

“DUFFER AND HERO!” This Week's Magnificent Greyfriars Story. . . .

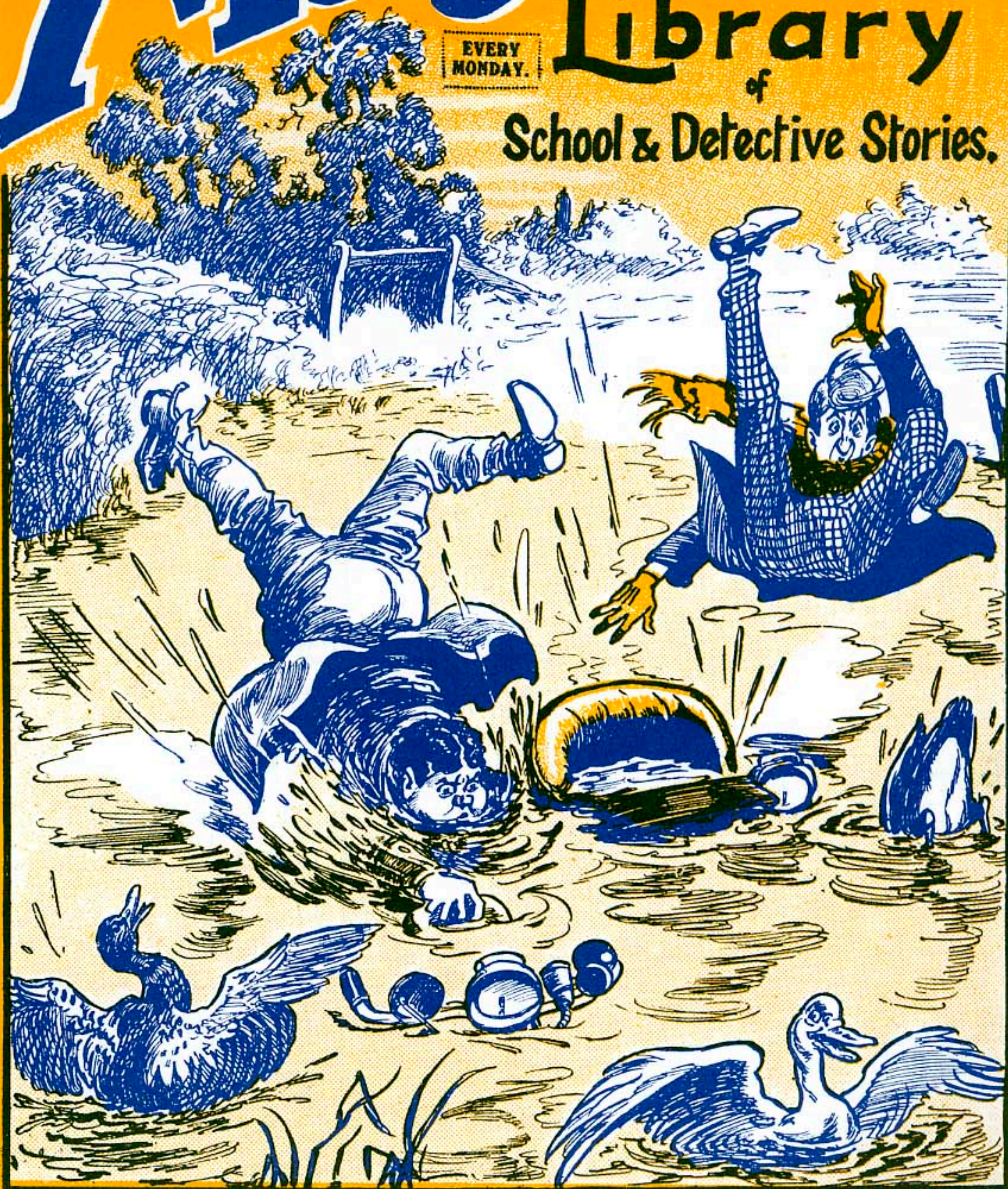
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Week ending March 8th, 1924.

The Magnet 2^d

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of
School & Detective Stories.

EVERY
MONDAY.



ALONZO "LOOKS AFTER" COKER!

(A diverting incident from the long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., inside.)

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A THRILLING COMPLETE STORY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE IN AUSTRALIA!



THE SCOURGE OF QUEENSLAND!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

In the Opium Den!

"Hi, Jim, have the bay out and saddle her for me straight now! If Sergeant Johnson turns up, tell him I've gone down to the camp to mix amongst the boys, and I'll be back by sundown!"

Dick Lorrimer stood by the door of the little shanty perched far up in the gully—the plain, bare, uninviting structure allotted to the several troopers of the Queensland Mounted Police—and, shading his eyes from the glare of the boonday sun, gazed steadfastly down through the heat mist to where the township in the valley lay.

"It's there, down there, I shall unravel the secret," the young trooper muttered. "I've been long enough about it, too. Why, it must be close on ten months since Captain Dare held the old 'un up, and thereby started me on the career of a mounted trooper, afire with the determination to break up the desperado and his band, and to recover, if not all, at least some part of his four-thousand-pound haul. The difficulty, after all, is to get a glimpse of the beggar. Pshaw! What's this worth?"—turning to the small photo on a police notice offering a substantial reward for the apprehension of the Queensland Scourge, Captain Dare: "A short, spare man of wiry build; height about five feet four; iron-grey hair, sharp features, dark, piercing eyes." Why, the description might fit a hundred toughs lounging in the township yonder. Ha! That you, Jim? Quite ready? Right-ho!"

The black came forward, leading Dick Lorrimer's heavy-limbed bay. In a trice the policeman was in the saddle, and heading for Cripple Creek.

In Dick Lorrimer's life there was one great ambition just now, and that to show his worth in the calling he had adopted. Up to the time that rich Old Man Lorrimer had been held up by Captain Dare, and robbed of a large sum in gold, Dick had spent far from a busy time up on the great ranchlands belonging to his father; but the loss sustained by the parent had fired the son with a worthy ambition. He would join the mounted police, and see if he could not do something to rid Northern Queensland of the greatest scourge it had had for many years—Captain Dare and his gang of bushrangers.

As Dick reached the corner of the main street, he turned off to the left, and stabled his horse. The conviction was strong upon him that in Cripple Creek lay the secret, not only of the whereabouts, but also of the identity of the bushranger chief. What had given him this idea Dick could hardly have explained, except that on two previous occasions he had seen a man corresponding somewhat closely to the description of Captain Dare enter Lu-hi's opium den. And then, again, every month or so, following

some great exploit of the bushranging gang in the neighbourhood, a set of rough, lawless fellows, flashing money about in all directions, appeared temporarily in the mining settlement, and having painted the place red, disappeared as mysteriously and as suddenly as they had come.

At the end of Charlotte Street Lorrimer paused. A medley of human voices raised in jeering laughter attracted his attention. His strong, brown hand moved to his pistol-belt as a scream of pain rang out. Turning the corner, there met his eyes a scene at which his British blood boiled with indignation.

Surrounded by a crowd of rough, brutal-looking fellows, of the class familiar to the Queensland mining settlements, was a little, wizened-up old Chinaman, who was praying to be released from the tight grip which a bleary-eyed, bearded ruffian had on his pig-tail.

"Me tellee, me giv' alay secler!" cried the Celestial, dancing about with pain; but every threat of the kind he uttered only caused the bully to increase the torture.

It was upon such an instance of ruffianly terrorism that Dick Lorrimer burst like a thundercloud. A heave of his broad shoulders, first to the right, then to the left, broke the engrossed ring; then, before the bully could realise what was about to happen, a great clenched fist, hard as hickory, caught him squarely between the eyes, and he went backwards, an unwilling spectator of a surprising astronomical exhibition.

No sooner had the miner gone to earth than he was up again, a heavy six-shooter in his hand. His wild flourishes with the weapon caused the mob to break like sheep for shelter; then, when at last he did locate with his fast-dimming eyes the author of the knock-out, his pistol spoke. A wreath of thin smoke curled lazily upwards in the afternoon sunshine as the report travelled along the distant mountain sides; but ere the echoes had died away a howl of pain rang out. Bunch clapped his disengaged hand to his bleeding ear, from which a disc had been cut by the trooper's pistol-ball, for even as Bunch had pulled trigger, Dick had fired. The two discharges merged into one, out of which Dick came victorious.

Leading the whimpering Celestial, the trooper sheathed his gun, and sauntered unconcernedly towards Charlotte Street.

There was little in Lu-hi's character to induce anyone to fight his battles for him, but Lorrimer's was one of those natures that revolted insensibly against bullying of any sort, and this was why he had raised his hand in defence of the Chinaman. It was a stern face he turned to the still trembling and frightened man.

"Now, what was all the trouble about, my yellow friend?" inquired Dick.

"Him, Bunchee, smokee many pipes at Lu-hi's, and no payce. Chinee man, ask for

yen, and gitee pligtail pulled. Then him say, tell secler. Pligtail pullee more."

"Oh, and what secret may that be? You and your precious den, Lu-hi, hold many dark secrets which I should-like to hear!" laughed Dick.

The old fellow grinned, and gripped Lorrimer's arm gratefully.

"You pleeseman!" he chuckled. "Not good tell pleeseman much, but Lu-hi not forgettee lot pleeseman done flor 'im. Bunch Gleglee one of Cap'n Dare's gang. Come along. Pleeseman learn somefing."

Nothing loth, for the experience promised to be interesting, Dick turned down a squalid side-street, and paused before the entrance of Cripple Creek's opium saloon.

It was a dark, forbidding place. Passing a closed door, Lu-hi ushered his visitor into a small, but comfortably furnished, room.

Bidding Dick be seated, the old Chinaman rested his elbows on the rickety table, and, propping his head in his hands, leered curiously at the white man.

"You Mlister Lollimer," croaked the old fellow. "You fion the hill station, where the tloopers live."

Dick started. How could this old rascal have learnt so much?

"You aftler Cap'n Dare, the blushlanger," he went on, eyeing Dick cunningly. "Want to see him?"

The trooper sprang to his feet.

"Want to see him! You bet I do! Only give me half the chance, that's all!"

"Me show you to him on one plomise."

"What's that?"

"That you notee tly to clapture 'im in my den."

Much against his will, Dick assented. After all, to get a glimpse of the bushranger chief would be something. Besides, might it not be possible to follow the man and effect his capture in that way?

At a signal from Lu-hi, Dick stepped softly across the matted floor. A small door in the wall was swung back, and Dick found himself in a tiny cubicle, lighted by an evil-smelling, dull lamp, hanging from the ceiling.

"You waitee there," croaked the Chinaman, motioning to a shelf-like arrangement let into the wall.

Wonderingly, knowing that by so doing he was placing himself absolutely in the power of Lu-hi, whose reputation was far from spotless, Dick crawled into the dirty bunk. The next instant the keeper of the opium-den vanished.

An hour slipped by. Then noiselessly the door opened, and two forms appeared. One of them was Lu-hi, the other a stranger. As the latter turned, and the lamplight fell upon his face, the policeman could hardly suppress a cry of surprise. The man was Captain Dare, the celebrated bushranger. Dick knew him from his photo.

Lu-hi, having supplied his customer with a

(Continued on page 27.)

It is a well-known fact that Alonzo is a guileless youth whose leg was made to be pulled. But throughout Alonzo's simple nature runs a vein of enthusiasm for the task in hand, whether it concerns the distribution of tracts and trousers amongst the Gooby Booby Islanders, or the reformation of his fellow-schoolboys. On this occasion Alonzo sets out to "look after" Horace Coker of the Fifth, thereby plunging himself into a string of adventures that leave the Removites gasping.



Duffer and Aero!

An Extra-long Complete
Story of Harry Wharton
& Co. of Greyfriars.
Told by
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Alonzo's Latest!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Is Alonzo here?" Bob Cherry's curly head appeared round the door of Study No. 7 in the Remove passage. And Bob's boisterous inquiry drew four pairs of eyes upon him.

Alonzo was there. He was having tea with his cousin Peter, and with Billy Bunter and Tom Dutton.

It would be more correct to say that Billy Bunter was having tea. The others had to be content with the few crumbs which he left.

"Yes, I am here, my dear Cherry," murmured Alonzo Todd. "What is wanted?"

"There's a letter for you," said Bob. "I brought it along, to save the post-man's ancient and weary limbs."

"Thank you, my dear Cherry!"

"Don't mench, my dear Duffer!"

Bob Cherry handed over the letter, and Alonzo took it with a satisfied smile. But his three studymates looked far from satisfied.

"Any for me?" asked Peter Todd and Tom Dutton and Billy Bunter in chorus.

"Not this journey!" said Bob, with a smile.

"Oh, rotten!" growled Billy Bunter. "Wonder when my titled relations are going to wake up and send me a few postal-orders?"

"Never!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Sir Bertie de Bunter has gone bankrupt; and Viscount Bunter, of Bunter Court, Bunkumshire, is also on the rocks."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really Cherry—"

"Better luck next time, old tulip," said Bob. "P'r'aps your postal-order will arrive to-morrow. But I shall expire of shock if it does!"

"Beast!" grunted Billy Bunter, as the humorous Bob took his departure.

"Who's the letter from, Lonzy?" asked Peter Todd. "Anybody I know?"

Alonzo looked up from his perusal of the missive.

"Yes, my dear Peter. I expect you know her slightly. The letter is from Coker's Aunt Judith."

Peter stared at his cousin.

"Coker's aunt?" he ejaculated. "Why the merry dickens should she write to you?"

"She has written in reference to her reckless and irresponsible nephew, Coker of the Fifth."

"My hat!"

"I can see that you are somewhat perplexed, my dear Peter, so I will explain. I have not been at all satisfied with Coker's conduct of late. He seems to have got quite out of control."

"So has his motor-bike," chimed in Billy Bunter. "He couldn't get the brakes to act yesterday, and he had a nasty spill in Friardale Lane."

Alonzo Todd nodded gravely.

"A motor-cycle is a dangerous toy for Coker to handle," he said. "The Head ought not to permit him to ride one. He is certain to commit suicide, if he goes on like this. As I have just remarked, I have not been at all satisfied with Coker's recent conduct. I have decided that he is scarcely responsible for his actions. What Coker needs is a protector—someone to take care of him and see that he comes to no hurt."

"Ass!" snorted Peter Todd. "A fellow of seventeen ought to be quite capable of taking care of himself."

"True; but then, Coker is not capable. And unless he is looked after his wild exploits on the road—and elsewhere—will be crowned with disaster. I have therefore decided, after much cogitation, to act as Coker's guide, philosopher, and friend—"

"You?" gasped Peter.

Alonzo nodded.

"I obtained the address of his Aunt Judith, and wrote to her, asking if she would grant me permission to take her nephew under my wing."

Peter Todd leapt up from his chair like a jack-in-the-box. He stared blankly at Alonzo.

The idea of the meek and mild Duffer of the Remove taking the great Coker under his wing was altogether ludicrous.

If any fellow wanted taking care of it was Alonzo himself. He was the frailest fellow in the Form. He was also the most guileless and innocent. And his very guilelessness and innocence frequently landed him into very awkward situations, from which his cousin Peter had to extricate him.

Horace Coker certainly wanted taking care of, but not by a weakling like Alonzo Todd. Alonzo was not even capable of taking care of himself, much less of the big, burly Coker. It would be a case of the blind leading the blind.

But Alonzo had quite made up his mind to take the great Horace under his wing. Wild horses would not have dragged him from his purpose.

"Lonzy," gasped Peter Todd, "you'll be the death of me! You're the despair of me already. Day by day, in every way, you get pottier and pottier and pottier! You're not fit to take care of a tame rabbit, let alone a wild fellow like Coker. What has his aunt written to you?"

Alonzo handed over the letter for Peter's inspection. It ran as follows:

"My dear Todd.—Thank you ever so much for your letter informing me of the wild and reckless exploits of my nephew Horace. As you say, he badly needs someone to take care of him—to act as his guardian and guide. It is very kind of you to volunteer to undertake the task.

"I have not the pleasure of knowing you personally—I have seen so many Greyfriars boys during my visits to the school, that I forget names and faces—but I presume you are one of the big boys in the Sixth Form—probably a prefect. I have no doubt you will exercise a steady and sobering influence over my wayward nephew, and you will thereby incur the lasting gratitude of his

"AUNT JUDITH."
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"A charming letter, is it not?" murmured Alonzo.

Peter gave a grunt.

"Aunt Judy has got hold of the wrong end of the stick," he said. "She thinks you're a prefect—a fellow of power and position."

"There is no harm in her thinking that, my dear Peter. There is no reason why I should not look after Coker just as effectively as a Sixth-Former. I will point out to him the error of his ways, and endeavour to reform him."

"He, he, he!" cackled Billy Bunter. "You've got a job on, Lonzy!"

"If you try to interfere with Coker," growled Peter, "he'll boot you out of his study!"

Alonzo looked alarmed.

"I sincerely trust he will not resort to violence," he said. "But I will face him. I will not behave like a craven."

"Eh? Who's talking about ravens?" chimed in Tom Dutton, who, to use his own phrase, was not deaf, but just a trifle hard of hearing.

"Nobody," said Peter Todd. "Lonzy merely made a remark—"

"A lark?" queried Dutton in perplexity.

"No, ass! He made a remark about not being afraid of Coker—"

"But a lark isn't a croaker!" said Dutton. "A raven is, if you like. But a lark warbles; it doesn't croak."

Peter Todd groaned.

"I said Coker—not croaker!" he shouted. "We weren't talking about birds at all. Your deafness will drive me potty in a minute!"

"Linnet?" said Dutton, misunderstanding, as usual. "You're not going to tell me that a linnet is a croaker. It's a libel on the linnet!"

Peter Todd gave a snort, and subsided. It was quite useless trying to talk to Dutton, except with the aid of a megaphone.

Tea was over by this time, Billy Bunter having demolished the lion's share of it.

Alonzo had eaten practically nothing. He was full of his new scheme for taking care of Coker. Fired by such a great resolve, how could he possibly waste time over such mundane matters as food?

"I am glad Coker's aunt has consented to my proposal," he said. "I can now proceed with my task of reforming Coker, knowing that it meets with the good lady's complete approval."

"Look here, Lonzy," said Peter, quite seriously, "don't be a more asinine ass than you can help! Leave Coker alone. If he chooses to dash along the roads on his motor-bike at forty miles an hour, let him go ahead!"

"But he will kill himself—"

"Well, his blood will be upon his own head. If he chooses to break his neck, that's his own affair."

Alonzo sighed.

"I am certain Coker will meet with a dreadful mishap, unless he is at once taken in hand, and cured of his recklessness," he said. "And I have quite made up my mind— Listen! What is all that commotion in the Close?"

Peter Todd crossed to the window, and looked out.

"My only aunt!" he ejaculated. "Talk of angels, and they're sure to appear! Not that Coker looks much like an angel at the present moment. He seems to have been giving himself a mud-bath—a whole series of mud-baths, in fact!"

Alonzo joined Peter at the window. A look of horror overspread his countenance as he glanced down into the Close.

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There was quite a commotion going on. Coker was the cause of it. He generally was. Coker's antics were always causing commotions. Scarcely a day passed without the burly Horace serving up a sensation of some sort.

At the present moment, Coker was coming across the Close, leaning heavily on his motor-bike as he limped and lurched along. He was in a dreadful state, and so was the motor-bike. Both were covered with mud; and Coker, in addition, had torn his trousers at the knee. He had evidently hurt himself, for blood, as well as mud, was visible at the place where the hole was.

Harry Wharton & Co., who had been punting a football in the Close, had left their game and hurried towards Coker. The two Todds, watching from their study window, could hear their excited exclamations.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"What's happened, Coker?"

"Had a spill?"

Coker glared at his questioners.

"Oh, no!" he replied, with crushing sarcasm. "I've not had a spill. My bags tore themselves at the knee of their own accord! As for all this mud, well, it simply fell from the skies!"

Hurree Singh laughed.

"It is quite patently obvious," he said, "that the esteemed Coker has had an upsetting spill. Tell us how it happened, my worthy friend!"

Coker grunted.

"Ran over a pig!" he said tersely.

"Eh? Impossible!" said Bob Cherry.

"How could you run over yourself?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"None of your cheek, young Cherry!" said Coker, with a glare. "It wasn't my fault the accident happened. The blessed pig would insist on walking in the middle of the road. I tooted my horn, but it wouldn't budge. I was going too fast to pull up in time, and I ran full-tilt into the pig, and then skidded into a deep ditch. My knee got mixed up with the motor-bike somehow."

"That's a nasty gash," said Harry Wharton, glancing at the injured knee. "You'd better have it attended to. Coker!"

"The motor-bike looks as if it will have to go into dock, too," said Johnny Bull. "It's twisted out of shape!"

"Oh, I'll jolly soon put that right," said Coker. "That's the best of being a skilled motor-mechanic. Ignorant kids like you would have to send it to a repair depot; but I can always do my own repairs. I've got it up here, you see!" added Coker, tapping his forehead.

"Got what up there?" asked Nugent.

