

The School-Story Paper that *Never Fails* to Please!

The **MAGNET** 2nd



Speedmania!



Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address:
The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

GATHER round, chums! I always think that one of the pleasantest jobs an Editor has is writing his weekly chat to his readers. That's because I look upon all my readers as real good pals—and I am as interested in hearing from them as I hope they are in hearing from me. If I could, I'd write a personal letter to every one of you—but as your numbers are legion, that's not possible. Still, there is no reason why every one of you shouldn't write to me!

I want to know all about you—the things you are interested in; the work you do; the adventures you have; and how you spend your spare time. Furthermore, just to encourage you to send me along interesting items about yourselves, I'm going to make you an offer! I'm already giving away topping books, penknives, and pocket wallets for limericks and jokes. Well, if you send along any of your personal experiences, and I think they are interesting enough to be passed on to my other readers through the medium of this page—your own page as much as mine—I'll give similar prizes. So sit down, chums, and get busy now!

FROM a reader who signs himself "Jimmy," and who lives at Bebington, comes a rather technical query

CONCERNING TIDES.

He asks, first of all: "What is the establishment of a port?" and then: "What is meant by the neutralisation of tides?"

As "Jimmy"—and most of you—doubtless know, the tides are caused by the attraction of the sun and moon upon the water of the sea, and high tide occurs at a certain interval after the moon has crossed the meridian of longitude upon which a port stands. The observed interval at the time of full tide and change of tide is known as the "establishment of the port." But tides are affected by various things—the weather, the effect of winds, the temperature of the water, certain currents, and local conditions. Under certain circumstances these things can actually neutralise the tide, so that in certain parts of the world there are actually no tides.

This is the case in the Baltic and the Black Sea, where the height of the water is always the same, the tides having been neutralised by local conditions.

If "Jimmy" wants to go fully into the subject, he should ask at his local library for a copy of "Norris's Navigation," or some similar work—but I warn him that it is a very scientific and abstruse subject."

HAVE you fellows ever heard of **ROBINSON CRUSOE'S RESTAURANT?**

How would you like to take your meals at the top of a tree? Well, if
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,204.

you ever happen to be in Paris, you can do so. The tables in a certain restaurant which is called "Robinson's," are placed, not on the ground, but at the top of trees! Rustic ladders are provided to allow the diners to mount the trees, and they then perch themselves up there, while the waiters clamber around like monkeys, bringing the food. Can you imagine Billy Bunter hanging on with one hand while he wolfs tuck as fast as a waiter can bring it?

But that isn't the only curious restaurant in Paris. There is another where the tables float around in a large swimming bath, and the diners, in bathing costumes, sit in the water. They also actually have rooms under the water, where you can have your food while people are swimming about above your head. "Some" restaurant, eh?

The old "Popular" has merged into the new "Ranger," as most of you chaps are now aware, and already this novel paper is a riot of success. If any of my reader chums have omitted to order this sparkling twopennyworth of fine fiction they have missed a real treat.



THE STUNT SQUADRON.

Above you can see a black-and-white reproduction in miniature of the **MAMMOTH COLOURED PLATE** which is being

PRESENTED FREE

to all readers of this week's

"RANGER."

This gorgeous colour plate—just fine for framing—makes twopence spent on the "Ranger" a really profitable venture.

Just think of it, boys? Seven delightful stories and a fine art presentation plate for twopence!

I suggest you get this week's "Ranger" to-day, before the other chap grabs the last copy available.

HERE is a selection of **RAPID-FIRE REPLIES**

to some of the queries my readers have sent me.

How many characters are there in the Chinese language? (R. K., of Wembley). There are actually 74,000 characters, but very

few people know them all. The average Chinaman knows only 200 of them!

Where can I buy a pair of handcuffs? (J. MacM., of Colchester): You can get them from any gunsmith's shop, or you can write to Messrs. Geo. Grose & Co., 8, New Bridge Street, London, E.C.4.

How far can a dart be blown from a blow-gun? (J. M., of Durham): South American Indians can blow poison darts for over fifty yards—and hit the target every time! I'll bet you can't do this with a pea-shooter!

Who wrote our national anthem? (E. H., of Wimbledon): It was composed by a man named John Bull. Both the Germans and the Danes have also adapted the tunes to their national anthems.

How many pipes are there in a cinema organ? (S. A., of Chelsea): A modern cinema organ contains more than 2,000 pipes!

What is Popocatepetl? (J. H., of Streatham): The name of a volcano in Mexico, over 17,000 feet in height.

The first prizewinner this week is R. Ashton, of 64, Dryden Street, Swindon, Wilts, who gets a topping Sheffield steel penknife for the following yarn:

Client: "I've brought this pair of trousers to be re-seated. I sit a lot, you know."

Tailor: "Yes, and perhaps you've brought that last bill to be receipted, too. I've stood a lot, you know."

A topping joke, don't you think? Now have a shot at winning a prize for yourself. I shan't be satisfied until all my readers have won a penknife, a pocket wallet, or a splendid book.

MAKE a note of next week's programme, chums. Frank Richards "tops the bill" with a rattling fine yarn that will make you wish it was twice as long. It's entitled:

"A SCHOOLBOY'S SACRIFICE!"

And when I tell you that this popular author has excelled himself, you'll know there's something good in store for you. Take my tip and order your copy now. I wouldn't like any of my regular readers to be disappointed by finding that their newsagent was "sold out."

In addition, there are thrills galore for you in the next instalment of

"THE ISLAND OF SLAVES!"

which certainly gets more and more exciting every week. Stanton Hope certainly knows how to spin a fine yarn, and I consider myself lucky to have "scopped" him for our present serial.

The "Greyfriars Herald" is calculated to raise a grin on a mule, while our usual shorter features will be "O.K., chief"—as always!

YOUR EDITOR.



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Chucked Out!

GATHER round!" chortled Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!" "I say, you fellows! Coker's going it!" chirruped Billy Bunter.

There was no doubt that Horace Coker of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, was "going" it.

He was going it strong. Properly speaking, Remove juniors had no business anywhere near the door of the Fifth Form games study. That apartment was within the precincts sacred to the Fifth Form, and fags were barred. Nevertheless, a good many of the Remove had gathered on the spot to enjoy the free entertainment provided by Horace Coker.

Coker of the Fifth had a hefty voice. Coker was a hefty fellow altogether. When Coker talked in his ordinary tones he could be heard over a wide radius. When he shouted, few inhabitants of Greyfriars School could remain in ignorance of the fact. He was shouting now.

He was talking to Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, in the games study. Blundell was not deaf; but had he been deaf, he must have heard Coker. Coker had been talking for many minutes, growing more and more emphatic all the time. Over a wider and wider radius Coker's voice was heard, and more and more fellows gathered round,

till the passage outside the games study was crowded.

How long it would be before Blundell pitched Coker out on his neck, was the interesting question. A swarm of fellows waited, with keen interest, to see Coker drop. Meanwhile, they listened to his powerful voice—a voice on which, as Fisher T. Fish remarked, a megaphone, or a steamer's siren had simply nothing!

"What sort of a silly, footling, footling, frabjous, fatheaded chump do you call yourself?" Coker was inquiring of George Blundell. "What sort of a dense, dunder-headed dummy—"

"Look here—"

If there's a wrong way of doing anything, Coker, poor boob, will do it. If a prize were offered for being the biggest duffer in the school, Coker—the one and only—would win it hands down!

"What sort of a babbling, burbling, benighted idiot?" Coker further inquired, in tones which Stentor, of old, might have heard with envy.

"Look here—"

"What sort of a blithering, blathering, blathering bandersnatch—"

"Getting eloquent, isn't he?" remarked Bob Cherry. "Fine flow of adjectives! Go it, Coker!"

"The absurd eloquence is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamsét Ram Singh. "But what is the esteemed matterfulness?"

"Goodness knows! Coker's gone off at the deep end! It can't be long now before Blundell boots him out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You call yourself captain of the Fifth!" Coker had paused a moment to take breath. But the pause was brief. "Captain of the Fifth! Yah! I could make a better Form captain out of a chunk of putty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Coker!"

"Keep it up!"

It was a yell of encouragement from the juniors outside. A shindy like this seldom occurred in the Fifth. The Fifth were a senior Form, and a dignified Form. They fancied themselves considerably. In all the Fifth, Coker was probably the only fellow capable of going off at the deep end in this terrific style. Whatever the Fifth Form men thought of it, the juniors regarded it as a thoroughly enjoyable entertainment.

Coker did not heed, or need, the encouragement from outside. Possibly he did not even hear it. Standing in the middle of the games study, his hands driven deep into his trousers pockets, his face flushed with excitement, his eyes gleaming and fixed on his Form captain, Coker roared on.

There were six or seven Fifth Form men in the games study. Some of them were laughing. Blundell had laughed at first. Now, however, he was frowning.

"Is that the lot?" asked Blundell as Coker paused once more to gulp in breath. He was expending breath at a great rate in his harangue.

"No! I tell you—"

"Well, whether it's the lot or not, chuck it!" said Blundell.

"What sort of a—"

"I've told you to chuck it!"

"Piffing, fat-headed, idiotic—"

"That will do!"

"Frabjous, footling, bungling—"

"Will you dry up?"

"Dense, dunder-headed, brainless ass do you call yourself?" Coker was still in an inquiring mood.

"For goodness' sake, Coker, old man, dry up!" came the voice of Potter of the Fifth.

"Shut up, Potter!"

"Coker, old bean—" came Greene's voice.

"Shut up, Greene!"

"Go it, Coker!" yelled the juniors outside. "Give him beans! Tell him some more, Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Form captain!" hooted Coker. "Ha, ha!" This was a sardonic laugh. "Ha, ha! If the Fifth were anything but a set of ninnies and nincompoops, they would sack you from the job on the spot! I could make a better Form captain out of a chunk of putty!"

"We've heard that one, Coker!" said Johnny Bull.

"The dear man's eloquence is failing him," said Frank Nugent. "Coker's beginning to repeat himself."

"But what on earth's the row?" asked Harry Wharton. Many fellows were wondering what was the cause of this unaccustomed shindy in the Fifth Form games study.

"Nobody seems to know!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Coker's holding an indignation meeting about something—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I won't say you're the biggest fool at Greyfriars!" Coker was going on again. "Wingate of the Sixth is the biggest fool at Greyfriars. But you're the next biggest fool!"

"You forget yourself, Coker!" came the voice of Fitzgerald of the Fifth, and there was a laugh in the games study.

"Shut up, Fitz!" hooted Coker.

"I think it's about time you shut up, Coker!" said Blundell, rising from his seat. "Are you finished?"

"I'm not! I'm going to tell you—"

"You've said your piece, and a little over," said the captain of the Fifth. "Now buzz off!"

"Yes, enough's as good as a feast, Coker, old man," urged Bland of the Fifth. "You can be heard all over Greyfriars, old chap. Run away and play."

"I'm going to tell that dummy, that crass ass, that footling fathhead—"

"Will you get out of this study?" roared Blundell. The captain of the Fifth seemed to be getting a little excited now.

"No!" roared Coker. "I won't!"

"Then I'll jolly well turf you out!"

"Why, you—you—you priceless idiot!" gasped Coker. "If you can turf me out of this study, get on with it! I'd like to see you do it! I'd just like to see you do it! I—"

"Here goes, then!" said Blundell.

"Look out, you men!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "Coker's coming! Give him room to drop!"

"I say, you fellows, give a fellow room! I don't want Coker to drop on me! I say—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors crowded back from the

doorway to give Coker room to fall. Coker was a mighty man with his hands. But only Horace Coker believed that he was a match for the captain of the Fifth.

There was a sound of scuffling in the games study. There was a panting and a gasping and a tramping of feet.

The crowd of fellows outside waited breathlessly. The door stood wide open, and they watched the doorway with eager eyes.

Two struggling forms staggered into sight.

"Go it, Coker!"

"Go it, Blundell!"

Coker was not talking now. He did not want to stop talking; seldom did Coker of the Fifth stop talking of his own accord. But he needed all his wind for that strenuous struggle.

To and fro, the combatants reeled; Blundell breathing hard, Coker gasping and spluttering. Then suddenly they parted, and a burly form came flying headlong through the doorway.

Crash!

"What-ho, she bumps!" gurgled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The bumpfulness is terrific."

"Whoooooooooooo!" came from Coker as he sprawled dizzily. "Oooooooooop! My hat! Oooooooooop!"

Blundell panted in the doorway.

"Now clear, you silly owl! Another word from you, and you'll get a Form licking! Bunk!"

"Whoooooooooh!" gurgled Coker, sitting up.

He sat and blinked at Blundell. Coker seemed surprised to find himself outside the games study. But there he was—outside; there was no doubt about that.

He scrambled up. Coker never knew when he was beaten. Breathless, but unconquered, Coker rushed back into the doorway of the games study.

"Coker wants more!" chortled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker got more. Not only Blundell, but all the Fifth Form men, seemed fed-up with Coker and his eloquence. Whatever it was that Coker was indignant about, the seniors had had enough of his indignation. Coker, rushing back into the games study, was collared by four or five pairs of hands. Spluttering wildly, Coker—was swept off his feet. His head was tapped on the door with a resounding tap that elicited a fiendish howl from Coker. Then he flew through the doorway again.

Crash!

The door of the games study closed.

Coker sat up once more. He rubbed his head, and gazed round dizzily at a grinning crowd.

"Ow! Wow!" was Coker's remark.

"Ow! Wow!"

"Go it, Coker!" roared a dozen juniors. "Pile in!"

Coker staggered to his feet.

"Go it, Coker!"

To the disappointment of the crowd Coker did not "go" it. Even Coker seemed to realise that he had had enough. Instead of making another wild charge into the games study, he turned, and walked to his own study, went in, and slammed the door.

The entertainment was over.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Present From Bunter!

"SMITHY, old chap!"

"Scat!"

"I say, old fellow—"

"Cut!" grunted the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

Herbert Vernon-Smith's hand wandered towards the inkpot.

It was prep in the Remove studies.

During lock-up, fellows were not supposed to leave their studies. There was, in fact, a Sixth Form prefect on duty to see that they didn't; though frequently they did, all the same.

In Study No. 4 in the Remove, Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing were at work. Or to speak more correctly, Redwing was at work, and the Bounder was lounging at the table, idling. But though the Bounder did not seem keen on work, he seemed still less keen on Billy Bunter's conversation. A fascinating fellow like Bunter might naturally have expected a hearty welcome in any study into which he inserted his fat face and big spectacles. But his fascinating society seemed at a discount in No. 4 in the Remove.

Bunter, of course, ought to have been at prep like the rest of the Lower Fourth. But between what Bunter ought to have done, and what Bunter did, there was often a great gulf fixed.

Bunter had tired of prep. Besides, Bunter had other business on hand; and that business brought him to Smithy's study. So he did not seat, and did not cut, when bidden to do so. He rolled in.

Redwing glanced round at him mildly. Redwing was rather more patient and good-tempered than his study-mate. Still, he did not want Bunter. It had never been on record, in fact, that anybody wanted Bunter.

"Hook it, old scout!" said Redwing. "Prep, you know."

"You can cheese it, Redwing," answered Bunter. "I'm not talking to you. I'm talking to my pal, Smithy."

"You fat ass!" said Tom. "You'll get licked, if Loder spots you out of your study in lock-up!" Loder of the Sixth was the prefect on duty that evening.

Bunter grinned.

"Catch Loder spotting anybody!" he answered. "More likely playing banker in his study with Walker."

"He may come up—"

"Rats!"

"Well, get out, anyhow," said Redwing. "We've got work to do, if you haven't."

"You're interrupting me, Redwing," said Bunter. "I say, Smithy—"

Vernon-Smith lifted the inkpot from the table.

"Where will you have it?" he inquired.

"Oh, really, Smithy!" The Owl of the Remove kept a wary eye on the inkpot. "I say, old chap, it's rather important. I've got some smokes for you, old chap."

The Bounder stared.

"Smokes!" he ejaculated.

Redwing looked up again.

"You fat sweep!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, cheese it, Redwing!" said Bunter disdainfully. "I'm not offering them to you. You're a milksop! You're a spooney! I don't suppose you've ever smoked in your life."

"I haven't," agreed Tom. "You fat chump, if you're caught with smokes on you, you'll get six! Don't bring your silly rubbish into this study."

"I've asked you to shut up," said Bunter. "Smithy, old man, look here! I got these specially for you, old bean."

The Bounder coloured a little, as he stared at Bunter. That Smithy often smoked cigarettes, all the Remove knew. He smoked them, probably, chiefly because it was against the rules. Any action that was a defiance of authority seemed to appeal to the Bounder. But Smithy had been on good behaviour during the Easter term,

so far; and smokes had not been seen in his study for quite a lengthy period; much to his study-mate's satisfaction.

"Look, old chap!" said Bunter.

He tossed a box of cigarettes on the study table. It was quite a large box, and it was nearly full. They were rather a cheap brand of cigarettes—a brand that the expensive Bounder disdained. He grinned as he looked at them. They were the kind popular in Skinner's study—Skinner of the Remove being much less blessed with superfluous wealth than the Bounder.

"You fat frump," said Vernon-Smith.

"Where did you get those smokes?"

"Bought them specially for you, old fellow," said Bunter,

blinking at him benevolently through his big spectacles.

"Liar!" said the Bounder cheerfully.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"You'd better take them back to Skinner before he misses them, you fat duffer. Cut, anyhow!"

"They're not Skinner's old chap. As a matter of fact, they're a present to me from a sporting friend—one of the Highcliffe men," explained Bunter. "I'm making you a present of them, Smithy, because we're pals."

"Fathead!"

"I don't want you to give me anything for them, you know," said Bunter. "They're yours, old fellow. I'm giving them to you for nothing. That's me all over, you know—generous, and all that."

"You fat chump, if Skinner misses them, I—"

"Well, he's not likely to go to the punishment-room to-night," said Bunter. "I—I mean, they're not Skinner's—"

"The punishment-room!" ejaculated the Bounder, and Tom Redwing looked up once more, in astonishment.

"Nunno! I—I never found these smokes in the punishment-room," said Bunter hastily. "Nothing of the sort! I never saw Skinner and Snoop sneaking out of that passage, and never wondered what they had been up to there—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter peevishly. "I think you might be decently grateful when a friend brings you a box of jolly good smokes for a present. If you think I went rooting into punny, to see what Skinner and Snoop had been up to, and found these smokes there, you're jolly well mistaken."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Bounder, and Redwing grinned.

"Look here, Smithy—"

"So Skinner's turned punny into a smoke-room!" chuckled the Bounder. "He was caught smoking in the box-room last week, and got six. He's found a safer place now! What a nerve!"

The Bounder chuckled loud and long. The punishment-room at Greyfriars—generally called punny for short—was

seldom used. It was rare for offenders to be locked up there—very rare indeed. It was in a remote part of the building, at the end of a long corridor, and except for a very occasional visit from a maid with a broom, it was hardly entered for whole terms. Certainly Skinner & Co. could hardly have found a safer or more secluded spot to smoke their surreptitious cigarettes; and it was certainly safer to keep the smokes there than to keep them in their study. But what the Head would have said had he dreamed that the punishment-room was used for such a purpose was really unimaginable.

Coker rushed at Potter and Greene like a raging bull. The next moment all three were waltzing round the study, hitting out furiously.



"I say, Smithy, do stop cackling!" exclaimed Bunter peevishly. "Look here, I'm giving you these smokes! They're not Skinner's! Besides, serve him right! If a prefect found them they would be confiscated! Skinner will only think some prefect has been nosing into punny and bagged them."

"You fat idiot—"

"Besides, they're not Skinner's. I haven't been in punny to-day at all," explained Bunter. "I dare say the door's kept locked—in fact, I'm certain it is. It's not left unlocked with the key outside. Dash it all, Smithy, you might thank a chap for making you a present."

"Idiot!"

"They're yours, Smithy!" said Bunter, with a wave of a fat hand. "A—a mark of friendship, you know."

"Don't leave them here, ass!"

"I bought them specially for you, old fellow—I mean, I thought of you at once when Ponsonby gave them to me. I don't want you to give me anything for them. But I say, Smithy—"

"Well?" grinned the Bounder.

He thought he could guess what was coming.

"Well, the fact is, Smithy, I've been disappointed about a postal order!" said Bunter. "I believe I mentioned that I was expecting a postal order."

"I believe you did!" agreed the Bounder.

"It hasn't come," said Bunter sorrowfully.

"You surprise me," said the Bounder, with deep sarcasm.

"It hasn't, old chap; and at the present moment I'm practically stony. I suppose you wouldn't mind lending me five shillings till my postal order comes, old chap."

"Quid pro quo, what?" chuckled the Bounder. "I'm to give you five shillings for Skinner's half-crown box of fags! Not good enough, old bean!"

