, Braeside, Teevan Road, Addiscombe, Croydon.
Miss Alice B. Larter, The Glyn, Llandrillo, Corwen, North Wales.
Arthur Elcome, 115, High Street, Margate.
E. Brown, 72, Wheelwright Road, Gravelly Hill, Birmingham.
A. S. Rudland, 7, Waterloo Street, Charles Street, Hull.
G. A. Miles, 19, Rectory Road, Gateshead-on-Tyne.
Jack Tyler, 14, Cavendish Road, Brondesbury, N.W.
O. F. Davies, 1, Thurlow Road, Hampstead, N.W.
Miss Winifred E. King, 59, Freshfield Street, Queen's Park, Brighton.
J. D. Morriss, 163, Upwell Street, Grimesthorpe, Sheffield.
James P. Hott, 30, Wykeham Road, Reading.
G. Dixon, 56, Tyrell Road, East Dulwich, S.E.
Raymond Armstrong, 12, Pembroke Crescent, Hove.
Arthur Duthie, 21, Albert Street, Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire.
H. Lawrence, 12A, Russell Street, Stroud, Glos.
Maurice Yates, 90, Coventry Road, Reading.
Robert Fuller, Deneholme, Puddlers' Lane, Bedlington, Northumberland.
W. Smith, 10, Abingdon Square, Northampton.

The stories submitted by the above readers, though short of the standard required in order to win the premier prize, were of a highly meritorious nature, and the writers are to be congratulated on their good work. A further selection of prizewinners will appear next week.

BEST THANKS TO LOYAL CHUMS.

To the following readers of the "Magnet" Library who have recently sent me splendid letters of appreciation I tender my sincere and hearty thanks:

H. Farrow (Southport), W. C. Abbett (Hull), "Two Loyal South African Readers," N. Williams (Cardiff), "A Loyal

Reader" (Bexley Heath), Jennie Stevens (Sunderland), N. C. Selway (Muswell Hill), "Satisfied" (Prestwick), "A Loyal Reader" (Jersey), F. Noyce (Salisbury), "Two Girl Chums" (King's Cross), Percival K. (Southampton), "Contented" (Brighton), S. A. T. (Harringay), "A Loyal Reader" (Inverness), Arthur F. (Guernsey), "A Loyal Reader" (Hornsey), Jack W. and Edward G. (Bristol), "A Loyal Reader" (Southend-on-Sea), "Pretoria" (London), Eric Howell (Tenby), "A Loyal Reader" (Bury St. Edmunds), C. E. R. (Bournemouth), W. Williamson (Edinburgh), Alfred Taylor (Birmingham), "A Loyal Reader" (London), H. Scott (Plaistow), J. Cordon (Liverpool), Conrad S. (Kingston Hill), G. G. W. (Northants), G. F. (Plumstead), Victor and Clarence W. (Eltham Green), "Dolly Dimple" (Clarkston), W. Walbank (Derbyshire), G. F. J. Harwood (Bristol), "An Old and Loyal Reader," "A Loyal Reader" (Greenock), "A Limerick Reader," "A Loyal Hertfordshire Reader," "Robert, Gerald, and Oscar," "Captain," J. A. M., Wilfred U. (Middlesbrough), J. M. (Glasgow), Sidney G. (Canning Town), P. G. (Aylesbury), L. R. and G. R. (Market Drayton), W. P. B. (Treharris), "Harry" (Bristol), "Pals" (Glamorgan), "A Lonely Girl Reader" (Liverpool), R. W. H. (Northampton), Frank A. (King's Cross), E. Morrison (Haley), "A Loyal Supporter" (Wakefield), Wilfred S. (York), Lawrence N. (Tittesham), Miss D. Hibberd (Co. Down), J. S. W. (Aylesbury), Billy M. (Stoke-on-Trent), T. R. (West Bromwich), Ernest Wright (Harringay), W. Cox (Birmingham), C. Briggs (Sutton), T. H. Webb (Northampton), "Peggy" (Watford), A. E. Wadham (Torquay), W. A. (Wilmslow), Eric B. (Liverpool), J. Geddes (Glasgow), "Two Girl Chums" (Carlton), Reg Evans (Ashton-on-Mersey), J. E. Davidson, T. Lockwood (Wombwell), and L. Dyer (Brighton), "A Loyal Reader" (Leeds), F. J. W. (Liverpool).

I should like to have thanked all these readers personally, but as many of them modestly refrained from stating their addresses, such a course is obviously impossible. Nevertheless, though the privilege of shaking them by the hand is denied me, I must thank them one and all for their unwavering loyalty to a paper second to none in the affections of British boys and girls.

HAS YOUR PHOTOGRAPH APPEARED YET?

Readers of the "Magnet" Library of either sex who have not yet sent in their portraits for reproduction in our popular gallery are requested to do so at once, as it is my wish to continue this novel feature for many months to come.