"Sawdust?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Horace Coker gave a final expressive snort, and passed on, limping painfully.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Alonzo Renders First-Aid!

DEAR me! How very distressing!" murmured Alonzo Todd.

Alonzo might have thought it distressing, but Peter seemed to find it amusing. He chuckled as he surveyed the muddy Coker and the equally muddy motor-bike.

"Just like Coker!" he said. "Wherever he goes on that mad motor-bike of his, he leaves a trail of slaughtered pigs and fowls behind him! It's marvellous how he manages to come back to the school in one piece!"

Alonzo frowned.

"There is nothing to be humorous about, my dear Peter! I am shocked, nay, disgusted, to observe that you are treating this shocking calamity in a spirit of levity. Coker has injured his knee—somewhat seriously, by the look of it."

"Serve him jolly well right!" growled Peter. "P'raps he'll moderate his transports in future, and not tear along the road at breakneck speed. Hi! Where are you going, Lonzy?"

Alonzo had moved to the door.

"I am going to render assistance to Coker," he said. "Here is an excellent opportunity for me to commence my task of looking after him."

Peter Todd shrugged his shoulders. He didn't trouble to call his cousin back. He had already advised Alonzo to leave Coker to take care of himself. And if Alonzo chose to disregard that excellent advice—well, there was nothing more to be said.

The Duffer of the Remove hurried down into the Close.

Coker wheeled his battered and bespattered machine into the shed, and he was just emerging, hobbling like an old man of ninety, when Alonzo bore down upon him.

"Coker, my dear fellow—"

Coker halted.

"Pray lean on me," said Alonzo, proffering his arm, "and I will assist you to your study."

"Eh?"

"Lean on me, and permit me to be your pilot."

Coker glanced at Alonzo's frail figure, and he gave a snort.

"Might as well lean on a wisp of hay for all the support I should get!" he said.

"Really, my dear Coker, I am much more substantial than a wisp of hay. Take my arm. You cannot possibly walk without assistance."

Coker saw that the Duffer of the Remove meant well, so he availed himself of the offer. He leaned heavily upon Alonzo, who felt as if a ton-weight had suddenly crashed upon him. His knees sagged, and he collapsed on the flagstones.

"Ow!"

Coker grinned as Alonzo tottered to his feet.

"You ask me to lean on you," he said, "and when I take you at your word, you collapse like a pricked bladder!"

"Wow!" gasped Alonzo, caressing his thigh. "I had no idea you were such a weighty person. I will summon Peter and Dutton to my assistance—"

"Don't be an ass!" growled Coker. "I can get to my study without help. No need to summon a party of stretcher-bearers or to phone for the ambulance."

Coker limped away towards the building. Alonzo followed close on his heels, like a faithful hound, but he made no further offers of assistance.

Progress was painfully slow; in fact, a tortoise could have kept pace with the limping Coker. But at last he reached his study, and sank into the armchair. Alonzo followed him into the apartment.

"What do you want?" growled Coker.

"I propose to administer first-aid," said Alonzo. "There is a nasty gash in your knee, and it will have to be bathed and bandaged. Kindly remain seated, my dear Coker, while I fetch the necessary appliances."

Alonzo hurried away to Study No. 7. He took a key from his pocket, and unlocked a cabinet which was affixed to the wall.

This cabinet was the private property of Alonzo. None of his study-mates had

access to it. Inside it was a miniature chemist's shop. There were bottles and phials and medicine-glasses and pills and potions and lints and lotions. It was really surprising what a vast and miscellaneous collection had been crammed into that cabinet.

Alonzo took a great pride in his medicine-chest, and sometimes it came in really useful. If a fellow happened to wake up in the night with raging toothache, he simply roused Alonzo, and the good-natured Duffer went to his cabinet and procured some soothing balm which brought relief to the sufferer. If a fellow met with a minor injury on the footer-field, he went to Alonzo, who promptly doctored him. If Billy Bunter, through overfeeding, threw his digestive organs out of gear, Alonzo supplied him with tablets which cured the trouble.

Alonzo's renown as an amateur physician had spread through the school. Skinner of the Remove, who had a sense of humour, suggested that a brass plate should be fixed outside the door of Study No. 7, with the inscription:

"DR. ALONZO TODD.

Consultations at any hour of the day or night."

Alonzo rummaged in the cabinet, and, having made quite a collection of articles, both necessary and unnecessary, he returned to Coker's study. Coker glared at him from the armchair.

"What's the little game?" he asked.

"I have come to cure you, my dear fellow. Will you place yourself in my hands, and regard me as your family doctor?"

"Oh, you're quite potty!" said Coker. "Still, you can go ahead!"

"Very well. I will first of all dress your wound."

Alonzo accomplished this feat in masterly style. He first of all cleansed the injury with an antiseptic, then he bandaged it with a dexterity and skill which Coker could not help admiring.

"Thanks very much!" said Coker.

But Alonzo was not finished yet. He had, in fact, scarcely begun!

"You have had a very nasty accident," he said, "and I must make sure you are not suffering from shock, or from unpleasant complications. Let me see your tongue."

"Ass!"

"Do not use vulgar epithets. You must remember that I am acting as your medical adviser. Show me your tongue."

"Oh, anything for a quiet life," said Coker, thrusting out his tongue.

Alonzo made an examination, and looked very grave.

"Your tongue is very much discoloured," he said. "Why, it is almost black! You are suffering from—er—let me consult my pocket dictionary of diseases."

Coker gave an explosive cackle.

"You silly young idiot!" he shouted. "I've been eating chocolates. That's why my tongue's so black."

"Oh!"

Alonzo seemed rather disappointed to find that Coker was not suffering from some chronic disease. However, he was determined to find something wrong with his patient. He produced a thermometer, and thrust it into Coker's mouth.

Coker spluttered and struggled. "Take it away, you imbecile! I don't want my temperature taken!"

"It is necessary," said Alonzo. "Keep the instrument in your mouth, and let me feel your pulse."

Coker was about to make a violent protest. But he remembered how skilfully Alonzo had dressed his injured knee, and he decided to humour the Duffer of the Remove.

After an interval, during which no sound was heard in the study save the ticking of the clock, Alonzo removed the thermometer, and took it to the window and examined it.

"Ah!" he ejaculated. "It is as I feared; you have a high temperature, my dear Coker. Instead of being ninety-eight point four, which is normal, it is ninety-eight point six. Your pulse is very rapid, too. You are undoubtedly suffering from a chill."

"Rats!"

"Pray do not mock me," said Alonzo.

"Unless great care is taken after an accident pneumonia frequently sets in."

"Idiot!" roared Coker. "You don't suppose I've got pneumonia, do you?"

"Not at the moment. But you have a chill, and every precaution must be taken to prevent it developing. First of all, you must take a stiff dose of my chest and lung tonic."

"I'll see you to Jericho first!" growled Coker.

"Come, come!" murmured Alonzo.

"You are a very refractory patient. You must carry out my wishes, or I will not be answerable for the consequences."

Coker suppressed his impatience, and he submitted quietly while Alonzo poured a dark-brown concoction into a glass and put it to his lips.

Coker drained the noxious mixture at a single gulp. Then he spluttered wildly.

"Gug-gug-gug! Gerooooogh!"

"Was it not to your liking?" inquired Alonzo.

"No; it wasn't!" hooted Coker. "I believe it was poison! I'm not sure what prussic acid tastes like, but I believe that was it!"

Alonzo shook his head.

"You are talking wildly, my dear Coker. I do hope it is not the prelude to delirium. Incoherent babbling usually is. I must hurry up and complete my treatment, or your chill will get rapidly worse."

"I haven't got a chill!" roared Coker.

"Pardon me, but you have. A temperature of ninety-eight point six is a sure indication—"

"That I'm quite all right!"

But Alonzo insisted that Coker was far from all right.

"Strictly speaking," he said, "I ought to send you round to the sanatorium, and leave you in the matron's hands. But I know enough about illness to be able to cure you myself. Do as I tell you, and all will be well. Remove your muddy garments and your boots—"

"Why?" asked Coker in amazement.

"I propose to wrap you in blankets."

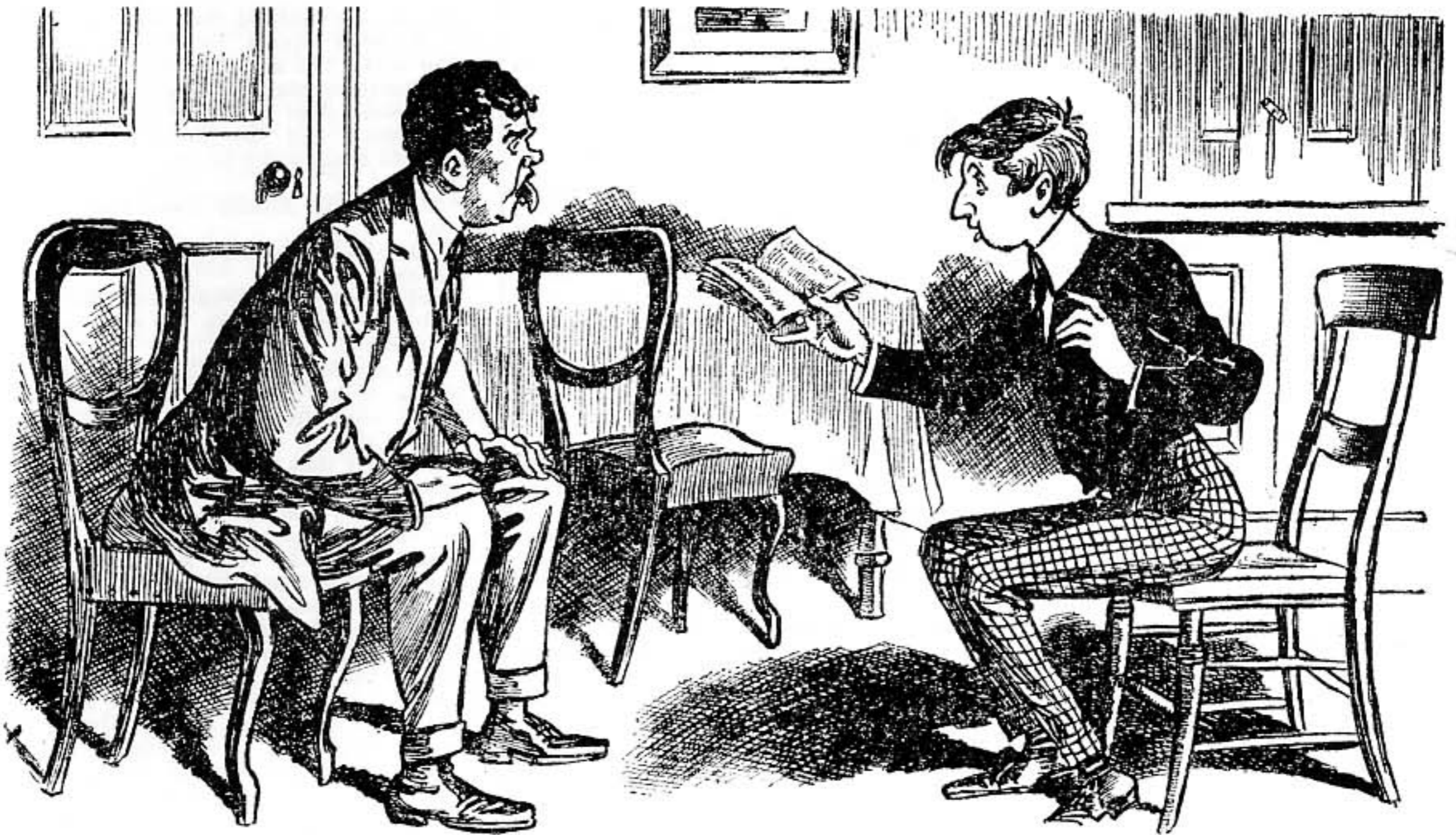
"My hat!"

Coker was about to say that he didn't want to be mollycoddled and treated like a chronic invalid, when there was nothing at all the matter with him. And



"Take my arm, my dear Coker," said Alonzo. "You cannot possibly walk without assistance." Coker leaned heavily upon the Duffer of the Remove, who felt as if a ton-weight had suddenly crashed upon him. His knees sagged and he collapsed on the flagstones. "Ow!" roared Alonzo. "Wow!"

(See Chapter 2.)



"Let me see your tongue," said Alonzo. "I must make sure that you are not suffering from shock, or from any unpleasant complications." "Oh, anything for a quiet life," muttered Coker, thrusting out his tongue. Alonzo looked grave. "My dear Coker," he said, "you are suffering from—er—let me consult my pocket dictionary of diseases." Coker gave an explosive cackle. "I've been eating choes, you dummy, that's why my tongue's so black!" (See Chapter 2.)

from the lips of Coker, Potter, and Greene.

"You see, my dear Coker," Alonzo went on, wagging a bony forefinger at the great Horace, "you are not responsible for your actions—"

At this Coker gave a roar like that of the Bull of Bashan. But the sound, terrifying though it was, did not disconcert Alonzo. He stuck gamely to his guns.

"You are wild and wayward, wanton and wilful," he continued. "You imperil life and limb—both your own and other people's—by careering at top speed on your motor-cycle. You do not take care of yourself, nor do you seem able to do so. Although burly of stature, you are as a helpless infant."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Greene.

As for Coker he was speechless. Like the gentleman in the "Floral Dance," he could only stand and stare.

"And so, my dear Coker," went on the guileless Alonzo, "I have arranged to take you under my wing."

"Un-under your w-w-wing?" stuttered Potter.

"Exactly! You and Greene ought really to take care of Coker, and see that he comes to no harm. You are his friends as well as his study-mates. But you have shamefully neglected your duty, so I must perforce take it upon myself."

"Why, you—you—"

"I have been in communication with Coker's Aunt Judith," said Alonzo, "and she has given her whole-hearted consent to the arrangement that I should take care of Coker. It is not an easy task, but I shall not shirk it. 'No man may shirk his daily work' is one of the precepts of my Uncle Benjamin. I will remain at your side, my dear Coker, and be your guide and mentor, your philosopher and friend. Place yourself in my hands, and all will be well."

Coker looked more like placing himself at Alonzo's throat than in his hands. He was nearly purple with rage, and he

appeared to be on the verge of an apoplectic fit.

At last the power of speech returned to Coker. There was a dangerous glint in his eyes as he glared at Alonzo.

"Sure you've quite finished?" he inquired.

"Yes, for the present," answered Alonzo. "Remember that from this time forth I shall be constantly at your side, to counsel and instruct you!"

"Oh, will you!"

"Yes."

"But supposing I don't want any counsel or instruction from a fag?"

"I shall proffer it, nevertheless. Pray do not glare at me like that, Coker! I am sorry you appear to be put out."

"Don't mention it," said Coker, with grim irony. "You're the one who is going to be put out. Here goes!"

The incensed Coker fairly hurled himself upon Alonzo. He did not strike him with his fists. Even in his wrath Coker realised that the frail Duffer would not have been able to withstand one of his sledgehammer blows. He simply charged Alonzo, in much the same way as a full-back charges an opposing forward.

Biff!

Alonzo went whirling through the doorway into the passage. He spun round three times, and then collapsed in a heap on the linoleum, feeling as if an earthquake had struck him.

"Ow-ow-ow!" groaned Alonzo.

"Going to take care of me, are you?" snorted Coker, from the doorway. "Going to bring me up in the way I should go—what? When I want a caretaker I'll let you know."

Crash!

Coker retreated into his study, slamming the door violently behind him, as an indication that he was well able to take care of himself.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Coker Runs Amok!

NOTHING daunted, Alonzo Todd continued to take care of Coker during the next few days—when Coker would let him.

There were times when Coker flatly refused to be taken care of. When the weather became intensely cold, and a snowstorm swept the Greyfriars district, Alonzo suggested that Coker should wear a chest-protector, as a safeguard against those ills which flesh is heir to. Coker bundled Alonzo out of his study, and hurled the chest-protector after him.

But there were other times when Coker had no objection to being taken care of.

Although Fifth-Formers were not entitled to have fags, and the Remove were exempt from fagging, Alonzo insisted upon performing menial duties in Coker's study. He swept it and scoured it. He lighted fires, he beat the carpets, he dusted the furniture, and he proved himself a most efficient general servant.

Coker rather liked being taken care of in this way. It was very nice to have the free services of a fag, and a most capable fag at that.

But there were two sides to the situation. Alonzo made himself a general servant; he also made himself a general nuisance. He stuck to Coker like a leech, and he seldom let the burly Fifth-Former out of his sight.

Bob Cheery likened Alonzo to Mary's little lamb.

"And everywhere that Coker went That lamb was sure to go."

Which was not always agreeable to Coker. There were times when he preferred Alonzo's room to his company.

On the next half-holiday Coker went into his study, and found his faithful

henchman arranging the volumes in his bookcase.

"You're a queer beggar," said Coker, after watching Alonzo in silence for a moment. "I always find you pottering about in my study, doing all sorts of jobs. What's your latest stunt?"

Alonzo turned a beaming face from the bookcase.

"I am arranging all your books in alphabetical order, my dear Coker," he said. "Then you will find them ready to your hand when you want to read. For instance, if you want 'Treasure Island,' you will find it among the T's. And if you want 'Captain Courageous,' you will find it among—"

"The K's?" suggested Coker.

"Not at all. It is among the C's."

"But 'captain' begins with a K, doesn't it?"

Alonzo smiled pityingly at Coker's ignorance.

"I can clearly see that I shall have to give you spelling lessons," he said. "Please don't frown at me in that ferocious manner! I have promised your aunt that I will take care of you, and that includes taking care of your education."

"Oh, does it?" growled Coker. "Look here, young Todd, you leave my spelling alone! A fellow in the Fifth ought to know more about spelling than a Remove fag."

"He ought to, certainly; but in this case he doesn't!" said Alonzo, with unintentional sarcasm.

Coker gave a grunt.

"Well, I don't feel like reading this afternoon," he said. "I've had my motor-bike repaired, and I'm going for a run round."

"No, no!"

"Yes, yes!" said Coker, with a grin.

Alonzo advanced towards the Fifth-Former, and threw out his arms appealingly.

"My dear Coker, I implore you to desist from this mad pursuit of motor-cycling! You will fracture your vertebrae."

"Break my neck, d'you mean? Well, it will be my neck, and not yours. So why worry?"

"I am answerable to your Aunt Judith for your safety."

"Rats!"

Alonzo continued to implore and entreat Coker not to venture forth on a motor-cycling expedition. But Coker was deaf to his implorings and entreaties.

"I've made up my mind to go, and there's an end of it!" he said. "What's more, I'm fed-up with your thundering interference. You're a decent enough kid in some ways—you make my study spick and span, and wait on me at tea-time—but when you start trying to interfere with my liberty it gets my back up. It was like your cheek to write to my Aunt Judy, and offer to take care of me! I suppose you think you're a sort of Coker Protection Society? Why, you silly young sweep, if anybody at Greyfriars wants taking care of, it's you!"

"Really, my dear Coker—"

"I've been looking forward to this spin," said Coker, "and I shall enjoy it up to the hilt. I've had a little argument with Blundell about how long it takes to get to Wapshot and back on a motor-bike. I say it can be done in under the hour. Blundell says it can't. So I'm going to put it to the proof."

Alonzo looked horrified.

"You will most certainly come to a violent and painful end!" he said. "And then what will your aunt say?"

"It won't much matter what she says, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 839.

as I sha'n't be alive to hear her," said Coker.

"So you insist upon carrying out this foolish escapade?"

Coker nodded.

"I insist upon going for a spin, if that's what you mean!"

"Then I shall come with you," said Alonzo firmly. "If I travel in the sidecar I shall possibly be able to control your recklessness."

In saying this, Alonzo showed himself to be an optimist. The person who could control Coker's recklessness remained to be born.

"You can come with me if you like," said Coker good-naturedly. "But remember this. I'm taking no orders from a fag!"

They went down together into the Close, and Coker fetched his motor-bike from the shed.

Alonzo, having wrapped himself up as if he was going for an Arctic voyage, clambered into the sidecar, while Coker did his best to coax the machine to go. Coker's motor-bike had all the obstinacy of a mule; but when it did make up its mind to go there was no stopping it!

Harry Wharton & Co. were in the Close. They stood in a grinning group, watching Coker as he kept pushing the machine along, and making frantic spurts, which ended in failure.

"Drat the beastly thing!" growled Coker, pausing to mop his heated brow. "Why won't it go, I wonder? It's just been repaired."

"Why not dangle a carrot in front of it, Coker?" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shall we get behind and push?" asked Johnny Bull.

Coker rejected this kind offer. He kept pegging away single-handed, and getting more and more annoyed with the obstinate machine.

"Stick it, Coker!" said Wharton encouragingly.

"You'll get it to startfully make a move by next Christmas!" said Hurree Singh hopefully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mind you take care of Coker, Lonzy!" sang out Bob Cherry. "See that he doesn't exceed a speed of a mile an hour!"

"He won't even manage that at this rate!" said Nugent.