"Oh, really, Smithy! That's a rather rotten way of putting it!" said Bunter

warmly. "I'm making you a present of these smokes because you're a pal. As a pal, I think you might oblige a chap by cashing a postal order a few hours in advance. What about it?"

"Nothing about it! Get out!"

"Look here, Smithy, if you can't oblige me in that small matter I jolly well shan't make you a present of those smokes!"

"There's the door!"

"Say half-a-crown!" urged Bunter. "Now I come to think of it, the postal order will be for half-a-crown. Is it a go?"

"No trade!" grinned the Bounder.

"Shut the door after you!"

"Look here, you rotter—"

"Travel!"

"I dare say you haven't half-a-crown to spare!" sneered Bunter. "Has old Smith gone bankrupt again? He goes bankrupt every year or so, doesn't he? Or have they found him out and sent him to chokey? That's what happens to all these moneylenders in the long run, isn't it? Sorry if your pater's been found out and sent to chokey, Smithy! Yarooooooh!"

Bunter was peeved; and as there was nothing doing in Study No. 4, the fat Owl of the Remove apparently found some solace in slanging Smithy. But

it was rather dangerous to slang Smithy on the subject of his father; on that topic the Bounder was touchy.

Vernon-Smith made one leap at Bunter, and the Owl of the Remove was suddenly interrupted.

A grasp of iron on his collar spun him round in the doorway; and Bunter yelled in apprehension.

His apprehensions were well-founded.

Smithy's boot landed on Bunter's tight trousers, with a terrific concussion. The fat junior fairly flew into the Remove passage.

Bump!

"Whoop!"

Bunter sprawled and roared. Whiz!—came the box of cigarettes from the study! It smote Billy Bunter's fat little nose and burst. Bunter roared again. Cigarettes rained round him.

"Yow-ow-ow-ooooop!"

Slam! The door of Study No. 4 closed. Billy Bunter sat up in a sea of cigarettes and spluttered wildly.

"Ow! Yow-ow! Beast! Wow-yow! Ratter! Oh crikey! Wow!"

A sadder, if not a wiser, Bunter gathered up cigarettes and rolled away dismally. Evidently there was nothing doing in Study No. 4.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Trouble in Coker's Study I

HORACE COKER, sitting in the armchair in his study in the Fifth, his hands in his pockets, his long legs stretched out, stared straight before him with a gloomy stare.

Potter and Greene, working at the study table, did not speak. Once or twice they glanced at Coker, in mild surprise. Coker was silent, and had

been silent for some time. This unusual state of affairs, naturally, surprised his study-mates. Still, they were thankful for small mercies. According to the ancient proverb, speech is silver and silence is golden. Potter and Greene felt that there was a lot in it. On the rare occasions when Coker was not talking they realised how golden silence was.

Coker was plunged in thought. Some problem seemed to be occupying his intellect, such as it was. Potter and Greene did not know, or care, what the problem might be; but they hoped it would keep Coker quiet till prep was over.

Coker evidently had no time for prep. Many of Coker's little troubles with his Form master, Prout, were due to the fact that often he had no time for prep.

Other fellows always found time; but Coker's time was perhaps of unusual value. Often and often, while Potter and Greene struggled with prep, Coker would be telling them how to play football, or explaining to them what thumping asses they were.

Long ago it had been borne in on Coker's mind that he was the only fellow at Greyfriars with anything like brains. He was a good-natured fellow, in the main, so it was natural that he should do his best to bring up his friends in the way they should go.

Potter and Greene seldom, or never, expressed any gratitude. Sometimes they became quite restive. That, of course, made no difference to Coker. He was in the happy position of knowing best, and knowing that he knew best; and there was no doubt—not a shadow of doubt—about this in Coker's mind at least.

With a fixed and gloomy brow, Coker was thinking. Possibly his thoughts were running on the scene in the games study. Coker had been chucked out of the games study; and his chums, who had been present, had not lifted a finger to intervene. Indeed, they had barely restrained themselves from lending a hand in chucking Coker out. If Coker was feeling resentment, Potter and Greene did not mind very much, so long as it kept him quiet.

Prep over at last, Potter and Greene rose. They exchanged a glance, and moved towards the door.

It seemed too good to be true; but it really looked as if they were going to get out of the study without any conversation from Coker at all.

"Hold on, you men!"

Potter sighed, and Greene grunted. It was, after all, as they had feared, too good to be true.

"Don't go!" said Coker. "I want to talk to you men!"

Potter and Greene reflected bitterly that they might have known it. It was a physical impossibility with Coker to keep his chin still for long.

"About the football!" said Coker.

"Oh dear!" said Potter.

If Potter and Greene had had tears to shed they would have prepared to shed them now. If there was one topic more than another on which Coker was absolutely intolerable it was football.

On all other subjects his ignorance was perhaps unusual; on football it was abysmal.

"The fact is I want to see Price," said Greene. "I—I've said I'll drop in on Price after prep—"

"I remember now Blundell wants to speak to me about the match to-morrow," remarked Potter.

These remarks passed by Horace Coker like the idle wind which he regarded not.

"Sit down, you men," he said. "I've been thinking. The fact is I've come to a decision, and I shall want your help."

Potter and Greene did not sit down; they were still hoping to escape. But they held on.

"Well?" said Potter drearily.

Coker, following his own great thoughts, did not even observe that his friends looked restive. Coker had never actually said "I am Sir Oracle, and when I open my mouth let no dog bark!" But that was the position of affairs, from Coker's view-point.

"You fellows know how the matter stands," he said. "You know how I've been left out of games—"

Groan!

"What's the matter, Potter?"

"Oh! Nothing! Go on."

"I've talked to Wingate on the subject till I'm sick of it," said Coker. "Wingate, being a fool, can't see that he's losing the best man at Greyfriars in refusing to play me in the First Eleven. I've given Wingate up! I've come to the conclusion that it's no earthly use trying to make Wingate see sense."

Coker paused, and Potter and Greene hoped that he was finished. Coker was not finished.

"In my own Form," he went on, "I really did expect to get justice. It's pretty sickening for Blundell to turn out as big a fool as Wingate."

"Um!" said Potter and Greene.

"To-morrow," said Coker, "there's a Senior Form match—the Fifth play the Sixth. Wingate having turned me down as a footballer, it would be just pie to play for the Fifth, and wipe up the field with those Sixth Form



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fatheads—just pie! I pointed that out to Blundell—you heard me. The Fifth don't often beat the Sixth. They can't expect to with a lot of duds in the Form team—like you fellows, for instance."

"Ah!"

"But one really first-class man can do a lot, even with a team that's pretty so-so," said Coker. "I'd really have enjoyed mopping up the Sixth in a Form match, practically on my own. Blundell and his crowd aren't much of a team, but they'd be useful to back me up."

"Oh!"

"You heard it all," said Coker bitterly. "Blundell's not only as big a fool as Wingate, but it's pretty clear that he's jealous."

"Jealous!" murmured Potter. The idea of any fellow being jealous of Coker as a footballer almost overcame Potter.

"I hate to think badly of a fellow," said Coker; "I try to make the best of everybody. Look how patient I am with you chaps, with your obtuseness, you know, and general fatheadedness."

"Ah!"

"I've tried to think well of Blundell," said Coker. "He's a fool—and a man can make allowances for a fool. We're told to suffer fools gladly, you know. But there's more than that to it. I'm afraid there's no doubt that Blundell deliberately keeps me out of the Form games owing to jealousy. As a matter of fact, if the fellows ever had a chance of seeing what I could really do, how long would Blundell stay captain of the Fifth?"

"Oh!"

Potter and Greene knew from experience that it was useless to argue with Coker. What was the use of pointing out to a fellow that he was no footballer when he was convinced that he was the best footballer at Greyfriars, if not in the wide world?

Argument being useless, Potter and Greene could only wait unhappily for Coker to finish, hoping that he would finish before bed-time.

"Well," said Coker moodily, "I'm not standing it. I've told Blundell plainly that I'm not standing it! You heard me. I spoke to him quite plainly in the games study this afternoon. Perfectly plainly! Could a fellow have spoken plainer?"

"Nunno!"

"What was the result? I was chucked out of the games study," said Coker. "Chucked out on the back of my neck! What are you grinning at, Potter?"

"W-w-w-was I grinning?" stammered Potter.

"If you think it's funny—"

"Nunno! Go on, old chap!"

"I've made up my mind now," said Coker. "It's practically a conspiracy against me. The best man in the Fifth is to be left out, left in the shade, excluded, ignored! The worm will turn. Well, I'm hitting back! I'm left out of the game to-morrow! Blundell thinks he's going to get away with that. Well, he isn't!"

"Oh!"

"I'm left out!" said Coker. "Ignored as if I were a dud like you chaps! Worse, in fact; for the silly ass is playing you, and me he won't play! What do you think of the intellect of a Form captain who will play you fellows and leave out a man like me?"

This was rather a difficult question for Potter and Greene to answer. They did not try to answer it.

That mattered little, however. When Coker of the Fifth was talking he had little use for answers.

"Mind, if I believed that it was sheer, crass stupidity on his part and nothing else I'd let him off!" said Coker. "Fellow can't help being a fool. If a man's born a fool it's his misfortune, not his fault."

"That's so," agreed Potter. "You can't help it, Coker—"

"Eh?"

"I—I mean—"

"Don't be a silly idiot, Potter! I'm not asking for any of your silly jokes! As I was saying, I'd let Blundell off if I believed it was just potty fatheadedness. But there's more in it than that. He's a fool, I grant—but he's not such a fool as all that. I'm driven to the

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A nigger was struggling with a mule that was more than usually obstinate.

"Where's your will power, Rufus?" called out a bystander.

"Mah will power am right wid me, but you oughta see dis yer animal's won't power!"

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conclusion that he's deliberately keeping a better man than himself in the shade from rotten motives—jealousy, envy, and so on."

"Oh dear!"

"To come to the point—" went on Coker.

"Oh! You're coming to the point?" asked Potter in surprise.

"Yes!" roared Coker. "Shut up and listen! For goodness' sake, give a fellow a chance to get in a word!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"To come to the point, what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander," said Coker. "Blundell's shut me out of the Form match to-morrow. I'm going to shut Blundell out!"

"Eh?"

"What?"

Potter and Greene fairly sat up and took notice at this. They had wondered what Coker was driving at, if he was driving at anything. They had not expected this.

"Surprised you—what?" grinned Coker. "Well, that's the big idea! I'm going to stop Blundell playing to-morrow—as a warning to him! It will make him understand that there's a limit. See?"

"You—you're thinking of—of meddling in a football match; of—of keeping a man out of the game?" stuttered Greene.

"That's what!" said Coker. "I shall

want you fellows' help. I've been thinking it out, and I've got it all out and dried. Just before the match Blundell is going to be bagged—"

"Bub-bub-bagged?"

"And locked in—"

"L-locked in?"

"Don't stutter at a chap, Greene. I thought at first of locking him in his study. But he would kick up a shindy there; might get out of the window, too. There's a safer place, and I've thought of it. You know the punishment-room; it's never used, and, of course, there's nobody there now. A fellow locked in the punishment-room will be safe till a fellow chooses to let him out."

"Oh crikey!"

"It's as easy as falling off a form," resumed Coker, evidently much taken with the big idea. "I would do it entirely on my own, but, of course, Blundell will make a fuss—"

"I—I—I rather think he would!" gasped Potter. "Yee-e-es, I—I think you can take it as a cert that Blundell would make a fuss."

"That's where you fellows come in," explained Coker.

"Do we?" murmured Greene.

"Yes; we get Blundell along to that passage, you know, and collar him and bung him into punny. The key's always left in the outside of the lock. We lock him in, take away the key, and keep mum. Nobody will know he's there—they couldn't let him out if they did know. The window's barred; the place is too far away for anybody to hear him yell. Once he's in punny he's landed. We let him out after the match."

"Oh, Christopher Columbus!"

"It won't make much difference to the game, of course," said Coker. "One dud more or less will make no difference. Besides, I shall be there. Bland as vice-captain, will take Blundell's place when he's missing. I shall offer Bland my services. He may have sense enough to accept. If not, the game, of course, will be a goner. That's his look-out."

"Oh!" gasped Potter.

They stared at Coker. They were accustomed to making allowances for Coker. They agreed that a brain like Coker's was a handicap to any fellow, and that Coker really couldn't help it. But they had supposed that even Coker's fatheadedness had a limit. Apparently they had been mistaken. It had no limit.

Coker, with complete satisfaction to himself, was asking them to lend a hand in kidnapping their own football captain just before a match, as a warning to him to play the worst footballer that ever was; and on the off-chance that the vice-captain, in Blundell's place, might be howling ass enough to play the worst footballer that ever was.

That was not, of course, how Coker looked at it. But that was actually how matters stood.

"Well, that's the big idea," said Coker briskly. "I've got to work out a few details. I can rely on you fellows?"

"Eh!"

"You're backing me up, of course?"

"Bub-bub-backing you up?"

"I hope," said Coker, rather unpleasantly, "that my friends are not going to let me down, after I've thought out this rather masterly stratagem. It may have big results. Suppose Bland plays me, being a man short? We walk all over the Sixth—lick them fairly out of their football boots! Wingate will see my quality and bag me

afterwards for the First Eleven. That means that I shall play for Greyfriars in the future. It's pretty disgraceful that I've never been given my colours. Well, that will be set right—if Bland has any sense."

"Ye gods!" said Potter.

"If Bland refuses my services, matters are where they were," added Coker. "Blundell gets a lesson—a sharp lesson—and no harm's done."

"No harm!" gasped Potter. "No harm in keeping a football captain out of a match?"

"Not in this case. No more harm than if you were kept out yourself, old chap. One dud's as good as another," explained Coker. "Plenty of duds in the Fifth, if Bland wants a dud instead of me."

Coker rose from his chair.

"Well, that's settled!" he remarked.

Potter and Greene looked at one another. It was not quite settled yet! There was a brief pause. Potter and Greene did not want to quarrel with Coker, if they could help it. Life in the study would be too strenuous on fighting terms with Coker. But it was evident that it could not be helped. If Coker's friendship depended on Potter and Greene helping him to kidnap their football captain and lock him up just before a match, Coker's friendship had to go. And as it was clear that there was going to be trouble, George Potter felt that the time had come, at last, to tell Coker some plain home-truths that had often trembled on the tip of his tongue. He did not want a row with Coker, but if a row was inevitable there would be some satisfaction in telling the egregious Horace what he thought of him.

"You piffing idiot!" said Potter, in measured tones. "You potty, pernicious, piffing chump! You're left out of football because you can't play football. Marbles is your game; and any fag in the Second could beat you at marbles."

Coker stared.

"Yes, stick to marbles," said Greene, taking his cue from Potter. "Or hopscotch! Try hopscotch!"

Coker glared.

"I'm going to the games study now," continued Potter. "I'm going to tell every man in the games study what you've just proposed. That's to keep you from trying on any potty tricks to-morrow on your own."

Coker gasped.

"You seem to have dreamed once," said Greene, "that you could play football, Coker. My advice to you is to go to sleep and dream again."

Coker gurgled.

"Is that plain enough, you howling ass?" asked Potter.

"Got it now, you burbling chump?" asked Greene.

Coker found his voice.

"So you're not backing me up? You're against me, too? My own friends—the friends I've trusted—have joined in the conspiracy against me! That's how the matter stands, is it? Why, you rotters—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Potter.

"Yes, shut up!" said Greene.

Coker did shut up. It was unusual—indeed, unprecedented—for Horace Coker to shut up. But he realised that this was a time for action, not for words. Misunderstood and wronged on all sides, even his own familiar friends had raised the heel against him! Coker was not the fellow to stand that!

Coker clenched a pair of huge fists and rushed at Potter and Greene.

He was not going to waste any more

words on them. He was going to give them the thrashing they deserved for letting down a pal—a pal like Coker, too! Coker came at them like a charging bull.

"Collar him!" gasped Potter.

The next few minutes in the study were wild and whirling.

Thrashing Potter and Greene had seemed, to Coker, the only thing to be done, in the circumstances. They had asked for it, and Coker was the man to give them what they had asked for. The fact that they were two to one made no difference to Coker—till he had actually embarked upon the enterprise.

Then it made a difference!

Coker was a hefty man, a plucky man, and a determined man. But he really was not a match for two Fifth Form men at once.

He handed out some hard knocks. He received precisely twice as many as he handed out.

Three Fifth-Formers were mixed up and mingled in a wild combat. It ended suddenly, with Coker on the floor, Greene standing on him, and Potter banging his head on the carpet.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

"Yow-ow-yarooooop!"

Bang! Bang!

"Yurrrrrrggh!"

Potter and Greene walked out of the study, leaving Coker for dead, as it were. They walked along to the games study, and the yells of laughter that proceeded from the games study told that the Fifth were in possession of the story. Coker did not follow them. Coker was sitting on his study floor, rubbing his damaged head with both hands and gasping spasmodically.

"Ow! Ow! Ow! Ooooooh!"

Coker was not quick on the uptake. Ideas were slow to penetrate into Coker's mighty brain. But even Coker realised that he was not going to get any help in the Fifth in his masterly scheme for executing rough justice on the captain of that Form.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

What Bunter Asked For!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry's powerful voice boomed in at Study No. 1, in the Remove.

Prep was over, and Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh were on their way down to the Rag. They stopped at Study No. 1 to gather up Wharton and Nugent.

"You men finished?" boomed Bob.

"Just," said Harry Wharton, and he shoved his books away and rose from the study table. "Come on, Franky!"

The Famous Five walked along to the Remove staircase in a cheery bunch. On the lower landing they came on William George Bunter. Bunter was going down, but he had stopped there to shove something out of sight under his jacket.

The chums of the Remove glanced at him and grinned.

Bunter, apparently, had something to conceal, which he was concealing under his jacket. Bunter's jacket, like all Bunter's garments, fitted him very tightly. There was so much of Bunter sideways, that his clothes were always packed to capacity.

W. G. Bunter was not a bright youth, perhaps, but he was bright enough to know that he had better not be seen with a box of cigarettes in his possession. So he had slipped the box under his jacket. But with the jacket

open the box naturally slipped down. Now he was buttoning the jacket over it to keep it safe; but that was not easy.

The roomiest garment would have had little room to spare when Billy Bunter was inside it. With anything extra there the buttons seemed disinclined to establish contact with the buttonholes. There was a difficulty in making both ends meet.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What have you got there, Bunt?"

Bunter blinked round in alarm.

"Eh? Nothing, old chap!"

"You're hiding nothing under your jacket?" asked Frank Nugent, with a chuckle.

"Yes, exactly! I mean—"

"Whose tuck have you been bagging now?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Let's see it, anyhow," said Bob. "If it's nothing, you needn't mind showing it up, old fat man. Let us see nothing."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The nothingfulness is not terrific," chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I—I say, you fellows, you mind your own bizney!" said Bunter, backing across the landing towards the lower stairs. "I'm jolly well not going to give them to you, I can tell you!"

"What's 'them'?" chuckled Bob.

"Oh, nothing! I've not got any cigarettes here," said Bunter hastily.

"Cigarettes!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You fat villain! Are you taking up smoking in your old age?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows," said Bob Cherry. "Bunter is wandering from the strait and narrow path of virtue! Let's bump him back into the right track."

"Hear, hear!"

"I say, you fellows, no larks!" exclaimed Bunter, backing farther away. "I say, I'm not going to smoke these fags! Nothing of the kind! I'm going to give them to Angel of the Fourth. He smokes, you know."

The Famous Five stared blankly at William George Bunter.

"You howling ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You've been smuggling smokes into the school for that cad Angel! Is that it?"

"No, you ass!" gasped Bunter. "I—I found them! I mean, I—I— That is, I—I borrowed them. I mean a fellow gave them to me. Well, Angel would lend me half-a-crown, if I gave them to him—see? One good turn deserves another. You mind your own bizney. Besides, I haven't got any cigarettes here. It—it's a packet of toffee."

"Tut-tut-toffee!" gurgled Bob Cherry.

"Yes, old chap, just toffee," said Bunter. "I suppose you can take a fellow's word."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Whose smokes have you been bagging, you fat burglar?" demanded Johnny Bull. "Some smoky waster in the Remove?"

"Nothing of the kind. I haven't been near the punishment-room. And I don't know anything about Skinner going there to smoke. Besides, serve him right. I'm really doing this to keep Skinner from getting into a row. He would be jolly well licked if the beaks knew he smoked in punny. Not that I've got any cigarettes in this box under my jacket, you know," added Bunter, with great caution.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, you fellows, you get down to the Rag! Wibley's doing some of his impersonations, and it's too good to miss."

