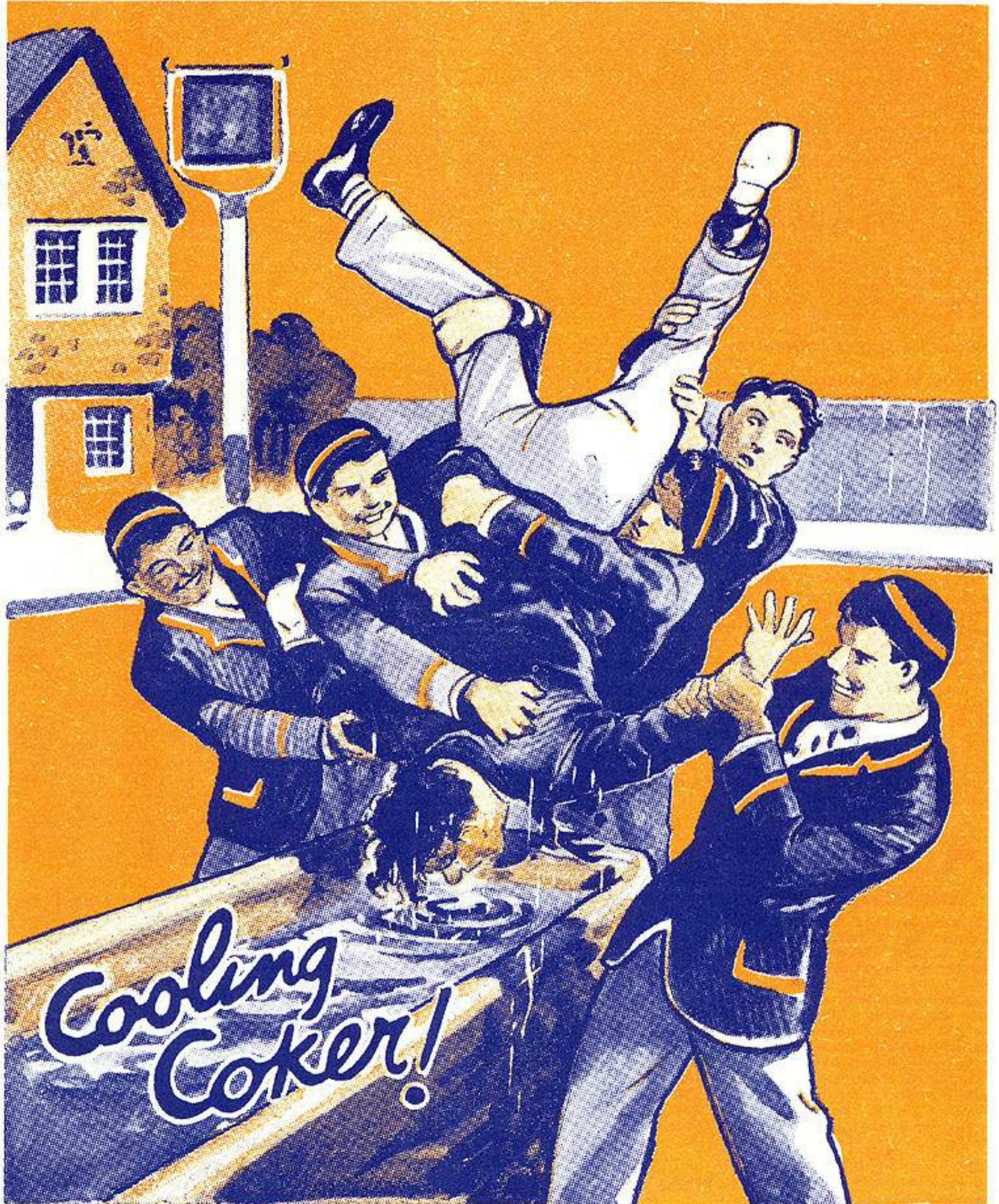


“COKER’S HOLIDAY CAPTURE!”

Rattling Fine School Yarn of Harry Wharton & Co.—Inside.

The **MAGNET** 2^D





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.