The name and address of the sender must be clearly written on the back of each photograph.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

W. H. W. (Yarmouth).—You consider "School and Sport" a masterpiece? Agreed, nem. con.! Thanks for photo.

A. S. C. (Leytonstone).—Stories accepted for the "Herald" from readers will be paid for just as if they were the work of professional authors. You can send yours along at once, and it will receive due consideration; but the offer is not likely to be closed down yet. We should be glad to find real talent among our readers, if it is there.

"Evening Star."—Bunter any good as a scout? My word! I should like to hear Bob Cherry's opinion on that subject.

F. O'D. (Dovercourt).—Good! You intend to back up the companion papers for all you are worth, and to start your young brothers on them as soon as they are old enough. Other readers are hereby requested to follow your example.

(Continued on page iv of Cover.)



"A. S.,"
London.



JESSE SKELDING,
Waleall.



EDWARD ROWLEY,
Scarboro'.



V. R. WEBLING,
Eltham.



F. A. WILLIAMS,
Mold.



M. D. WOOD,
Croydon.



DOUGLAS W. IVES,
Peterboro'.



ERNEST ROBINSON,
Ferryhill, Durham.



A. HATTON,
Warrington.



B. SIMMONS, Junior,
Forest Gate.



W. L. GIBSON
and his brother,
Farnham, Surrey.



MISS GRACE WILCOX
and
MISS WINNIE REASON,
Ontario, Canada.



L. HAYMES,
Streatham.



L. McQUINNIEITY,
Govan.



A SCOTTISH GIRL
READER.



P. BARKER,
Hull.



W. KING,
Oldham.

REPLIES IN BRIEF—continued.

H. M. (Handsworth).—Thanks for good wishes and for the dog's photograph. I am not sure that I can print this, but am glad to have it, nevertheless.

"A Magnetite."—Fictitious. But keep it dark! We don't tell everybody these great secrets.

"Tomboy Joan."—Don't worry! H. W. & Co. are not going to be moved up. So glad you like the "Magnet"!

"Dinkie J." (Swiff).—Quite right! It should, of course, have been ~~Fugger~~ XV., not XI. I know better, so it must have been the wicked printer man. Trust a Cardiffian for spotting such a bloomer!

C. M. J. (Chorlton-cum-Hardy).—Will see what can be done about giving Dicky Nugent & Co. a bigger show.

"Full Back" (Middleton).—Afraid I cannot add any names to your list. It is already a longer one than I could have written out. The remaining four can't be of much importance, or Mr. Richards would have given them a place in some story or other.

L. G. B. W. makes it his duty to come home from work in a hurry on Mondays so as to give the "Herald" proper attention. But I hope he does not start home before the proper time!

"A Thornaby Heraldite" can hardly wait for the next issue. But he has to. Capital thing, learning to be patient!

W. C.—Sorry, but I really can't. It's just as well to have something to say before you start to write verses, and you seem to have failed there.

D. M. (Christchurch, N.Z.).—But we are not sick of congrats! They do us good. We often get letters from New Zealand. You think the Famous Five get too much of the limelight, and suggest more Coker. But Coker is not exactly a back-seater, is he?

W. K. (Oldham).—Thanks for photo!

"Competitor."—What a dreadful threat! You say you have entered for all the competitions, and if you don't win anything you will—try again! Quite right! Bruce and the spider well up to date.

Sara C. (Dublin).—Many thanks for good work done on behalf of the "G. H."

F. J. S. (Tottenham).—Hope you are better now. Have had some myself.

M. W. (Croydon).—Too early yet to talk of making the "Herald" a penny paper. Glad you liked "S. and S."

Bugler Callaghan.—Thanks for photo. No age-limit to competitions.

J. P. (Tonbridge).—To try every week is certainly the best way. Only a few readers can win each week, but your turn may come if you stick to it.

Vera K. V. (West Ealing).—Thanks! Hope you will win, but merit is the only thing that counts.

"A Faithful Reader" (Bethnal Green).—Any kind of paper will do. Write on one side only. And don't be disappointed if your story comes back.

P. S. (Blackburn).—Glad to hear of your Greyfriars Club.

C. W. (Kent House).—Sorry; can't use verses. The poet is born, not made, and I fear you were born something else.

H. Ettridge (New Kent Road).—Glad you enjoyed the hamper.

P. W. S. (Wiblington).—Wingate and Courtenay are the best boxers in the Sixth.

L. W. (Leicester).—Inky has already had a contribution in the "Herald." Cannot tell you how many mistakes you had. I do not judge the competition.

"An Irish Girl" (Somewhere in Dublin).—What's the matter with Vernon-Smith's looks? Anyway, he can't change them.

"Two Tom Merry Admirers."—Places and characters named are imaginary.

G. R. (Rochester, Australia).—Glad to hear from you, but have not space to publish your letter.

"A Staunch Magnetite."—I am very glad indeed to know that my papers have done so much to make a straight and decent fellow of you. You say you would like to shake hands with me. Consider it done!