"We'll jolly well make an end of those smokes first, you fat chump, before you get spotted with them and licked," said Bob.

"Look here, you beast, I keep on telling you it's a packet of butterscotch—I mean chocolate."

"Bag him!"

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

He bolted down the lower staircase. It was said of old that more haste is less speed.

The fat Owl of the Remove bolted, not wisely, but too well. He missed his footing and rolled.

"Yaroo!" roared Bunter as he continued on his way downstairs rather like a barrel rolling down.

Bump, bump, bump!

"Oh, my hat!"

"Look out!"

Crash!

It was sheer ill-luck that Wingate of the Sixth was coming up the stairs as Bunter went on his barrel-like descent downwards.

They met!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped the Sixth Form man as he was sent spinning.

"Great pip!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Bunter's done it now."

"Yaroo!"

"You clumsy ass!" roared Wingate as he clutched at the banisters, and barely saved himself from hurtling down. "You—

you—"

"Whoop!"

Bunter, like the deep and dark blue ocean in the ocean, rolled on. He bumped at the foot of the staircase, sprawled there, and roared. From under his jacket shot a cardboard box, and all round Bunter, for the second time that evening, cigarettes showered.

"Ow, ow, ow! Yow! Whoop!" spluttered Bunter. "Ow! I'm hurt! I'm injured! I'm killed! Wow!"

Wingate, with a glare, descended after Bunter. He grabbed the fat Owl by the shoulder and dragged him to his feet.

"You young sweep!"

"Yaroo!"

"What are you doing with those cigarettes?" roared Wingate.

"Oh crumbs! I—I'm not—" gasped Bunter. "I—I didn't—I mean, I—I wasn't—it wasn't me! Wow!"

"Pick them up!" hooted Wingate.

For the second time Bunter scooped up scattered cigarettes, and crammed them back into the box. The second time, however, was to be the last time. Evidently Skinner's secret store of smokes was destined now to pass out of the possession of the Owl of the Remove.

"Now you'd better come to my study," said Wingate grimly, as he took the box of smokes from Bunter.

"Wh-a-at for?" gasped Bunter.

"Six; for smoking," said Wingate briefly.

"I—I haven't been smoking!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, you can ask these fellows! I say, you fellows, you tell Wingate—"

"Do you fellows know anything about this?" asked Wingate, glancing up at the grinning quintette on the staircase.

"I think Bunter found the cigarettes somewhere, Wingate," answered Wharton. "I'm certain he never bought them."

"How do you know?" demanded the Greyfriars captain.

"Cigarettes cost money," explained Wharton. "All Bunter's money goes on tuck."

Wingate stared at him for a moment, and then grinned. He turned his attention to Bunter again.

"Bunter, where did you get these cigarettes?"

"I—I found them!" groaned Bunter.

"Where?" rapped out the prefect.

"In—in punny!" groaned Bunter.

matches, or anything. There wasn't any smell of baccy, or anything of that kind."

Wingate stared at him and smiled.

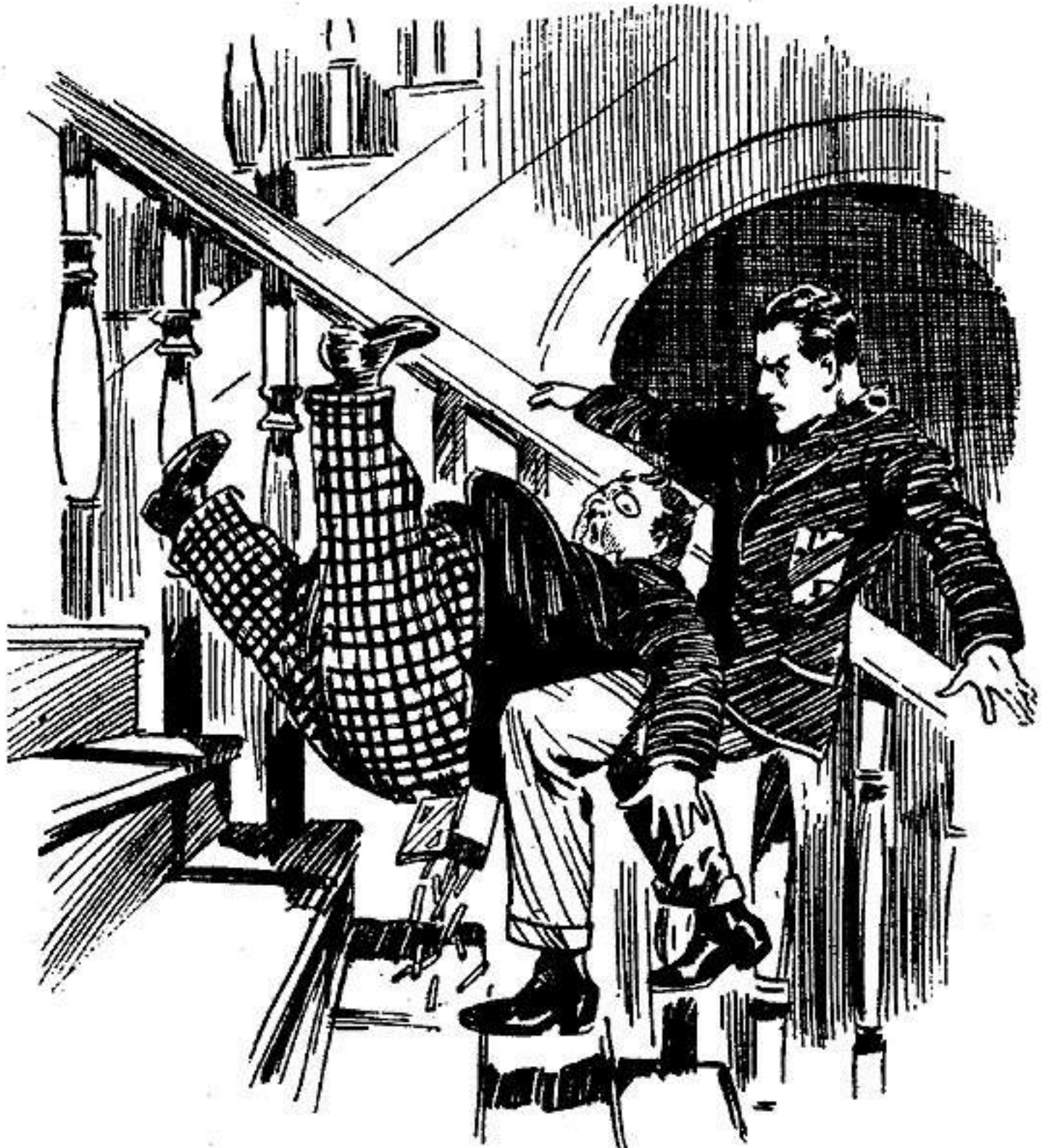
"You young ass! I'll take your word for it that you found these cigarettes," he said. "You should have handed them over to a prefect at once, though."

"So—so—so I have!" gasped Bunter. "I—I was just looking for you to—to hand them over."

"That will do, you young rascal!"

Wingate turned away, much to Bunter's relief. Harry Wharton & Co., laughing, walked on to the Rag. Bunter rolled after them.

"I say, you fellows—"



Like a barrel rolling down a hill, Bunter continued on his way down the stairs. Crash! "Yaroo!" There was a loud yell from Wingate as the Owl's fat form caught him amidships and sent him spinning.

"In the punishment-room!" exclaimed Wingate, in astonishment.

"Oh dear! Yes!"

"What were you doing in the punishment-room? You know jolly well that it's out of bounds, you young rascal!"

"I—I went there to—to—to—"

"To what?" snapped Wingate.

"To—to—to admire the scenery!" gasped Bunter. "There—there's such a—a—a ripping view from—from the window, you know."

"Has somebody been smoking in the punishment-room?" demanded Wingate.

"Oh, no! I—I think not!" gasped Bunter. Bunter might be every kind of an ass, but he was no snook. "I—I never saw any cigarette-ash there, Wingate, on the hearth, or any burnt

"Run away and play, old fat man! You've done your funny turn!"

"You owe me half-a-crown!" yelled Bunter.

"Wha-a-at?"

"It was your fault Wingate begged those smokes!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "Now, they're gone! I suppose you're not going to bilk me!"

"Bilk you!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Well, what do you call it?" he demanded. "Angel would have tipped me half-a-crown for those smokes. Now Wingate's got them! I shouldn't wonder if Skinner makes a fuss, too! Might make out that somebody's pinched those smokes! He's a suspicious beast! Look here, you owe me half-a-crown for those smokes! That'll be a tanner each all round! Shell out!"

"My esteemed fatheaded Bunter—"

"I don't want any jaw!" interrupted Bunter. "I want what I've asked for, and I want it now!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"You want what you've asked for?" he demanded.

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter, with emphasis.

"And you want it now?"

"I jolly well do!"

"Friends, Romans, and countrymen!" said Bob cheerily. "Let's give Bunter what he's asked for, and give it to him now!"

"Hear, hear!"

Five pairs of hands collared William George Bunter at the same moment. Bunter roared.

"Ow! Leggo! Wharrer you up to?" he howled. "Wharrer you think you're doing, you silly asses?"

"Giving you what you've asked for!" explained Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

"Ow!"

Billy Bunter sat on the hard, unsympathetic floor—hard! The Famous Five walked on and left him there. And the frantic howl that followed them from William George Bunter indicated that, although he had received what he had asked for, William George was still dissatisfied.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Latest!

"HEARD?"

Skinner of the Remove asked that question as Harry Wharton & Co. came into the Rag. Skinner's face was wreathed in smiles.

There were a good many fellows in the Rag—Remove and Fourth and Shell. All were smiling.

Apparently some jest was going the rounds; a jest that relaxed the general visage into a joyous grin.

"No. What?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Coker—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Just Coker's name was enough! Coker of the Fifth was not a humorist; he was, indeed, a serious fellow, who took himself very seriously indeed. But there was no doubt that Coker of the Fifth added considerably to the gaiety of existence at Greyfriars School. Fellows could hardly hear his name without smiling. Perhaps it reminded them of the way Coker played football.

"What's the jolly old latest?" asked Bob Cherry.

Skinner chortled.

"The Fifth have been yelling over it in the games study," he said. "It was too good to keep, of course. Coker—ha, ha, ha—" Skinner broke off in a howl of laughter.

"But what—"

"You heard him slanging Blundell this afternoon," said Skinner, almost weeping. "Well, it turns out that that was because Blundell wouldn't play him in the Form match to-morrow against the Sixth—"

"Dear old Coker!" gurgled Bob Cherry. "He thinks he can play Soccer! He really thinks so! Goodness knows what put it into his head! But he does!"

"And he asked Potter and Greene—" Skinner chortled again. "He asked Potter and Greene—ha, ha, ha!—to back him up—oh dear!—to back him up in bagging Blundell—"

"Bagging Blundell?" yelled Bob Cherry.

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"Yes, just before the Form match to-morrow, and—and—ha, ha, ha!—and locking him up in punny—"

"Wha-a-at?" stuttered Wharton.

"To punish him for leaving out the best footballer in the Fifth," sobbed Skinner, "and to give Bland a chance to play Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's the richest in cream, ain't it?" chortled Temple of the Fourth. "Coker seems to have thought they'd back him up! Their own football skipper, you know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They've told all the Fifth, of course!" chuckled the Bounder. "Coker doesn't seem to have expected that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five.

"I guess that guy Coker is the world's prize boob!" chuckled Fisher T. Fish. "This is the elephant's hind leg! It surely is the grasshopper's whiskers!"

"The Fifth have been simply killing themselves!" gasped Skinner. "If Blundell's missing to-morrow, they'll know where to look for him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's the jolly old limit!" chortled the Bounder.

"It's the lizard's side-whiskers!" declared Fisher T. Fish. "I'll tell the world, it's the bluebottle's eyebrows!"

"Coker rowed with Potter and Greene because they wouldn't stand for it!" gurgled Peter Todd. "They've been scrapping in their study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blundell was wipin' his eyes when I saw him," said Skinner. "The Fifth have been nearly weepin' over it. But some of them are talking about lynching Coker."

"Bunging him into punny, you know!" gasped Squiff. "Locking him in! Coker doesn't know he would be torn into small pieces if he got away with a stunt like that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Famous Five.

The whole Rag was yelling. Coker of the Fifth had often caused hilarity; but this time he had, so to speak, gone the whole giddy unicorn. Coker's "latest" was a genuine shriek.

His simple innocence in supposing that Potter and Greene would help him in such a remarkable stunt, that they would even keep it dark, would have been astonishing—in any fellow but Coker! Even in Horace Coker it was a little surprising. Coker was well known to be every imaginable kind of an ass; but in this, his latest, Coker had really surpassed himself.

Potter and Greene had set the games study in a roar with the story. The jest had been, of course, too good to keep! All Greyfriars had heard it, or was hearing it, now.

"Dear old Coker!" gasped Wharton. "He doesn't know that he can't play footer! He thinks he's playing Soccer when he barges about like a mad elephant!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"With Blundell locked up in punny, Bland would skipper the Fifth Form team—and have a chance of playing Coker!" gurgled Bob. "I can see Bland jumping at that chance—I don't think!"

"I can see the other men jumping at Bland, if he did!" chortled Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter put a fat face and a pair of gleaming spectacles in at the door of the Rag. "I say—Coker—he, he, he!—Coker—I—"

General attention was turned on

Bunter. If there was fresh news of Coker everybody wanted to hear it. Coker, at the moment, filled the public eye; he was right in the spotlight.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "What's the latest?"

"He, he, he! Coker—" gasped Bunter. "Coker's getting it! They're in his study! He's going through it—"

"Come on!" shouted Bob.

There was a rush to the door. If the Fifth Form men were dealing with Coker every fellow wanted a front seat to see the entertainment. A swarm of juniors invaded the Fifth Form passage.

Coker's wonderful wheeze had been taken as a jest—a screaming joke. Still, it had its serious side. A scheme to bag a footballer and keep him away from a match in which he was booked to play was undoubtedly a serious matter—though it was difficult to take Coker seriously.

Certainly, the scheme was not likely to be a success. Coker would never have been likely to "get by" with it, as Fisher T. Fish expressed it. Still, it was not a matter that the Fifth Form footballers could pass over without comment. No doubt Blundell & Co. felt that it was up to them to attempt to induce Coker to see the matter in a proper light. And, to judge by the sounds that echoed along the Fifth Form passage, they were making that attempt on drastic lines.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

What Coker Did Not Expect!

HORACE COKER remained alone in his study after Potter and Greene had left him.

He was not in a mood to seek company.

He was, in fact, busy for some little time in attending to the damages he had received in the wild and whirling combat with Potter and Greene.

After that Coker threw himself into his armchair, with a gloomy and thoughtful brow.

Potter and Greene had turned him down! Not only had they turned him down, but they had given him away. Coker could hear the yells of laughter from the direction of the games study, and he guessed what they meant. Not that there was, in Coker's opinion, anything to laugh at. The comic side of the affair was quite lost on Coker. Still, he knew that the Fifth were laughing over what Potter and Greene had told them.

Coker's reflections were rather bitter.

He had put a great deal of thought into that masterly stratagem. He could not help feeling that it was such a stunt as no other fellow would ever have thought of. On that point no doubt Coker was right. Coker's powerful intellect was the only one at Greyfriars capable of evolving such a scheme.

His friends had failed him at the pinch. Coker was accustomed to being monarch of all he surveyed in his study. Potter and Greene generally gave him his head, partly for the sake of a quiet life, partly because they shared the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and partly, no doubt, because they really rather liked old Coker, in spite of his weird manners and customs. Coker was quite unconscious of the fact that he had stepped over the limit, and he felt bitterly that in an emergency like this his own familiar friends had turned on him.

But Coker was a sticker.

(Continued on page 12.)

"Half-Time" Gossip!



"Old Ref" really is a great authority on Soccer. If you're in doubt over any problem relating to the great winter game, our "Wise Man of the Whistle" will help you out.

FROM past experience I know well enough that readers of the MAGNET do not go about with their eyes shut. They not only observe things, but make notes about them. I have further evidence of this in my post-bag this week.

Among my readers is evidently one who divides his time, quite impartially, between Soccer and Rugger. He goes to watch both games when he has a chance, and has also played both games. He says he has recently been to a big Rugger match, and also to a big Soccer Cup-tie.

"At the Rugger match," he writes, "the players all had numbers on their backs, so that I was able to identify them with the aid of the programme. The Soccer players did not carry any such numbers on the backs of their shirts, and consequently, as I did not know the players of either team, I was often at a loss to identify the player who had done something good."

This reader naturally wants to know why the players of the one game have numbers on their backs, while the players of the other game do not.

Let me say at once that I am in very real sympathy with my reader friend, and he has stumbled on a point connected with Soccer which I have never been able to understand—the persistent refusal of the clubs to agree, in general, to the numbering of their players so as to render them identifiable to the watcher in the crowd who does not happen to be familiar with them.

TWO or three years ago there was a serious movement towards the numbering of all players in a Soccer match. Indeed, two of the leading London clubs—Chelsea and Arsenal—went so far as to turn their players out in a match with the numbers and all complete. To the amazement of most people—and certainly to my amazement—the Football League Management Committee stepped in and told these clubs that they must immediately stop the numbering of players. I repeat that I have never been able to understand why.

Of course, I have heard a certain number of stock arguments against the suggestion. I have been told—as if I didn't know it well—that football is a team game:

that the success of the individual doesn't matter, and that it is the welfare of the team as a whole which should be the only consideration.

Of course it is. You can't have a successful football side unless every member of it is playing for the side, as distinct from playing for himself.

I submit, however, that this is not an effective reply to the argument that footballers should be numbered. The watchers of the game, interested in the result, are also interested in the personalities of the players. If it were not so, surely it would be sufficient to say that Blackburn Rovers would have eleven men on the field for their next match, without giving the public any indication of the names of the eleven players.

IT can also be argued that the watcher with a programme can identify the players, if he will take the trouble to do so, by watching them in relation to their position on the field. This argument is all right so far as it goes. But let us suppose that during a match a player of a side is injured, so that he has to go off the field. Immediately there is, of necessity, a shuffling of the players—a forward may go to half-back, and so on. Immediately this happens—and it happens quite frequently, the programme becomes of no use at all for "identification" purposes.

I think the players of a Soccer side ought to be numbered; that such numbering would add to

the interest taken in the players, and would not have the slightest effect for ill on the play itself.

Items of interest to the watchers of a game do not necessarily detract from the quality of the football. In a football match, for instance, it doesn't matter a little bit who scores the goals, but the onlookers are always interested in the goal scorer. "Who got that one?" is a frequent question. There is at least one first-class football club which settles the question for those who attend the ground. The Arsenal have a big board, and when a goal is scored the scorer's number is put up on the board for all to see—the number, that is, corresponding with his number on the official programme. Would anybody seriously suggest that such an announcement is noticed by the players at all, or that it makes them selfish? The idea is absurd. I am all for the numbering of footballers, whether in the Soccer game or the Rugger game.

THE football season is getting on. The majority of the big clubs have played three-quarters of their matches, and the end is beginning to appear on the horizon. Is it a fact, asks one reader, that the big football clubs are not allowed to sign on new men after the Sixteenth of March? This is one of those questions to which perhaps the answer nearest the correct one would be: "Yes and no."

It is not literally true to say that a big football club cannot sign on a new player—secure his transfer, that is—after the Sixteenth of March in each season. What is literally true is

that no club signing a player after that date can play him in any League match without the consent of the officials of the League Management Committee.

In practice the League Management Committee do not stop transfers in the middle of March. What they do say is that any player signed on after that date shall not play for his new club if by playing he may affect such problems as championship winning or relegation.

If Manchester United, in danger of relegation to the Second Division, were to sign on a new player after the Sixteenth of March, he would not be allowed to play for them. And if another club, with a perfectly safe position in the League, signed on a player after the Sixteenth of March, he would not be allowed to play for them against Manchester United, to give an example. You see, if he played against Manchester United, he might jeopardise their chances of saving themselves from going down to the Second Division.

THE authorities are very careful to see that this March 16th rule is carried out. I recall, for instance, that four years ago Stockport County had two points deducted because they played, without permission, a player who was not signed on before the Sixteenth of March.

It was the Chelsea club who were responsible for the rule being put on the books. Quite a long time ago they signed on about half a team very near the end of the season in the hope that by so doing they would save themselves from going into the Second Division.

It is obviously unfair that a club which happens to have a lot of money should, by buying players late in the season, save itself at the expense of a less favoured side.

It is my sincere wish that one of these days there will be in League football a rule similar to that which operates in the English Cup competition: That no player can play for more than one club in one season.

"OLD REF."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1.204.

THE CHAMPION CHUMP!

(Continued from page 10.)