Coker redoubled his efforts, anxious to get away from the group of grinning juniors. At last his persistence was rewarded. There was a bang and a flash, and the motor-bike leapt forward like a live thing. Coker was only just in time to get astride the saddle.

"Now they're off!" chuckled Wharton.

"Good-bye, Bluebell!"

"If you're not back in an hour," shouted Johnny Bull, "we'll start dragging all the ponds in the district."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker's motor-bike passed through the school gateway in a twinkling. Gosling, the porter, stood in the doorway of his lodge, and shouted something to Coker. But all that Coker could catch was the word "haccident."

Alonzo Todd, seated in the sidecar, was shaking like an aspen-leaf. He tried to call out to Coker to moderate the pace, but the swift rush of air took his breath away.

At a fast and furious pace, which Jehu of old might have envied, the motor-bike sped on its way. It seemed only a matter of seconds before it reached the nearest village.

There was a certain amount of traffic in the village street, but still Coker did not slacken his speed. Perhaps he

couldn't. He and his startled passenger had a brief vision of horses being pulled in to the side of the street, and of pedestrians standing rooted to the pavements. And then the village was left behind, and the motor-bike continued its mad career in the direction of Wapshot.

After a time Alonzo Todd found his voice.

"Coker!" he exclaimed shrilly.

No answer.

"Coker, apply the brake immediately! Do you not see that we are dashing to destruction?"

"Dashing to Wapshot, you mean!" rejoined Coker breathlessly. "Don't get the wind up, kid. I know exactly what I'm doing. I'm going to prove to old Blundell that it's possible to get to Wapshot and back in less than an hour."

Judging by the speed at which they were travelling, it seemed more than probable that the feat would be performed in half that time, always provided there wasn't a spill. And a spill seemed more than likely.

Alonzo begged and entreated Coker to moderate the pace. But it was not until Wapshot was reached that Coker slowed down. And even then it was only for a moment, so that he could turn round.

"Well, we've got here all right," said Coker, in tones of satisfaction. "And now it's only a question of getting back. I'm going to let her rip on the return journey!"

Coker spoke as if the previous pace had been a mere crawl.

Alonzo Todd was a nervous youth, and his nerves were in rags now. He despaired of getting Coker to see reason. He had set out with the idea of taking care of Coker, but Coker stubbornly refused to be interfered with. He had threatened to "let her rip," and he did. Coker was a speed merchant, and in his eager desire to get the better of Blundell in the argument, he was blind and deaf to all other considerations.

Alonzo felt a wild impulse to jump out of the sidecar, but he at once realised that such an action would be suicidal. Better to stay where he was and risk a spill than to leap to his doom. So Alonzo stuck to his seat, and waited feverishly for the end.

It soon came.

Coker's machine swung round a bend in the road, and almost ended the earthly career of an aged pedestrian, who was hobbling along with the aid of a stout stick.

How Coker managed to avoid the man he never knew. But he did avoid him by a mere hair's-breadth.

The old man stopped to stare after the madly-rushing motor-bike, and to hurl abuse at Coker.

"Disgustful. Oi calls it, comin' round corners at about a 'unnerd miles an hour! An' 'e never so much as went tooty-tooty! Why, it moight 'ave bin the death of Oi!"

It might, indeed, and the old countryman could account himself very fortunate that he had not fallen a victim to the speed maniac.

Coker's mad ride came to an abrupt end shortly afterwards.

After that threatened collision with the ancient rustic, the motor-bike shot down a steep hill at a truly alarming speed.

Coker failed to get the machine under control, and the frenzied shouts of Alonzo Todd only made him the more flurried and confused. He tried to apply the brake, but it refused to act.

Cold beads of perspiration broke out on Coker's brow. He himself was scared now, every bit as much as Alonzo. Visions of a terrible doom rose before his eyes.

"We—we shall be killed!"

That was the last despairing shriek of Alonzo as the motor-bike made its head-long descent.

At the bottom of the hill the road took a sharp turn to the right. Straight ahead was a duck-pond; and it was straight ahead that Coker's machine rushed, for he was too panic-stricken to turn it.

Crash! Splash!
Motor-bike and rider and passenger were swallowed up in the duck-pond.

The stagnant water was stirred out of its sluggish inactivity. It closed over the heads of Coker and Alonzo, for the machine had whirled them right into the middle of the pond, where the water was six feet deep.

It was an inglorious climax to Coker's reckless ride!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

By Order of the Head!

"HELP!"

It was "a solitary shriek, a bubbling cry," to quote Byron, and it came from the muddy depths of the duck-pond.

Alonzo Todd uttered that shriek, and Coker—who had risen, gasping, to the surface—heard it.

"Todd, where are you?" he panted.

There was a frantic gurgle from the bed of the pond.

Coker concluded that Alonzo was stuck in the mud, and unable to rise to the surface. So he promptly plunged beneath the water, and groped around until his hands came into contact with the helpless Alonzo.

The Duffer of the Remove was embedded in the mud, and it needed all Coker's strength to haul him out of it. He tugged and heaved, until at last Alonzo and the mud parted company, and rescuer and rescued rose panting to the surface.

"We must get out of this!" gasped Coker.

He was nearly spent, but he retained his hold of Alonzo, and swam with him until he reached the shallow water, where they were both able to stand.

They paused for a few moments, pumping in breath, before they were able to wade out of the pond.

Both Coker and Alonzo were in a terrible plight. They were scarcely recognisable. Weeds and slime clung to their clothing, their necks, and their hair. Their faces and hands were plastered with mud—in fact, they looked as if they had been giving themselves a very thorough mud-bath. And they did not appear to have enjoyed their ablutions.

"Gug-gug-gug!" gurgled Coker.

"Oooooch!" spluttered Alonzo.

Having gouged the mud from his eyes, Coker looked around for his motor-bike. It was nowhere to be seen. As a matter of fact, it lay embedded in the mud at the bottom of the pond, where Alonzo had lain a few moments previously.

"The old bike seems to have disappeared!" muttered Coker. "I'll go in and salvage it presently, when I've got my breath back."

"Oh dear!" gasped Alonzo. "What a dreadful experience! I am suffering severely from shock. It will be weeks before my nervous system recovers from this calamity. I am all of a tremble!"

"Pull yourself together, kid!" said Coker. "It might have been worse, you know."

"Indeed it might! I thought we should both have been killed. Really, my dear Coker, your recklessness is appalling! You sacrifice everything to speed, which is a most insane policy. I

shouted to you to moderate your speed! I pointed out to you the many perils and pitfalls—"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Coker.

"At the same time, I am extremely grateful to you for saving my life," Alonzo went on. "Had you not plunged into the depths of the pond, and extricated me, I should have been cut off untimely—in the springtime of my youth. I should have shuffled off this mortal coil—severed the knot of existence—given up the ghost. In a word, I should have died."

Coker grunted.

"Nothing to make a song about," he said. "It was a simple enough matter to fish you out of the mud. By Jove! What a precious pair of beauties we look! We shall be the laughing-stock of the school!"

Alonzo didn't seem to mind that very much. He was only too anxious to get back to Greyfriars and remove his soaked garments. But Horace Coker, being a person of weight and dignity, would feel the situation keenly. He would like to have crawled into the school by a back way, but there was no way of getting in unobserved.

Having rested for a while, Coker waded into the pond, and made search for his motor-bike. He had to plunge several times before he located it, and even then he was powerless to move it, for the machine was firmly embedded in the mud.

"We shall have to get a rope," said Coker.

In a meadow near at hand some farm-labourers were working. They had heard the crash and the splash which accompanied the calamity, and had come out into the road to see what it was all about. They stood in a group, grinning at the two dreadful-looking objects who had emerged from the pond.

Coker felt that he would like to go up to the yokels and knock their heads together. But he bottled his wrath, and asked, as politely as possible, for the loan of a rope.

This being forthcoming, Coker made a third entry into the pond. He was so saturated already that a further immersion would not make any difference.

Into the slimy depths of the duck-pond he plunged; and, having located his motor-bike, he made one end of the rope fast to it.

All this had to be done under water—and very thick and muddy water at that. By the time he had made the rope secure Coker was well-nigh suffocated.

He scrambled out of the pond at length, dragging the rope after him. And then the salvage work began in earnest.

The farm-labourers gave Coker a hand, and so did Alonzo Todd—not that Alonzo's puny strength was of any use.

"Heave-ho!" said Coker.

A long, long pull, and a strong, strong pull, and Coker's motor-bike was hauled forth from the muddy depths.

The machine presented a sorry spectacle. It was battered and bent—more so than when Coker had had his previous spill. Moreover, it was simply smothered



Coker and Alonzo had to run the gauntlet of a crowd of grinning juniors, who held handkerchiefs to their noses. "My hat!" chuckled Nugent. "Been exploring a duck-pond, Coker?" "Hurry up, kid!" gasped Coker, squelching mud and water at every step. "Let's get out of this!" (See Chapter 5.)

with reeds and slime. To ride it would have been out of the question.

The side-car was badly damaged, and had shipped a good deal of water.

Coker made a grimace as he surveyed the wreckage.

"Just my luck!" he growled. "The beastly thing's battered out of shape. It will have to go into dock again for repairs. Meanwhile, I must push it back to Greyfriars. Give me a hand, Todd."

"Certainly, my dear fellow."

Having returned the rope to the rustics and thanked them for their assistance, Coker and Alonzo set out for Greyfriars. Coker walked on one side, pushing the machine, and Alonzo walked on the other, pushing the sidecar.

It was hard work, and both were exhausted by the time the gates of Greyfriars came in sight.

"It's beginning to get dark," said Coker. "Wish it was quite dark, and then nobody would see us come in."

"I fear we are observed already," panted Alonzo, as they squelched their way through the school gateway.

Alonzo's fears were swiftly confirmed. There was a rush of feet to the spot, and a whole crowd of juniors witnessed the return of the weary and middy pair.

"My only Aunt Sempronia!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "You don't mean to say you've come another cropper, Coker!"

"Br-r-r!"

"Been exploring a duck-pond?" asked Nugent.

That was precisely what Coker had been doing, but he didn't say so. He was only too anxious to get his machine installed in the shed, and to have a bath and a change of attire.

Coker and Alonzo had to run the gauntlet of a crowd of grinning juniors. And some were not content with grinning; they guffawed loudly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"Jevver see such a pair of beauties?" gurgled Fisher T. Fish.

"No, never!" said Skinner solemnly. "I suppose the big chap really is Coker, and the skinny one Alonzo? It's impossible to recognise either of them!"

"Don't get too near them," advised Dick Penfold. "They're giving forth an offensive effluvia! It's enough to knock a chap over!"

"Yes, rather!"

With their handkerchiefs pressed to their noses, the juniors watched Coker and Alonzo struggling across the Close with the battered motor-bike. They made no offer to help them. The pair of them might have been lepers, judging by the respectable distance at which their schoolfellows kept.

"Hurry up, kid!" gasped Coker, turning to Alonzo. "Let's get out of this!"

Suddenly a window was thrown open. It was the window of the Head's study.

The stern voice of Dr. Locke called upon Coker to halt.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Horace. "I'm in for it now!"

"Coker!"

The Head's voice boomed across the Close like a rumble of thunder.

"Yessir?" faltered Coker.

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded the Head.

"M-m-meaning of what, sir?"

"Your present deplorable condition—and that of the boy who is with you. It is Skinner, is it not?"

"No, sir; it is I," said Alonzo.

"Bless my soul! You are almost unrecognisable, Todd! I repeat, Coker, what is the meaning of your present deplorable condition?"

"Ahem! We—we had a slight

accident, sir," explained Coker. "We were going along at quite a reasonable speed, and a beastly duck-pond got in the way, sir!"

"Indeed!" said the Head grimly. "It would be nearer the truth, Coker, to say that you were travelling at a reckless speed, which caused you to lose control of your machine and run into a pond. Is that not so?"

"Well—er—more or less, sir!"

The Head frowned.

"You not only endangered your own life, but also that of your companion," he said. "I have been thinking for a long time, Coker, that a motor-bicycle is too dangerous a toy for you to handle."

"Not at all, sir—"

"There have been numerous complaints about your reckless riding," the Head went on. "Only a few days ago you nearly ran down Sir Hilton Popper when he was taking his afternoon walk. He was obliged to get into the ditch in order to avoid your machine, which was zig-zagging across the road in a most dangerous manner!"

Coker said nothing. He could not deny the soft impeachment.

"I have come to the conclusion that your foolhardy exploits must be stopped, Coker!" said the Head sternly. "I therefore forbid you to ride a motor-bicycle for a month from this date!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Coker's face fell. He looked like a person who had been sentenced to a term of imprisonment. Motor-cycling was Coker's pet hobby, and to be deprived of his favourite pursuit for a whole month was indeed a crushing blow.

"You understand, Coker?" said the Head. "You are restrained for one month from riding a motor-bicycle. During that interval, I trust you will reflect upon the folly of dangerous riding. Then, when the ban is removed, and you are permitted to ride again, you will not be so intrepid and impetuous."

"It wasn't my fault the beastly duck-pond was there, sir!" muttered Coker. "It's downright stupid to stick a pond right at the foot of a hill!"

"And it is criminally stupid not to avoid the pond when motor-cycling!" said the Head, with asperity. "Had you been descending the hill at a reasonable speed, the accident would not have occurred. Have you suffered any bodily hurt?"

"No, sir!"

"And you, Todd?"

"No, sir," said Alonzo. "But I became embedded in the mud—a most disquieting experience! Fortunately, Coker plunged in and assisted me to the surface, or I should have been drowned."

The Head glanced curiously at Alonzo.

"I quite fail to understand why you should wish to travel with Coker," he said.

"I did not wish to, sir; but I had to. I could not allow the call of duty to pass unheeded."

"Duty!" echoed the Head, in perplexity.

"Yes, sir. Coker has been committed to my care by his Aunt Judith—"

"Shurrup, you ass!" muttered Coker.

"I have taken him under my wing, sir, and I accompanied him in order to see that no calamity occurred."

"You do not appear to have been very successful, Todd," said the Head, with a slight smile. "As for your taking care of Coker—well, he certainly needs taking care of, but I fear you have not the necessary qualifications for such a task. Go and cleanse yourselves, both of you; and remember, Coker, that you are not to use that machine—or any other of its kind—for a month!"

The Head withdrew, and closed the window. And Coker and Alonzo went on their way with the wrecked machine. They were followed by a crowd of grinning juniors, who were careful, however, to keep at a discreet distance. Unlike the garments of the Queen of Sheba, the attire of Coker and Alonzo did not smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, and other sweet spices!

"I am glad, my dear Coker, that you have been forbidden to ride your machine for a month," murmured Alonzo.

Coker gave a roar.

"What! You dare to tell me that you're glad? My hat! I—I'll jolly well pulverise you!"

"I—I— What I meant was, I am extremely sorry!" said Alonzo hastily.

"So am I!" growled Coker. "The Head's a tyrant! He's got no right to interfere with a fellow's hobbies. No more motor-biking for a month! It's awful! I don't know how I shall manage to exist!"

But Alonzo was secretly relieved at the Head's decree. For a month, at any rate, he was deprived of the perilous task of taking care of Coker on the King's highway!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Alonzo's Loyalty!

HORACE COKER was in a very ill-humour during the next few days. Like Achilles of old, who sat sulking in his tent, Coker sat and sulked in his study.

No more motor-cycling for a month!

It was a big blow to Coker, for motor-cycling was meat and drink to him. He loved it, just as Blundell of the Fifth loved football, and Fitzgerald of the same Form loved boxing.

Blundell would have felt very sick if he had been forbidden football for a month, and Fitzgerald would have been furious if boxing was banned. Coker was both sick and furious. He hurled abuse at everybody who came near him—including Potter and Greene. In fact, those two bright youths were driven out of the study by Coker's aggressive attitude.

But there was one person whom Coker could not drive away.

Alonzo Todd practically lived in Coker's study these days. He continued to wait hand and foot on the great Horace, and although Coker slanged him and slated him and even cuffed him he remained at his post.

It was Alonzo's mission in life to take care of Coker, and he went on doing it, though it brought him more kicks than pence.

Now that motor-cycling was "off," Coker seemed to have lost all interest in life. He simply sat in the armchair and moped. Alonzo did his best to console Coker; but he had no more luck than Job's comforters had with Job.

There was another heavy fall of snow, and the Remove challenged the mighty men of the Fifth to a snowfight. Coker took no part in it. A deputation of his Form-fellows called on him, urging him to go forth to the battle. It would be great fun, they said, even though it was rather undignified to fight with fags.

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"Come back, you ass!" "You'll get hurt!" Alonzo Todd heeded not the clamorous shouts. He rushed towards the combatants with the object of dragging them apart somehow, and thus saving Coker from the fate which threatened him. Biff! At the identical second when Alonzo intervened Blundell delivered what was intended to be a knock-out blow. It caught the Duffer squarely between the eyes, and he went down as if he had been shot. (See Chapter 6.)

But Coker was not to be drawn. He told the deputation to go and eat coke.

The Remove gained a gallant victory in the snowfight. And then, flushed with their success, they challenged the Fifth to a football match.

Blundell of the Fifth, who talked football and dreamed football and worshipped football in addition to playing it, accepted the challenge which Harry Wharton threw out. Then he went to consult Coker about it.

Blundell stepped into Coker's study while the great Horace was at tea. Alonzo Todd, kneeling on the hearthrug, was engaged in making toast.

"I say, Coker," said Blundell, "those cheeky Remove fags have challenged us to a footer match!"

Grunt from Coker.

"You hear what I'm saying?" Blundell went on. "They've thrown down the gauntlet, and it's up to us to meet them and give them the licking of their lives!"

Coker gave another grunt. Blundell might as well have been addressing the teapot for all the response he got.

"You don't seem wildly excited about what I'm telling you," said the captain of the Fifth.

"I'm not," growled Coker.

"But the match is fixed for to-morrow and I've put you down to play. There was a time when I wouldn't have dreamed of asking you to turn out. You used to be an arrant duffer at footer. You couldn't kick a goal for toffee—unless it was against your own side!"

Coker didn't like being reminded of the painful past. He scowled.

"However, you've improved out of all knowledge, Coker," continued Blundell. "You used to play in the forward line, and that was a mistake. You'd never make a forward, not if you lived to be as old as Methuselah and Gosling, the porter, rolled into one. But when we tried you at back you put up a stunning performance. You were great, man—great! And we've come to that stage when we can't do without you."

"Well, you'll have to do without me to-morrow!" grunted Coker.

"Eh?"

"I'm fed-up with footer, and I'm fed-up with silly fatheads who come barging in where they're not wanted!"

Blundell coloured up.

"Look here," he said hotly, "as captain of the Form, I object to being spoken to like that!"

"As captain of the Form," said Coker bluntly, "you're a fool—a frost—a failure!"

"What!" shouted Blundell.

"Don't bawl at me like that," said Coker. "The truth is often painful, I know; but I'm never shy of saying what I think. I don't mince my words. You're no more fit to be Form captain than this silly duffer who's making my toast!"

And Coker nodded towards Alonzo Todd, who was making toast so effectively that he had burnt the bread black.

Blundell clenched his hands. Coker's words had touched him on the raw. He had come to Coker's study on an amiable errand, and this was the sort of reception he got! It was not only annoying, it was exasperating!

"You cheeky bounder!" roared Blundell, advancing towards the arm-chair. "I—I've a jolly good mind—"

"Indeed you haven't," said Coker. "Your mind's a blank!"

At this Blundell fairly exploded. He rather prided himself on being an intellectual sort of fellow, as well as a Trojan on the playing-fields. And to be told by a brainless booby like Coker that his mind was a blank—why, it was a deadly insult! Moreover, it was an insult that must be avenged.

"I'm not standing that," said Blundell in a choking voice. "Put up your hands!"

Coker heaved himself out of the arm-chair.

"Is it a fight you're wanting?" he asked.

"Yes!"

"Then we'll have it out in the gym, if you don't mind. I value my study furniture."

Alonzo Todd turned a flushed face from the fire.

"My dear fellows," he said, in tones of distress, "I implore you not to indulge in a brutal exhibition of fisticuffs! It is degrading, debasing, and demoralising. My Uncle Benjamin—"

"Blow your Uncle Ben!" snorted Coker.

"My Uncle Benjamin has often warned me of the folly of fisticuffs. 'Let dogs delight to bark and bite; but well-bred boys will never fight. Let savage tribes delight in gore; but gentle lads will never war!'"

"If your Uncle Benjamin said that he's a chicken-hearted pacifist!" said Coker. "Come on, Blundell!"

Coker strode out of the study, and Blundell followed.

Alonzo Todd, grieved to think that the wise precepts of his Uncle Benjamin had been ignored, laid down his toasting-fork and followed in the wake of the two Fifth-Formers.

Long before Blundell and Coker reached the gym they had a crowd at their heels. And the crowd grew with astonishing rapidity.

News of the forthcoming fight spread through the school like a fire through gorse. Billy Bunter was one of the first to get wind of it, and Bunter was a human broadcasting-station.