A LITTLE while ago I mentioned in my chat about the Eskdale Railway—that curious miniature track which is the smallest public railway in this country. Last week I had a letter from a chum who hails from Cleator Moor, Cumberland, and who tells me that he has often travelled on it. When he first went on it, he says, the engine travelled so slowly that boys could run as fast, but nowadays the engines have been brought more up to date. Also, some of the open coaches have been replaced by closed ones, but, according to my chum, the latter are frightfully stuffy. One of these days I will have to pay a visit to this railway!

The same reader (J. D. T.) asks me whether the Shell is a higher Form than the Remove. Yes; the Remove is below the Upper Fourth, while the Shell is between the Upper Fourth and the Fifth.

From E. F. English, of Oxford, come THREE QUERIES CONCERNING COAL.

How is it formed, he asks. Why is it so deep in the earth? And how do people know it is there?

Hundreds of years ago the coal was flourishing forests. In time the trees rotted, and, as they were covered over by earth and various upheavals, the wood of the trees gradually became petrified. The harder the coal is now, the longer it has been in the earth.

Geologists are able to tell, from the layers of the earth, whether there is a likelihood of coal being discovered at any particular spot, but they cannot say whether it is in sufficient quantities to make it worth anyone's while to sink a mine. To discover that, it is necessary to sink a long hollow tube through the earth, and draw up samples of the coal. If coal is present in good quantities—and if it is good coal—a mine is then sunk; but if the coal is only half-formed, or the layers are broken, no one bothers any more about it, for, as you can imagine, it is a very costly business to sink a mine!

A BIRMINGHAM chum, who signs his letter "R. R.," is a pianist who is

INTERESTED IN SYNCOPATION.

He wants to know if I can tell him where he can take a correspondence course in this subject. Personally I should not advise him to attempt to study syncopation by post. He should endeavour to get into touch with someone in his own city who will be willing to teach him, for he will find that much more satisfactory. An advertisement in a local paper might help him—or he could write to the conductor of a local "jazz" band and ask him to help.

Ivar Rees, of West Hartlepool, asks for MR. "X'S" AID

to solve the following query: I've seen a conjurer take a number of bags of all

nations and tie them together. Then the conjurer took hold of one end and his assistant took hold of the other. They pulled the bags apart—and they turned into a large Union Jack. How was it done?

Well, one of the smaller bags was really a bag, and inside this there was a large silk Union Jack. When the small bags were tied together, the corners of the Union Jack were pulled out, and the smaller bags were allowed to drop behind the large bag as it was extended. There are several ways of doing this particular trick, but the above method is the simplest. The "trick" bags can be bought from any magical dealer. My chum should remember that, being made of silk, a tremendously large flag will pack away into the smallest possible space.

HAVE you got a MAGNET pocket-knife yet? Sydney Lyall, of 176, Archway Road, Highgate, N.6, wins a topping Sheffield steel penknife for the following yarn:



Son: "What is a clue, dad?"

Father: "Well, son, a clue is what keeps the detective busy while the



criminal escapes!"

"Can you tell me

SOMETHING ABOUT ALASKA?"

is the query which comes from Tom Bell, of Sunderland. Alaska, which used to belong to Russia at one time, was bought from that country by the United States, and since that time various expeditions have brought to light much interesting information concerning this land. There are wonderful ice caverns there, some of which are large enough to allow several

BOOKS, PENKNIVES and POCKET WALLETS offered for storyettes and Greyfriars limericks. All efforts to be sent to:

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trains to travel abreast through them. There are ash-filled rivers, full of treacherous quicksands, and vast snowfields which are also covered with ash from ancient volcanoes.

In several places old wooden crosses, dating back for over a hundred years, show where Russian missionaries converted the original natives. Alaska, of course, came into prominence when gold was discovered there, and the famous gold rush took place. In addition to gold, coal, quartz and platinum

are mined there, while fur-trapping and salmon tinning is extensively carried out.

It might interest you to know that it is possible to walk from Alaska to Russia! At certain times of the year the Bering Straits, which stretch between them, are frozen over.

Do you know which is

THE LARGEST ISLAND IN THE WORLD?