Nature had not, perhaps, been kind to Coker in the matter of brains, but in compensation she had endowed him with plenty of bulldog determination. The fellows who were chuckling and chortling over Coker's latest would have been surprised to learn that Coker was still sticking to his great wheeze. But he was!

He did not even think of giving it up. Opposition only confirmed Coker in a resolution. His friends had failed him, so he was going to manage without them, somehow. The only question was: How? Blundell, no doubt, would be on his guard after this, which made matters rather awkward and presented difficulties. But difficulties were only made to be overcome. Coker was the man to overcome them.

With his powerful brain concentrated on these cogitations, Coker did not heed a sound of voices and footsteps in the Fifth Form passage outside. But he sat up and took notice, so to speak, when his study door was hurled open and half a dozen Fifth Form men tramped in, led by Blundell, the captain of the Fifth.

Coker stared at them.

Blundell & Co. appeared to be making an effort to keep serious, as became fellows dealing with a serious matter. In spite of this, however, they were grinning.

"What the thump do you want?" snapped Coker. "I don't remember asking you into this study, Blundell!"

He stared again, noting that the captain of the Fifth had a fives bat in his hand. Coker wondered what on earth Blundell was carrying a fives bat about for. He was soon to learn.

"You benighted ass!" was Blundell's greeting.

"Chuck it!" said Coker.

"So you're going to bag me before the Form match to-morrow," said Blundell, "and bung me into punny, and lock me in?"

Coker eyed him calmly.

"What about it?" he asked.

"Wha-a-a-t about it?" stuttered Blundell.

"Yes. What about it?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Hilton of the Fifth.

"Ain't he priceless?" chuckled Fitzgerald.

"Look here——" hooted Blundell.

Coker waved an impatient hand to the door.

"Get out! I don't care to discuss it!" he said.

"You—you—you don't care to discuss it!" gurgled Blundell.

"No. Get out!"

The Fifth Form men looked at Coker and looked at one another. They did not get out. Blundell took a harder grip on the handle of the fives bat.

"You think you can arrange to bag a footballer and keep him out of a game and muck up a Soccer match and nothing said?" asked Blundell.

Coker laughed—one of those sardonic laughs. He seemed contemptuously amused.

"You call yourself a footballer?" he asked.

"Wha-at?"

"Of course, a fellow can call himself anything he likes," said Coker generously. "Call yourself a footballer. I don't mind. You can call yourself the Emperor Japan if you like!"

George Blundell breathed hard. He had come there to explain matters to Coker, with a little help from the fives

bat, but he had come in quite a good temper. Now his temper seemed to be less good. Blundell, captain of his Form, member of the First Eleven and a tremendous blood, was not the fellow to be talked to as Coker was talking to him.

"You burbling chump——" began Blundell.

"As for mucking up a Soccer match," went on Coker, ruthlessly interrupting him, "that's rot, and you know it! The match will be mucked up, anyhow, with a chump like you skipping, and a lot of fumbling duds barging about. You fellows may take it seriously if you like. You can't expect a footballer like me to take it seriously."

"Ye gods!" murmured Bland of the Fifth.

"The Sixth will walk all over you," resumed Coker, "as usual! You choose to leave out the only really good man in the Form, and the other duffers choose to let you do it. Well, what difference will it make to the match whether you play or not? Some other silly ass could take your place and nobody would see any difference. Isn't one howling ass as good as another?"

Some of the Fifth Form men chuckled, and Blundell's face grew crimson. His good temper was quite gone now, and his grip on the fives bat almost convulsive.

"So—so—so that's how you look at it?" gasped Blundell.

"That's how," agreed Coker. "I shouldn't have dreamed of shifting a man out of the game if it would make any difference to the result. In your case it wouldn't. It would be a lesson to you. You're too sidey, Blundell."

"I—I—I——"

"Much too sidey," said Coker. "It's time, I think, that you were told plainly that you're not the big noise you fancy you are!"

"Oh!" gasped Blundell.

"It would be a lesson to you, and a warning," explained Coker. "You've asked for it—begged for it, in fact. As for the match, that's a muck-up, anyhow, with me left out. If you'd been missing, some other silly idiot could fumble and fozzle about instead of you. Bland might have had sense enough to play me. In that case it would mean a win."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fifth Form men.

"You can chortle!" roared Coker. "As it happens, I know what I'm talking about, and all that you fellows know about Soccer could be put into a thimble. Anyhow, I'm fed-up with you, and I've no time to waste. Get out!"

Blundell breathed hard and deep.

"You don't see anything rotten in this scheme of yours, Coker?" he asked.

"Don't be an ass!"

"You don't see anything mean or sneaky or tricky?"

"Don't be a fool!"

"You don't expect to be jolly well licked for it?" roared Blundell, his temper quite bad now.

"I'd like to see any man in the Fifth lick me!" said Coker truculently.

"That's lucky, for you're just going to see it," said Blundell. "You're going to have six from this bat, Coker, as a warning not to play the goat. If you'd really tried on that potty stunt we'd have lynched you. As it is, you get six as a warning. Collar him!"

Coker leaped to his feet.

He had not, apparently, expected this. But with Coker it was often the unexpected that happened.

"Why, you cheeky rotters!" hooted Coker. "Hands off! Why, my hat, I—I—I'll— Yarooooop!"

Coker hit out right and left as he was collared. Hilton of the Fifth captured Coker's right with his eye; Fitzgerald got Coker's left on his nose. Both of them uttered wild war-whoops. But Coker had no time for more. Collared on all sides, Horace Coker was swept off his feet and slammed on the study table, face down.

"Hold him steady!" said Blundell.

It was not easy for even half a dozen Fifth Form men to hold Coker steady. Coker roared and struggled and wriggled.

But they held him. Three fellows holding his legs, three more holding his arms, pinned Coker across the table.

Thus placed in a favourable position for punishment, Coker was given his due. Blundell wielded the fives bat with scientific precision.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Whoooooooop!"

The celebrated Bull of Bashan had nothing on Coker, so to speak, at that moment. The trumpeting of a wild elephant would have sounded like a gentle murmur in comparison with Coker's terrific roar.

"They're going it!" came a yell from the passage.

"Give a fellow room!"

"Don't shove!"

"I say, you fellows, let a fellow see——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Outside Coker's study the passage was swarming. Fifth Form men were there, and they were joined by juniors of the Shell, the Fourth, the Remove. Even some fags of the Third and the Second struggled for places.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroop! I'll smash you, Blundell! I'll lick the lot of you! I'll pulverise you all round! Yaroooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wallop the lot of them, Coker!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Go it, old bean!"

"Coker sounds cross!" chortled Skinner.

"The crossfulness is terrific."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here, you clear off, you fags!" said the captain of the Fifth, glancing round at the crammed doorway. "This isn't a circus!"

"Isn't it?" chuckled Bob Cherry. "My dear man, it's better than a circus. Don't mind us—get on with it."

"I'll smash you!" roared Coker. "Leggo! Leggo, I say! You hear me telling you to leggo?"

Whack, whack whack!

"Yaroooo! Oh crikey! Leave off!" yelled Coker, wriggling spasmodically.

"Oh, my hat! Oh crumbs! Oh, jumping Moses! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yoooooooooooop!"

"That's a dozen!" said Blundell, stopping at last. "You ought to have some more, Coker; but we're letting you off with that. Chuck him into a corner and come on, you men."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker, in a frantic and breathless state, was accordingly chucked into a corner of his study, where he collapsed in a spluttering heap. The Fifth Form men followed Blundell from the study, pushing through the almost hysterical mob there. Grinning faces looked in on Coker as he sprawled and gasped and spluttered.

Coker staggered to his feet at last. He picked the poker out of the fender and came towards the door.

The crowd melted away—rapidly. They roared with laughter as they went. Coker slammed the door.

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "Oh, my hat! Oh! Ow! Wow!"

He wriggled. Blundell had laid on the fives bat with a heavy hand. Coker was still wriggling when he went to the Fifth Form dormitory that night. Smiling faces surrounded Coker in that dormitory; but Coker did not smile. Coker's expression was like that of the ancient king who never smiled again!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Poor Old Coker!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. smiled, the following morning, when they came across Coker of the Fifth in the quad.

Coker was not looking his bright and bonny self.

His brow was set and gloomy.

With his hands deep in his pockets and a moody frown on his rugged brow, Coker tramped under the elms on his lonely own.

He glanced at the cheery chums of the Remove, frowned more darkly, and tramped on.

Potter and Greene came along the path towards Coker, and they exchanged a rather uncomfortable glance and slowed down.

Coker gave them a steely look, but no other sign of recognition.

Coker, evidently, had his back up.

His friends had turned him down; and Coker was not the man to be turned up again, as it were. He was done with these two faithless friends; and his grim look made that clear.

Potter coughed, Greene hummed and hemmed. Potter and Greene really did not want to quarrel with old Coker. They rather liked him, in a way. Anyhow, they had to share their study with him. Neither were they wholly indifferent to the magnificent hampers that, from time to time, arrived from Coker's Aunt Judy.

Of course, they had not been able to back him up in his remarkable scheme for dealing with his Form captain. But they had refrained from taking a hand in the batting. They would willingly have let the whole matter drop—had Coker been willing. Coker did not look willing, however.

"Coker, old man——" murmured Potter.

Horace Coker stopped and looked George Potter full in the face.

"Did you speak to me?" he asked icily.

"Yes, old chap——"

"Well, don't!"

"You see, Coker, old man——" urged Greene.

"I don't!" contradicted Coker.

"You see——"

"I'd rather you didn't speak to me, Greene!"

"But you see——"

"Shut up!"

"There's a jolly old rift in the lute!" murmured Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"The esteemed riftfulness is terrific!" chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The



Coker was pinned across the table in a favourable position for punishment. Next moment Blundell was wielding the fives bat with scientific precision. Whack, whack, whack! "Whooooop!" yelled Coker.

worthy and ridiculous Coker has his back terrifically up!"

"You see, Coker——" persisted Greene desperately.

Coker raised a commanding hand.

"Shut up! I'm done with you! I relied on you to back me up! You refused——"

"You see, old bean——"

"Not only that," said Coker warmly, "but you gave away my game! Gave me away to Blundell and his crew!"

"You—you see," gasped Potter, "we—we had to! We really couldn't let you run on, Coker! We had to warn Blundell! You see that?"

"You jolly well know what an idiot you are," said Greene argumentatively.

"If we hadn't given Blundell the tip, you're quite ass enough to have tried on some potty stunt——"

"I've been batted!" said Coker.

"The whole Form are down on me! I've been laughed at!"

"Well, that's nothing new——"

"What?"

"I—I mean——" stammered Greene.

"Laughed at!" said Coker, deeply incensed. "Made a fool of! Fellows treat the whole thing as if it were a screaming joke!"

"Well, isn't it?" asked Potter.

"No!" roared Coker. "It isn't!"

"Of course, it wouldn't have been a joke, if you'd really tried it on!" said Potter. "You'd have been lynched! But——"

"I've done a lot for you fellows," said Coker, more in sorrow than in

anger. "I've given you a lot of tips about footer. I've never hesitated to tell you what silly fatheads you were. I've been your friend through thick and thin. I've helped you with advice, without you even asking me. I've shut you up lots of times when you've been talking rot. Then you turn me down—give me away—throw me over! It reminds a man of what Spokeshave says—I mean Shakespeare. 'How sharper than a thankless child it is to have a serpent's tooth!'"

"Oh crumbs!"

"But I'm done with you now," said Coker. "Don't speak to me any more! Not a word! Another word from either of you, and I'll knock your silly heads together! Mind, I mean that!"

"But Coker, old man——"

"You see, Coker——"

Potter and Greene spoke together, heedless of the warning. Coker's eyes glinted. Coker was a man of his word.

"That does it!" he snapped.

And suddenly reaching at Potter and Greene, Coker grasped them, to knock their heads together.

Crack!

There was a simultaneous howl from Potter and Greene, as their heads met. The next moment there was a howl from Coker.

Potter and Greene had been trying to make it up. But they forgot all about making it up now.

(Continued on page 16.)



(Continued from page 13.)

They fairly hurled themselves at Coker.

Coker had said that he would knock their heads together, and he had done it. Whether Coker expected them to take it quietly, cannot be said. Perhaps he did not expect anything at all. There was, in point of fact, only room in Coker's mighty brain for one idea at a time. Anyhow, whatever Coker expected or did not expect, he certainly did not seem to expect what happened next. In the grasp of the enraged Fifth-Formers, Coker's head was banged on the trunk of an elm-tree—once, twice, thrice!

Bang, bang, bang!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Then Potter and Greene strewed Coker on the earth, and walked away, with frowning faces, rubbing their heads.

Horace Coker lay where they had strewn him, and spluttered. Harry Wharton & Co. chuckled.

"Poor old Coker," sighed Bob Cherry, "always asking for it, and always getting what he's asked for! Shall we pick him up?"

"The pickfulness-up is the proper caper."

"Let's!" grinned Nugent.

And the Famous Five kindly took hold of Coker, and helped him to his feet. Coker gasped for breath and rubbed his head.

"The cheeky rotters!" he gasped. "What are you grinning at, you cheeky fags? Don't grin at me, unless you want a licking all round."

This was apparently Coker's way of rendering thanks for kind assistance.

"You silly ass!" said Johnny Bull.

"I've told you not to be cheeky, Bull."

"Fathead!"

The next moment Johnny gave a roar, as a finger and thumb fastened on his ear. Coker pulled.

"Owl! Wow!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Why, you silly chump—you—you—you—Back up, you men!"

Again Coker did not seem to expect what naturally and inevitably followed. He seemed quite surprised when the Famous Five collared him, and bumped him down on the earth, hard. They had helped him up; and now they helped him down again. And Coker's last state was worse than his first.

Staying only to give Coker's head a final bang on the ground, the Famous Five walked away.

Coker sat up dizzily.

"Oh, my hat! Why, I'll—I'll—Oh crumbs!"

"He, he, he!"

Coker glared round. That fat and unmusical cachinnation came from Billy Bunter. Bunter was blinking at Coker of the Fifth, through his big spectacles, apparently greatly entertained.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,204.

"You wait a tick!" gasped Coker, struggling to his feet.

Billy Bunter did not wait a fraction of a tick. He spun round and started for the House. Coker's expression was enough for Bunter. He did not wait to see what Coker was going to do when he got up.

"Stop!" roared Coker.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

He fairly flew as he heard Coker's heavy footsteps behind him. Bunter's movements were not, as a rule, swift. But there were times when he could put on speed. This was one of the times. Bunter vanished into the House at a speed that was really remarkable. After him rushed Coker.

Crash!

"Now I've got you!" gasped Coker, as he crashed into somebody just within the doorway. "Now I've— Oh! Ah! Oooh! Great pip! I—I didn't see you, sir! Oh crikey!"

"Bless my soul! I—I— Bless my soul! I presume that you did not see me, Coker!" gasped the Head of Greyfriars, as he staggered. "I—I certainly suppose that you did not see me. But what do you mean, Coker, by rushing—by plunging—yes, plunging, recklessly into the House, in this disorderly and obstreperous manner, sir? I repeat, Coker, what do you mean by it?"

Coker gasped.

"I—I—I—"

Dr. Locke gasped, too. Generally a very mild and benevolent gentleman, the Head of Greyfriars was looking at Coker now as if he could have bitten him.

"Coker! You stupid, ill-mannered, obstreperous, unthinking—"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Coker.

"You will take five hundred lines, Coker!" gasped the Head. "Bless my soul! I am quite breathless! I shall speak to Mr. Prout! Take five hundred lines! Bless my soul! I have a great mind to cane you, Coker! A very great mind indeed! Bless my soul! Go!"

Coker limped away.

"He, he, he!" came from somewhere; but this time Coker did not heed it. He limped away, and Billy Bunter was left to cachinnate.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Strategists!

SKINNER of the Remove glanced round as his study door opened, and stared at the sight of Coker of the Fifth. Skinner was not expecting a visitor in his study; and least of all was he expecting Coker. What on earth Coker could want there, was a mystery to Skinner, and he just stared.

After dinner that day, which was a half-holiday, the Greyfriars fellows were following their various avocations. Blundell and his merry men were thinking of football. Wingate and the Sixth Form men had the same subject in mind, being booked to play the Fifth. Harry Wharton & Co. were also thinking of the great winter game, as they were playing Hobson's Shell team on Little Side, while the senior match was on Big Side.

Other fellows had other matters to think of. Fisher T. Fish was deep in abstruse business calculations. Billy Bunter was seeking up and down the House for some good Samaritan to cash, in advance, a postal order that he was expecting shortly. Skinner, for his part, was thinking of loafing along to punny to smoke a surreptitious cigarette or two; not being aware that his secret supply of smokes, kept in that safe

and secluded quarter, had been lifted by the Owl of the Remove, and had passed into the hands of authority.

Coker of the Fifth—amazing to relate—was still thinking of the wonderful wheeze which had caused so much gaiety in Greyfriars the previous evening. Even fellows who knew Coker well, and thought they knew exactly what an ass he was, never suspected that he was sticking to that scheme. But they did not quite know Coker. Coker was a stickler, and he was sticking.

Coker, indeed, considered that it was up to him now.

Blundell, in the innocence of his heart, had supposed that a batting with a fives bat would knock some of the nonsense out of Coker. He had supposed that it would be a warning to him. Instead of which, that batting had been, as it were, the last straw. Coker was going to "show 'em!"

Fixed and immutable, like the laws of the Medes and the Persians, was that great stunt in Coker's powerful mind. The only doubtful point was "how."

Obviously, strategy was required. Coker realised that. But for the faithlessness of Potter and Greene, the thing would have been simple. George Blundell, enticed into the passage that led to the punishment-room, would have been collared, and bundled neck and crop into punny, locked in, and left. Simple as A B C—if only Potter and Greene had been good men and true!

But it was not so simple now. Blundell, aware of the scheme, was not likely to let Coker entice him anywhere near punny. Even if he did, Coker on his own could not bundle him in neck and crop. It was certain that Blundell would have raised objections of the most strenuous nature.

Strategy was indicated. Fortunately, Coker was the man for it. Hence his present visit to Skinner's study—though Harold Skinner did not understand, as yet, that he was cast for a part in Coker's strategic schemes.

Coker came in and closed the door, Skinner staring at him blankly. Then he sat on the study table and looked at Skinner.

"Make yourself at home," said Skinner sarcastically. "This happens to be my study; but don't mind me."

"I fancy you'll do!" said Coker, looking at Skinner with an appraising air, and apparently following his own line of thought. "From what I've heard, you're a seedy sort of sweep. You'd do a good deal for a quid."

Skinner stared harder. Coker's words were not complimentary; but if Coker had come there to exude quids, Skinner was not the man to say him nay. Skinner, indeed, could have used a quid that afternoon. He had a fancy for Nobbled Nick for the Swindleton Stakes.

"And you're sharp," said Coker, still eyeing him. "The sharpest young rogue in the school, I fancy!"

"Thanks!" said Skinner sarcastically.

"Not that a fellow need be very sharp to take in a crass fool like Blundell!" added Coker.

Skinner jumped.

"What the thump—" he ejaculated.

"Don't jaw," said Coker. "Listen to me! I want you to make yourself useful, and I'll stand you a quid. Catch on?"

Nine fellows out of ten in the Lower School of Greyfriars would have told Coker to go and eat coke. But Skinner was the tenth. So far, it had to be admitted that Coker judged well. Skinner was not proud or sensitive in

these matters. If there was a quid going, it was welcome. Skinner was astonished, but he was ready to do business. He only wondered what on earth Coker could possibly want.

"Catch on?" repeated Coker irritably. "Oh, yes!" gasped Skinner. "But what the thump—"

"You've heard about it, I dare say," said Coker. "Most of the fellows were cackling over it last evening. I want your help. I'm going to lock that fool Blundell in punny—"

"Eh?" "You've heard about it, I suppose? What are you cackling at, you cheeky little beast?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Coker slipped off the study table, and came towards Skinner. The expression on his rugged face was quite unpleasant.

Skinner ceased to cackle suddenly. Coker was between him and the door. "Safety first," was Skinner's motto.

"I—I— All right, Coker," said Skinner hastily. "Don't get your rag out, old chap."

"If you 'old chap' me, I'll pull your ears, Skinner."

"Look here—" "Shut up and listen! I haven't come here to listen to you jawing!" Coker sat on the table again, much to Skinner's relief. "The fellows seem to think I've given up the idea. Well, I haven't! Blundell's for it! It's up to me now! You're going to help! I'm going to stand you a quid for your trouble—not that it will be much trouble. See?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Skinner. "But I—"

"Don't interrupt me! Blundell's got a new match ball in his study," said Coker. "He's going to use it in the Form match. That is, he thinks he is." Coker smiled grimly. "Now, the idea is this. You sneak that football out of Blundell's study—"

"Do I?" murmured Skinner. Skinner could not quite see himself doing it!