"I say, you fellows, there's a scrap on! Coker and Blundell have had a fearful row!"

Billy Bunter bellowed this information after the manner of a town-crier.

Study doors were thrown open, and fellows came rushing out, eager to witness the duel between two hefty Fifth-Formers.

Harry Wharton & Co. joined the stream of humanity that was hurrying towards the gym.

"Wonder what it's all about?" said Bob Cherry.

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"Goodness knows," said Wharton. "I expect Coker has rubbed Blundell up the wrong way. He hasn't had a civil word for anybody since the Head put the kybosh on his motor-biking."

"It ought to be a good scrap," said Johnny Bull. "The battle of the giants, by Jove!"

"The worthy Blundell will win," said Hurreo Singh sagely. "He will knock-fully despatch the ludicrous Coker into the middle portion of next weekfulness!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors put the pace on and arrived at the gym just as Coker and Blundell were donning the gloves. Alonzo Todd was hovering near them, imploring them to desist. But Alonzo's eloquence was wasted on the desert air. Presently Coker, in exasperation, gave him a push, and the Duffer of the Remove sat down violently on the floor of the gym.

"Ow!" he gasped.

Peter Todd grasped his cousin by the collar and hauled him out of the danger-zone.

"Let 'em get on with it, Lonzy," he said. "They've no use for a peace-maker."

"But—but there is a possibility, my dear Peter, that they may hurt each other."

"There's a distinct probability, I should say!" grinned Peter. "Hallo, now they're at it!"

Blundell and Coker were in the ring. Gwynne of the Sixth, who had come on the scene, was acting as referee. He gave the word for the fight to commence, and Coker and Blundell rushed at each other like tigers.

"Go it, ye cripples!"

"Pile in!"

These injunctions were unnecessary. Coker and Blundell were already "going it," and "piling in," for all they were worth. It seemed to be the fixed intention of Blundell to knock his opponent off the map; and Coker seemed to harbour a similar intention with regard to Blundell.

Nobody seemed to know what it was all about, and very few seemed to care. It was sufficient that a fight was in progress between two hefty and determined fellows.

The first round was fought at a fierce pace.

Coker was no fool with the gloves, and he gave as good as he got. But his methods were more crude and clumsy than Blundell's; and it was the prevailing opinion that the science of Blundell would tell in the long run.

Biff! Thud! Biff! Thud!

The combatants were pommelling each other without mercy. There was no sparring for openings—no ducking and retreating. Some boxers simply stand and look at each other, each waiting for his opponent to launch an attack. But Coker and Blundell scorned such methods. They were "going it" hammer and tongs.

Both took heavy punishment in the course of that fierce first round, and both looked decidedly the worse for wear when they went to their respective corners.

So far, honours had been pretty evenly divided.

In the second round Blundell forced a slight advantage. In the third round the advantage was more noticeable. And in the fourth round Blundell was well on top, and Coker was fighting with his back to the wall—or, to be more correct, the ropes.

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"It's all over, bar shouting," murmured Bob Cherry. "Blundell's got poor old Horace tied up in knots!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"The knock-out will come any minute," he said. "I'm rather sorry for Coker. He's game to the last."

Coker was in sorry straits now. Time and again Blundell descended on him like a whirlwind. Coker was exhausted, and he offered but a feeble resistance to the series of smashing blows which rained upon him.

Everybody felt that the end was at hand.

"Get ready to cheer!" advised a voice in the crowd.

Alonzo Todd looked on, with a troubled expression on his face. He saw that Coker was getting the worst of it, that Blundell would settle his hash at any moment. And Alonzo felt very miserable about it, because he was supposed to be taking care of Coker. True, he had done his best to prevent the fight taking place, but was there nothing more he could do?

What would Coker's Aunt Judith say if she stepped into the gym at that moment? She would accuse Alonzo of not being true to his trust. He had undertaken to be the guide, philosopher, and friend of Horace Coker; yet here he was, sitting tight at the ringside, while Coker was in imminent danger of being knocked out!

Alonzo felt that the time was ripe for action. At a very critical moment, when Blundell had Coker completely at his mercy, and it needed only one more blow to finish the fight, Alonzo sprang to his feet and rushed into the ring.

Instantly there was a wild commotion.

"Come back, you ass!"

"You'll get hurt!"

"Is the fellow mad?"

Mad or not, Alonzo heeded not the clamorous shouts. He rushed towards the combatants, with the object of dragging them apart somehow, and thus saving Coker from the fate which threatened him.

At the identical second when Alonzo intervened Blundell delivered what was intended to be the knock-out blow.

Biff!

Had Coker stopped that terrific "pile-driver" he would undoubtedly have gone down for the count.

But it wasn't Coker who stopped the blow. It was the unfortunate Alonzo. Blundell's fist caught him squarely between the eyes, and he went down as if he had been shot.

For a few brief seconds there was a dramatic silence. Then Blundell, who would have given anything to have been able to recall that blow, dropped on his knees beside the fallen junior.

"Poor kid!" he muttered. "What on earth made you butt in like that?"

There was no reply from Alonzo. He was stunned.

Coker joined Blundell at Alonzo's side. His face was working strangely.

"I believe the kid chipped in like that to prevent me being knocked out," he said. "I'm sure of it! He promised my aunt that he'd take care of me and see that I came to no harm. Of course, it was potty of him, but—"

Coker's voice shook with emotion. He was touched by this proof of Alonzo's loyalty.

Without thought of his own safety, but thinking only of Coker's, the Duffer of the Remove had dashed between the two boxers. He had stopped the blow which had been intended for Coker; and now he lay, with white, upturned face, in the ring.

A big crowd, including Harry Wharton & Co. and Peter Todd, quickly gathered round.

Blundell loosened Alonzo's collar, and Bob Cherry fetched some water and dashed it into the junior's face.

Presently Alonzo revived. He opened his eyes, and blinked around at the circle of friendly faces.

"What—what has happened?" he murmured.

"You've been knocked out, kid," explained Blundell. "I was just letting drive at Coker when you suddenly sprang up from nowhere, and stopped the blow."

"Dear me! Was it really your fist that struck me, Blundell? It—it felt like an earthquake."

Blundell smiled slightly.

"Feeling all right now?" he queried.

"I am just a trifle dizzy," murmured Alonzo, as he tottered to his feet. "But I am happy to think I was instrumental in saving Coker from worse punishment than he has already received. I promised his aunt that I would take care of him, and I must not shirk that duty, however painful it may be at times."

Coker held out his hand to Alonzo.

"Thank you, kid!" he said, his voice a trifle husky. "You're a champion duffer, you know, but you're a brick into the bargain!"

"Hear, hear!" chimed in Harry Wharton & Co.

The fight was not resumed. It was regarded as settled, and the honours went to Blundell.

The great crowd, feeling more sober and subdued than when they had entered the gym, quietly dispersed. And the last to leave were Coker and Alonzo. Each seemed to be trying to support the other, and it was a case of the blind leading the blind.

And Horace Coker, selfish and thoughtless though he was at times, would not soon forget how the loyal Alonzo had rushed to his rescue in the boxing-ring.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Rash Resolve!

"STILL taking care of Coker?"

Peter Todd put that question to his cousin.

The two Todds and Tom Dutton were preparing tea in Study No. 7. Billy Bunter, usually the soul of punctuality at meal-times, had not yet come in.

"Yes, my dear Peter," said Alonzo. "Ever since that disastrous bout of fisticuffs the other day I have kept a brotherly eye on Coker. I regret to say he is in a very pugnacious mood at the moment; that is why I have come away from his study. I inadvertently poured some boiling tea down the back of his neck—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Peter.

"And Coker's subsequent behaviour was violent—not to say brutal! He seemed to mistake me for a football, for he implanted a series of savage kicks behind me!"

"Well, you can hardly blame him, you know," chuckled Peter. "You can't expect a fellow to be in an angelic mood when he's had scalding tea swamped down the back of his neck!"

Alonzo was silent.

"Look here, Lonzy," said Peter seriously. "It's time you chucked this fool's game. You're not competent to take care of Coker. He's much too big a handful for you. There isn't a fellow at Greyfriars who would tackle such a

(Continued on page 16.)

THE GREYFRIARS HERALD



Supplement No. 165.

HARRY WHARTON
EDITOR

Week Ending March 8th, 1924.



A Vision of the Future!

By
Billy Bunter.

WEMBLEY PARK was crowded to its fullest capacity, one memorable afternoon in April, 1934; for the English Cup Final was about to be fought out in the presents of that vast multitude!

The finalists were Aston Villa and Plumpton Rovers. Everybody eggspected the famous Villa to win; but they overlooked the fact that Billy Bunter was playing at centre-forward for Plumpton. Yes! It was only the understanding few, who had seen Bunter play, who knew what a deadly shot he was.

In one of the stands a number of Greyfriars Old Boys were seated. There was Harry Wharton, a young officer in the Royal Cavalry Artillery. There was Peter Todd the rising young barrister (but he was seated at the present moment). There was Tom Redwing, a first-class Petty Admiral of the King's Navy; and there was Bob Cherry, a regimental pal of Wharton's.

They uttered wild whoops of delight when I led Plumpton Rovers on to the field.

"Why, that's Bunter!"

"Our dear old prize porpuss, by Jove!"

"The fellow I used to leave out of the Remove Eleven, owing to personal jellussy!" muttered Wharton, in tones of remorse.

"Shiver my timbers!" said Petty Admiral Redwing. "Bunter's broader in the beam than ever! He always was on the plump side, I remember; but now he's as round as an orange! Fancy a fat fellow like that becoming a famus footballer!"

At that moment Aston Villa emerged from the dressing-room. They were hot favorites for the Cup, and the crowd cheered them to the ekko.

I won the toss, and set the Villa to face a hurrican, a tempest, a sigh-clone, and a typhoon.

Modesty prevents me describing the match in detail. Needless to state, we were all over our opponents from start to finish. They lost their heads, and failed to keep their feet. Their defence cracked up under continual pressure, and I scored three goals in as many minnits.

My form was trooly dazzling. I used my weight to good advantage, until the opposing backs were frightened to come anywhere near me. I found myself unmarked (as the schoolboy said when his Form-master let him off a licking), and I made goal-scoring appear as simple as shelling peas. I got seven altogether, and those who had eggspected Aston Villa to win had the shock of their lives.

As soon as that historrick Cup Final was over I rejoined my old schoolfellows, and they stood me a topping feed in a West End resterong.

Supplement i.]

"My word, Buntty," said Bob Cherry, "you've come on by leaps and bounds as a footballer! I never thought you had it in you! Axcept my humble apologies for ragging you when you were at Greyfriars, and trying to belittle your footballing genius."

"Axcept mine, too!" pleaded Wharton, slipping on to his knees.

I smiled condesendingly.

"Granted!" I said, with an airy flurrish of the hand. "No, I won't have any more sham-pain, thanks! I've got to keep fizzically fit. You see, I've been selekcted to play for England next Saterdag!"

EDITORIAL!

By HARRY WHARTON.

I SUPPOSE there is hardly a single boy reader of the "Greyfriars Herald" who doesn't play footer. I refer, of course, to those who are fortunate enough to be physically fit. Some there are who have never known the joys of a thrilling tussle on the football-field, who have never been able to kick a ball, owing to some physical infirmity. Tragic, indeed, is their lot; yet they keep wonderfully cheerful, although they know that they can never be anything more than lookers-on.

Among my correspondence this week is a letter from a Cardiff chum, who tells me he has been a cripple from early childhood. "But please don't imagine, Harry," he writes, "that football and football stories make no appeal to me. I'm a red-hot enthusiast, and shall remain so, I hope, so long as I have a pair of lungs to enable me to cheer my favourite team to victory, and so long as I have a pair of eyes to enable me to read of their exploits."

This letter shows a very fine spirit, and it has acted as a spur to me in producing this Special Cuptie Number. I like to think that it will be appreciated by footballers and non-footballers alike, and that even those who cannot join in the game will spend a happy hour in reading about it.

Cupties have their humorous side, and my merry contributors always make a point of squeezing as much fun as they can out of every subject they tackle. Even Billy Bunter has been allowed to have a hand in this production, and no article by Bunter could ever be taken seriously. Billy is still loudly lamenting the fact that he is "barred" from the Remove Eleven, and he will remain barred, so long as the team is controlled and captained by—

HARRY WHARTON.

CUPTIE CHATTER!

By Bob Cherry.

CUPTIES are in full swing now all over the country. Of course, the fight for the English Cup is the most fascinating of all. Who can predict the two teams that will face each other in the Final at the Wembley Park arena? 'Tis a ticklish task, my masters! Many fancied favourites have fallen by the way, and many more will drop out of the running before the Final comes to be staged. I don't pretend to be able to predict the ultimate winners of the Cup; but may it be a jolly good sporting side, whether it hails from North or South!

WINGATE of the Sixth complains that a teacup is missing from his study cupboard. I can only conclude that Billy Bunter has fallen a victim to the Cuptie fever, and succeeded in "lifting the Cup"!

IT is reported that Alonzo Todd, the Duffer of the Remove, went to the hosier's in Courtfield in order to see a Cuptie. Alonzo was evidently under the impression that a Cuptie was an article of neck-wear!

ONCE again the Public Schools Challenge Cup has come to Greyfriars. We had to fight every inch of the way in order to win it; but we came through the desperate tussle with flying colours. "Now give three cheers. I'll lead the way. Hurrah! Hurrah! Hooray!!!"

THE COKER CUP has also found a resting-place in the Remove. And poor old Horace was absolutely certain that the Fifth were going to win it this year. They will have a chance to wrest the trophy from us next season; but the Remove's motto is: "What we have we'll hold!"

MR. DORRINGTON, a master, kept goal for Greyfriars for fifteen seasons, and never missed a match! He played his last game for the school in 1906, when forty years of age, and he was the best "keeper" the school has ever known.

GWYNNE of the Sixth has come to be known as the "Penalty King." He has taken ten penalty-kicks this season, and has found the net on each occasion!

THIS is Billy Bunter's idea of special training for a cuptie:

Eat a hearty meal just before the match.
Whenever there is a stoppage of play, owing to an injury, eat a little snack.
Eat another hearty meal at half-time.
Celebrate the scoring of each goal by drinking a pint of gassy ginger-pop!

GREYFRIARS and St. Jim's (junior elevens) have met on no less than 101 occasions. The encounters have resulted as follows:

Victories for Greyfriars ...	41
Victories for St. Jim's ...	40
Drawn games	23

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By DICKY NUGENT.

A Fearful and Wonderful Narrative
of the Football Field.

"COME what may," cried Charlie Crook, the skipper and senther-half of Puddleton Rangers, "we're going to win the County Cup! We've got as far as the Final, and now we're going a step farther. We'll lick the Green Croosaders or perrish in the attempt!"

"Here, here!"

"Well spoken, Charlie!"

This konversation took plaice in the Rangers' dressing-room, just before the grate and momentuss match was about to start.

Charlie Crook looked even more skoundrelly and sinnister than usual in his sky-blue, dark-red, rainbow-cullered jersey. His eyes were tightly clenched, and his hands were gleeming. The light of rezzerlation shone from his nose. He was despritly keen on winning the County Cup; and the reezon for this was soon made clear.

"As you fellows know," he said, "I'm frightfully hard-up. For some time now I've been at debt's door. And at last I've got a gilt-edged chance of making some munny."

"But we're not a perfessional team, Charlie," said Puncher, the Rangers' goalie. "We don't get paid for our servisses. So how can you possibly make any munny out of this Cup Final?"

Charlie Crook larfed. It was a harsh, horse larf—not at all nice to lissen to.

"My dear Puncher," he said, "who is the kaptin of this team?"

"Eh? You are, worse luck—I mean, of corse!"

"And if we win the Cup, who will reseeve the valewable trofee at the hands of the Mayor of Puddleton?"

"Why, you, Charlie!"

"Eggsactly! And when I get the Cup I shall promptly pawn it, in order to replennish my empty coughers."

"Grate Scott!"

Charlie Crook's comrades stared at him in blank amazement. They knew him for a dubble-died skoundrel and a dasterdly rogue, but they had not dreamed that he would sink to such depths as this.

"We must win this Cup Final at all costs," Crook went on. "And if we can't win it by fare means, we must resort to fowl! We must lay out our opponents, so that they will be carried off the field with broken lims and collar-bones and all the rest of it. The ambulanse-men will have a busy time. Hallo! There goes the referee's wissle! Let us Sally fourth to the fray!"

A mity cheer greeted Puddleton Rangers as they sprinted on to the field.

The eleven lined up as advertised:

Puncher; Tripper, Fowler; Charger, Crook, Craftey; Trapp, Shuter, Gottim, Pass, and Breakaway.

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Another mity cheer rang out as the Green Croosaders took the field.

(Did the referee see them take the field? And, if so, did he order them to put it back again?—ED.)

"Play up, the Rangers!"

"Pile in, the Croosaders!"

"On the ball!"

The referee fired a shrill blast on his pistol, and the rival elevens plunged fiercely into the fray.

In the very first minnit the Croosaders attacked, and their senther-forward was about to shoot, when Charlie Crook grabbed him by the ankle and sent him sprawling.

There was a roar from the Croosaders.

"Fowl!"

"Give him the bird, ref!"

"He wants his neck rung!"

The referee stopped the game, and pointed to the penalty-spot.

Charlie Crook strode up to the official. He towered like a giant over the dapper little man.

"What's the little game, ref?" he demanded. "Are you going to award the Croosaders a penalty?"

"Certainly!" said the referee. And then, seeing Charlie Crook's clenched

FAMOUS FOOTBALL FEATS!

THE most memorable match in the history of First Eleven football was played in 1904, between Greyfriars School and Courfield Crusaders. The pitch was frostbound, and the players had great difficulty in keeping their feet. In the first half the Crusaders stormed the Greyfriars goal, and found the net three times. Undaunted by this heavy reverse, the school eleven "crowded on full sail" in the second half, and scored three times, the equalising goal being obtained in the very last minute. As the game was a cuptie "extra time" was ordered, and amid tremendous excitement the Greyfriars centre-forward scored the winning goal. A really remarkable exhibition, which demonstrates the truth of the axiom that a game isn't lost till it's won.

The most amazing instance of "tall scoring" occurred in 1899, when Greyfriars First Eleven entertained a weak team from Wapshot. From start to finish the visitors were overwhelmed, the final score being 14-1 against them! Campbell, the Greyfriars skipper, had a "bag" of ten goals to his credit! It is only fair to add that Wapshot arrived with only ten men, and they lost another player early in the game through an accidental injury.

In the season of 1907-8, the Greyfriars First Eleven went right through the period without a defeat; and—what is even more remarkable—without a goal being registered against them! This was due to the sterling defence of Forrest, the goalie, and Belton and Braund, the backs. Neither before nor since has the school been able to boast such a brilliant trio of defenders. Forrest afterwards kept goal for a well-known amateur club.

fists and terribil scowl, he hastily changed his mind.

"It—it's all right!" he stammered. "That was a beestly fowl that you committed, but I won't allow it to ruffle my fethers. I'll overlook the offense this time."

So the Croosaders were deprived of their penalty, and the game went on.

It was a ruff and brootal exhibition on the part of the Rangers. Charlie Crook fowled on every possibul occasion; and so did Fowler, the left-back. In fact, there wasn't a fouler fowler on the field than Fowler. He was a big, berly lout of tremendus statcher, and he threw his weight about to such purpuss that the opposing forwards were soon put out of action. One had his knee-cap knocked clean off his head, and was forced to retire. And another unfortunate wretch broke the collar-bone in his left leg.

With only half a team, the Croosaders hadn't a hope of winning the match. They were ten goals down at half-time—and ten goals take a lot of picking up. Of corse, there was just a chance that they would score eleven goals in the second half, and pull the game out of the fire. That is what most authors would make them do; but not me! I always prepare a drammatick climax for my readers.

Instead of the Croosaders getting eleven goals in the second half, the Rangers got eleven more, and then ran out easy winners by twenty-one goals to nill!

Charlie Crook was simply purring with plezzure.

"Hooray! We've won hands down!" he chortled. "It was like a cricket score! I'm sorry we had to resort to violent tatticks, but it was necessary. And now I will go and reseeve the magnnifiscent silver cup at the hands of the Mayor!"

But there was a big shock in store for our hero—or, rather, our villen. When he made his way to the grand-stand, where the Mayor and Corporation were assembled, he saw at a glance that there was something wrong.

The Mayor was ringing his hands in a state of grate agitation.

"Crook," he said horsely, "some theeving skoundrel has been and collered the Cup!"

"What!" gasped Charlie, staggering back.

"It's a fact," groaned the Mayor. "While we were watching the match some raskally sneek-theef came along and pinched the Cup from under our very noses! The tragedy of it is, we can't afford to buy another Cup, so you will have to go without. However, permit me to offer you my harty congratulations!"

And with that meegre reward Charlie Crook had to be content.

[Supplement ii.]



The Fight for The Cup!

A Graphic Description of the Public Schools Cup Final, By Dick Russell.

I TRAVELLED to London with the Remove eleven as first reserve.