Stanley Shaw, of Whitstable, has been having an argument with a chum, who says that Australia is. This is not strictly true, because Australia is classed as a continent. The world's largest island is Greenland, which has an area of about 825,000 square miles. That means that it is about twenty-five times the size of Ireland. And yet there are only about 400 white people living there, and about 13,000 Eskimos. But it is no good my chum thinking about going there to live, for foreigners are barred—unless they get special permission from Denmark, to which Greenland belongs.

Miss Irene B. Batty, of Tolbamcoates, Heysham Road, Heysham, Morecambe, Lancs, has been awarded one of this week's topping books for the following snappy Greyfriars limerick:

Dikey Nugent's a daring young fellow,
Who turns his bag master's face yellow.
For the bread that he toasts,
And the sosses he roasts,
Are enough to make any "pre" bellow!

Here is an interesting fact for you concerning

GOLD FROM SEA WATER.

Do you know that sea water contains gold? It does! Many experiments have been made in an endeavour to extract it, but, so far, they have not met with success. Yet a French scientist reckons that the Gulf Stream carries as much as £33,000,000 worth of gold in suspension! Unfortunately no possible method of extracting the gold would be commercially successful.

THERE'S another rattling good yarn in store for you chaps next week. It's entitled:

"COKER'S DESPERATE VENTURE!"

By Frank Richards,

and it's absolutely O.K.—as all his yarns are! The chums of the Remove, as usual, are up to the top of their form, and there are chuckles galore in the story, as well as thrills.

In "The Island of Slaves," you'll follow the further thrilling adventures of Guy Easton, Tony Dunn and Chotajee, while in the "Greyfriars Herald" you'll get a feast of fun. Shorter features as usual, of course!

Cheer-ho, chums?

YOUR EDITOR.



COKER'S

HOLIDAY

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The High Hand!

"HERE!"

Billy Bunter blinked round in surprise.

It was a familiar voice that hailed him, a voice familiar enough at Greyfriars School, but which Billy Bunter had not expected to hear on a country road in Surrey in the Easter holidays.

Bunter had rolled out of the gates of Wharton Lodge on his lonely own. He had rolled out to look for Harry Wharton & Co. There was a frown on his fat brow. Bunter had turned out at half-past ten that morning, as was his happy custom in holiday-time. With the selfishness that Bunter really might have expected of them, Harry Wharton & Co. had cleared off after breakfast, instead of waiting for Bunter to turn out. Green woods and bright April weather seemed to attract them, somehow, more than William George Bunter's fascinating company. Although Bunter had told them quite plainly that he would be ready at half-past eleven, they had gone out at nine, regardless.

So Bunter was feeling cross.

"Here, you fat chump!"

It was quite an unexpected voice that hailed Bunter. He had not expected to see Coker of the Fifth again till next term at Greyfriars, and did not particularly want to see him then. Certainly he did not want to see him now.

He blinked across the road at Coker through his big spectacles, but did not otherwise heed that great man.

Coker beckoned to him impatiently.

Still Bunter did not heed. If Horace Coker thought that he could order a Remove man about, especially in vacation, he was jolly well mistaken, in Bunter's opinion.

Coker, like Bunter, was looking cross. His friends, Potter and Greene of the Fifth, were with him, and they were looking resigned. Resignation was a lesson that any friend of Coker's had to learn.

The three Fifth Form men of Greyfriars were standing by their bicycles.

CAPTURE!

They looked rather warm and dusty, and had apparently ridden far that sunny morning. Now they were at a halt, seemingly also at a loss. Coker was the leader of that cycling party of three. Being leader, he led; and, being Coker, he led in the wrong direction. Having covered about ten miles in an effort to reach a destination three miles from the starting-point, Coker & Co. had come to a stop.

Coker stared across at Bunter.

"That's a Greyfriars fag," he said.

"It's that fat idiot Bunter of the Remove. I suppose he's staying about here somewhere. He can put us on the right road. Here, Bunter!"

Coker beckoned again.

"Come here, you fat ass!" shouted Coker. "Are you deaf?"

Coker's about the world's worst duffer but he's got the pluck of a lion. It's a case of "Burglars, Beware!" when the great Horace gets on the scent.

Bunter remained where he was.

"Hold my bike, Greeney," said Potter.