"That's the idea! You take it along to punny, and chuck it in there."

"D-d-do I?"

"Blundell will look in his study for it before the game," went on Coker. "You'll tell him where it is."

"Shall I?"

"Yes. You needn't tell him you pinched it, of course. He would lick you—not that that would matter—"

"Wouldn't it?"

"No. Still, you needn't tell him. Just say you saw a fellow pinch it and take it to the punishment-room and hide it. That will be the truth, of course—not that you're particular about the truth."

"Oh!"

"Blundell will think it's some fat-headed practical joke, you see," exclaimed Coker. "What will he do? Of course, he will buzz away to punny to fetch the ball."

Skinner's eyes opened wider. He was getting a glimpse of Coker's strategy. Evidently Coker had been doing some deep thinking.

"Well," resumed Coker, his rugged face breaking into a smile of satisfaction, "Blundell won't see anything of me. But I shall be on the spot."

"Oh!" gasped Skinner. "You—you'll be on the spot?"

"Just that! There's a room in that passage that's never used, you know—not far from the door of the punishment-room. I shall be in that room, with the door shut."

"Oh!" gasped Skinner again.

"It's an old lumber-room—nobody ever goes there," smiled Coker. "Blun-

GET BUSY, LADS, AND WIN A WALLET like Bernard Lavin, of 137, King Street, Drighlington, near Bradford, Yorks, who submitted the following winning limerick, illustrated by our artist:



Fat Bunter, whilst out for a ramble,



Sat down by mistake on a bramble.



His trousers were tight!



He felt it all right,



And yelling, to school he did scramble!

You'd just like one of these dandy wallets. Why not set to work and win one now?

dell will pass the door to get to punny. I shall hear him. See?"

"I—I see!" "As soon as he's gone into punny, I whip out, bang the door shut on him, and lock it!" said Coker.

"My hat!" "Easy as falling off a form!" said Coker. "I've had to think this out since my friends let me down. I've had to carry on, on my own, you see. Still, it only needed brains."

"Only!" murmured Skinner. "And—and you've got the brains, Coker."

"I rather flatter myself that I have," assented Coker. "I've rather a gift for strategy. I don't brag of it—it just happens, you know. Well, that's the idea. All I require is some fag to give Blundell the tip, and get him where I want him. Of course, even a fool like Blundell would smell a rat if I told him myself to go to punny after his match ball—since those dummies gave me away, you know. Blundell's an ass, but he would smell a rat if I gave him the tip myself."

"I—I rather think he would!" gasped Skinner. "Yes, I—I fancy that he would, Coker."

"But, of course, he won't be suspicious of a Remove kid," said Coker astutely. "That's where you come in. I'd rather have asked Wharton or Cherry—but they're rather too straightforward for a trick like this."

"Eh?" "So I've picked you—"

"Oh!" "Not that there's anything wrong in it," explained Coker. "Nothing of that sort! Still, it's the kind of trick that is better in the hands of a rather sharp and unscrupulous sort of fellow—like you, you know."

"L-l-like me?" gurgled Skinner.

"Yes. Mind, you'll have to be careful. Blundell's a silly fool; but you want to be careful, all the same. You bag a quid. According to what I've heard of you, you'd do anything for a quid. Well, that's all right."

Skinner looked at him.

With all Horace Coker's many gifts, it was possible that he lacked tact. Skinner was, in point of fact, a rather unscrupulous fellow. But he did not like being told so. He really was not flattered at being selected for this little game on account of his unscrupulous qualifications. Only one circumstance prevented Skinner from telling Coker what he thought of him. Coker was still between him and the door.

"Well, you understand?" asked Coker, slipping from the table.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Skinner. "You—you—I mean, look here! What's going to happen to me afterwards? If it comes off, I mean. The Fifth Form men will mangle me!"

"That's all right. I'll see you through," said Coker reassuringly. "I shall tell them, of course, that I ordered you to do it—"

"Ordered me?"

"Yes; and that I should have thrashed you if you'd refused."

"Oh!" Skinner immediately reconsidered his intended refusal.

Coker looked at his watch.

"You may as well get going now," he said. "There's some time before the match. Still, you may have to pick an opportunity for getting at the ball."

Skinner looked at him.

"Oh! Yes! Exactly! I—I see!"

Coker, evidently, was not prepared to take a refusal. Skinner, on the other hand, was not prepared to take the licking that would indubitably have

followed a refusal. Coker had a heavy hand!

Coker was a whale on strategy. But Skinner could be strategic, too. He had to be so long as Coker was between him and the door.

"Well, get off, then, and let me know when you've bagged that footer," said Coker. "There's a quid waiting for you," he added. "Don't spend it on smokes, though, you nasty little sweep, or I'll make an example of you!"

Skinner got to the door.

There he turned.

As Coker was no longer between him and the door, Skinner considered, for a moment, whether he might venture to tell the Fifth Form man what he thought of him.

But he decided not! Coker was dangerous at close quarters. He strolled away from the study.

As he went down the Remove passage he chortled. Coker was waiting in the study for Skinner to return and inform him that he had carried out instructions. Skinner wondered at even Coker being ass enough to suppose, for a moment, that he was going to carry out those instructions. If Coker waited till Harold Skinner came back to report, Coker was booked for a long, long wait—longer than the weary vigil of Sister Anne, or the Lady of the Moated Grange.

Leaving Coker waiting in the study, Skinner walked out of the House and strolled away whistling.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Going Strong!

HARRY WHARTON came up the Remove staircase and glanced, in some little surprise, at Coker of the Fifth.

Coker was lounging about the Remove landing.

What a Fifth Form man could possibly be loafing about there for was a mystery to the Removes.

He glanced at Coker and went on to his study. Coker cast a rather sour look after him, and resumed loafing.

Some time had passed since Skinner had gone down to carry out the lordly behests of Coker—as Coker supposed. He had not yet returned. It was getting near time now for the football match, and Coker was uneasy and impatient.

He had waited a considerable time in Skinner's study; and, tiring of that, he came out and waited on the Remove landing, loafing about irritably and impatiently.

Skinner had had ample time to carry out instructions. Yet he had not returned to report to Coker that Blundell's match ball was safely deposited in punny. Why the young rascal was delaying like this was unknown to Coker. It did not occur to his mighty brain that Skinner had no intention whatever of carrying out his instructions—even with a quid in prospect.

Skinner was keen enough on a quid; and he had no objection, in principle, to playing monkeyish tricks on anybody. But even Skinner had his feelings; and Coker really had not put the thing tactfully.

Skinner, moreover, much as he would have liked Coker's quid, would not have ventured to raid Blundell's study in the Fifth for six or seven quids. He apprehended only too clearly what might happen to him afterwards. Taking a hand in kidnapping the Fifth

form football captain was not quite good enough for Skinner. He would have been about as willing to kidnap his Form master, or the Head, or a tiger in the jungle.

Coker, oblivious of these considerations, waited with more and more impatience and annoyance.

Harry Wharton, coming back from his study ten minutes later, passed him on the Remove landing again, and eyed him with more surprise than before. Coker was still hanging about; and the junior wondered why.

This time Coker addressed him as he passed.

"Here, kid! Have you seen Skinner about?"

"Yes," answered Harry.

"Where is he, then?"

"In the quad, I think—if he hasn't gone out."

"Gone out!" ejaculated Coker.

"I think he was going out with Snoop and Stott," said Harry. "He generally does on a half-holiday. What—"

Coker waited for no more. He started down the Remove staircase three steps at a time.

"My hat!" ejaculated Wharton, staring after him blankly. He followed more slowly, wondering whether Coker of the Fifth was off his rocker. He never was securely on it, in Wharton's opinion.

But it was time now for the Remove men to get ready for the match with the Shell, so Wharton dismissed Coker from mind.

Heedless of the junior, Horace Coker hurried out of the House, in a state of mingled surprise and wrath. It seemed scarcely possible that Skinner could have forgotten that Coker was waiting for him—how could anyone forget Coker? Still, it looked like it!

Coker hurried out to look for Skinner. He was not in sight in the quad, and Coker glared round for him in vain. Billy Bunter was in sight, and Coker hooted to him.

"Bunter! Have you seen Skinner?"

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"Yes, I've seen him," he answered.

"Where?" demanded Coker.

"At dinner."

"At—at—at dinner!" gasped Coker. He did not want to know whether the Owl of the Remove had seen Skinner at dinner. "You—you—you young idiot! Take that!"

"Tarooh!"

Whether Bunter was merely obtuse, or whether he was venturing to jest with Coker, the great man did not stop to inquire. Having smacked Bunter's bullet head, Coker strode on, leaving the fat junior spluttering with wrath.

In the quad he passed some of the Fifth—Blundell, Bland, Hilton, Potter, and Greene. He heard Blundell speak as he passed.

"Well, it's nearly time to get changed! Better get in!"

Coker looked at them grimly for a moment as he passed. They did not look at Coker. He passed them like the idle wind which they regarded not.

"Seen Skinner, Temple?" called out Coker.

Cecil Reginald Temple glanced round. "Eh? Yes! He was in the tuckshop a few minutes ago."

Coker hurried on to the tuckshop.

A sound of chuckling greeted him as he entered. Skinner and Snoop and Stott, of the Remove, were there—and they were all laughing. Skinner was telling his friends something that

seemed to amuse them considerably. Coker did not guess what it was.

But Skinner ceased to chuckle as Coker came in. A look of alarm came over his face. He had supposed that Coker was still safe in the Remove quarters, understudying Sister Anne.

"You young sweep!" exclaimed Coker angrily. "I've been waiting for you."

"Oh!" ejaculated Skinner. "I—I was just coming! I—I was just having a ginger-pop with these chaps, but—"

Coker glared at him.

"Come out of this!" he growled.

He did not want to speak before Snoop and Stott, not being in the least aware that Skinner had been telling them all about it, as the best joke of the term. It had to be said for Coker that he was not a suspicious or distrustful fellow.

Skinner eyed him. Again Coker was between him and the door; and Skinner realised the need of strategy. Skinner did not mind really. If Coker insisted upon having his leg pulled a little farther, Skinner did not see why he should not be gratified.

He followed Coker out of the school shop, bestowing a wink on his comrades as he went. Snoop and Stott were left chuckling.

"Well?" growled Coker, under the elm outside.

There they were safe from listening ears.

"It—it's all right!" said Skinner.

"You've bagged the match ball from Blundell's study?"

Skinner had been nowhere near Blundell's study; and he would not have touched Blundell's match ball for love or money. But it was obviously injudicious to tell Coker that.

There was once a person named Washington, who, according to his own statement, could not tell a lie. Skinner did not resemble Washington in the very least. Skinner could not only tell a lie, but often did. It was quite a small matter to Skinner.

"Oh, yes! Of—of course!" said Skinner. "Naturally!"

"You got it away all right?"

"Right as rain!" said Skinner cheerfully.

"You've left it in the punishment-room?"

"Just as you told me," agreed Skinner.

Coker's wrathful brow cleared.

"Well, you young ass, you should have told me at once," he said.

"I—I was just coming—"

"Well, it's all right! Now get into the House! Blundell will be changing for footer soon, and you've got to weigh in."

"Oh, yes! Rather!"

"Mind you're careful. Blundell's a fool, as I've told you—but don't let him smell a rat. If he doesn't get along to punny after that ball you don't get your quid."

"Leave it to me," said Skinner.

"Better not be seen going into the House with me," said Coker thoughtfully. "We've got to be on our guard. Besides, I've got to get on the spot. Give me five minutes, and then pile in!"

"Better compare our watches, then," said Skinner solemnly. "We can't be too careful, Coker! What!"

"Yes, that's a good idea!" agreed Coker.

They compared watches; and then Coker hurried away to the House.

Skinner gazed after him with cheery interest.



Skinner suddenly ceased amusing his friends as Coker entered the tuckshop, and a look of alarm appeared on his face. "You young sweep!" exclaimed the burly Fifth-Former angrily. "Come out of this at once—I want a word with you!"

Coker was going into ambush, in the lumber-room that opened on the passage to punny. He was going to wait there, in ambush, for Blundell to pass. For the second time that afternoon Coker was booked for a long wait.

Skinner looked into the tuckshop again.

"Come on, you men," he remarked. "Let's get out of gates for a bit."

Snoop and Stott joined him.

"Aren't we going to have a smoke in punny?" asked Sidney James Snoop.

Skinner chuckled.

"Not just now. Coker's on the watch there. I'd rather give Coker a wide berth for a bit. Let's get out."

And Skinner & Co., chuckling, got out.

Meanwhile, Coker of the Fifth was losing no time. In the House, Coker adopted a casual, careless air as he strolled away in the direction of the long corridor that led to the punishment-room. He reached that corridor and whipped along to the lumber-room, half-way down it.

A moment more, and Coker was in the room and the door was closed.

Nobody, of course, was there. Some old boxes, and two or three disused and dilapidated articles of furniture occupied the room. A dusky light glimmered in at a cobwebby window.

Standing just within the door, Coker waited and listened. There was a grim smile on his face.

If ever a stratagem was bound to succeed, Coker felt that this one was bound to succeed. Blundell, missing his match-ball, and learning from a junior that some practical joker had bunged it in the punny, would rush there to get it. Coker would hear his footsteps pass along the corridor, and as soon as he

entered the punishment-room Coker would whip along the passage after him, bang and lock the punishment-room door. Then he would streak for the bike-shed and disappear over the horizon on his motor-bike. If the Fifth Form men knew or guessed where Blundell was they could never get him out—without the key. And the key would be in Coker's pocket—over the horizon!

It was a masterly scheme! It was astute! It was really cunning! The only weakness in it was that Skinner had not bagged the match-ball at all, and had gone out of gates without the slightest intention of speaking to Blundell of the Fifth. But as Coker was blissfully ignorant of that he was naturally unaware of this one weakness in his masterly stunt.

He waited and listened. That Blundell of the Fifth had already gone down to the football ground with his match-ball under his arm Coker was happily unconscious. He listened and waited.

And when he heard footsteps coming along the corridor Coker's eyes gleamed with triumph, and he had no doubt whatever that the footsteps were those of Blundell of the Fifth. How could he doubt? With gleaming eyes Coker listened to those footsteps passing in the direction of the punishment-room.

was resting on a box of cigarettes that lay on his desk.

"Shocking!" repeated the Head, apparently addressing the cigarette-box. He was alone in the study.

He sighed as he rose to his feet.

This disagreeable matter had to be looked into, of course. It was a half-holiday for the headmaster as well as for the Greyfriars fellows. Dr. Locke would have preferred to spend a happy hour or two with Sophocles. But duty came first.

He had to look into this.

Wingate, as in duty bound, had reported the affair to the Head. Secret smoking was going on in the school, and it appeared that the young rascal—or more probably young rascals—had selected the punishment-room as the scene of their pernicious activities.

Wingate of the Sixth had taken a box of cigarettes from a junior, who had found it in the punishment-room. Left there, of course, by the young rascals who used punny as a smoke-room! Wingate had gone to the room and found cigarette-ash and burnt matches there. So there was no doubt about it.

It was a serious matter, and the headmaster had to look into it.

It was shocking!

Dr. Locke did not exactly expect the two hundred fellows under his charge to be all perfect characters. He realised only too clearly that some black sheep were sure to creep into such a numerous flock. Still, he did not like to think that there were fellows at Greyfriars who deliberately disregarded the rules laid down for their benefit and in secret flouted the commands of their headmaster. It was, in fact, shocking!

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THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for the Head!

"SHOCKING!" said the Head.

Dr. Locke shook his head sadly.

The headmaster of Greyfriars was in his study, and his glance

Whether the offenders were many or few, whether they were seniors or juniors, the Head did not know; but evidently, he had to ascertain. A careful examination of the room might probably afford a clue. It was a disagreeable duty; but it was a duty that had to be done.

Indeed, the Head had intended to make that necessary visit to the secluded room that morning, but he had been rather upset by a Fifth Form boy charging into the House and knocking him breathless. The Head had felt so very upset by that collision that he had left the matter over till the afternoon.

Now he was taking it in hand.

With a slight cloud upon his scholastic brow, caused by the shocking circumstances, Dr. Locke left his study and with slow and stately steps proceeded in the direction of the punishment-room.

That room was at a distance from the more inhabited portions of the school building. It had, indeed, been a penance cell in the old days when Greyfriars had been a monastic establishment, before King Henry VIII. came down like a wolf on the fold.

A long and rather dusky corridor led to it. Off this corridor opened some rooms that were never used, except as lumber-rooms.

Dr. Locke walked down the long corridor.

His footsteps sounded clearly in the silent, secluded space.

That anyone was listening with eager ears to those footsteps was a thought that was not likely to occur to the Head.

Naturally, it did not cross his mind for a moment that any Greyfriars man was hidden in a lumber-room or the corridor, listening for passing feet. That was really the last thing that would have occurred to the Head.

He was thinking of the disagreeable matter in hand, chiefly, and a little of the cosy study he had left and the entrancing Sophocles.

He walked on and reached the punishment-room.

The key was in the outside of the lock, as usual, the door naturally unlocked, as the room had no offender inside.

The Head opened it and passed in.

Standing in the middle of the room, he looked about him. Outside, there was a bright spring sunlight, but the light that penetrated through the small, barred window was limited. The room was dusky.

There were obvious traces of recent smokers. No doubt the dingy young rascals had never dreamed of being discovered, or looked for, in such a spot. But for a series of accidents, in fact, nobody in authority would ever have suspected that punny was used surreptitiously as a smoke-room.

There was quite a lot of cigarette-ash to be seen, and burnt matches galore. Probably cigarettes were concealed in the room. If so, they could be found, and perhaps traced to the owners. The Head was quite determined that the culprits should be traced. They should be traced, discovered, and severely dealt with—all the more severely because they had ventured to use the punishment-room for their pernicious proceedings.

Looking about the dusky room, the Head suddenly heard a sound in the corridor outside.

He glanced round towards the door.

It flashed into his mind that one of the secret smokers might be coming to the

room at that very moment; it was quite possible, on a half-holiday. Not knowing that the headmaster was there, the offender would walk right into his hands.

A rather grim smile came over Dr. Locke's face.

He stood watching the door, which he had left ajar.

To his surprise, the door was suddenly drawn shut by an invisible hand from without.

Slam!

The Head jumped.

Click!

The Head stood transfixed.

Scrape!

The key was dragged from the lock.

The Head gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a loud, triumphant laugh from the corridor.

The laugh was immediately followed by the sound of retreating footsteps. They died away rapidly down the corridor.

The Head stood rooted to the floor! He had seen—he had heard—but he found it hard to believe either his eyes or his ears.

Was it possible—was it credible—was it imaginable—that any boy would dare to shut him in the room and turn the key?

It was not possible; it was not credible; it was not imaginable! Yet it certainly seemed to have happened!

"Bless my soul!" said the Head faintly.

He crossed to the door. He turned the handle. The door remained immovable; it was locked!

"Bless my soul!" repeated the Head.

The impossible, the incredible, the unimaginable had happened! The headmaster of Greyfriars was locked in his own punishment-room! It was amazing—overwhelming—staggering!

"Goodness gracious!" gasped the Head.

He rapped sharply on the door with his knuckles.

"Boy!"

Echo answered "boy." There was no answer. The Head realised that the young rascal was gone! Gone—with the key! Yet it was difficult for Dr. Locke to realise that he really was shut in a room from which there was no escape—a room with a barred window, a locked door; too far away from the rest of the buildings for a calling voice to be heard. It was an absolutely unprecedented occurrence—unique, in all the Head's long experience as a schoolmaster.

"Boy!" thundered the Head.

"Boy!" came back in echoes.

"Bless my soul! Boy! Unlock this door at once! Release me! You shall be flogged, sir—and if you do not immediately unlock this door, you shall be expelled from the school! Boy!"

The faithful echo answered; then silence. The Head realised that the young rascal—the young scoundrel—the disrespectful young villain—was gone; leaving him locked in.

He sank down on a chair; the only chair in the room. He sat and stared at the locked door! Even yet he could not believe it. But he had to believe it. He was locked in—far from help!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

And a Surprise for Skinner!

HOOT! Hoot! Honk! Skinner & Co. jumped out of the way.

A motor-cyclist came up Friardale Lane at great speed from the direction of Greyfriars. Friardale

Lane was not wide; and the three Removeites were walking along the middle of the road. So they jumped.

Chug! Chug! Chug! Honk! Honk! Honk!