After many thrilling tussles on muddy fields and frost-bound fields, in snow and in sunshine—and on one occasion in a hailstorm—our fellows had won through to the Final. This was to be played at Stamford Bridge, the famous Chelsea enclosure, and our opponents were Clare College.

As the express train bore us swiftly to our destination, I wondered whether I should be called upon to don the Greyfriars colours, and to take my part in the great football drama that was about to be enacted. Supposing one of the regular players was taken ill at the last minute? Supposing our skipper, Harry Wharton, decided that one of them was below form, or had become stale, and decided to play me in his place?

But all my suppositions came to nothing. The Remove eleven were fighting fit, and nobody was taken suddenly ill at the crucial moment, so I hopped into the grand-stand.

The atmosphere was electric with excitement. Nearly five thousand people had turned up to see the match. Not what you would call a huge crowd, as crowds go; still, it was pretty good for a public school match.

The Clare College fellows were the first to emerge from the dressing-room. And as their tall skipper, Clive Wilson, led them on to the field, quite a pandemonium broke loose from their supporters. Rattles and whistles and mouth-organs, clapping and stamping and cheering, all combined to produce a most unearthly din.

Personally, I reserved my lung-power for the moment when Greyfriars came out, in their blue jerseys and white shorts. And when Harry Wharton led them into the fray I let out a roar which would have done credit to the Bull of Bashan.

"Hooray! Greyfriars for ever!"

But even that mighty roar was drowned by the shouts of the rest of the Greyfriars supporters who had come up to witness the epic struggle.

The rival skippers met in the middle of the field and gripped hands. A coin was spun, Wharton won the toss, and as the teams lined up the applause broke out anew.

"Greyfriars!"

"Clare!"

Play was rather scrappy at the start. The players were excited, and there was much wild kicking and aimless passing. The Clare College men were the first to settle down to scientific football, and when they attacked they were very dangerous. Bulstrode, in the Greyfriars goal, had to be constantly on the alert. He fielded a swift, low shot from Clive Wilson, then he had to leap into the air to punch away a dangerous high one.

My heart was in my mouth as I watched the manoeuvres of the Clare forwards. They knew the geography of the goal, and they shot hard and often. It was fortunate that Bulstrode had his wits about him.

The first goal came after twenty minutes' play. Clare attacked hotly, and their outside-right flashed across a perfect centre. Clive Wilson met it with his head, and the ball whizzed into the net like a pip from an orange.

"Goal!"

The air was rent with cheering, but almost before the applause had died away Greyfriars equalised. Vernon-Smith broke away and sped down the wing like a hare. When tackled he transferred the leather to Wharton, who whipped it into the net before the Clare goalie could wake up to the situation.

"Goal!"

"Jolly well played, Smithy and Wharton!"

There was no more scoring in the first

half, though Clare College had three-parts of the play. But thrills were in store.

Talk about thrills! Talk about excitement! The spectators had sufficient of both that afternoon to last them till next football season.

Clare College broke away and scored. That was sensation number one. Then Hurrec Singh raced through and equalised. That was sensation number two. Then Tom Brown was duffer enough to handle the ball in the penalty area, and Clive Wilson scored from the "spot-kick." That was sensation number three.

It wasn't until five minutes from the end that the crowning sensation came.

Clare College were leading three—two, and the Friars were fighting with their backs to the wall. Their chances of collaring the Cup seemed to fade farther and farther away as the minutes passed.

And then Bob Cherry performed a wonder-feat. The ball came out to him at right-half, and he ran it forward a few yards, and then drove it goalwards with all his force. It was a mighty shot from a long way out, but its direction and elevation were perfect. The goalie leapt into the air, but the leather eluded his frantic clutch, and came to rest in the top corner of the net.

Cheer upon cheer greeted that equalising goal. And then, in the last minute, the grand-stand was converted into a Tower of Babel.

Harry Wharton organised one last fierce attack. He shot hard and rattled the cross-bar. Frank Nugent pounced upon the ball as it rebounded, and steered it into the net with the skill of a master. It was the last goal, the winning goal—the goal that enabled Greyfriars to carry off the Cup!

THE END.

Eleven little footer boys played a team of men;
One, through funk, began to bunk, and then there were ten!

Ten little footer boys played with skill divine;
One fell down and broke his crown, and then there were nine!

Nine little footer boys grumbled at their fate;
One was fouled, he hopped and howled, and then there were eight!

Eight little footer boys—formerly eleven—
One grew tired, and then expired, and then there were seven!

Seven little footer boys, in a fearful fix;
One went "Smack!" into a back, and then there were six!

Six little footer boys pluckily did strive;
One was tripped, so off he slipped, and then there were five!

Supplement iii.]



Eleven Little Footer Boys!

A Very Mournful Ballad.
By Dick Penfold.

Five little footer boys, trying hard to score;
One yelled "Oh! You've crushed my toe!" and then there were four!

Four little footer boys—sorry sights to see!
One named Jeff abused the ref, and then there were three!

Three little footer boys, keen to dare and do;
One cried "Shoot!" then burst his boot, and then there were two!

Two little footer boys, feeling dead and done;
One was charged, and bumped and barged, and then there was one!

One little footer boy—they pelted him with bricks;
He gave a yell of "Fare thee well!" and then there were "nix"!

To complete our little ballad we drag in the referee—
Congratulated by the crowd, and taken out to tea!

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DUFFER AND HERO!*(Continued from page 12.)*

job successfully—least of all you! Leave Coker to go his own way—that's my advice. Write to his Aunt Judy, and tell her she must appoint a fresh chaperon."

Alonzo shook his head.

"I am sorry, my dear Peter, but your persuasions have fallen upon stony ground. I am determined to go on taking care of Coker. I will not pretend that it is a pleasant task, or that Coker is an easy person to take care of. But I have given a solemn undertaking to his Aunt Judith, and I will not shrink from it."

Peter Todd shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "Your blood be upon your head! I won't try to persuade you any more! Pour out the tea, there's a good fellow! But I'll have mine in my cup, please—not down the back of my neck!"

The teapot was taken up tenderly, lifted with care, and Alonzo filled the cups. He poured out Billy Bunter's tea, for the Owl of the Remove was expected at any moment.

"Dutton," said Peter Todd, "make some toast."

"Not at all," said Dutton.

"What?"

"I don't believe in ghosts, and I never have done. Tommy-rot, I call it!"

Peter gave a snort.

"Who's talking about ghosts, fathead? I told you to make some toast! Here's a loaf. Hack off some slices—"

"What—in winter?" gasped Dutton. "It's the wrong time of the year for ices!"

Peter Todd groaned.

"A megaphone—a megaphone! My kingdom for a megaphone!" he muttered.

Then, placing his mouth in close proximity to Dutton's ear, he fairly bellowed the command:

"Make some toast!"

"Oh, all right!" said Dutton. "No need to bawl at a fellow as if he was deaf!"

"My hat!" gasped Peter Todd.

Dutton made the toast, and the meal began—without Bunter.

Very few meals ever began without Bunter in Study No. 7. It was a matter for wonder where the fat junior had got to.

The tea in Bunter's cup became luke-warm, and eventually quite cold. And still the Owl of the Remove failed to appear.

"I can't think where our tame porpoise has got to," said Peter Todd.

"Somebody must have invited him out to tea," said Alonzo.

"Rats! Nobody who knew the size of his appetite would ever invite him to tea. He must have met with an accident, or something."

"I sincerely trust not!" said Alonzo. "We have had quite enough calamities of late—"

Alonzo stopped short as the door opened and Billy Bunter burst breathlessly into the study.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Why are you so jolly late, Bunter?" asked Peter Todd.

"I was detained in the Fifth Form passage," explained Bunter. "The fact is, I had an appointment just outside the door of Coker's study."

Peter stared.

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"Queer sort of place to have an appointment," he said. "Who was it with?"

"Ahem!"

"I strongly suspect, my dear Bunter," said Alonzo mildly, "that you have been applying your ear to the keyhole of Coker's study door in order to listen to his conversation."

Billy Bunter blinked at Alonzo through his big spectacles.

"Well, and what if I have?" he said defiantly. "I've a perfect right to listen to a fellow's conversation if I consider it a matter of public interest! I say! What do you fellows think of Coker's latest? He's going to defy the Head!"

"Eh?"

"He's been ordered not to do any motor-biking for a month. But he's just had his motor-bike repaired—and, what's more, he's going to use it!"

Alonzo Todd looked quite alarmed. Even Peter looked startled. Tom Dutton, who hadn't the foggiest notion what the conversation was about, went on munching his toast.

"Dear me!" murmured Alonzo. "This is very disquieting news which you have brought, Bunter! And when, pray, does Coker propose to use his motor-cycle?"

"To-night's the night," said Bunter. "He's going for a midnight ride. You've heard of the midnight ride of Paul Revere, of course? Well, this will be the midnight ride of Horace Coker!"

"The fool! The mad fool!" exclaimed Peter Todd. "Coker can't manage a motor-bike in daylight, let alone in darkness! And look at the state of the roads! It's been snowing heavens hard all day!"

It had, indeed. And not only all day, but all through the previous night.

So heavily had the snow fallen that the train services had been dislocated, and the road traffic hung up for hours. No one but a madman would have dreamed of making a midnight excursion on a motor-cycle. For the snow lay thick underfoot, and there were deep ruts and pitfalls in various places, which only the most careful driving could avoid. And Coker was anything but a careful driver.

"I reckon Coker will break his neck!" said Billy Bunter cheerfully. "That won't matter very much! It will save the Head the trouble of expelling him to-morrow morning!"

"Well, he certainly will be sacked if he goes on this mad stunt!" said Peter Todd. "He ought to be stopped!"

Alonzo rose to his feet. There was an expression of grave concern on his face.

"I will go and see Coker, and try and dissuade him from his purpose," he said.

"Don't tell him where you got your information from!" said Billy Bunter. "If Coker thinks I've been listening outside his door there will be ructions!"

Alonzo hurried away to Coker's study. He found the great Horace at tea. Potter and Greene were present, and they were pleading very earnestly with Coker.

"Don't do it, old man!" Potter was saying. "The game's not worth the candle! To begin with, you can't take your motor-bike out of gates, even in the middle of the night, without being spotted!"

"Rats!" said Coker. "Old Gosling will be sound asleep, and I know where he keeps his keys. It will be quite a simple matter to sneak the keys and unlock the gates without waking the old buffer!"

"But look at the state of the roads!" exclaimed Greene. "They're not fit for motor-biking, or for any sort of travelling. I saw a horse and cart stuck in

a snowdrift to-day. The wheels were buried right up to the axles!"

"Then the driver didn't know his job, or he'd never have landed himself in such a mess!" said Coker. "I'm not likely to bury myself in a snowdrift!"

"My dear Coker," came Alonzo's voice from the doorway, "it is madness to embark upon such an escapade! You have been expressly forbidden to use your motor-cycle for a month. The Head's word is law, and if you defy it the consequences will be serious and terrible!"

"Bust the consequences!" growled Coker. "Look here, young Todd, I'm fed-up with your grandmotherly advice! You mean well, I know, but I wish you'd leave me alone! I've already kicked you out of my study for spilling hot tea down my back! If you don't want another encounter with my hefty boot—buzz off!"

Alonzo lingered in the doorway.

"Will you not listen to reason?" he entreated. "This midnight ride which you contemplate can only end in disaster! You will either be killed or else maimed for life—"

"Cheerful sort of chap, aren't you?" said Coker. "Going to be an undertaker when you grow up?"

"Or, if by some miracle you come through the ride successfully, you will be expelled by the Head!" said Alonzo.

"The kid's quite right, Coker," said Potter.

"Absolutely!" said Greene.

Coker gave a snort.

"Dry up, George Potter! Hold your tongue, William Greene! When I make up my mind to a thing I always see it through! I've decided to go on this midnight trip, and there's nothing more to be said!"

"But, look here—"

"The subject is closed!" said Coker firmly.

And the subject remained closed, for neither Potter, Greene, nor Alonzo Todd could get a hearing. Coker was at their throats, so to speak, the moment they started to plead with him. And at last they gave it up; and Alonzo Todd, shaking his head sadly, went back to his own quarters.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.**Paying the Penalty!**

BOOM!

It was the first stroke of eleven sounding from the old clock-tower.

Greyfriars School lay still and silent under a shroud of snow. The old turrets and towers were mantled in white. The Close was covered as with a carpet. The branches of the old elms drooped beneath their burden of snow. And still the driving snowflakes came down faster than ever.

Greyfriars, with few exceptions, slumbered.

In the Fifth Form dormitory Horace Coker lay wide awake, waiting for the midnight hour to arrive, so that he might embark on his reckless enterprise.

In the Remove dormitory Alonzo Todd tossed restlessly on his bed, his thoughts centred upon Coker. It was useless for Alonzo to try to court slumber with so great a worry on his mind.

The only other person awake was Mr. Quelch, who was working in his cosy study. The Remove master was adding yet another chapter to his interminable history of Greyfriars.

As time wore on Horace Coker dropped into a doze. But Alonzo Todd remained as wide awake as ever.

"Coker must be stopped!" he murmured over and over again. "It is futile to plead with him. He will not listen to reason. Drastic measures must be taken to check Coker's mad folly. I must think out ways and means while there is yet time."

It was shortly before midnight when Alonzo hit upon a scheme.

"I will procure a stout coil of rope and bind Coker to his bed," he muttered. "Then he will be unable to rise and put his mad project into practice. Of course, he will probably be awake when I enter his dormitory. But if I act swiftly I may be able to overpower him."

Fired with this resolve Alonzo rose and dressed. Nobody heard him. Harry Wharton & Co. were in the arms of Morphous, and Billy Bunter and Bolsover major were snoring in a noisy duet.

Having donned his clothes, Alonzo went downstairs, and groped his way to one of the lumber-rooms. Here he discovered a coil of rope which would answer his purpose admirably.

Alonzo then conveyed the rope to the Fifth Form dormitory. He was wearing rubber-soled shoes, and his footsteps were noiseless as a cat's.

He knew where Coker slept. It was in the bed nearest the door. Alonzo was thankful for this, for it simplified his task. He would not have to traverse the whole length of the dormitory, and thus run the risk of being seen.

The door was slightly ajar. Alonzo pushed it wide open and stood listening, his heart pounding against his ribs.

From Coker's bed came sounds of deep breathing. Evidently the great Horace had fallen asleep.

Alonzo tiptoed towards the bed and got busy with the rope. His eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness, and he was able to see what he was doing.

The rope was passed over Coker's slumbering form and then underneath the bed. This was done three times before Alonzo thought of tying the knot.

The three layers of rope were over Coker's ribs, and when Alonzo drew the rope taut, prior to tying the knot, Coker knew all about it. He started out of his slumbers with a yell.

"Hellup! What's the little game? Something's digging into my ribs!"

It said much for Alonzo that he did not lose his nerve. Hastily he tied the knot, underneath the bed, so that Coker would not be able to get at it.

Coker tried to struggle into a sitting posture, but he found that he was a fixture. He blinked wrathfully through the gloom, and he faintly discerned the frail form of Alonzo Todd.

"Is that you, young Todd?" he spluttered.

"Yes, my dear Coker."

"What are you doing, you mad young idiot?"

"Hush! Do not raise your voice, my dear fellow, or you will disturb the slumbers of your comrades. I have found it necessary to fasten you to your bed in such a manner that it will be impossible for you to liberate yourself."

"What!" roared Coker. "Untie this rope at once, you young demon!"

"I will only untie it on one condition," said Alonzo. "If you will promise me that you will not embark on this midnight excursion."

"I'll promise no such thing!" shouted Coker. "If you don't let me loose I'll spifflicate you!"

Alonzo moved to the door.

"Good-night, my dear Coker!" he said calmly.

"Come back!" howled Coker.

"Later on, when you are in a saner

frame of mind, you will thank me for frustrating your plans," said Alonzo. "I have saved you from expulsion—possibly from a fatal accident on the road. Once again, good-night!"

"Come back!" repeated Coker, struggling frantically to free himself.

But Alonzo was gone. Happy in the knowledge that Horace Coker was a prisoner for the night he retired to his own dormitory.

But Coker had no intention of remaining a prisoner. His shouts had already awakened Fitzgerald, who slept in the next bed.

"Faith, an' what's all the rumpus about?" inquired Fitzgerald.

"Get a knife, quick!" panted Coker.

"What on earth for?"

"I'm tied to my bed!" hooted Coker.

"And the beastly rope's gnawing into my ribs!"

"Oh, bedad!"

Fitzgerald promptly got out of bed and groped in his trousers-pocket for a knife. Then he severed Coker's bonds.

"Who trussed you up like this, Coker?" he asked in amazement.

"That young villain Todd! I—I'll smash him in the morning!"

"But why did he do it?"

"To keep me from going out on my motor-bike, of course!"

Fitzgerald, who was in the act of going back to bed, paused in astonishment.

"My hat! Surely you're not thinking of going for a joy-ride in the middle of the night?"

"Certainly I am!" said Coker.

"Shure, an' if I'd known this before

I shouldn't have cut that rope. It was a jolly cute wheeze of young Todd's to truss you up, Coker. I'm sorry I've spoilt it all. If you take my advice, you'll stop where you are."

But Coker, having ignored the advice of Potter, Greene, and Alonzo Todd, was not disposed to listen to Fitzgerald.

Midnight began to boom from the clock-tower, and Coker promptly got out of bed and started to dress.

He did not stop to contemplate the folly of his action. He had been longing for an opportunity of going for a spin on his motor-bike. And as there was no opportunity in the daytime, this was his only chance. The machine had been repaired, and it looked as good as new, and Coker was simply dying to test it.

Fitzgerald remonstrated with him while he dressed. But Coker, though he heard, did not heed. Cautiously he quitted the dormitory and went down the dark staircase.

"Too much fag to fetch my overcoat from the study," he reflected. "I'll go as I am. After all, I shall be back within an hour."

Coker ought to have added "barring accidents." But no thought of a possible spill occurred to him. Despite his previous mishaps on the road, Coker was conceited enough to think that he was a clever and skilful motor-cyclist. Had the weather conditions been ten times worse than they were already he would not have cancelled his midnight excursion.

Coker made his exit from the school building by way of the box-room window.



"Hellup! What's the little game? Something's digging into my ribs!" roared Coker. He tried to sit up, but he found that he was a fixture. He blinked through the gloom, and he faintly discerned Alonzo Todd. "Hush!" muttered Alonzo. "Do not raise your voice, my dear fellow! I have found it necessary to rope you to your bed." "What!" roared Coker wrathfully. "Untie this rope at once, you young demon!" (See Chapter 8).

The snow lay in the Close just as good King Wenceslas had seen it—deep and crisp and even. The night was intensely cold, and Coker shivered as he made his way to the shed where his machine was housed. He began to wish he had brought his overcoat, after all. But the risk of going back for it would be too great. Coker was anxious to be out and away.

He made scarcely any noise as he wheeled his machine across the carpet of snow down to the school gates.

The gates, of course, were locked for the night, and it was necessary for Coker to try his 'prentice hand at a bit of burglary.

Gosling, the porter, had left his parlour window unfastened, and Coker left his machine in the Close and approached the window. It opened in response to his touch, and he clambered through into the little room. Gosling was in bed upstairs, and he did not arise from dreams of burglars in the first sweet sleep of night.

Once inside the porter's lodge, Coker groped his way to the door, behind which hung a bunch of keys on a nail. He reached down the keys, paused for a moment, listening intently, and then, satisfied that the coast was clear, he went back to the parlour and clambered out of the window.

It was the work of a moment to unlock the heavy gates and swing them open. They creaked a little on their hinges, but the noise was not sufficient to awaken Gosling.

Coker wheeled his machine through the gateway. Then he closed and locked the gates, and slipped the bunch of keys into his pocket.

"Good!" he murmured. "Everything's gone without a hitch, so far. I'd better push the bike out of earshot before I start her up."

As he trudged over the snow, pushing his machine, Coker became converted into a human snowman.

The snow was falling heavily now. It clung to Coker's garments, and pattered upon his bare head.

He was almost out of sight of the school before he mounted his machine. For once in a way, he had no trouble in starting. The motor-cycle throbbed and pulsed like a live thing, and Coker was soon speeding away through the night.

The going was difficult, and Coker should have exercised extreme caution, for there were dangerous dips on each side of the road. But he was so delighted at being astride the saddle once more that he fairly "let her rip," riding with reckless abandon.

Ahead of him lay the town of Courtfield. Coker decided to leave it on his left, and to take the road which led across Courtfield Common. He did not want to run the risk of encountering a policeman on night duty.

"This is glorious!" chortled Coker, as he sped along.

He kept as far as possible to the middle of the road. The rays of his lamp showed him the dangerous dips on either side; and he knew that if he swerved off the track it would mean disaster.

Courtfield Common was a dreary waste of snow. It might have been an unexplored tract of Arctic territory, judging by the solitude.

Coker did not encounter a soul on the road. Neither was there any sign of a vehicle having passed that way.