"I'll cut across and ask the kid—"

"You won't!" said Coker positively.

"I suppose a Lower Fourth fag can come when he's called? I never stand cheek from fags at Greyfriars, and I'm not going to begin now. Bunter!"

Billy Bunter grinned. He did not see why he should cross the wide road at Horace Coker's behest. He was not in the least interested in Coker.

Coker, however, saw. Coker of the Fifth had, as he often said, a short way with fags. Being on vacation made no difference. Coker was always Coker.

"Here, hold this jigger!" snapped Coker, and he shoved his bicycle against Potter, as if Potter had been a post, and strode across the road towards Bunter.

"Want anything, Coker?" grinned Bunter. "Oh! Ow! You beast, leggo my ear! Yaroooooh!"

A finger and thumb that felt like a steel vice closed on Bunter's fat ear.

"Now, you cheeky young sweep—"

"Yow-ow-ow! Leggo!" roared Bunter.

"This way!" said Coker.

With that vice-like grip on Bunter's ear, Horace Coker walked back to the cyclists. Bunter's fat ear had to go with him, and, needless to add, Bunter went with the fat ear. He yelled as he went.

"Now—" said Coker.

"Ow! Beast!"

"Look here, Bunter!" said Potter. "We've lost our way—"

"We haven't lost our way!" interrupted Coker. "We've come round a bit. No harm in going round a bit on a ripping morning like this. We're on a bike tour, ain't we? A few extra miles don't hurt me. If you fellows can't ride—"

"For goodness' sake, Coker—"

"Shut up, Greeney! Now, look here, Bunter! We haven't lost our way, but we want a short cut to Oakshott. If you're staying about here, you've heard of the place.

It's not far away. Where is it?"

"Ow!"

"Is it on this road?" roared Coker.

"Wow! Leggo my ear!"

Coker did not let go Bunter's ear. Rather he compressed his grip on it. There was a wail from the Owl of Greyfriars.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Now, you fat chump—"

"Ow! Rescue!" yelled Bunter, in the faint hope that the Famous Five might be within hearing. "I say, you fellows! Rescue!"

"Shut up!" roared Coker.

Potter and Greeney cast a rather anxious glance up and down the road. Coker was a man born for trouble as the sparks fly upward; but his comrades did not want to be mixed up in a shindy with a mob of fags.

"Look here, Coker! You can ask the

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kid civilly, can't you?" expostulated Potter.

"Shut up, Potter!"

"Did we come here for a row?" demanded Greene.

"Shut up, Greene! Now, you fat idiot, why don't you answer? Point out the nearest way to Oakshott before I twist your ear—like that!"

"Whoooooop!"

"I'm waiting!" hooted Coker.

"Ow! Take the first turning to the right, and then the first to the left, and keep straight on!" gasped Bunter.

"Now leggo my ear, you beast!"

"Sure that's right?" demanded Coker.

Bunter was not sure that it was right. As a matter of fact, he was sure that it was wrong. But he did not mention that.

"Oh! Yes! Leggo!"

"How far is it from here?" demanded Coker.

"About five miles."

"What?"

"I—I mean one mile!" gasped Bunter.

Bunter did not mind what distance he made it, so long as Coker let go his ear.

"For goodness' sake, don't be a bigger fool than you can help, Bunter!" snapped Coker. "I don't believe it's a mile. Nothing like it!"

"That's right!" gasped Bunter. "I—I mean a quarter of a mile. Less than a quarter of a mile. Leggo my ear!"

"Sure about the turnings?" asked Coker suspiciously.

"Ow! Yes! Turn to the left—"

"You said the right a minute ago!"

"Did—did I? I meant the left. First to the left, and keep straight on!" gasped Bunter. "Leggo!"

"The cheaky young rotter's pulling our leg!" said Coker. "He'd better show us the way. We can wheel the bikes. Come on, Bunter!"

"Why, you silly idiot!" gasped Bunter. "Think I'm going to walk to Oakshott? It's over two miles, and up a hill! Leggo!"

"I knew you were pulling my leg, you frowsy young sweep! Get going, you fellows! Bunter is going to show us the way."

"I'm not!" yelled Bunter.