Skinner & Co., cramming out of the way into the hedge, stared round angrily at the man on the motor-bike. They crammed still more closely into the hedge as they recognised Coker of the Fifth. Coker of the Fifth, mounted on his motor-bike, required plenty of sea-room, so to speak. Coker had a way of zigzagging across the road and back again; indeed, fellows had often wondered whether Coker was trying to do figures of eight when he was riding that stink-bike, like a fancy skater.

Coker, no doubt, knew the rules of the road; but he honoured them more in the breach than in the observance. At times that bike seemed to take the bit between its teeth, as it were, and Coker was just a passenger. By a series of miracles, Coker had never killed himself or anybody else; but there was no doubt that when Coker was going on that motor-bike, he bore an alarming resemblance to Death on a Pale Horse. Skinner & Co. plunged into hawthorns for safety.

Chug! Chug! Chug! Honk!

Coker swept by. He went sailing on merrily towards the village where he spread dire terror among sundry street tradesmen, stray dogs and wandering chickens as he roared along at forty miles an hour. Skinner & Co. stared after him.

They had only a glimpse of Coker; but they had seen that his rugged countenance was merry and bright.

Coker, obviously, was in a pleased and satisfied mood.

Skinner wondered why.

Judiciously, Skinner had decided to keep out of Coker's way that afternoon. He had supposed that the egregious Horace would remain quite a long time in ambush near the door of punny. But when he came out of ambush, at long last, Skinner expected him to be in a frightful temper.

Instead of which, he had apparently left his ambush quite soon; and in a cheery frame of mind. It was rather perplexing.

"That's Coker!" said Snoop, staring after the chugging, honking figure that swept on towards Friardale.

"He didn't look ratty!" remarked Stott.

"Looked quite bucked," said the puzzled Skinner. "I'm glad he didn't see me, all the same. He must be wild! He must know by this time that I never touched Blundell's match-ball and never told him it was in punny, and that I was only pulling his silly leg."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I'm glad he's gone," said Skinner. "I'd rather keep out of the howling fathead's way; but we can go in and get a smoke now. I thought he would stick there watching for a long time."

"Got tired and chucked it, perhaps!" said Snoop.

"I suppose he must have—but that's not like Coker! Anyhow, the silly ass has gone off on his jigger, and the coast's clear. Let's get in."

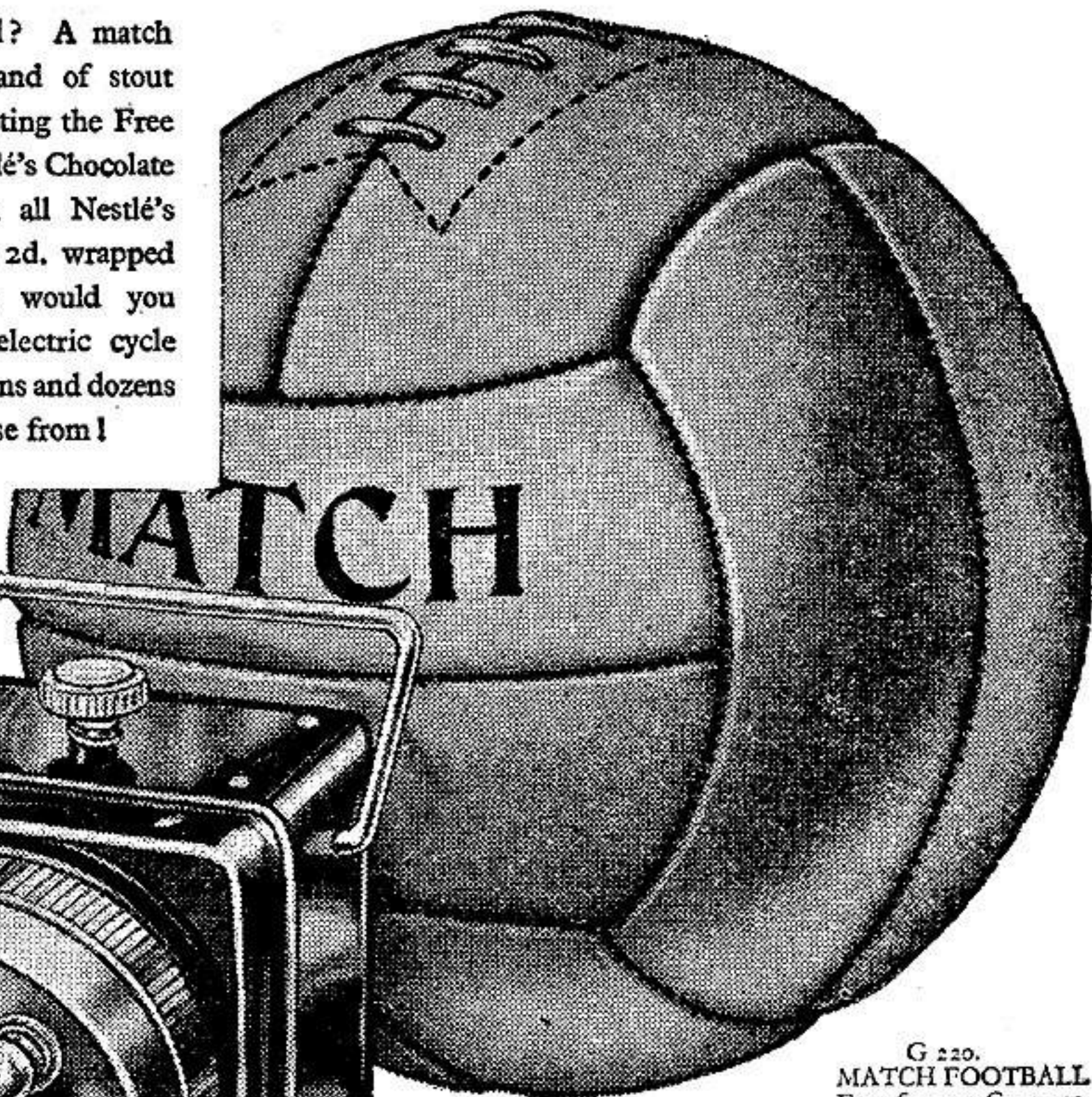
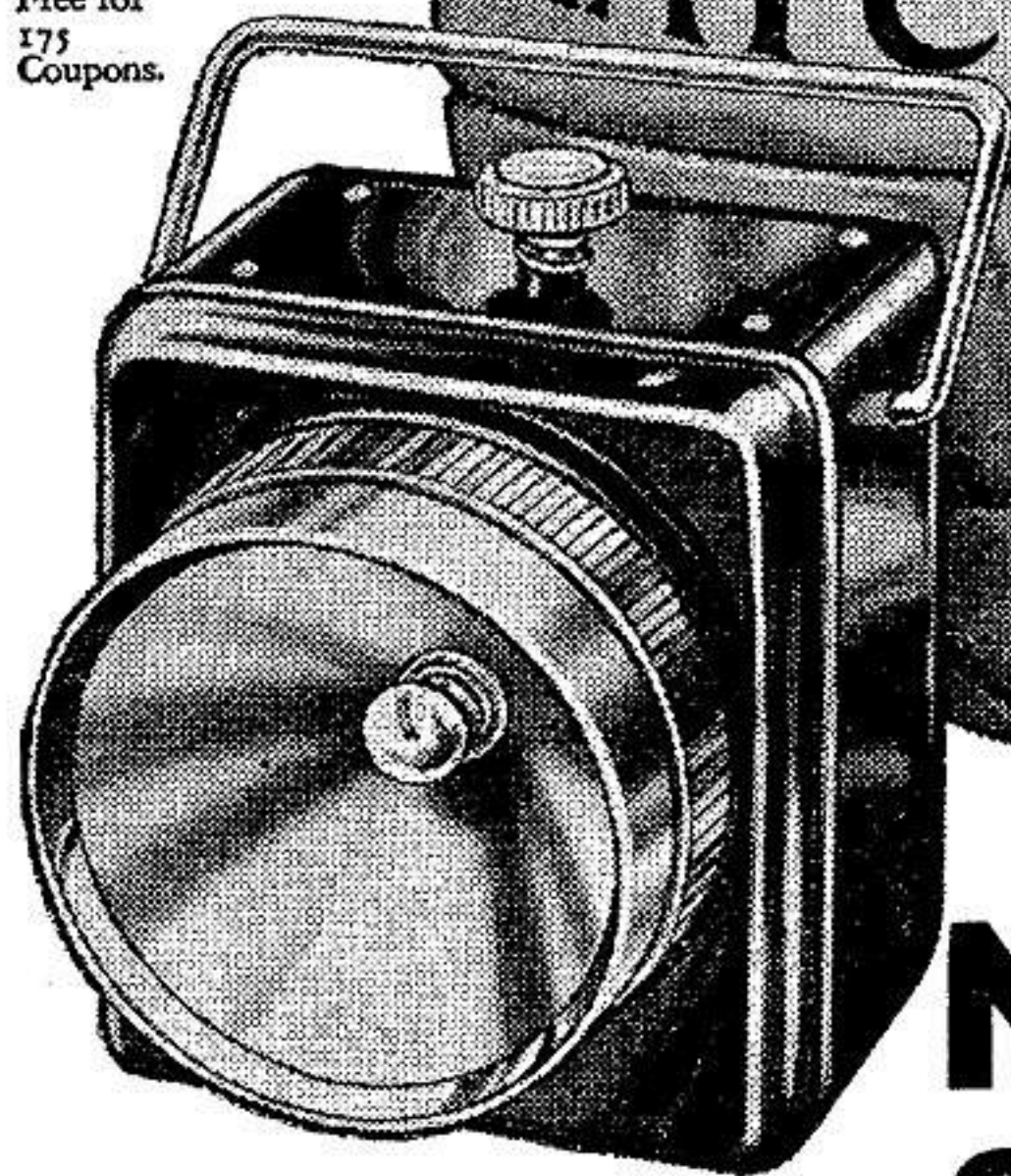
Coker of the Fifth had vanished in the distance, leaving behind him only a trail of dust and a smell of oil. Skinner & Co. lounged back to the school.

As usual on a half-holiday, the slackers of the Remove were loafing. Football did not interest them much. (Continued on page 22.)

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THE CHAMPION CHUMP!

(Continued from page 20.)

A secret smoke in a hidden spot interested them much more than the great winter game. There was a store of cigarettes in punny—at all events, Skinner still supposed that there was. Bunter had not confided to Skinner the discovery he had made there the previous day; Bunter had been very careful not to mention that to Skinner. The black sheep of the Remove were quite unaware of what had happened to those cigarettes.

They strolled in at the gates. From the football ground they could hear shouting. Plenty of Greyfriars men were gathered there; some on Big Side to watch the senior Form match; others on Little Side to see Harry Wharton & Co. deal with Hobson and his merry men of the Shell. A roar from Big Side came on the wind.

"Goal!"

"Well kicked, sir!"

"Bravo, Blundell!"

Skinner chuckled. Blundell of the Fifth was going strong in the senior Form match—quite unconscious of Coker's deep-laid scheme for dishing him. But Skinner was puzzled. Had he seen Coker looking fierce and furious, he could have understood it. But he was quite certain that Coker had looked merry and bright as he careered away on his motor-bike. Yet—so far as Skinner could see—Coker had chucked up the whole stunt and left Blundell unhindered to play football. It was perplexing.

"I say, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter met the three as they came up to the House. Bunter was at a loose end that afternoon. Harry Wharton & Co. were playing footer; and most of the other Removites watching them do it. Nobody had been willing to cash, in advance, the postal order that Bunter was expecting. He was rather glad to see Skinner & Co.

"You fellows coming along to the tuck-shop?" he asked brightly.

"Bow-wow!" was Skinner's reply.

"My treat, you know!" said Bunter. Skinner shook his head.

"Can't afford your treats, old fat man," he answered. "It comes rather too expensive to a chap."

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

Skinner & Co. chuckled and passed on. Bunter rolled after them into the House.

"I say, Skinner, old chap—"

"Oh, sheer off, barrel!" snapped Skinner. He did not want the Owl of the Remove on his track when he headed for the secret smoke-room.

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles, and a fat grin dawned on his face. He guessed Skinner's destination.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. He found it rather amusing to think of Skinner's face when that festive youth looked round punny for his store of cigarettes and failed to find them.

"What are you cackling at, you fat frump?" grunted Skinner.

"He, he, he!"

"Oh, roll away!" snapped Skinner, and Billy Bunter, still cackling, rolled away.

Skinner & Co., keeping a wary eye open, strolled away to the corridor that led to the punishment-room. They were not likely to be observed; nearly everybody was out of the House that fine afternoon.

Once in the long corridor, they walked quickly. It would not have done to be

spotted in those forbidden precincts; the punishment-room, of course, being out of bounds.

They reached the oak door at the end of the passage, and Skinner turned the handle. Not having the faintest suspicion that the door was locked, he pushed it as he turned the handle, expecting it to yield. It did not yield, and Skinner had a narrow escape of tapping his sharp nose on the solid oak.

"What the thump—" ejaculated Skinner, in annoyance and surprise.

"Well, open the door!" said Snoop.

"It's fastened."

"What rot!"

"Well, try yourself, you silly ass!"

Snoop tried, but the door did not open.

"Oh, my hat! The key's gone, too!" said Stott. "Somebody's locked the door and taken away the key! I wonder whether they've found out—"

"Hark!" breathed Skinner.

There was a sound within the room. The three young rascals stared at one another in astonishment. The sound of a movement within was unmistakable. Someone was in the room and the door was locked, and the key gone. Distinctly they heard footsteps approaching the door from within.

"Well, my hat!" breathed Skinner. "Somebody's in punny—I hadn't heard a word about it—"

Skinner's natural conclusion, after the first moment of surprise, was that some fellow had been condemned to punny, as sometimes happened, though rarely. It was a dismaying thought. If a fellow was locked in there, the beaks must have been there, and they must have found—

Before Skinner could finish the thought, there came a voice from the punishment-room.

"So you have returned! You—you impertinent young rascal! You—you impudent young knave! Open this door at once!"

Skinner and & Co. fairly staggered. They knew that voice! It was the voice of their headmaster!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Prisoner of the Punishment-Room!

DR. LOCKE rapped on the inside of the door.

He rapped with energy.

It was seldom that the kind, good-tempered old Head was in a "wax," but he was in a wax now—a royal wax.

Really, the circumstances were sufficient to exasperate the kindest and best-tempered headmaster in the scholastic profession. It was safe to say that no headmaster of any school could have been locked in his own punishment-room, without a wax supervening.

Rap! rap! rap!

"Unlock this door!" came the Head's voice, trembling with anger. "Unlock this door at once! You shall be flogged for this! Release me from this room! Do you hear me?"

Skinner & Co. heard, but they did not answer. They couldn't! They seemed bereft of the power of speech.

They stood with their mouths open, staring at the oaken door before them, on which the unseen headmaster was rapping.

The Head—locked in punny! They had concluded that some hapless offender had been condemned to punny, and locked in there. But it was obviously impossible that the headmaster could have condemned himself to punny! Yet there he indubitably was—locked in the punishment-room!

It was startling, amazing, terrifying, unnerving.

Thump! thump! thump! Dr. Locke was beating a rapid tattoo on the inside of the door.

"I know you are there!" His voice came in tones of thunder. "I am aware that you are there! Unlock this door instantly!"

Skinner and Co. gaped. For the moment, they could do nothing else.

"Skinner!"

The owner of that name jumped.

"I heard your voice, Skinner—I know you are there! Skinner! I am sure that it was your voice, Skinner! I am perfectly well aware that you are there, Skinner! Open this door at once!"

"Oh crikey!" Skinner found his voice. "I—I mean—I can't, sir!"

"What? What? How dare you, Skinner! Open this door immediately, and release me."

"I—I can't—"

"Do you dare to disobey my direct commands, Skinner?" It was almost a roar from the locked room.

"The key isn't here, sir!" gasped Skinner.

"The—the key!"

"Yes, sir! It's gone!" babbled Skinner.

"What? What? Was it not you who locked me in, Skinner?"

Skinner jumped.

"I, sir? Oh crumbs! No, sir! Oh dear! Certainly not, sir!"

"You did not, Skinner?"

"Oh holy smoke! I mean, certainly not, sir! I—I shouldn't dare!" gasped Skinner. "Oh, my hat! Oh, sir! Nothing of the kind, sir! I—I hadn't the faintest idea there was anybody here, sir—"

"Then why are you here, Skinner, this room being out of bounds for all junior boys?" demanded the Head, through the door.

Skinner jumped again. His visit to the forbidden precincts required explaining. Certainly he could not explain that he had come there to smoke cigarettes—not to the Head!

"I—I—I—" Skinner stammered.

"Answer me at once, Skinner!" boomed the Head.

"I—I—we—we—I—I—we—we—I—" stuttered Skinner.

"What? What?"

"We—we—we came here to—to—to—" Skinner cudgelled his brains for a reason; any reason that would do for the Head.

"To what?"

"To—to—to—just to—to—to look round, sir! We—we thought we'd like to—to have a look at punny, sir—just curiosity, sir."

"A very foolish proceeding, Skinner, this room being strictly out of bounds. I trust, Skinner, that you are telling me the truth."

"Oh! yes, sir! Certainly."

"You are not the boy who has been smoking surreptitiously in this room, Skinner?"

"I, sir? I don't smoke, sir! It would make me sick, sir."

"In the circumstances, Skinner, it is fortunate that you have come here. I shall excuse you for having done so, in the—the circumstances! It is, undoubtedly, fortunate. You are sure that the key is not there?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"I have been locked in—someone shut the door suddenly and locked it, and— and departed! If the key is not there, Skinner—"

"It's not here, sir!"

"Do you know who has taken it, Skinner?"

"You can come out now, you cheeky ass," said Coker, "and I hope this will be a lesson to you. Why—what—!" His jaw suddenly dropped, for instead of seeing Blundell, as he expected, he saw the Head!



"I—I've no idea, sir—"

"Go to Mr. Quelch! Go to Mr. Quelch at once! Inform him how I am situated, and request him to come here immediately."

"Yes, sir! Certainly, sir!"

"Lose no time, Skinner."

Skinner lost no time. He hurried up the corridor again with Snoop and Stott. At the other end of the passage, however, the three juniors stopped, and stared at one another.

"The Head locked in punny!" murmured Snoop. "What the dickens—"

"What the thump—" gasped Stott.

"It beats me!" said the amazed Skinner. "What the howling Moses was the Head doing in the punny, anyhow? Oh, my hat!" He whistled. "I've got it—they've found out about the smokes, and the Beak went there to nose into it! That's why he asked me—"

"But who—"

"But why—"

Skinner gave a sudden howl.

"Coker!"

"Coker?" repeated Snoop and Stott.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner staggered against the passage wall, almost in convulsions. He gasped, he gurgled, and the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Coker! You noticed how bucked he looked! He was ambushed about here for Blundell! He—he thought—"

"Wha-a-at!"

"He must have thought it was Blundell!"

"Oh crikey!"

"He—he—he thought he was locking Blundell in, and—and—and it was the Head!" sobbed Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat! Oh, my only summer hat! Coker!" Skinner gurgled spasmodically. "Oh, holy smoke! C-C-Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner & Co. shrieked. It was the obvious explanation. Indeed, it was the only explanation. They yelled.

"Oh dear! Oh dear!" sobbed Skinner. "Coker thinks he's brought it off! Ha, ha! He looked no end bucked. Ha, ha! He thinks Blundell's locked in punny. Ha, ha! And Blundell's playing football, and it's the Head—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner & Co. were fairly doubled up. For whole minutes they forgot that they had an urgent message for Mr. Quelch. They rocked with merriment.

"Oh dear!" Skinner wiped his eyes. "Well, I've got to tell Quelch. I won't mention Coker. Ha, ha, ha! I—I wonder whether Coker will feel bucked when he comes in and finds out that he's bagged the Head?"

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

"Come on!" said Skinner.

They wiped their eyes and trailed away for Mr. Quelch's study. Skinner tapped at the Remove master's door. With great efforts he reduced himself to gravity. This thing was a shriek—the jest of the term—a real *serasmus*. But Skinner, of course, knew that a Form master would not regard it in that light. Mr. Quelch was not likely to see anything comic in it. He was likely to be shocked and scandalised. It was necessary not to laugh, not even

to smile, under Mr. Quelch's gimlet eye.

Mr. Quelch looked up rather irritably from a pile of papers as Harold Skinner entered the study.

"What is it, Skinner?"

"The—the Head, sir—"

"What? You have a message from Dr. Locke?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Skinner. "He's in punny, sir."

"What?"

"I—I mean the punishment-room, sir. He—he—he's locked in! He—he can't get out, sir."

Mr. Quelch fixed his gimlet eyes on Skinner with a freezing stare.

"What do you mean, Skinner? Is this a jest—an impudent jest? Explain your meaning at once, sir!"