As Coker progressed, the road narrowed and the snow became deeper. His front wheel churned it up, and scattered it like spray. The machine was

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ploughing quite a furrow along the centre of the road.

Coker was simply compelled to slacken speed now. To have maintained his previous pace would have been sheer suicide.

The strain of having to steer an absolutely straight course began to tell upon Coker. He started to lose his nerve, and the machine wobbled dangerously.

Then, without any warning, the lamp went out, and a wall of blackness loomed in front of him.

Coker groped feverishly for the brake, but before he could apply it the motor-cycle swerved suddenly to the right. Coker tried to bring it under control, but he was too late.

There was a dip of three feet at the side of the road, and the machine plunged down it.

It was like a thrilling scene from the films, where a motor-cycle rushes over the edge of a precipice.

A confused medley of thoughts surged through Coker's mind. Then he was thrown clear, and he found himself hurtling through space.

There was nothing to break his fall. The ground seemed to rise up to meet him. There was a roaring in his ears; a myriad lights danced before his eyes; and then all was blackness and oblivion.

Coker rolled over in the snow, and then lay motionless, while the snowflakes pattered down upon his prostrate form.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Alonzo to the Rescue!

ALONZO TODD awoke suddenly from a troubled slumber.

He felt strangely uneasy as he peered through the gloom of the Remove dormitory.

Instinctively his thoughts turned to Coker. Less than an hour ago he had left the burly Fifth-Former fastened to his bed. But the fear came into Alonzo's mind, amounting almost to a conviction, that Coker had been set free.

So insistent was this fear that Alonzo decided to go and investigate.

For the second time that night he rose and dressed, and made his way to the Fifth Form dormitory.

One glance at Coker's bed confirmed Alonzo's fears.

The rope lay in a heap on the floor and the bed was empty!

Alonzo paused irresolute. He looked grave and troubled.

"So all my efforts to restrain Coker have been in vain!" he murmured. "The foolish fellow has carried out his wild scheme, after all. He has gone! He is careering through the snow on his motor-cycle! Perhaps—who knows?—he may already have met with an accident."

Even as he spoke, the chilling conviction came to Alonzo that all was not well with Coker.

In his mind's eye he had a picture of the reckless Fifth-Former, lying helpless in the snow, having been hurled from his machine.

Perhaps it was pure fancy on Alonzo's part—just an idle premonition. But he didn't think so. He seemed to have a powerful inward conviction that there had been a mishap on the road.

"Coker wants help!" That was the message that was flashed to Alonzo's mind. And again he had that vivid mental picture of Horace Coker lying helpless in the snow.

Whether it was imagination or not, Alonzo felt that he ought to set out in search of Coker. In any case, he could not have gone back to bed. It was past midnight, and Coker was out of bounds. He must be found and brought back.

Alonzo did not go back to his own dormitory. He went straight downstairs, and made his way to Study No. 7. Arrived there, he put on a pair of stout shoes, and a heavy overcoat with a fur lining. Alonzo always took the utmost precautions against chill.

Having equipped himself against the elements, he unlocked the cabinet in which his pills and potions were kept; and then he filled the capacious pockets of his overcoat with surgical bandages and various small bottles and tubes. Alonzo might have been a doctor, called up in the middle of the night to attend a case some miles away.

He took his school cap off the peg, and he borrowed his cousin Peter's electric torch. And then, feeling that he was fully equipped, he set out on his quest.

In the usual way, Alonzo Todd was a nervous and timorous youth, who would have shuddered at the bare notion of breaking bounds by night. But he was not a scrap nervous now. He was not thinking of himself at all. That vivid mental picture of Coker kept recurring to his mind; and it was on Coker that all his thoughts were centred.

Alonzo used the same means of egress as Coker had done—the box-room window.

He was hampered somewhat by his heavy overcoat, and he was fearful of breaking those important little bottles which nestled in his pocket. But he succeeded in clambering through the window without mishap.

Even though he was dressed like an Arctic explorer, Alonzo shivered as he crossed the snow-covered Close.

The cold penetrated his thick gloves, and set his fingers a-tingling. He also felt an icy draught up each leg; for the overcoat finished at his knees.

It was now necessary for him to scale the school wall—a matter of no small difficulty, for Alonzo wasn't an acrobatic youth.

He had to take three flying leaps before he was successful in drawing himself up. But at last the feat was accomplished, and Alonzo dropped down into the roadway on the farther side.

One thing was in his favour. He did not need to be a Sherlock Holmes to trace which way Coker had gone. The trail of the motor-cycle could be seen clearly in the snow without the aid of the electric torch.

Alonzo hurried along the white road, seating his arms across his breast in an endeavour to get warm. And as he walked, the driving snowflakes whirled and wheeled around his head.

"Coker must indeed be mad to venture out on such a night!" he panted. "I only hope that he is well protected against the bitter elements. I cannot get it out of my head that something has happened to him. I must hurry!"

Alonzo pressed on, half running and half stumbling through the snow.

The trail led him almost to Courtfield. Then it turned abruptly to the right. Alonzo followed it up, and presently found himself on that bleak and barren waste known as Courtfield Common. It was a pleasant enough spot in the summer-time. Blackberries grew there, and picnic parties disported themselves on the grass.

In winter, however, the common was as dreary a place as the Sahara Desert. And now, locked in the grip of the snow-storm, it was more dreary and depressing than Alonzo had ever known it.

Buffeted by the blinding snow, he stumbled on, his eyes fixed upon the deep rut made by Coker's motor-cycle.

Alonzo had proceeded a good mile across the common, when the trail

halted abruptly. It took a sudden swerve to the right—a clear indication that the machine had rushed off the road.

"Ah, it is as I feared!" murmured Alonzo, coming to a halt. "There has been an accident."

He called Coker by name, but there was no response. Then he stepped to the side of the road, and switched on the electric torch, and peered around him.

The rays of the torch fell full upon a prostrate form, huddled in the snow. There was no movement—no sign of life.

Not many yards away was Coker's motor-cycle, half embedded in the snow.

With a sickening sense of dread, Alonzo Todd plunged down the steep decline, and hurried to Coker's side.

A hasty examination revealed the fact that Coker was unconscious, but that he had not come to serious hurt. Had he fallen upon hard ground, there would have been a different tale to tell. As it was, the snow had lessened the severity of his fall.

Coker's trousers were torn, and there was an injury to his knee. Doubtless his leg had become entangled with the machine at the time he was thrown.

Alonzo's first action was to loosen Coker's collar. Then he produced a bottle containing a powerful restorative, which he forced between the lips of the unconscious Fifth-Former.

The next task was to bandage the injured knee; and Alonzo did this with the skill and dexterity of a trained surgeon.

In a few moments Coker's eyes opened, and he blinked around him in a dazed sort of way.

"What on earth—" he muttered, in perplexity.

"It is all right, my dear fellow," murmured Alonzo. "You have had an accident—as I feared would be the case—but there are no bones broken. There is a rather deep abrasion on your knee, but I have dressed it."

Coker struggled to collect his faculties. He was still not very clear as to what had happened. How came he to be sprawling in the snow like this?

Then the full recollection of the calamity came home to him. He had had a spill, of course—and a bad spill, at that. But young Todd had assured him that it was all right, so he supposed it must be so.

But what was young Todd doing here?

Still half dazed, Coker wrestled with that problem, and presently he spoke again.

"Todd!"

"Yes, my dear fellow?"

"How did you come to be here?"

"I simply followed the trail," explained Alonzo. "I found that you had somehow escaped from your bonds, and embarked on this midnight ride. I feared that a calamity had overtaken you, and I lost no time in coming to your aid. But you are cold—half frozen, in fact. I must apply massage."

Coker offered no resistance while Alonzo massaged his hands and arms and then his legs.

A comforting glow came over Coker, and he began to feel much better.

But Alonzo was not finished yet. He insisted upon taking off his fur-lined overcoat, and wrapping it round Coker. He knew that by so doing he was exposing himself to the bitter breath of that chilly night; but he did not hesitate. His first and last consideration was for Coker.

It was a splendid act of unselfishness, equal, in its way, to the gallant deed of



"Ah, it is as I feared!" murmured Alonzo, coming to a halt and switching on his electric torch. "There has been an accident!" The rays of the torch fell upon a prostrate figure huddled in the snow. There was no movement, no sign of life. Not many yards away was Coker's motor-cycle. With a sickening sense of dread, Alonzo plunged down the steep decline and hurried to Coker's side.

(See Chapter 9.)

Sir Philip Sidney, who placed the needs of the dying soldier before his own.

"No, no!" muttered Coker, as Alonzo wrapped the warm overcoat around him. "You want this coat yourself. You'll get your death of cold!"

"Nonsense, my dear Coker! You have been lying in the snow for at least half an hour, and it is highly essential that you should have warmth."

"But I'm not going to lie here any longer—"

"You will have to, I am afraid, while I run into Courtfield and fetch the doctor. You will be unable to walk, not because of the injury to your knee, but because the intense cold will have robbed you of the use of your limbs."

What Alonzo said was very true, as Coker soon proved for himself. He tried to stagger to his feet, but his legs refused to support him, and he sank down again in the snow.

"I will hurry into Courtfield with all speed," promised Alonzo. "Meanwhile, you must remain well wrapped up. I am not a speedy runner, but I will undertake not to waste a single moment. The doctor will soon be here with his car to convey you to Greyfriars."

Alonzo sped off on his errand. Coker called after him, for he wanted to express his gratitude. Alonzo had indeed taken care of him on this occasion. In fact, but for the Duffer's timely aid, Coker would surely have been frozen to death.

"I say, kid! Come back a minute. I want to thank you—"

But Alonzo did not waste valuable time by returning to be thanked. He raced through the snow towards the

few twinkling lights of Courtfield; and his speed would have amazed the Greyfriars fellows, who had never regarded the Duffer of the Remove as an athlete.

On and on he went, never pausing until at last he came to the door of the doctor's house.

Gasping and panting with his exertions, Alonzo tugged at the night-bell. Then he seemed to spin round, and collapsed in a heap at the top of the steps.

But he still retained his senses sufficiently to be able to explain matters to the medico when that worthy appeared in the doorway in dressing-gown and slippers.

The doctor tumbled to the situation in a twinkling. He was a man of prompt action, and he did not lose a second.

But Horace Coker was not the only patient he had to convey to Greyfriars in his car on that eventful night.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Alonzo Saves the Situation!

GREYFRIARS was in a buzz next morning.

Swiftly the news spread through the school—the news of all that had happened during the night.

This news was supplemented by the report that both Coker and Alonzo were in the sanny.

Coker's condition was not serious. He was suffering slightly from exposure, but his robust constitution was expected to pull him through.

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In the case of Alonzo, however, the news was not so reassuring.

The Duffer of the Remove had contracted a bad chill, which threatened to develop into pneumonia.

Harry Wharton & Co. were staggered when they learned the news.

"What a madman Coker is!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Fancy going for a midnight jaunt on his motor-bike!"

"It will always remain a puzzle to me how he managed to escape without a broken neck!" said Harry Wharton. "Why, the roads must have been terrible!"

"It's Coker's last adventure, I'm thinking," said Frank Nugent. "I reckon he will be sacked for defying the Head's orders, and breaking bounds in the bargain."

"The sackfulness seems quite on the cards," agreed Hurree Singh. "But Coker will have no one to blame but his stupid and ludicrous self!"

"That's true enough," said Johnny Bull. "But personally, I'm not a bit sorry for Coker. It's poor old Alonzo who matters. They say he's in a sort of delirium, and the doctor fears pneumonia."

"Pray Heaven he will pull through!" said Harry Wharton fervently.

And Harry's chums chimed in with a solemn "Hear, hear!"

Never had the juniors felt such keen admiration, as well as concern, for the Duffer of the Remove. They had been inclined to laugh at Alonzo, at first, for taking upon himself the task of looking after Coker. But they didn't laugh now. Alonzo had taken care of Coker very effectively at the finish. In fact, Coker owed his life to the junior, who, though physically frail, had the heart of a hero.

It was a very anxious time for Alonzo's friends, and particularly for his cousin Peter.

Bulletins were issued from time to time concerning his condition. Some were reassuring; others were disquieting.

The suspense continued for a couple of days. Then it was definitely announced that Alonzo was out of danger, and that another week in bed would complete the cure.

As for Horace Coker, the Head took a very grave view of his delinquencies. It was a serious matter when a fellow defied the Head's express commands.

It was equally serious when he broke bounds at night.

The word went round that Coker was going to be expelled.

Billy Bunter set the rumour in circulation. He declared that he had heard the Head telling Mr. Prout that Coker would have to go.

Confirmation of the rumour was soon forthcoming.

Coker had fully recovered by this time, and the day after his discharge from the sanny he received a summons to the Head's study.

It was with considerable apprehension that Horace Coker made his way to that sacred apartment. He could guess what was coming. Already the words seemed to ring in his ears:

"Horace Coker, you have disobeyed my commands, and the penalty is expulsion. Your name will be struck off the school register, and you will proceed to your home by the next train!"

Coker tapped on the door of the Head's study, and the stern voice of Dr. Locke bade him enter.

"I have sent for you, Coker," the Head began, "in connection with your disgraceful conduct of a few nights ago!"

Coker felt himself trembling. As he stood before the Head, who was seated in solemn majesty at his desk, the years seemed to roll back, and Coker felt as if he was a fag in the Second again. Never had he been so nervous. He tried to speak, but his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth.

"You were expressly forbidden to ride your motor-bicycle for a month, Coker," the Head went on. "I made it quite clear to you that the consequences would be very serious if you defied my commands. Not only did you defy them, but you have been guilty of the additional offence of breaking bounds at night."

Coker said nothing. There seemed to be nothing to say. At first he had thought of making an eloquent speech in his own defence. But he now realised that he had no defence that would hold water.

What the Head had said was perfectly just and true. He could not deny the charge.

Coker shifted uneasily from one foot to the other, and waited for Dr. Locke to pronounce sentence.

"Your conduct, Coker, merits expulsion!" said the Head sternly. "Indeed, I had quite made up my mind to expel you. But Alonzo Todd—the boy to whom you already owe so much—has begged me to reconsider my decision."

At this, Coker felt a queer lump rise in his throat. There seemed to be no limit to the good-hearted actions of Alonzo. Not content with saving Coker's life, he had begged the Head not to expel him.

"I could not turn a deaf ear to the boy's plea," said Dr. Locke. "Such is his devotion to you, Coker, that if I were to expel you, he would feel the punishment just as keenly as yourself."

Coker's shoulders heaved, and his burly frame was shaken by a sob.

The Head's face softened.

"You have acted very wrongly, Coker, but I am going to give you another chance. You are a thoughtless and irresponsible boy, rather than a deliberately bad one. For Todd's sake, you shall have this fresh chance. But I have told Todd that he is not to attempt to take care of you any more. You are big enough and old enough to be able to take care of yourself. It is not fair to allow a frail boy like Todd to share your troubles and shoulder your burdens."

"I never asked him to, sir," said Coker, finding his voice at last. "That was an arrangement between Todd and my Aunt Judith."

"That arrangement will no longer hold," said the Head. "I will write to your aunt on the subject. Now you may go, Coker, and I trust that this narrow escape from expulsion will be a wholesome lesson to you."

Coker thanked the Head, and took his departure.

With a heart full of gratitude towards Alonzo Todd, he went round to the sanny, and thanked Alonzo again and again for all he had done.

"You've been an absolute brick to me all through the piece," said Coker. "I can't thank you enough, kid!"

Alonzo, propped up on the pillows, smiled happily.

"My dear Coker, there is no need to make all this fuss," he said. "What I have done on your behalf was little enough, in all conscience. I should like to do more, but the Head says I am not to take care of you any longer. You will have to paddle your own canoe, as the saying goes."

Coker laughed.

"Well, I'm glad in some ways, and sorry in others," he said. "There were times when I didn't want to be taken care of, and I'm afraid you got on my nerves on those occasions, and made me lose my temper. But, by Jove, it was a lucky thing for me that you took care of me on the night of the accident!"

"Don't talk about that any more," said Alonzo. "It is past history now. When you are permitted to ride your motor-cycle again, I trust you will do so by daylight, and also that you will remember that there is such a thing as a speed-limit!"

"I'll never exceed thirty miles an hour," said Coker solemnly.

"I should hope you wouldn't!" answered Alonzo, with a laugh.

They shook hands warmly, and then Horace Coker went on his way, light of step and light of heart.

And when, a week later, Alonzo Todd rejoined his schoolfellows, there was a tremendous ovation for the lion-hearted Duffer of the Remove, who had proved himself a hero.

THE END.

(Don't miss "The Rebels of the Second!"—next Monday's ripping Greyfriars story—chums.)

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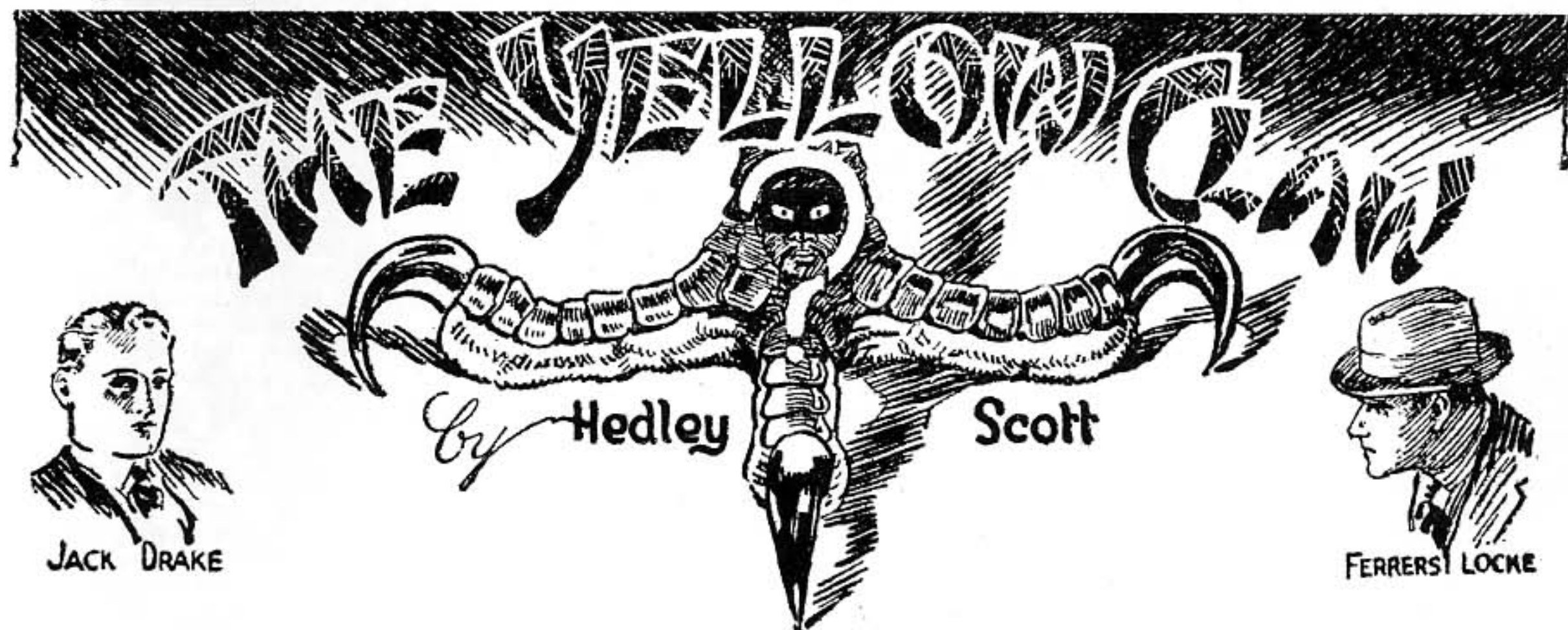
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A Friend Indeed!

YOU are better now, Mr. Drake?

The words came softly, and two deep blue eyes asked the question more eloquently than the voice.

"Better?" babbled Drake, for the moment his mind a maze of confusion. "Y-yes, much better, thank you! But who are? What are you doing here?"

"Shssh!" came the warning reply. "I have come to warn you—to save you, if I can. The guards do not think for one moment that I would betray my father—"

She faltered as she voiced the last word, and blushed uncomfortably, and Drake intuitively guessed the reason.

"Are you, then, the daughter of the Yellow Claw?" he asked eagerly.

The girl nodded, and again the blush of embarrassment suffused her finely chiselled features.

"He calls me such," she answered, lowering her eyes.

"Great Scott!"

Drake ejaculated the remark in astonishment. To think that this young girl was the daughter of the chief of the dreaded society fairly took his breath away.

"But come," suddenly whispered the girl. "We are wasting time. Let me tell you that it is my father's intention to send you back to your master, Ferrers Locke, whom he hates like poison, an imbecile—"

"What!" exclaimed Drake, horrified. "What do you mean?"

"You have sampled the cruel treatment of the room of a hundred lights? Yes, I know you have, for did I not see you brought out of that horrible chamber? You are to be taken to that room periodically, until your strength of will, your pluck, can no longer hold out. By that time you will be raving mad!"