"Smithy."—I do not think there would be any chance of you following your trade in the Navy. But you can get information as to the various artificers required at any post-office.

"Two Mansfield Readers."—Not at present. I don't doubt that the reopening of the Correspondence Exchange would be popular, but I must consider the work it causes.

A. K. P. L. (Yorkshire).—The information you ask for cannot be given in any form that would be useful. Teams vary from time to time, and some of the players in them have no parts in the stories.

"A Loyal Girl Reader" (Sturry).—I understand that Snoop's father is a boarder in one of his Majesty's establishments—a convict, in brief. Marjorie and Clara are about 15. Better to order the "Herald" in advance, but not absolutely necessary with most newsagents.

E. C. B. (Broken Hill, Australia).—The characters are imaginary, so that corresponding with them is out of the question. Wharton is the Remove's crack footer man. Marjorie Hazeldene is fifteen.

"Semper Fidelis."—There is no real inconsistency between

the statements you allude to. Goalkeepers vary in form, like everybody else. Hazeldene, scarcely as sound as Bulstrode, is more brilliant at his best, and at the top of his form may be the better of the two.

A. R. (Torrance).—Bunter has no cousin at Greyfriars. I don't know the heights of the Remove, or how many lumps of sugar they like in their tea.

Teddy H. (Sydney, Australia).—See reply above. Of course one knows a bit more about Bob Cherry than, say, Treluce or Trevor. I should estimate Bob's foot-size at nine, there or thereabouts, his height at 5ft. 7in., and his weight at between 9st. and 10st. But these are only estimates. Glad to hear from so keen a reader.

W. W. (Perth, W. Australia).—Get your friends to read a story or two; they will laugh all the more if you choose the humorous yarns. "Bunter the Masher" or "Grundy the Hypnotist" ought to convert them into readers.

M. De Afar (Tamworth, N.S.W.).—See if your post-office keeps the little international currency notes, value about 2½d. each. They are negotiable anywhere. Very pleased to hear from a French chum.

H. S. (Angaston, S.A.).—Bulstrode is quite all right. Don't mix him up with Bolsover. Some people do. No, we don't have double numbers of the "Penny Pop." No twopenny pops, so to speak.

Kitty M.—Typing quite good. Perhaps Bunter senior may blow in some day. I agree that his coming along ought to be quite funny.

Winnie A. (Kingston Hill).—I am not angry with you; but I think that perhaps when you are older you will realise that few people are capable of judging another person's circumstances. "Bosh" is not good argument; in fact, it is not argument at all.

"A Scout Reader" (Ilford).—Ever so many thanks for the good work you are doing for the "Herald." Eighteen new readers is quite a whack.

"Worried."—There is no certain way of increasing height, but gymnastic exercises and plenty of fresh air may help.

Winnie B. (Kingston Hill).—Quite a coincidence! Above is an answer to Winnie A. (Kingston Hill), and the letters came close together in my pile. Afraid it's too late now to suggest a suitable present, and, anyway, it's not much good trying without some knowledge of the boy's tastes.

"Three Loyal Chums" (Retford).—Write, giving your address, and tell me what in particular you want to know. I will help if I can. But most boys starting amateur papers have much too big ideas. Printing is very expensive.

L. C. and E. C. (Reading).—It is not easy to find room for fresh characters continually. After all, a boy from Reading would be very much like a boy from anywhere else, wouldn't he?

"Heraldite."—No. You won't find either Peter Todd or Skimming at Deal. Glad to hear that your uncle is still interested in the "M." and "G.," and that your spare copies go to the hospitals.

D. K. (London Docks).—Kindest regards to your friend A. B.

A. T. (Small Heath).—Most readers prefer a complete yarn each week. Yes, post-offices accept papers for hospitals—but some say they can only take sixpenny magazines.

"A Loyal Reader" (Montreal).—I don't need to secure the "Penny Popular"; I have it already. Sorry, but your suggestion cannot be carried out.

C. E. (Thornton Heath).—Bob Cherry is the best boxer in the Remove. Glad to hear your father approves of my papers.

A. G. (Forest Gate).—More about Dicky Nugent and Wun-Lung presently.

"A New Zealand Reader" (Christchurch).—Naturally the Famous Five are usually in the limelight, for they are the chief characters. But others get plenty of show, I think.

"The Bounder's Relapse" ought to please you, also "Hazeldene's Honour," in which Hazeldene, Snoop, and Penfold all figure prominently. Don't you see that the Famous Five simply can't chuck Bunter out when he thrusts himself in at a time when they are entertaining girl visitors? It would not be decent manners. Even Peter Todd puts up with him then.

W. C. (Sheerness).—Results in the "Herald," of course. If you have solved all the picture puzzles correctly you ought not to be hungry for quite a long time to come. Can't you give Bunter an invite?

B. B. (Inverness).—A Sea Scout, eh? Good business! Sorry your earlier letter remained unanswered, but perhaps there were no questions in it.

Your Editor