"It—it's true, sir!" gasped Skinner. "Somebody's locked the Head in the punishment-room, sir, and—and taken away the key. He called out to me, sir, and asked me to tell you, sir. He wants you—"

"Upon my word!"

Mr. Quelch jumped up. The news was amazing, astounding, staggering! But he realised that it must be true. Mr. Quelch was not a gentleman with whom the most humorous humorist would have thought of jesting.

"We—we found him there, sir. And he sent me to tell you—"

Mr. Quelch whisked out of the study. It was hardly considered good form at Greyfriars for a master to run. But Mr. Quelch ran now. He did the passage as if it was the cinder-path, and vanished from the eyes of Skinner & Co., with his gown floating behind him.

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And Skinner & Co., free to indulge their mirth once more, went forth chortling, to spread the amazing news.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Unparalleled.

"I SAY, you fellows!" Billy Bunter fairly shrieked into the changing-room.

Bunter's fat face was pink with excitement; his little, round eyes almost bursting through his big, round spectacles.

"I—I—I say, you fellows!" shrieked Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. had come off the football field. They had beaten the Shell by one goal to nil, and were feeling rather pleased with themselves as they changed after the match. Hobson & Co. were not feeling so pleased. Indeed Hobby was telling his goalkeeper and his backs what he thought of them and their methods of defence.

Every man in the changing-room looked round as Bunter shrieked in at the door. Obviously, something had happened. Judging by Bunter's looks the House might have been on fire.

"What the thump?" asked several voices.

"I say, you fellows! The Head— spluttered Bunter "Skinner found it out! I say, the Head— The—the—the Beak—"

"What about the Head, ass?"

"He—he—he's locked up—"

"What!"

There was a roar of incredulous amazement. Billy Bunter liked to be the bearer of startling news. This time he had made the fellows jump.

"The Head—locked up!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"You howling, fat duffer!" gasped Wharton.

"I—I say, you fellows, it's true!" gasped Bunter. "The Head—he's locked up!"

"The lockfulness-up of the esteemed Head cannot be terrific," chuckled Hurroo Jamsset Ram Singh. "Draw it mildly, my worthy fat Bunter."

"I tell you he's locked up!"

"What's he done?" grinned the Bounder. "Anybody gone to bail him out?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the fat ass burbling about?" asked Harry Wharton, in wonder.

"He's locked up!" shrieked Bunter.

"Locked up in the punishment-room!"

"What?"

This was surprising, though not so surprising as the erroneous impression given by Bunter's first announcement.

"Somebody's locked him in punny," stammered Bunter. "I say, it's true! The Head's in punny—locked up! The key gone! Quelch's at the door! Skinner found it out—honest injun! The Head's yelling on one side of the door, and Quelch on the other!"

"The Head locked up in punny!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yes, rather! Locked up! Can't get out! Nobody knows who did it! Skinner found him there! He's telling the fellows in quad—"

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

Football, as a topic died an instant death. Remove men and Shell men finished changing at record speed. They bolted out of the changing-room, and rushed away for punny. If it was true, if it was possibly true, that the Head was locked up in punny, it was the sensation of the term. Fellows wanted front seats on such an occasion.

Plenty of Greyfriars men were already in the long corridor that led to the punishment-room. Skinner & Co. had related the amazing news already in the quad. Seniors, and juniors, and fags gathered on the spot. The footballers, when they arrived, found the passage swarming.

Indeed, nearly all Greyfriars seemed to be converging on the spot, except the Sixth and Fifth Form men who were still on Big Side, the senior Form match not being over yet.

Thick as the crowd was, however, they kept back a little from the door of punny. Mr. Quelch was there, and Prout and Capper had joined him

there. The crowd gave the masters respectful room.

"Heard, you fellows?" sniggered Skinner, as the Famous Five came breathlessly up. "The jolly old Beak is—"

"Yes!" gasped Wharton. "It's true, then?"

"Yes, rather!" giggled Snoop. "We found him there. He's locked in. Been there for hours, I fancy."

"But who," gasped Bob Cherry—"who did it? Who's locked him in? How the thump—"

"I fancy it was Coker. Coker was going to bung Blundell in, you know, and lock him up!"

"Eh? He couldn't have taken the Head for Blundell!"

"I fancy he did," chortled Skinner. "Isn't Coker idiot enough for anything?"

"Well, yes. But—"

Mr. Quelch looked round with a glittering, gimlet eye.

"Less noise! Silence!"

The buzz of excited voices was subdued a little. The Remove master turned back to the solid, oak door that shut off the Head from the rest of Greyfriars. Through that door came the voice of Dr. Locke in tones of intense and concentrated exasperation.

"Mr. Quelch, cannot you devise anything? The key must be found! I am a prisoner here. I cannot remain here—"

"I have made inquiries in all directions, sir, but nothing can be heard of the key," said Mr. Quelch. "No one appears to know anything about the matter. Of course, a number of boys are out of gates. But—"

"Do you suppose, Quelch, that the iniquitous young rascal who has locked me in has gone out of gates with the key in his possession."

"I—I fear that that may be the case, sir—"

"Bless my soul!"

"I cannot sufficiently express, sir, my amazement, my horror, at this unexampled outrage—"

"Yes, yes, yes; but I must be released, Mr. Quelch! I cannot remain here. It is most—most undignified! The boy must be found! The key must be obtained!"

"If you had any suspicion, sir, of the young scoundrel's identity—if you could give any indication—"

"I have already told you that I did not see the boy, Quelch! Someone crept to the door after I was in the room, slammed it suddenly and locked it on the outside! That is all I know."

"Amazing!" boomed Mr. Prout. "Unparalleled!"

"Extraordinary!" gasped Mr. Capper.

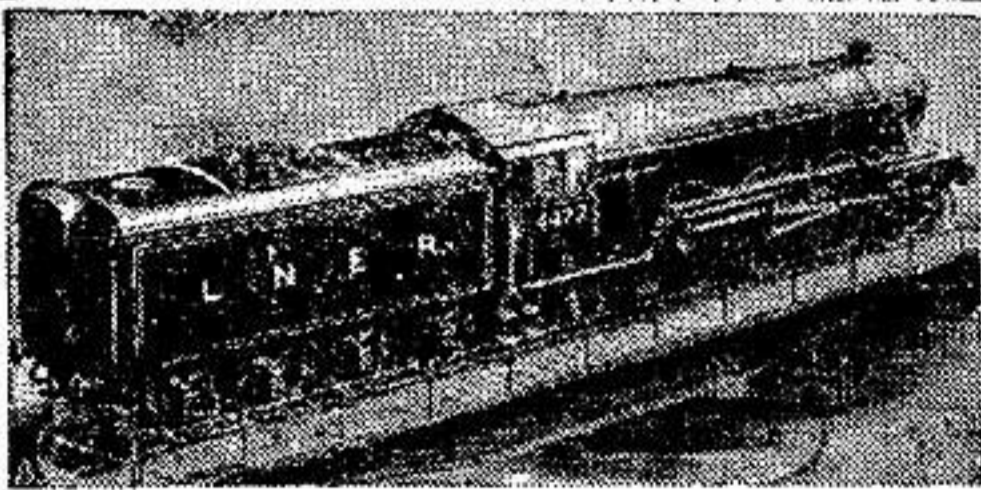
"I saw nothing of him!" came the Head's voice. "I heard him laugh—he had the impudence, the audacity, the effrontery, to laugh! I distinctly heard him laugh! That is all I heard! I have not the faintest knowledge of his identity! Let every boy be questioned, Quelch! I cannot remain in this—this undignified and ridiculous position!"

"I have already telephoned to Courtfield for a locksmith, sir! He will arrive, I hope, shortly. Unfortunately, the lock is so very strong—"

"Sir!" boomed Prout. "Gosling could be sent for, and doubtless he could hew in the door with—with an axe—"

Prout seemed to favour heroic methods!

"Certainly not!" rapped the Head. "The key should be found—the key must be found! The iniquitous offender must be found! I rely upon the



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members of my staff to discover the— the wretch who has played this unheard-of trick on his headmaster! I have a right to expect this!"

The Form masters looked at one another. This was a little unreasonable on the part of the Head. Still, a little unreasonableness was excusable, in the peculiar and painful circumstances.

There was a fresh tramp of feet in the already swarming corridor. Sixth Form men and Fifth Form men arrived in a crowd. The senior Form match was over, and the senior footballers had heard the amazing news.

Several more masters came on the scene, pushed through the swarming crowd, and joined the rest outside the door of punny. Nearly all the masters and prefects of Greyfriars had gathered there now. But it booted not, as a poet would say. A thick and solid oak door, an enormous lock of great strength, manufactured in the old days when doors were doors, and locks were locks, stood between the Head and his staff.

Nothing, apparently, could be done till the offender was found with the key, or the locksmith arrived from Courtfield. And there was no clue to the offender or the key, and it was a long, long way from Courtfield.

Inside punny the Head, habitually a kind and good-tempered gentleman, was now in a state of concentrated fury. Outside punny his staff were angry, dismayed, distressed. All the prefects looked extremely serious. But here and there, among the crowd swarming in the corridor, there were grinning faces to be seen. This awful, unnerving state of affairs seemed to have its comic side—to unthinking youth!

Mr. Quelch glared round as the sound of a chortle reached his ears. Such a sound, in the circumstances, was outrageous.

"Disperse!" hooted Quelch. "Clear the corridor at once! Wingate, see that the corridor is cleared!"

Unwillingly, the crowd swarmed away. They did not want to miss this entertainment. But there was no help for it. The prefects fairly drove them away.

"Well," said Bob Cherry, as they went, "this is a go!"

"The go-fulness is terrific!"

From the distance, borne on the breeze of spring, came the chug-chugging of a motor-bike.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Awful for Coker!

HORACE COKER smiled.

Having put up his motor-bike, Horace Coker walked across to the House, and he smiled as he walked.

He could see signs of excitement. Fellows in the quad were talking excitedly. Coker was not surprised at that. He expected the success of his scheme to cause excitement. He had no doubt that the Fifth Form footballers had raged and raved when they found their captain missing. He had no doubt that Blundell was yelling like a maniac within the walls of the punishment-room. He had no doubt that there was excitement, and wrath, and vengeance to be faced! And he did not care.

So when Coker walked into a swarming House, he expected the general attention to turn on him. But it didn't! Nobody seemed even to notice that he had come in!

There was excitement—such excitement as had seldom been seen at Greyfriars before. On all sides he heard

fellows speaking of the Head! He wondered whether anything had happened to Dr. Locke! But nobody was speaking about the senior Form match, or about Blundell, or taking any heed of Coker. He was puzzled.

He tapped Greene of the Fifth on the arm.

"How did the game go?" he asked. "Eh? The game? Oh, we drew with the Sixth!" answered Greene. "I say, Coker, do you know that the Head—"

"It was a draw?" asked Coker. "I rather wonder the Sixth didn't walk over you—with me left out."

"Don't be funny now, Coker, old man! The Head—"

"It didn't make a lot of difference Blundell being left out, what?" grinned Coker.

Greene blinked at him.

"Eh?"

"I told you it wouldn't," said Coker. "One fozzler's as good as another, what?"

Greene only stared.

"Are the fellows going to make a shindy about it?" asked Coker.

"Eh? About what?"

"About what I did."

"Blessed if I know what you did, or care, either," said Greene. "I say, did you know that the Head—"

"Well, shindy or no shindy, I don't care a straw!" said Coker. "I said I'd do it, and I've done it! I'm going to let him out now, of course. Can't keep him in punny all night. Ha, ha!"

Coker drew a long, heavy key from his pocket. Greene gave a sort of convulsive start.

"Coker! That—that key—did you? Oh, my hat! Did—did you?" Greene stammered.

"Of course I did! Didn't I say I would? But I'm going to let him out now."

Coker walked away towards the punishment-room, leaving Greene stupefied. Eyes were fixed on Coker on all sides. He had been surprised at getting no attention when he came in. He was getting plenty now. Bob Cherry grabbed at his arm as he passed.

"Coker, did you—"

Coker shook off his hand and walked on, disdaining to reply. There was a roar of voices behind Coker now.

"Coker!"

"Coker's got the key!"

"It was Coker!"

Like one man the fellows swarmed after Coker. Heedless of the wild excitement, Coker walked cheerily down the long passage to the punishment-room. He was still under the happy impression that Blundell of the Fifth was locked in there. He fully expected trouble with Blundell when he opened the door. But Coker did not fear trouble. Coker feared no foe. Key in hand, he walked cheerily on his way.

He stared a little at the sight of a crowd of masters and prefects outside the door of punny. He had certainly not expected Blundell's incarceration to draw the whole staff of Greyfriars to the spot. Mr. Quelch's eyes turned on Coker and the key in his hand, and he started.

"Coker, is that the—the key of the punishment-room?" articulated the Remove master.

"Yes, sir!" said Coker.

"You—you—you have the key?" boomed Mr. Prout.

"Yes, sir!"

"Is it possible, Coker, that you—you were the person who—who locked this door?" thundered Prout.

"Yes, sir! No harm done, I hope, sir!" said Coker, rather dismayed by

the terrifying expression on his Form master's face. "I—I don't see why you are here, sir!"

"No harm?" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"No, sir! I dare say the Fifth may kick up a shindy, but it's not a matter for the masters, so far as I can see," said Coker, in surprise. "Really, it was only a—a sort of lark, sir, locking a fellow up for a few hours."

"You—you speak of him as a—a—a fellow!" gurgled Prout. "Are you out of your senses, Coker?"

"Really, sir—" Coker could not see why he should not speak of Blundell as a fellow. "Really—"

"Unlock the door!" said Mr. Quelch in a grinding voice. "We waste time. Unlock the door instantly!"

"Certainly, sir!"

Coker was already inserting the key in the lock. He turned the key back, and as it turned the door was grabbed open by a hand inside.

"You can come out now," said Coker. "And I jolly well hope this will be a lesson to you, you cheeky ass! Why, what—what—who— Great jumping Moses!"

Coker's jaw dropped. The words froze on his tongue. He had fully expected to see Blundell of the Fifth when the door opened. It was the Head that he saw!

Coker gazed at the Head; the Head gazed at Coker. For a second there was an awful silence. A pin might have been heard to drop.

Coker's hair fairly stood on end. His eyes almost started from his head. The ghost of Dr. Locke could not have startled and terrified him more. It was the Head! It seemed like some horrible nightmare to the wretched Coker. He had locked Blundell in punny—at least, he firmly believed he had—and the unlocked door revealed the Head of Greyfriars! Coker's brain swam.

The Head broke the unnerving silence.

"It was you! You, Coker, a Fifth Form boy! You are expelled from Greyfriars, Coker! Not a word!"

The Head swept by. The other masters followed him. The prefects followed the masters. Coker stood, rooted. Power of motion seemed to have left him; power of speech had deserted him. He stood, rooted and dumb. And when he found his voice at last it was only to ejaculate in a husky whisper of horror:

"Oh crikey!"

All Greyfriars shrieked.

Of course, Coker was not sacked. He explained the mistake—the ghastly mistake—to the Head. Dr. Locke learned that his imprisonment had been quite unintentional on Coker's part. Coker was let off with a flogging.

Coker did not like it, but he was glad to escape so cheaply. He thought it was rather thick, however. Any fellow, Coker thought, might have made such a mistake in the circumstances.

Neither could Coker see why the whole school should rock with laughter on this subject. Coker saw nothing in these unfortunate happenings to set all Greyfriars in a roar.

But, though Horace failed to see why, it was a long, long time before Greyfriars ceased to chuckle and chortle over Coker's capture.

THE END.

(Now look out for next week's MAGNET and another ripping yarn of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled: "A SCHOOL-BOY'S SACRIFICE!" You'll vote it one of Frank Richards' greatest yarns. See that you order your copy EARLY!)
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,204.



By STANTON HOPE

The ISLAND SLAVES!

A Gruesome Discovery!

SINCE Guy, Tony, and Chotajee had got adrift in the hurricane they had garnered useful information concerning the big revival in the terrible slave traffic. The grim trade in "black ivory" had flared up again to an extent which had left the Royal Navy battling at a disadvantage against heavy odds. Fast sailing dhows were carrying the living black cargo in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. Arab chieftains, like Sheikh Haji of Khoof, were aiding and abetting in the traffic. Back of the whole trade was a master mind—someone whose power and cunning was such that he had organised the traffic in a manner to defy most of the usual assaults of the naval patrol boats on it.

Who was the master mind at the back of the slave organisation? Was it Ras Dhin, the giant ebony-coloured Abyssinian, with the yellow eyes of a tiger, whom the chums had seen aboard the dhow at Khoof and from whom they had rescued the slave at present in the sanctuary of the Ahkab residence with little Chotajee? Ras Dhin was a fiend in human form, and must be hunted down. But was his the organising brain behind the whole traffic? As the chums knew, Ras Dhin was capable of any crime or villainy, yet they were doubtful whether he was No. 1 in the trade, or only a lieutenant under orders from someone yet higher up.

And then there was Sayyid, the Arab retainer of the consul! The chums had no proof against him, but Guy was convinced that it had been Sayyid and none other who had tracked them

through the bazaars and had thrust Tony under the golden chain into the sacred courtyard of the mosque, thus rousing the anger of the fanatical mob against them. Their own resource and activity had saved their lives; but supposing Sayyid had endangered them, what had been the object?

The Arab had seen them arrive at the residence in company with Chotajee and the slave, whose back bore ample testimony to Ras Dhin's savagery by the long scar of the rhinoceros-hide whip. If Sayyid had intended that they should die, the deduction clearly was that he had some connection himself with the slave traffic and had wanted to stop their mouths.

Conversing in undertones together, they shuffled through the dusty streets in their bare feet and huddled in the borrowed robes.

Navigation through the tortuous streets of Ahkab, though, proved a difficult matter, and it was fully fifteen minutes before they located the residence and approached the courtyard. The consul's car was outside, and Major Gundath himself, who had been up to the house, was about to step into it again. Guy and Tony ran forward, and the consul turned angrily, thinking they were two of the usual beggars come to whine for alms.

"Major Gundath!" Guy exclaimed.

"One moment, sir!"

The consul's monocle jerked from his eye.

"Great Scott! Who the blazes—"

"Ay, we're your guests, sir," Guy chuckled, "and jolly lucky we're not food for the pariahs! We were chased by a howlin' mob which had taken a

dislike to us, and we only got clear by snaffing these duds."

Rapidly the pals gave him an account of what had happened, and mentioned their suspicion of Sayyid.

"By Jove, you fellows are proving a bit of a handful!" Major Gundath grunted. "To my knowledge Sayyid hasn't been in the bazaars at all this morning, and I can hardly credit that he could have played that rotten trick on you. I've always found him an honest servant, but I'll make full inquiries into the matter. Come on into the house and take another bath."

"A bath!" Tony breathed. "And if you've got anything that's good for blisters, sir, I'll trouble you to trot it out! My sternsheets and proppers—"

"A few blisters are easily mended," the consul smiled, "and it's jolly lucky from what you've told me, that you haven't had cracked skulls. After this it will be fearfully risky for me to keep you here, and I must arrange to get you away this evening by the latest. I've had a wireless message from the Falcon, and I've been asked to arrange transport for you from Ahkab to Aden. If the Falcon's at sea when you get there, you are to report to Navy House where you'll get orders what you are to do until her return."

"Thanks, sir," Guy said. "We are a beastly nuisance, I know, and I'm afraid we're interfering again with your business this morning."

"I've done the official business of the morning," the consul replied, "and was only going to what we call the Akhab Yacht Club for a cocktail before lunch. There are only about a dozen white sahibs here, you know, most of 'em

connected with the shipping companies or steamship agents."

The courtyard was deserted, save that at the far end a hamil—low-class servant—was squatting in a hunched position in the dust with his back against a date palm.

"Better come round to the back," Major Gundath suggested. "You'll perhaps be able to get to your room without any of the servants seeing you."

They mounted some steps at the side of the residence, and walked round the wide verandah. And then, with startling suddenness, the bead curtains hanging over a doorway were parted, and there staggered out Chotajee, the little babu, minus his round spectacles, his face the colour of old putty, and his eyes blinking dazedly.

Guy darted forward as the Bengali reeled against the doorpost and clung there for support, his thin legs trembling so that they threatened to crumple under him. The tips of his fingers against the woodwork were red as though he had adopted the popular vogue of the Indian beauties.

"S-sahibs! S-sahibs!"

His lips moved as though he would say more, but his tongue seemed to have shrivelled within him, and with his other hand he feebly rustled the bead curtains.

"Great fish-hooks! What's up?" Guy exclaimed.