"Good Heaven! It's unbelievable!" said Drake, with a shudder. "And yet I know such a thing would happen. I couldn't stand much more of that kind of torture. Ugh!"

"You shall not!" whispered the girl. "You will, if you follow my directions and allow me to help you, be far away from this dreadful place before your time for the next visit to that shameful room comes round. See here!" She brought into view a small but serviceable automatic pistol. "Take this! You are not likely to need it, but you must have a weapon of some sort in case of emergency.

"In an hour's time I will return for

you, and you must follow my directions without question."

"But what of yourself?" asked Drake. "They will kill you!"

"I think not," was the reply. "My—the Yellow Claw—would not stoop so low as that."

Before Drake could utter another word the bulky figure of one of the Ethiopian guards loomed up, and the girl, with an expressive glance at the sleuth's young assistant, silently vacated the room.

For the next hour Drake hardly knew whether he was dreaming or not. The room of a hundred lights, the beautiful young girl, her promise to save him, seemed inextricably mixed in one gigantic blur. He waited anxiously for the minutes to tick by, but the time seemed to pass on leaden wings. At length, however, there came to his listening ears the sound of approaching footsteps. One of the heavy curtains was swung back, and in the aperture, beckoning him to approach, was the figure of the girl who had promised to save him.

With a thrill of excitement gripping his heart, Drake walked forward and reached the curtains. Once there, he was about to speak to his rescuer, when the girl held up her slender hand and signalled to him to be silent.

"You must permit me to blindfold you," she whispered. "For, scoundrel that the Yellow Claw is, I could not wantonly reveal his hiding-place to anyone connected with the law. Come! Ask no questions, and be as silent as you can."

The sleuth's assistant allowed himself to be blindfolded, for he could understand the motive for such a procedure. No one would betray their own father, no matter how big a rogue he was. He would be content to be freed of the creepy place that had been his prison for the last three hours. Time enough then to discover where it was situated.

Taking the hand of his young rescuer, Drake was guided in and out several passages, up and down steps, for quite a quarter of an hour. But at length he felt a cool breeze on his face, and he knew that the house, or whatever it was, had been left behind.

His young guide still walked on, now forcing the pace a little. After traversing a distance of quite a hundred yards, she halted.

"Here is a car, the driver of whom is in my employ," she said quickly. "You will enter this car, and you will promise me not to remove the scarf from your eyes until the driver bids you do so. You will then alight from the car and make your way home without endeavouring to entrap the driver in any way. You will promise me these things?"

"I promise," said Drake simply. "You are taking a great risk, I feel certain, in having effected my escape," he said. "Can I not prevail upon you to come with me to my master's place? He would sympathise with you—would help you."

"No, no, Mr. Drake!" said the girl quickly. "My place is with my—"

"Your father," said Drake quietly. "I understand, Miss—"

"Yvonne!" came the soft reply. "And now, good-bye, Mr. Drake! You must go. I can hear sounds from the house that point to your escape having been discovered. Quickly!"

"But I can't run off and leave you to face the music!" protested Drake. "I will—"

"Get into the cab!" The words were uttered in a harsh male voice now—that of the driver.

IN THE LIMELIGHT

THE YELLOW CLAW, a mysterious and powerful organisation that preys upon wealthy Englishmen.

SIR MALCOLM DUNDERFIELD, a successful City financier, whose family the Yellow Claw has threatened to wipe out.

JOHN HUNTINGDON, his nephew. An actor by profession, Huntingdon invariably fills the leading role in Mark Chaerton's plays.

FERRERS LOCKE, the famous detective, of Baker Street, who has been engaged by Sir Malcolm to bring the dreaded society to book.

JACK DRAKE, the sleuth's clever boy assistant, who is given a job as dresser to Huntingdon.

MARK CHAERTON, a successful playwright, who has also been threatened by the Yellow Claw. He, too, seeks Ferrers Locke's services.

Jack Drake is captured by agents of the society and taken to their secret den. He undergoes a course of "treatment" in the room of a hundred lights—a cruel yet ingenious method of torture employed by the Yellow Claw. On his recovery he is carefully guarded by two brawny, silent Ethiopians. Suddenly Locke's assistant becomes aware of the fact that his guards have disappeared. And in their place stands a young girl—a young, beautiful girl—who smiles kindly at him.

(Now read on.)

Locke's young assistant felt himself being bundled into the car, and before he had composed himself the engine was breaking into motion. The car moved off, with Jack Drake clenching his hands and fighting back a longing to tear the obscuring scarf from his eyes. But he had given his word, and he would keep it.

For the space of thirty minutes the car sped through the streets, and then came a grinding of brakes.

"You may now take off the scarf and beat it—quick!" rasped a voice through the speaking-tube.

Drake unfastened the scarf and pocketed it. Then, with neither a glance to right or left, he stepped into the roadway.

The moment his feet touched earth the car started off again at a speed which very soon took it out of sight. And whilst Jack Drake was endeavouring to locate his surroundings a familiar voice—a voice that sent a thrill of excitement through his frame—rang in his ears.

"What the deuce are you doing here, Jack? Where have you been?"

"The 'guv'nor!" exclaimed Drake, with a whoop of delight. "Where am I, sir?"

"Where are you? Outside Bow Street Police Station, my lad!" came the astonished reply.

The Engraved Initials!

"**B**OW STREET!" gasped Jack Drake incredulously. "Yes, you're right, 'guv'nor," he added, as he glanced about him.

"Well, I'm blown!"

"You are no more surprised than I am, my lad," returned Ferrers Locke, with a grim chuckle. "I've been worrying my head off about you for this last three hours. Where the dickens have you been?"

"You didn't happen to spot the number of the car that deposited me, did you, sir?" asked Drake eagerly, evading his chief's query. "You see, 'guv'nor, I was under a promise not to attempt to trace the johnny who drove the car. But you haven't given your word. I—"

"Not so fast!" admonished the sleuth, knitting his brows in perplexity. "Promise! What promise?"

"I promised the daughter of the Yellow Claw—"

"What!"

Drake repeated his statement.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Ferrers Locke, with more excitement than Drake had ever given him credit for. "Do you mean to tell me that you have met the daughter of the Yellow Claw?"

"Right first time!" grinned Drake. "A peach of a girl, too, sir! She came to my rescue like a guardian angel."

"Indeed?" grunted Locke laconically. "Tell me more!"

His assistant forthwith outlined his experiences since the time he had discovered the three masked invaders in the sitting-room.

"My word, Jack!" remarked Locke, when his assistant had concluded his astonishing story. "You were only lamenting your life of ease this morning, but, by jingo, you've had enough excitement since then to keep you cool for a few days, I'll wager! And to think that you have been in the stronghold of this confounded society—"

"And hopped out of it again!" interrupted Drake, with a wink. "Alive, too!"

"Ah, that brings me to one very important point," said Locke thoughtfully.

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"Come, my lad, I'll phone up Mr. Huntingdon, and notify him of your safety, and then we'll have a talk over a cup of coffee."

"Did you see Huntingdon this morning, 'guv'nor?"

"I did. He arrived at Baker Street at much the same time as I returned from Chaerton's place, and we both stared down in horror at the state of my sitting-room floor. Papers and documents—the place was like a dustbin!"

"It was like that when I snoozed off," said Drake reminiscently, fingering his jaw. "The masked fellows had come after the claw."

"Yes, I guessed as much," remarked Locke thoughtfully. "But once again it just shows you that my movements are watched. The burglar merchants knew jolly well that I was out of my rooms, but they evidently did not expect to find you at home."

"But where was Sing-Sing?"

"He was lured away from the rooms by a bogus telegram," returned Ferrers Locke. "It was some minutes after Huntingdon and I had arrived before Sing-Sing put in an appearance."

"But the scoundrels didn't get what they came for," said Drake. "Perhaps they fear we shall be able to track them by it."

"Well, Inspector Pycroft is putting the plain-clothes men on the trail," replied Ferrers Locke. "And we ought to pick up a clue of some sort. However, let me put Huntingdon's mind at rest. He was tearing his hair at your mysterious disappearance this morning."

The sleuth entered the nearest telephone kiosk and spoke over the wires to the lead in Mark Chaerton's play. Then, with Drake in tow, he made tracks for a restaurant. Over a cup of coffee, Ferrers Locke listened to a more explicit account of Drake's adventures, the while he placidly smoked his briar.

"Well, my lad," he remarked at length. "And have you no idea where the secret den of the society is situated?"

"Not much," replied Drake gravely. "I got a whiff of a dookyard or a wharf after I had been led out by this girl Yvonne into the street. That won't help us much. And I was in the car for quite half an hour. Could have come four or five miles in that time."

"But why on earth were you dumped down at Bow Street?" asked the sleuth, puzzled.

"More dramatic effect, 'guv'nor!" grinned Drake. "It's a bit cheeky, you know, for a gang of scoundrels to capture a chap and then release him outside the doors of a police-station. Like the type of crook that delights in walking up to a jeweller's window, smashing it, and helping himself to the sparklers under the very noses of the public and the police."

"Something in that," returned the sleuth. "I suppose it was only a strange coincidence that I happened to be calling at Bow Street myself. At first I was rather inclined to think that my movements had been traced there; but as you say that this young girl Yvonne effected your release, I doubt whether she would be in the know as to my movements."

"A fine girl, 'guv'nor!" said Drake enthusiastically. "Jove, I nearly collapsed when she told me who she was!"

"Hum!" ejaculated the sleuth. "From your description of this young lady, my lad, it would seem that she is thoroughly English despite her French name."

"Every time, 'guv'nor!"

"Well, that points to the fact that her father—the chief of the Yellow Claw—is not a Chinaman," said Locke, with a

gleam in his eye. "Unless she is only an adopted child or a stopdaughter."

"I follow your line of reasoning," admitted Drake. "But she's English, you can take it from me. And, by Jove—"

He broke off, and his hand slid into his jacket-pocket. He brought to light a small, enamelled automatic pistol, which he held out to his chief.

"This is what she gave me in case of accidents, 'guv'nor!"

The sleuth took the tiny weapon and examined it intently. Once, for a fleeting second, an excited look sprang into his eyes, but it died away as quickly as it had materialised, and his features became more sphinxlike than ever.

"Thought for one moment that I had discovered a clue," he explained, in response to Drake's inquiring look. "You see the initials engraved on the butt of this pistol?"

He handed the weapon back to his assistant, and watched his face as he began to scrutinise it. On the enamelled butt of the pistol were the initials "Y. C.," wrought in silver.

"Yellow Claw!" exclaimed Drake, at length. "That's what those initials stand for."

"I suppose you're right, my lad," said Ferrers Locke. "I was endeavouring to use the 'Y' for Yvonne, but I gave it up when I called to mind what the 'C' could stand for."

"But those initials might stand for her name!" exclaimed Drake eagerly. "It might only be a coincidence that they could be interpreted as 'Yellow Claw.'"

"I don't think I shall waste any time in trying to decipher those initials now," said Locke, rising to his feet. "Come, my lad, it's time you were at the theatre! I will see you early to-morrow, for I understand from Mark Chaerton that the company is travelling to Blackpool by an early train. And, by the way, he informs me that he has secured another understudy to Huntingdon, in case anything happens to the fellow. Chaerton is extremely highly strung, and seems to walk about in fear of his life. He has again been threatened by the society, and this time he fears that the threat is no idle one. You might keep an eye on him, my lad."

"Sure thing!" replied Drake cheerfully. "I'll cheer up the miserable old bouncer!"

The detective chartered a taxi, and accompanied his assistant as far as the Thespian, in Shaftesbury Avenue. From there he walked down to Scotland Yard by way of Leicester Square, Whitehall, and the Embankment.

He found Inspector Pycroft interrogating a plain-clothes man as he entered the former's office.

"Glad you've come," said the inspector, shaking the private detective warmly by the hand. "We've traced the painted claw to an auctioneer's in Chancery Lane—"

"And the purchaser?" interpolated Ferrers Locke eagerly.

"Was a woman!" grunted Pycroft. "A woman of middle age, accompanied by a young girl of anything from twelve to sixteen years. That right, Burdett?"

"That's right, sir," said Burdett.

"The only clue I came across was a signature which, the auctioneer told me, came from the young girl months ago when she and her mother, or her aunt, or whoever she is, purchased a few things and left a deposit until the things were paid for and collected."

"And what was the signature, Burdett?" asked the private detective.

"Merely two initials, Mr. Locke," replied the plain-clothes man. "'Y. C.'" Ferrers Locke shook his head.

Radcliffe
Wilson

Before the echo of the gong had died away a score of robed, masked figures entered the room. They ranged round their chief, thus encompassing Yvonne and the Ethiopian by her side. (See this page.)

"Not much help there," he remarked. "I suppose a toy pistol wasn't, by any chance, amongst the articles this young girl bought at the auctioneer's?"

Burdett glanced up quickly.

"Well, I'm blest!" he ejaculated. "How did you know that? I only left the auctioneer chap half an hour ago!"

For answer Ferrers Locke held out the enamelled pistol which had been given to Drake by the girl who had called herself the daughter of the Yellow Claw.

Inspector Pycroft's eyes nearly started out of their sockets as he beheld the weapon, and Ferrers Locke felt it incumbent upon him to explain. And whilst the celebrated detective of Baker Street was detailing Drake's experiences in the mysterious house situated somewhere near the river the Yellow Claw himself, sinister and fearsome as ever, was seated in the heavily curtained room of his retreat scowling into the slowly burning cauldron which threw off the overpowering perfumes.

For some few minutes he remained thus, and then he clapped his hands. In response, three dark-skinned, muscular Ethiopians appeared as if by magic from behind the heavy black and gold curtains. They bowed low before him, and then drew back a pace. The Yellow Claw clapped his hands again, and this time the curtains opened to admit the young girl who had befriended Jack Drake. At her back was a brawny Ethiopian clad in European garb.

"Come hither, you traitors!" hissed the dreaded chief of the Yellow Claw society. "And do you, you black scum, sound the gong!"

For a moment the eyes of the Ethiopian clad in European clothes gleamed. Then, his huge fists clenching and unclenching spasmodically, he took hold of a drumstick and sounded the large brass gong.

The Council of Death!

BOOM!

Before the echo of the gong had died away the curtains had been moved at every part of the room, and a score of robed, masked figures entered with hardly a sound. They ranged round their seated chief in a circle, thus encompassing the girl known as Yvonne and the Ethiopian by her side.

Eyes glittered from the heavy crepe masks they wore, whilst in striking contrast were the scarlet robes that hung loosely round their shoulders and which almost trailed the carpeted floor.

"My brothers!" The hissing voice of the leader of the society, resembling in its intensity the hissing note of an asp, pierced the silence. "We are all here?"

There was a general nodding of heads.

"Good. Let no one ever absent himself from the Council of Death!" went on the robed figure of the chief. "We have been betrayed—betrayed by she who bears my name and that black scum yonder!" The voice rose to a screech in its passion. "Our prisoner has been freed—freed by the hand of the child who eats at my table, accepts of my bounty. And that scum yonder forgot his vows in that he assisted her."

There was a low murmur of anger from the circle of robed figures, and fists were shaken at the young girl who stood defiantly in their midst without a tremor of fear flickering across her delicate features. The Ethiopian by her side trembled slightly as the angry murmur grew into a furore—a furore that passed as quickly as it had come when the sheathed fingers of the chief clawed the air in a gesture of command.

"You are gathered together, brothers," went on the hissing voice, "to decide the fate of the traitors. I cannot invoke the death penalty in one case, for I never wage war against

women, but with the remaining traitor I ask you to devise an end fitting to his treacherous act."

"Ay, ay!"

Voices were raised, and once again fists were shaken at the broad-shouldered Ethiopian who towered above the diminutive figure of his companion.

"What shall it be, brethren?"

For some moments the robed figures conferred amongst themselves, and then one of them spoke.

"The room of a hundred lights!"

"The room of a hundred lights!" echoed the remainder of the council. "Let him sample the medicine that was to have been the portion of Ferrers Locke's accursed assistant."

"So be it," came the sibilant voice of the chief again. "He shall die slowly. Take him away!"

The three remaining Ethiopians moved forward and laid hands on their one-time companion. The girl, with a cry that touched no heart amongst such an assembly of callous scoundrels, darted forward and clutched the Yellow Claw by the arm.

"Hear me," she cried. "You cannot do this thing, father. Harah helped me to effect Drake's release on my orders. I commanded him to absent himself from his prisoner, and whilst he was gone I released Mr. Drake. Do you hear—I commanded him! He is in no way to blame."

"You commanded him!" rapped the masked chief; and he accompanied his remark with a sinister laugh. "Since when have you possessed the right to command anyone, Yvonne? No, no"—as the girl broke into an impassioned appeal—"it is useless. Harah must die. I and I only give orders. And 'tis but a whimsical fad of mine that prevents me from sending you to share his doom. As it is, you will be cast into exile—into isolation. You fool, you ungrateful

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child! You would place a halter round my neck. Away with her!"

One of the dusky Ethiopians left his companions and took up his stand behind the diminutive figure of Yvonne.

"Away, do you hear!" commanded the Yellow Claw, stretching his sheathed fingers towards the curtains. "Since she has been good enough to plead for Harah she may pray for him in the room of a hundred lights!"

Harah was compelled to move forward between his guards. He cast one look that flashed hatred of the robed figure sitting in the chair, another that was strangely soft and affectionate, resembling the devotion of a dog for its master, in the direction of Yvonne who stood a few paces behind him, and then the heavy curtains opened and closed upon the pair of them.

Harah had gone to pay the penalty.

And whilst the Yellow Claw and his merciless gang of cut-throats discussed their future plans a fellow creature was being slowly tortured to death in the room of a hundred lights.

"Another five minutes, Pycroft," said Ferrers Locke, as he accelerated the engine of his car, "and you'll be in the train."

Inspector Pycroft frowned.

In his heart of hearts he was hoping that he would miss the train, for the long journey that lay before him did not appeal to him in the least. A trip to Scotland was all very well, he reflected, but a trip just now when all his energies and interests were centred in the tracking down of the Yellow Claw rather nettled him. But orders were orders.

A "wanted" man had been arrested in Edinburgh, and the Chief Commissioner at Scotland Yard had instructed Pycroft to journey by the midnight train to Scotland to "pick up" his man and bring him back to London. That, in Inspector Pycroft's opinion, meant a great waste of time and trouble. He had hoped that at the last moment the Chief would have relented and despatched another man to Edinburgh, but it had been a forlorn hope, and Ferrers Locke, in his readiness to oblige, had promised the Chief that he would run the inspector down to Euston in time for the midnight express.

Inspector Pycroft's frown deepened as Euston grew gradually nearer.

Suddenly, and without warning, a tall, broad-shouldered man staggered out from the pavement and pitched into the road, falling almost at the wheels of Ferrers Locke's car.

"Hi, where on earth are you going?" rapped the sleuth, as he jammed on the brakes of the Hawk. "What the deuce—Why, Pycroft, the man's ill!"

Even as the words left his lips the sleuth jumped out from the driving-seat, and Inspector Pycroft was not a second behind him.

Both stared down in astonishment at the figure lying sprawled on the roadway, for his face was undoubtedly that of an Ethiopian, and Ethiopians were not usually seen in the heart of London. Then, recovering from their astonishment, Locke and the C.I.D. man knelt down beside the dusky figure, the former making a pillow of his arm and supporting the fellow's head.

The light from the headlamps of the car threw up a picture of a dusky face twisted in pain. The eyes were staring from their sockets, the brow was wrinkled, the thick, broad lips drooped.

"What's wrong?" grunted Pycroft,

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in his official manner. "What do you make of him, Locke?"

At mention of the world-famous detective's name the eyes of the Ethiopian opened still wider, and a smile symbolical of relief and astonishment stretched across his dusky face for the moment, obliterating the lines of pain.

"Locke!" he gasped in broken English. "Did you say Locke? Ferrers Locke?"

"That is my name," said the sleuth wonderingly. "Where are you hurt?"

"I am hurt beyond all aid," replied the man, with a wan smile. "I have incurred the wrath of the Yellow Claw"—he broke into a fit of violent coughing—"I am dying!"

"The flask, quick, Pycroft!" rapped Ferrers Locke, hardly able to conceal the excitement that possessed him. "We are going to learn something!"

The C.I.D. man swiftly brought into view a brandy flask, and some of its contents was poured down the throat of the stricken man. For a moment, as the potent liquor did its work, the fellow's breathing became easier, the lines of pain round the eyes and mouth disappeared.

"Quick! My time is short!" he panted. "I escaped the room of a hundred lights, to fall a victim to a cursed bullet. No, no"—as Locke was about to lift him—"you can do nothing for me. The Yellow Claw made certain of his vile work. But he cannot stop my tongue. Listen, I indirectly assisted Mr. Drake to escape, and my punishment was death. I can help you—I can help you!" His voice grew strangely weak again, and Pycroft frantically doctored him with the brandy. "The Yellow Claw is Wallis—"

His words trailed off, and his limbs began to stiffen. Once again Pycroft forced the brandy flask between the dying man's lips. With every muscle strained, Locke and his companion waited for the Ethiopian to speak again.