"I think you are!" grinned Coker. "Come on!"

"Look here, Coker——" said Potter feebly.

"Shut up, Potter!" Horace Coker was evidently satisfied with his own high-handed methods, though Potter and Greene seemed to have doubts. "Why the dickens shouldn't the fag make himself useful? Now, I'll let go your ear, Bunter; but if you try to scoot off, I'll give you such a thumping licking, you won't get over it before the end of the vac. Get a move on!"

Billy Bunter rubbed his ear, which was crimson and had a pain in it. He blinked up the road and down the road. But there was no sign of Harry Wharton & Co., and no rescue for Bunter. And it was evidently useless to cut and run from a fellow who had a bike.

Billy Bunter had to resign himself to his fate. With feelings too deep for words he started, and his only consolation was that he was leading Coker & Co. in a direction diametrically opposite from that of Oakshott. Coker wanted a short cut to that Surrey village; but if he continued to follow Bunter's guidance he had twenty-five thousand miles to cover before he reached his destination. In short, he would have to travel round the globe. But Coker was never a fellow to think before he acted, otherwise he would have realised that Bunter was leading him astray.

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THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Friends in Need!

"WHO says ginger-pop?" Bob Cherry asked that question. And immediately three voices replied:

"Ginger-pop!"

And a fourth voice added:

"The ginger-popfulness is terrific!"

It was midday, and the April day was warm. Five Greyfriars juniors were dusty, dry, and athirst. The signboard of the Bunch of Grapes, swinging from the branch of an elm by the side of the leafy Surrey lane, was welcome to the view.

The little old-fashioned inn, with its porch, its diamond-paned windows, its red-tiled roof, half-hidden by creepers and foliage, was more welcome. Most welcome was the bench by the table under spreading branches, and the prospect of ginger-pop. And Harry Wharton & Co. turned from the dusty lane towards the inn.

They had walked a good many miles that sunny morning, and enjoyed every one of them. Now they were heading back to Wharton Lodge, which was only half a mile distant, in time for lunch. But they were glad of a rest and a cooling drink at that little wayside inn.

At the horse-trough a sleepy horse was refreshing himself, and a sleepy carter stood by him chewing a straw. A plump and ruddy-faced waiter in the porch sleepily admired the landscape, with one eye on a solitary guest who already occupied the bench at the table under the tree. Harry Wharton & Co. glanced casually at the solitary guest as they came up. He was a fellow some few years older than themselves, very well dressed, with a slightly sunburnt and strikingly handsome face. He had ginger-pop before him on the table, and a book in his hand, in which he seemed deeply interested; and the juniors could not help noticing that it was a pocket edition of Livy. From which they gathered the impression that the handsome youth was some senior schoolboy, improving the shining hour in holiday-time.

He glanced up from his book as the juniors approached. He was seated in the middle of the long oaken bench, but he immediately shifted along to one end to make room for the newcomers.

"Lots of room!" he remarked politely.

"Thanks!" said Harry.

"The thankfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh, with his urbane, dusky smile.

The handsome youth started a little, and gave the dusky junior a second glance. Whereat the other members of the Co. smiled. They were accustomed to manifestations of a mild surprise when strange ears heard the remarkable English that the nabob had learned in far-off Bhanipur.

Wharton and Nugent, Johnny Bull and the nabob, sat on the bench. Bob Cherry sat on the end of the table. There he could swing his legs. Those sinowy legs had covered long miles; but it was one of Robert Cherry's little weaknesses that he disliked keeping still. In the Remove Form room at Greyfriars, Bob had often been "lined" for shuffling his feet. Still life did not appeal to Bob.

The rubicund waiter brought ginger-pop. Five thirsty schoolboys found it grateful and comforting.

"Topping!" said Bob, setting down an empty glass.

"The topfulness is preposterous!" agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"The dryfulness was great, and the absurd ginger-pop is a boonful blessing." A pair of handsome, dark eyes were lifted from Livy to give the Nabob of Bhanipur a third glance. The young stranger seemed more interested in Hurree Singh's English than in Titus Livius' Latin. And the Co. smiled again.

"Jolly weather, isn't it?" said Bob, affably addressing the student of Livy.