He thrust Chotajee into the supporting arms of Tony, flung apart the hanging strings of coloured beads, and burst into the room beyond, followed closely by the consul. There, in a shaft of golden sunlight, shining from a window high in the wall, was the negro slave he had helped to rescue from Khoof, skewered to the floor with a long knife driven between his shoulder-blades!

The Mysterious Killer!

UTTERING a gasp of dismay, Guy dropped on his knees beside the slave, knowing before even he touched him that life was extinct. The consul stood as if petrified, and then, recovering himself, staggered to an inner door, flung it open and clapped his hands.

"Sayyid! Hussein! Fahi!"

Three of the servants employed at the residence came hurrying to the room, and babbled in alarm at the sight of the slain negro.

The major swallowed hard.

"Who—who has been in here?" he demanded. "Have any of you?"

The Arabs vigorously shook their heads and began a chorus of protest.

"Did you see anyone come out of this room?"

Sayyid held his hands out before him, rocking his body forward and backward in distress, real or feigned.

"We know nothing, master!" he moaned. "We are poor men and honest, and the sons of honest men."

According to all three of them they were in the servants' quarters of the residence, and had seen or heard nothing to alarm them.

The consul swung round.

"Where's that confounded babu?" he exclaimed.

Chotajee was gulping down water, secured for him by Tony from a earafe in the room. He rose trembling as the consul barged out through the bead curtains, and some of the crimson was transferred from his finger-tips to the side of his alpaca jacket.

"Come, pull yourself together!" Major Gundath said brusquely. "What do you know about that?"

He gestured beyond the beads, and Chotajee rubbed his hands together as though washing them with invisible soap and water.

"I—I didn't do it, sahib!" he stammered. "In very truthfulness I am innocent as babe unborn. I am Bengali, of honest parentage, and not of debased Badmash caste, an esteemed 'Failed B.A.' of well-known University—"

"Cut all that!" the consul said. "You came out of that room a few minutes ago; we went in and found the negro. He had been struck down by one of the Arab weapons used for wall decoration there. What do you know about it?"

Chotajee stammered and spluttered. "The shock's heaved him over on his beam-ends, sir," Tony said to the consul. "Still, I'd stake a year's pay that he had nothing to do with this terrible affair. Come, Chota, get it off your chest, old son! What d'you know?"

In trembling accents the little babu told a strange story.

According to his statement he had been walking round the veranda when he had heard a heavy thud. He had pulled aside the bead curtains, and entered the room where he knew that the negro had been resting. The slave was lying on his face on the floor, and bending over him was the bulky figure of a man in the white robes of an Arab, in whose uplifted left hand was a long-bladed weapon.

Apparently, the slave had been struck down by a blow on the head, and then he had seen another blow delivered by the keen-bladed dagger. He had been rooted to the spot; and the Arab attacker had slithered away through the inner door.

Chotajee had then come over faint, and must have fallen, for his next recollection had been that he was picking himself up from the floor and staggering out from the bead curtains, which might have been some minutes later.

Major Gundath exchanged glances with Tony.

"This sounds fishy to me!" he muttered. "I'm afraid, Dunn, I shall have to hold this fellow and hand him over to the local authorities."

Chotajee gave a faint shriek. "Yuhoo!" he cried. "I begfully request, sahib, that you do not act with any such rashfulness! The dastardly miscreant was a debased Arab—"

"Cut the cackle, Chota!" Tony interposed sharply; and, turning to the consul, said: "There's no evidence against this chap, so far as I can see, sir. If he fell in a faint on the floor

there, it's quite reasonable that his hand would have touched the stained carpet, and it would hardly have occurred to him to make up that yarn about the Arab who struck the blow with his left hand."

"Don't you believe it, Dunn," Major Gundath said. "I've lived in the East more years than you've been out here months, and I can assure you that any of these people—particularly Bengalis of the babu class—are quite capable of making up yarns that would make the average British sailor seem like a novice."

"You haven't any evidence, sir," Tony persisted, "and, surely, without that you can't have him arrested?"

"I'm not going to have him arrested," the consul answered; "it's merely my plain duty to have him held so that he's available when wanted. It's customary here in Arabia for important witnesses in a crime to be held in custody until the matter is thrashed out; they have the same safe custom in Mexico and several other places, I believe."

"We intended that he should come back to the Falcon with us," Tony pointed out.

"Permission regarding that will rest with the Arab authorities of the port," the consul responded. "There's no need for you to worry yourself unduly, my dear fellow. I personally will see that no harm comes to him, but it's clear that no stone must be left unturned to discover the treacherous snake who struck down that poor beggar of a slave."

When he and Tony entered the room again, taking the trembling Chotajee with them, they found that Guy and the Arabs had covered over that grim figure on the floor. The consul questioned Sayyid in Arabic, and the servant answered volubly in the same language, until Chotajee began to babble protests in the same tongue.

"Sayyid tells me," the consul said, turning to the chums, "that he saw the Bengali enter this room by the other door ten minutes before I summoned him."

"My sainted aunts, that is foulsome lie!" Chotajee hooted. "May moths breedfully multiply on the robes of the Arab pig-dog! I am honourable gent and 'Failed B.A.' and of too kindful heart to hurt even buzzful bluebottle! I never set single one of honourable feet through that doorway!"

"I believe him," Guy said simply.

"Same here," Tony affirmed. "But I wouldn't trust Sayyid the length of a boathook, and it wouldn't surprise me that he either knifed the black himself, or knows who did!"

The Ahkab Gaol?

MAJOR GUNDATH, the British consul of Ahkab mopped his brow.

"I don't know what to think," he muttered. "I have had Sayyid in my employ for a long time, and have always found him strictly honest."

Both Lieutenant Guy Easton and Sub-Lieutenant Tony Dunn could see that he was more inclined to believe his own servant than Chotajee, which was natural. But they themselves were positive that the little Bengali had not killed the negro slave whom they had helped to escape from the Arabian island of Khoof.

"I'm afraid, you fellows," the consul added, "that the Bengali must stay for interrogation by the Arab authorities. Keep on those disguises; you will have

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THE FIRST CHAPTERS RETOLD.

LIEUTENANT GUY EASTON, SUB-LIEUTENANT DUNN, and CHOTAJEE, a Bengali interpreter, having been ordered to board a suspicious-looking dhow heading a southerly course out of the Red Sea, are cut adrift during a storm and cast ashore on the Island of Khoof. After a series of exciting adventures the dhow in question arrives at the island, and Guy and Tony discover that Ras Dhin, a giant Abyssinian in command of the dhow, is a dealer in slaves. Eventually reaching Ahkab, on the Arabian coast, the boys call upon the consul and unfold their story. With a supply of money and fresh rig-outs, Guy and Tony set off through the streets of Ahkab, where an unknown enemy makes it appear that they have desecrated one of the most important mosques in the Arabian port. Fearing an ignominious end at the hands of the fanatical Arabs, the two chums seek sanctuary in a brassware establishment. Overpowering two of the workers, they disguise themselves in Arab clothing and then wend their way back to the consul's residence.

(Now read on.)

to clear out of the port as soon as possible."

Further protest was useless, and Guy and Tony went to dress their blistered feet.

"You can see now, Tony, old shipmate," Guy remarked, when they were alone after a meal, "that we're up against something bigger than any dyed-in-the-wool Arab slaves. There are agents of the slave traffic right here in Ahkab, and we're jolly lucky to have escaped the same fate as that blackamoor. They've stopped his mouth—and by heaven, I'll never have an easy shut-eye again until the murderous swab responsible is collared!"

"The rotten brute deserves boiling in oil!" said Tony hotly. "Of course, Chota was speaking the plain truth, though he made his own case look pretty fishy by all that stuttering and spluttering in front of the consul. Much more likely it was that snake, Sayyid. Is he left-handed?"

"I've been watching him carefully," Guy said. "but he seems to use his right hand for ordinary jobs. Now take a dekko at this."

He produced a small object from the pocket of his jacket under the Arab robes and placed it on the arm of the wicker chair in which he was seated. It was a fragment of glass about three-quarters of an inch long, and in the rough shape of a crescent.

"Where did you get this?" Tony asked.

Guy took up the fragment of glass, and Tony saw the woven wickerwork of the chair magnified under it.

"I found this," Guy said, "in the clenched right hand of that dead negro. There may have been a broken piece of glass on the floor which his fingers clawed up in his last moments. This,

old son, looks like a fragment of a broken lens—perhaps the lens from a pair of spectacles."

Tony stared agape. "Phew!" he whistled. "Surely you don't mean— But I remember Chota wasn't wearing his specs when he came out of that room!"

"I noticed that, too," Guy muttered. "In spite of this, I still don't believe that he did that rotten job."

"Nor I, admiral!" returned Tony. Guy grimly restored the fragment of glass to his pocket.

"I'm keeping this to myself," he said. Toward evening they learned from Major Gundath that he had arranged with the Arab skipper of a fast-sailing type of craft called a mahalla to give them passage from Ahkab to Aden. Still in their disguises they were to report aboard after dark, and the consul gave them full details concerning the skipper, the craft—which was decorated with blue—and where it was lying beside a rough jetty.

They learned, too, that Chotajee was locked in a typical Arab prison not far from the waterfront, and, in casual conversation with the consul, discovered various facts about the place.

When the crescent moon was lifting above the minarets and palms of Ahkab, Guy and Tony took leave of the consul. They had previously refused his offer that Sayyid should guide them to the mahalla, but borrowed some money in real British gold and silver. Then they left the residence by a back way, and in their Arab disguises shuffled through the streets of the port.

At the junction of two evil-smelling streets Guy hesitated.

"The mahalla can wait," he muttered. "Before we go to it, old scout, we're

going to take a peek at that Arab calaboose."

A sly smile overspread Tony's face. "Of course we're not going to leave old Chota in the soup!" he said.

The thoroughfare where the gaol described by the consul was situated was known in Arabic as the "Arcade of Pomegranates." Someone with the imagination of Omar Khayyam must have named it, for it was neither an arcade nor were there any pomegranates. The street consisted solely of a number of dark, forbidding dwellings, and it fairly reeked of foul offal left about in the big Ahkab fish bazaar at the far end. Altogether, it was a pretty filthy hole, and the only living things were two Arabs armed with loaded rifles, and a few hungry pariah dogs doing duty as scavengers in the gutters.

The chums shuffled past the sentries and paused to see Chotajee curled miserably like a dog behind the iron bars flush with the wall. Sometimes as many as a dozen prisoners were cramped into that fetid den, but the little babu was the only prisoner there to-night, which was all to the good. Unfortunately, he was asleep, and would have to be roused.

One of the Arab guards addressed a remark in Arabic to the chums, who had no idea what he meant. Guy, however, granted in reply, and picked up a chunk of decayed cabbage from among the offal:

"Wa feringhee!" he muttered venomously, and threw the chunk of cabbage at Chotajee.

(Poor old Chotajee is in a sorry plight, but you can be sure Guy and Tony will do their best to rescue him! Don't miss next week's feast of thrills, whatever you do, chums!)

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Greyfriars Herald

No. 36.

LAUGH AND GROW FAT.

March 14th, 1931.

Edited by **HARRY WHARTON, F.G.R.**

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ESCAPED BEAR AT GREYFRIARS

SCOUT RALLY SENSATION

PROUT IN A PICKLE



'BO-O-OYS, BE PREPARED! THAT'S WHAT THE FA-BLES SAY.

And so on, through the good old Scout song! Scores of hearty voices yelled it out at the great Scout Rally held on Little Side last week.

Mr. Harry Lasselles, Scoutmaster of the Greyfriars Troop, had charge of the arrangements. Other celebrities present included Paul Prout, Esq., who was the Guest of Honour, and Messrs. Quach, Twigg, and Wiggins, while Dr. Locke turned up just before the end.

Under the direction of Leader Wharton, the Scouts gave a top-hole exhibition of Scoutcraft. The first event was a snappy display of Swedish drill and gymnastics, finishing up with a grand human pyramid. Scout Bolsover rather spoilt this by bounding down to the top of his shoe lace at the moment when half the Lower School was supported by his shoulders. The gymnasts came down with a bump and the event ended in some confusion; but apart from this, the human pyramid was voted a huge success.

Evidently the Scouts of Greyfriars are expert at bridge-building. They rigged up quite an imposing looking bridge in a matter of minutes, and the spectators had a visible proof of its strength when they afterwards proceeded to march across it. Unfortunately, Mr. Prout decided that he also would like to test it; and this time the bridge came off second-best! Prout rolled on the ground in a heap of debris and the Scouts rushed him off to the first aid tent and cleared up what was left of the bridge, to make way for the next event.

Relay-racing, camp-cooking, fire-fighting, and many other things

were demonstrated one by one, then there was a great battle of Redskins versus Cowboys, performed by the entire Troop.

Meanwhile, outside Greyfriars, Scouts Vernon-Smith and Russell were doing a little stunt of their own. Arrangements had been made for them to try to bring a message from the Commissioner at Courtfield to Mr. Lasselles through "enemy" lines represented by the Scout Troop from Highcliffe. They were allowed to disguise themselves and the Highcliffe champions were allowed to roam anywhere between the circus on Courtfield Common and the end of Priardale woods.

As the afternoon wore on and Smithy and Russell failed to turn up, we began to wonder whether they had been captured. Even worse fears than that were entertained later on when a startling event interrupted the proceedings. A fierce-looking brown bear suddenly loomed through the gates and made a straight line for the Scout Rally!

Yells of alarm sounded on all sides. We all guessed at once that it had escaped from the circus, and from the fact that a foreign-looking stranger was chasing it, we guessed also that it might be dangerous.

For a few seconds there was quite a panic. Then the panic ended and a roar went up.

"Smithy!"

The "bear" was none other than Vernon-Smith, disguised, and, of course, the foreign-looking gentleman turned out to be Russell. They had got through without a single challenge from the Highcliffe men—which, in the circumstances, was nothing to be wondered at!

The great Rally concluded with a charge across the field to the pavilion. Owing to a little misunderstanding the Scouts thought they had to finish up before the Head, who was standing on the veranda, instead of Mr. Prout, who was waiting some little distance in front. As a result, the Guest of Honour was bowled over and not seen again till after the show. But everybody, with the possible exception of Mr. Prout and Scout Bolsover, declared that it had been a great day!

100 YEARS AGO

EXTRACTS FROM EARLY ISSUES OF THE 'HERALD.'

Mr. Hardnucle and Mr. Stannwell of the Remove fought 90 five-minute rounds with bare fists behind the College Chapel last Saturday. At that stage in the bout the headmaster appeared, and taking the two principals to his chamber, inflicted 250 strokes of the birch on each. The fight was resumed at once in the Common-room and 35 more rounds fought before supper without a decision being arrived at.

After an investigation lasting nearly a year, Wykelet minor was found guilty of throwing a piece of turf at Prefect Smith during a cricket match last summer. Prefect Smith was bathing at the time, and the turf dislodged his top-hat and made him an object of ridicule to the spectators. Wykelet minor has been taken to the dungeons and will spend six months writing Latin verse on a diet of bread and water.

The headmaster, after a discussion with the Governors, has approved the following timetable for the College:

5.0 a.m.—Rising bell.
 6.0 a.m.—10 a.m.—Latin.
 10.5 a.m.—Breakfast.
 3 p.m.—Dinner.
 3.5 p.m.—Midnight.—Latin.
 Midnight.—Supper.
 12.5 p.m.—Lights out.
 A HUNDRED YEARS HENCE.

A regrettable lapse into the barbarous habits of the past occurred yesterday when Percy Boore of the Remove slapped Cyril Sotheby of the same Form after a quarrel on their respective merits at basket-ball. The offender, overcome with remorse, has drowned himself in the fountain.

Bertram Bounce, who has been feeling out-of-sorts lately, threw a bottle of ink at the Head this morning. He has been remonstrated with, care being taken not to hurt his feelings in any way.

The headmaster, after a discussion with the Governors, has approved the following timetable for the school:

11.30 a.m.—Rising bell (optional).
 Noon.—Breakfast (in bed, if desired).
 1 p.m.—3 p.m.—Recreation.
 2 p.m.—Classes (optional).
 3 p.m.—Recreation and dinner.
 4 p.m.—11 p.m.—Recreation.
 Midnight.—Lights out (if desired).

HOUSEMAID KNEES AND CHILBLAINS CURED—WARTS WIPED OUT.

Write to Our Medical Expert—He'll Kill or Cure You

This feature has been of great benefit of sufferers from all kinds of sores, pains and ailments, who write us for advice. So get busy, you're invited, and let's hear all your troubles. We'll put them right, space permitting. If you're suffering, we're afraid you'll all have to suffer! Here's the first batch of our but effective replies to correspondents. (The first shall be last as far as I'm concerned.)

"ALONZO" writes: "A very irritable pain which I am at a loss to explain is affecting my palms. I am apprehensive I have fallen a victim of some dread malady. The pain came on quite suddenly. When I get in to Mr. Quelch's study to see him about my prep, my palms were quite numb, yet when I came out a few minutes later I was suffering intensely. Nothing had happened in the intervening period excepting that I had given me six strokes with the case soap bar."

This is one of those puzzling ailments that are the despair of the medical profession. One might hint at a hundred possible causes, yet still fail to strike the right chord. Get your chemist to make you up the following prescription: Sulph. Bic. Aq. Precip. ʒi. Am. Fe. ʒi. Fo. Fun. O. Yeh. Apply the mixture to the affected parts. If it doesn't do much harm, anyway! It occurred to me as an afterthought that the pain may be due to Mr. Quelch's cane. Note carefully on the next occasion, "Alonzo," and if it shows an increase, write again. "NUGENT MI" writes: "I'm worried about my dial. Six months ago it was

JOHNNY BULL AND HIS BOYS

RUCTIONS IN THE RAG

A Jazz Concert given by Johnny Bull and his Boys in the Rag on Wednesday evening proved a much to the liking of a large and enthusiastic audience. The band, which consisted of six highly skilled musicians, was composed of the following instruments:

Comb-and-Paper—Bob Cherry
Jazz's Harp—Ernie Nugent.
Kazoo—Tom Brooks.
Squeaker—Percy Bolsover.
Base Vile—Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Tim-corn—JOHNNY BULL.

There was some curiosity before the programme began as to what sort of article the base vile would be. Loud laughter ensued when it was found to consist of a frying-pan with lengths of elastic stretched across it; but the laughter changed to applause when Vernon-Smith got busy on it.

The Boys proceeded to give a varied selection from their extensive repertoire and the fun was fast and furious. Each tune earned loud and repeated applause, particularly when it happened to be one of Johnny Bull's original compositions.

Of these we select the following as the best of the evening:

"School House Blues."
 "Dancing on the Bassinet."
 "My Size."
 "That Tuckshop Melody."

We congratulate Johnny Bull on the fine discipline of his orchestra. In many dominitory and Common-room bands, as musical notes are always pointing out, a common fault is for the kazoo to be playing one tune while the guitarist plays another, the tim-corn a third, and so on. This rarely happens with Johnny Bull and his Boys. At least, it didn't happen more than half a dozen times on Wednesday, and even when it did, Bob Cherry, with the comb-and-paper, discreetly drowned the rest, so that it was hardly noticeable!

The "hit" of the evening was "School House Blues." Johnny Bull provided the "hit" by accidentally bashing Bolsover on the head with one of his drumsticks. Loud sneezes were demanded, but Johnny Bull smilingly declined. Owing to members of a rival band dropping stink-bombs among the audience, the performance ended rather hurriedly, and there was a stampede for the doors. We look forward, however, to hearing a good deal more from these rising and gifted young musicians.

PROFESSOR KIPPS WRITES ON A "COMPPELLING" SUBJECT

HYPNOTIST & HOLD YOUR OWN WITH ALL COMERS

Hypnotist! Hold the beast in the hollow of your hand! Compel the world to obey your will! Gentlemen, chairs, and fellows, take my word for it, hypnotism beats cock-fighting!

He doesn't know it, but he's getting the fluence! The beak puts his hand to his eye and closes his eyes. You hold a stern and stony stare on him.

"I'm not late, am I?" you ask.

"Nunno! Certainly not!" he answers your victim. "I wouldn't miss your lecture."

"Just us well for you!" you say, as you roll off a log! All of a dozen on the hand!

"With great pleasure!" gasps the beak.

He holds out his hand and grasps himself half a dozen times, you start passing a football all round the room! The sort of passing I mean is a passing of the hands, designed to exercise a compelling effect on the sub-



"Think of the joy of it! You stroll into the Form-room, find a minute late and Quelch's dog glances at you with a suspicious eye on you.

"Boy," comes an icy greeting from the magisterial desk.

"You are late!"

"Fancy that, sir!" you chorle, wrinkling at the trembling Form.

"Any objection?"

"Wretched youth!" you grab for his case. "I will thrash you! I will—over! Ah! Dgl! What's coming over me!"