"He is Wallis—" suggested the sleuth gently.

"Wallis—"

The head drooped forward. The name that had hovered on the lips of the Ethiopian was never uttered. He had passed to a realm beyond the territory of the Yellow Claw, where names were not needed.

A Call For Aid!

"THAT'S spoiled my journey to Scotland," remarked Inspector Pycroft, with a catch in his voice. "We must superintend the removal of this poor fellow, Mr. Locke!"

The celebrated detective of Baker Street wiped the perspiration from his brow. His nerves had been strung to a high pitch as he had held the head of the dying man in his arms. To gain half a secret was, in this case, to gain nothing. Wallis—there were thousands of people boasting such a name in London alone.

"Tough luck, old man," commiserated the C.I.D. man as he noted the look of keen disappointment on the face of his companion. "I really thought we had got our man!"

"Instead of which, the Yellow Claw has added yet another victim to its lengthy list," returned Ferrers Locke gravely. "This poor fellow has been shot in the back. Come, Pycroft, let us return to the Yard. You have missed your train, and the next one doesn't leave until seven o'clock to-morrow morning."

Between them they lifted the body of the deceased man, and placed it reverently in the back of the car. Then followed a drive to the mortuary. It was in a very subdued and silent mood that the private detective and his companion drove back to Scotland Yard, to report the affair. The chief commissioner stamped up and down his sanctum as he listened to Pycroft's description of the meeting with the Ethiopian, and he was unreasonable enough to censure the inspector for having missed his train.

But as Ferrers Locke added his remarks to those of Pycroft the chief calmed down a trifle, and at once detailed another man to make the journey to Edinburgh—a circumstance that brought a sigh of relief to Pycroft's lips.

"Something must be done," rapped the chief jerkily. "This is monstrous. London—crimes such as these happening every day! Monstrous! Pycroft, my man, you'll lose your reputation if you don't effect an arrest, and I my job. This Yellow Claw gang of cut-throats must be exterminated!"

He rapped off in this fashion for over half an hour, until Ferrers Locke begged to be excused.


"I am journeying to Blackpool with the company, sir," he remarked, as he reached for his hat. "My clients, Sir Malcolm Dunderfield and Mark Chaerton, have requested me to do so, only I shall be in disguise and shall travel under an assumed name. I have an idea that the activities of the society will follow on my route. Rest assured, sir, I shall keep my eyes open, and will notify you of my movements from time to time."

"If you care to accompany Mr. Locke, Pycroft," said the chief slowly, "you may do so. I will instruct Inspector Morrison to take over your duties. But for Heaven's sake come back and tell me that you have succeeded in running this thrice accursed gang to earth."

Inspector Pycroft saluted smartly.

"I will do my best, sir," he said firmly. "So far, I have been in the dark, but Mr. Locke here has a peculiar faculty for working and seeing in the dark. With his aid I hope to be able to bring back the whole gang of the Yellow Claw within a month at the latest."

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"Nobly said!" said the chief, extending his hand and shaking that of his subordinate warmly. "Good luck!"

"Better come back to my place for the night, Pycroft," said Ferrers Locke, when he and the C.I.D. man were once more seated in the Hawk. "We have yet to fix up our disguise and several other details."

"Much obliged, Mr. Locke," grunted Pycroft, making himself comfortable in the cushions. "I'm ready for a sleep, too!"

But it seemed that the Fates were working against them, for no sooner had Locke and his companion entered the



Suddenly, without any warning, a broad-shouldered man staggered out from the pavement and pitched into the road, falling almost at the wheels of Ferrers Locke's car. (See page 24.)

former's sitting-room in Baker Street when the telephone-bell whirred out its piercing note.

"Hallo! Yes, yes, this is Ferrers Locke," snapped the sleuth irritably. "Who are you? Eh? What? What's that? At once, Mr. Chaerton!"

With a glint in his steely grey eyes, the sleuth replaced the receiver and turned to his companion.

"What's wrong now?" queried Pycroft.

"Get your hat and coat on, old son," rapped Locke, suiting the action to the word. "The Yellow Claw has been busy with Mark Chaerton. We must run round and release the poor fellow!"

"Release——" began Pycroft in amazement; but he found that he was addressing space, for Ferrers Locke was descending the stairs to the street below. The sleuth was thankful that he had not garaged the car, for it meant that he could make the journey to Mark Chaerton's house in half the time it would take an ordinary taxicab to accomplish it.

By the time he had started the engine Inspector Pycroft, flushed of face, and feeling a trifle indignant that his remarks, or his intended remarks, had not been listened to, joined him in the car.

"Now let's hear all about it, Mr. Locke," he grunted as the car moved off. But he appeared to be addressing space again, for all the impression his remarks made upon Ferrers Locke. The sleuth was huddled up at the wheel, a puckered frown on his sharply scissored features denoting that his brain and his attention were centred on something far removed from Baker Street, despite the fact that he was driving the car.

And after two or three ineffectual attempts to "draw" his companion, Pycroft gave it up with a grunt, and endeavoured to possess his soul in patience. In less than ten minutes the Hawk reached Mark Chaerton's house in Eton Square. Without loss of time, Ferrers Locke and Pycroft scrambled from their seats and mounted the steps of the old Victorian house. The former rang a violent peal on the bell, and Pycroft heard it reverberating through the passage and hall beyond. But there came no answering sound of footsteps. The house, to all intents and purposes, was deserted. Not a light glimmered anywhere.

"Flash your pocket-torch on this lock, Pycroft," grunted Ferrers Locke. "I'll try my skeleton keys on it."

As he spoke Ferrers Locke drew from his pocket a bunch of skeleton keys, and with a skill born of long practice manipulated one on the ring so that it forced back the levers of the lock. Then he flung the door open and walked inside. Pycroft bringing up the rear, flashed his pocket-torch into the hall until his companion found the electric-light switch.

From a room on the right of the spacious hall they found themselves in Locke and Pycroft heard the sound of movements.

"This way, Pycroft," grunted Locke, pushing open the door, and feeling for the light switch on the wall. "Here we——"

He broke off as the sudden flood of light revealed a strange scene, and a gasp of amazement left the lips of Inspector Pycroft.

There were five people in the room. Four of them, obviously the servants of

the house, were sprawled in all manner of positions in an equal number of chairs, apparently fast asleep, for both Locke and the inspector could hear their stertorous breathing. In the fifth chair, which was drawn close up to a small table, upon which lay an overturned telephone, was the dishevelled figure of Mark Chaerton, the famous playwright.

He turned an agonised face to the two detectives as they entered the room, and it was seen that a gag trailed under his chin. His hands were clasped behind the back of the chair, and Locke, moving forward, saw that the wrists were encircled by a pair of handcuffs. His ankles were each attached to a leg of the chair in the same way.

"Well, I'm blowed" grunted Pycroft. "If this isn't the limit!"

He darted forward to assist Ferrers Locke, who was busily trying his skeleton keys on the handcuffs.

"Oh, Mr. Locke," gasped the unfortunate playwright. "I have had the fright of my life. Quickly! Release me, or I shall go mad. I have been like this for over two hours."

Chaerton Explains!

FERRERS LOCKE paid little attention to the playwright's remarks. He was busy forcing the locks of the handcuffs, and at last he had the satisfaction of seeing them snap open. He treated the bracelets that encircled each ankle in the same way, while Pycroft slipped his knife through the string of the gag that had been forced down under the chin.

Then, with the assistance of the two detectives, Mark Chaerton staggered to his feet and stretched his cramped limbs.

"This is awful!" he muttered in a dazed sort of fashion. "I hardly know whether I am on my head or my heels!"

And look, gentlemen! Look at my poor servants!"

Ferrers Locke crossed over to the inert figures in the chair, and carefully examined them.

"Don't worry about them, Mr. Chaerton," he remarked. "They will be all right in a few moments—nothing harmful. Appear to be under the influence of the favourite drug of the Yellow Claw—nitrous oxide and some other compound."

"But my poor servants have been like this for two hours or more!" wailed Chaerton.

"Sit down, sir," advised Pycroft, pushing forward a chair. "And let me help you to a little stimulant. It will do you good."

He crossed to the sideboard as he spoke, and poured out a liberal measure of spirit, which the playwright drank at a gulp.

"Ah, that's better!" he remarked. "It has steadied my nerves. Wonder that a man of my age has any nerves left at all after such an experience as I have just gone through!"

"Tell me all about it," said Ferrers Locke. "I needn't say that you surprised me with your telephone message. I'm all curious to know how you came to be bound up like that."

"Ah!" Mark Chaerton made an expressive gesture with his long hands. "It was terrible! But I will collect myself—and explain. I was sitting in this room preparatory to my going to the theatre, as is my usual custom, when the door suddenly opened and the terrible figure of the Yellow Claw, whom you yourself have described to me, Mr. Locke, entered the room. You can imagine my horror and surprise. For some moments I must have sat like a statue, the while he stared at me through the slits in his mask like some big bird of prey. It appears that I have offended the society by refusing

to pay them the sum of money they demanded. After hissing at me for five minutes or so, this Yellow Claw went on to say that he knew I had withdrawn from my bank to-day a substantial amount of money—ten thousand pounds in all. He demanded it, and I, naturally enough, refused it.

"There was a struggle; but, as you can guess, I was speedily overpowered—overpowered before I had time to shout for assistance. I was gagged, and chained to this chair. My pockets were turned out upon the table, and my wallet was emptied of its contents—the ten thousand pounds."

"But what of your servants?" queried Ferrers Locke quickly. "Did they not hear anything strange going on in the place?"

"No, no, poor fellows!" said Mark Chaerton in his excited, squeaky voice. "This Yellow Claw calmly informed me that he had drugged the whole lot of them in the kitchen whilst they were at their evening meal, and that he would bring them into this room to keep me company. Here they are. Look at them, gentlemen. Is it not monstrous that such a thing could go on in peaceful London?"

Inspector Pycroft heartily agreed that it was, and Ferrers Locke shook his head gravely.

"But tell me," said the latter at length. "Why was it you telephoned me and not someone nearer?"

"Ah, that is simple of explanation, Mr. Locke!" said Mark Chaerton, with an expressive gesture. "You see, the chair I was made a prisoner in was not stationed near the telephone when the Yellow Claw bade me adieu. It was at the farther end of the room. It took me two hours to work that chair across the room to the telephone."

"A very creditable performance in the darkness, with all these obstacles

in the way," said Ferrers Locke, pointing to the inert figures of the servants.

"Ah, it was not easy!" rejoined Chaerton, with a peculiar glance at the sleuth's unemotional face. "You might be inclined to sneer at an old man's performance, as you call it, but I never want to repeat the experiment again. I moved in inches. But I will proceed. I reached the telephone, and worked my gag loose on the small table by rubbing my chin up and down its jutting edge. Then I gripped the telephone in my teeth and turned it over on its side. The receiver I moved along by pushing it with my chin until it came on a level with where my ear was.

"I chose to call you up, Mr. Locke, because I knew that you would grasp the situation more quickly than any policeman would. I should have been questioned had I phoned up anyone but you, and my awkward position did not allow of my hearing the words of the person at the other end of the wire for any length of time. As it was, I hardly heard what you said to me, Mr. Locke. But I must say that you flew round here in record time."

"And the sum total of the damage done," remarked Ferrers Locke, "is the loss of ten thousand pounds, and two hours' discomfort for yourself, and two hours or more sleep apiece for your servants. Ah, well, Mr. Chaerton, it could have been worse!"

"It could, indeed!"

"But tell me," continued the sleuth, "have you the numbers of the stolen notes?"

For some moments Mark Chaerton was at an obvious loss to reply. But, seeing Locke's eagle eye bent upon him, he broke into a smile.

"Why, of course," he made answer. "The bulk of the notes were in fifties, the remainder in tenners."

"I would like the numbers of them."

"Very well." Chaerton's reluctance to comply with the request was very marked now, although his words implied otherwise. "You see, Mr. Locke, I don't want to arouse the revenge of the society—not yet," he added in explanation. "I don't want the numbers of the notes to be broadcast at the banks and—"

"As you will," interrupted the sleuth. "But I would like the numbers of the notes for my own purpose. Rest assured, Mr. Chaerton, they will not be broadcast."

The playwright brought to view his pocket-book, and copied from one of the leaves therein a series of numbers, which he eventually handed to Ferrers Locke.

"Thank you," murmured the sleuth. "I hope one day to bring you face to face with the man who relieved you of your ten thousand. When I do that he will, of course, be incapable of doing you further harm. That will be worth all the interest you might have lost on your ten thousand, Mr. Chaerton."

"Ah!" muttered the playwright. "You speak confidently. And you are coming on the tour with us to-morrow? You will be near me, for I fear that the next sortie of the Yellow Claw will end more disastrously for me."

(There is another long and thrilling instalment of this powerful serial in next Monday's bumper issue of the MAGNET. Order your copy in advance, boys.)



Chaerton turned an agonised face towards Ferrers Locke and Inspector Pycroft as they entered the room. "Oh, Mr. Locke," gasped the unfortunate playwright, "I have had the fright of my life! Release me or I shall go mad! I have been bound like this for over two hours!" Pycroft gazed at the sleeping servants in the chairs and then he blinked at Locke. "Well, I'm blown!" he grunted. "If this isn't the limit!" (See page 25.)

THE SCOURGE OF QUEENSLAND!

(Continued from Page 2.)



Before the bully could realise what was about to happen Dick's clenched fist caught him squarely between the eyes.

pipe, departed. Curiously the trooper, himself invisible, watched the strange scene.

So this man before him, lying in the ghostly light of the evil-smelling lamp—this pale-faced but stern and forbidding-looking man, losing himself in the potency of the insidious drug, was Captain Dare, the bushranger, whose name was a name of terror throughout the whole length and breadth of the Colony.

Stealthily the young policeman drew his revolver. Here was Dare absolutely at his mercy. The drop was on him with a vengeance. But even as the trooper prepared to leap from the shadows, and at the pistol's point demand the other's surrender, he remembered the promise he had made to Lu-hi. It was well, too, that he paused, for at that moment Dare's voice fell upon his ears.

"To hold up Lorrimer's station, and clean the place out, would settle us all for life."

Dick stared incredulously. Then a curious light broke in upon him. The opium-smoker, he could see, was asleep. Yes, asleep, but his eyes were open in a glassy, unseeing stare—asleep, unconscious of surroundings and of material things, yet talking mechanically, unrestrainedly.

Even as the policeman looked on, his eyes met those of the bushranger chief, but in them was no recognition. Again the dreamer spoke.

"To-morrow night, boys, we'll have a round-up at Old Man Lorrimer's. He's got plenty of coin, and, alone as he is, we'll wipe the boards easily. Don't forget, my boys, to-morrow night at seven. Meet by Truman's Gulch. Don't for—get; do—n't for —"

The opium-smoker slept. Still his pipe burned, filling the tiny receptacle with dense, suffocating, slumber-inducing fumes.

Strange, indeed, was the trooper's discovery. How wonderfully the wheels of fortune had turned, that from his befriending

of Lu-hi he should learn the secret which the bushranger chief had unwittingly and unconsciously revealed. So Dare and his gang were premeditating an attack on his father's station. The thought filled Dick with dismay. What if he were unable to prevent it, to stop this attack on the house? Surely then his father would go under!

While engrossed thus with his thoughts, the policeman's eyes unconsciously rested on the slowly burning opium pill. Fascinated, he watched the blue smoke curling up; then, insensibly, his eyelids drooped, his enervated senses floated away into dreamland, and he, too, slept.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Between Two Fires.

BYOND the distant mountain peaks the sun had long since sunk to rest, and the night had shut down swiftly.

A solitary figure still slept on in the little bunk of the private room behind Lu-hi's shop. Dare had long since gone, unconscious of the inanimate trooper asleep in the shadow.

It was dark pitch dark—when Dick Lorrimer awoke from a light touch on his shoulder. Lu-hi stood beside him.

"You sleepee vellee long," said Lu.

Dick looked at his watch. Ten past ten. Slipping a coin into the Chinaman's hand, and thanking him for the opportunity he had given him of seeing Dare, the trooper hurried away. An hour later he was back at his quarters, and knocking up Sergeant Johnson. To him he explained the situation. Now or never was the chance for laying the gang by the heels.

Still Dick was utterly at a loss to know why Lu-hi had chosen such a strange way of showing his gratitude. But the Chinaman, if questioned, would easily have explained:

"If I givee trooper chance of coming across

bushranger chief, then if pleeseman cannot follow him up and clutch him, pleeseman velly much big fool!" he would have said.

At midnight a small body of mounted troopers, seven in all, rode out of the valley, and, striking a mountain path, set off in the direction of the far-distant station. To avoid the possibility of their intention being prematurely discovered by the bushrangers, it was necessary to make a wide detour, which would involve them in at least an extra fifteen-mile ride.

Throughout the night they rode, and at dawn struck camp. The rest of the day was spent in hiding among the Molonga Hills. As darkness once more set in the advance was continued. Barely, however, had the troop ridden a couple of miles than a terrific thunderstorm, such as only Queensland knows, broke over them.

The lashing fury of the elements was such as to retard progress considerably.

Suddenly, on the wings of the wild night wind was borne the report of firing. Several shots rang out in quick succession, followed by an ominous silence.

"We are too late!" said Dick, dashing forward. "The attack has commenced!"

As the policemen neared the station they dismounted, sank to the earth, and, each holding his carbine in his hand, crawled forward cautiously. The lashing rain drowned any sounds they might have made in their advance.

Before the edge of the clearing surrounding the stockman's house was reached the men separated, each taking up the position allocated to him.

As Dick peered through the fringe of undergrowth a growl of anger left him. He saw a dozen black, indistinct forms rushing all together for the front door of his father's house. There was a short, sharp struggle, a battering with some heavy object, the splintering of woodwork, a rapid exchange of shots, and then shouts, cries, and curses as the bushrangers gained an entrance.

At the preconcerted signal the policemen darted from cover. Dick was the first to reach the door. Already he had discarded his rifle. In his right hand a deadly Colt glistened. At one bound he cleared the broken door. Down the passage he raced. Already the bushrangers had gained the first floor. Feet stamped overhead, a rattle of shots filled the house.

Swiftly Dick unlatched a side door, sped along a dark passage, then up again he went. A further door barred his progress, but he was through this in a second, then along the landing till he reached the top of the stairs.

A stirring sight met his eyes. There, gripping a heavy pistol in his left hand, was his father, blazing away furiously at the mob of human wolves below. Blood trickled down the old man's face from a furrowed wound on his skull, yet he stuck grimly to his position.

But even as Dick took in all this his face paled, for, following a heavy report from below, the young fellow saw his father drop his smoking pistol, clap one hand to his breast, and, with a choking cry, pitch backwards. In a second Dick rushed to his father's side. Then, standing over the old man's prostrate form, the young trooper, on the topmost step, held the stairs against the oncoming rush of men.

By this time the rest of the policemen had entered the house. Caught like rats in a trap, between two fires, those who refused to surrender were shot down.

Luckily old Mr. Lorrimer's wound was not a fatal one.

The whole affair had been a complete triumph for the police. The capture of the whole gang in toto was a piece of work for which there could be naught but the highest praise.

Needless to say, a great portion of the bushrangers' plunder was restored to the proper owners, and in one case, at least, Dick figured handsomely.

And at the trial, which came off two months later, it was Trooper Lorrimer who came in for the greatest share of honour. The promotion he received that day ended in a very few years in his attaining the coveted rank of inspector.

THE END.

(Look out for the result of our stupendous "Footballers' Names" Competition in next Monday's issue of the MAGNET.)

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Next Monday's Programme!

THERE are some startling and exciting scenes at Greyfriars next week, when Dr. Craddock temporarily takes the place of Dr. Locke as headmaster of the Old School. At the outset the new Head runs foul of Dicky Nugent & Co. of the Second, and his brutal treatment of the fags leads Dicky Nugent to stir up a rebellion. Against the unorthodox yet very effective measures employed by the Second-Formers Dr. Craddock is made to look very small, likewise Loder and Carne,

the two unpopular prefects of the Sixth, who are the new Head's right-hand men. Make a note of the title

"THE REBELS OF THE SECOND!"

and place your order for next week's MAGNET right away. If any of my chums miss this latest story from the pen of popular Frank Richards, which, by the way, is considerably longer than usual, they will regret it.

"THE YELLOW CLAW!"

The next instalment of this thrilling serial sees the commencement of the tour of "Man and His Money" in the provinces. John Huntingdon, Sir

Malcolm Dunderfield's nephew, has a narrow escape from losing his life before the company arrives at Blackpool. And scarcely does he set foot outside the railway-station at Blackpool when he is handed a grim, threatening letter from the Yellow Claw Society.

A "DICKENS" SUPPLEMENT!

Many of my readers have besieged Harry Wharton & Co. to publish a supplement dealing with the popular novelist whose works are to be found in every home. The "Herald" staff has put some deep thinking and hard work into this coming supplement, and, in my opinion, it will score a great success. Don't miss it!

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