"Very jolly!" agreed the stranger.

"Sweating in the holes?" asked Bob.

"Eh?"

Greyfriars English seemed as new to the handsome youth as Hurree Singh's variety of the language.

Bob made a gesture towards the Latin volume.

"Mugging it up for next term, I mean?"

"Oh, no!" The young fellow laughed slightly. "I am not a schoolboy."

"Oh, I fancied you were some Sixth Form man with a holiday task on hand!" grinned Bob. "Not reading that stuff for pleasure?"

"Well, yes!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob.

The idea of any fellow reading Livy without having to, almost overcame Bob Cherry. He called for some more ginger-pop.

"My esteemed Bob," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur gently, "the tastefulness differs terrifically. There is probably preposterous pleasure in the perusal of the excellent and ridiculous Livy."

"Shouldn't wonder," agreed Bob. "Give me the Holiday Annual, though. I've never seen a Sixth Form man at Greyfriars looking as if he enjoyed Livy. I remember hearing Walker of the Sixth speaking about the discovery of the Lost Books of Livy——"

"But they were not discovered, after all!" remarked the owner of the classic volume.

"No; it was only a false alarm!" grinned Bob. "Walker said that if it was true he would like to give the discoverer a good one on the solar plexus."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob suddenly. "Listen! I wondered whether Bunter was up yet. Sounds as if he is!"

From the leafy lane a familiar voice reached the ears of the Famous Five. It was raised in tones of complaint.

"I say, you fellows, I tell you I can't walk any faster!"

It was the voice of William George Bunter, though the speaker was as yet hidden from sight by a high hawthorn hedge.

"Bunter!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "And—my hat!—that's Coker of the Fifth!"

Coker's voice was heard next.

"If you don't get a move on, you frowsting fat snail, I'll jolly well boot you all the way to Oakshott!"

"Oh, really, Coker——"

"Buck up, you fat frog! Think we're going to be late for lunch because you want to crawl along like a superannuated snail?" roared Coker.

"You beast, I never wanted to show you the way, did I?" wailed Bunter. "Ow! Leggo my ear, you beast! Yaroooooh!"

"Coker, old man——" came Potter's voice.

"Shut up, Potter! We've got to get to Oakshott for lunch. Now, Bunter, you can walk faster if I pull your ear——"

"Whooooop!"

Harry Wharton & Co. chuckled. Apparently Billy Bunter had been impressed into Coker's service as a guide;

another proof that forced labour was not of much value. For wherever Bunter was leading Coker, he certainly was not leading him to Oakshott, which was in the other direction.

"Get a move on! We haven't done half a mile yet!" growled Coker. "It you want me to kick you, Bunter—"

"Beast! I jolly well wish we could meet those beasts!" groaned Bunter, apparently alluding to Harry Wharton & Co. "I'd like them to give you a jolly good licking! Keep off, you rotter! If you kick me—Yaroooop!"

Evidently Coker had kicked.

"Now, are you bucking up?" asked Coker. "I'll kick you as often as you like!"

"Look here, Coker—" said Greene.

"Shut up, Greene!"

"Here's an inn!" said Potter of the Fifth, spotting the signboard. "I say, what about lunching here?"

"We're going on to Oakshott. It can't be far now. If you silly duffers hadn't missed the road—"

"It was you missed the road!" bawled Potter. Tempers seemed to be growing short in the Fifth Form party.

"Don't yell, Potter! And don't argue! You talk too much, as I've often told you at Greyfriars. Now then, Bunter, get on!"

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances and rose to their feet. They were not anxious for Bunter's company.

stranded. But there was no escape, under the eagle eye of Horace Coker.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry, as the dusty party came into view.

"This way, Fatty!" shouted Frank Nugent.

Billy Bunter blinked round towards the inn with a gasp of relief. Never had the Owl of the Remove been so glad to see the cheery chums of Greyfriars.

"Oh!" he gasped. "I say, you fellows—"

"Stop where you are, Bunter!" roared Coker.

"Beast!"

Horace Coker made a grab at Bunter as he fled. But the fat junior eluded that hasty grab. He did the distance

THE THIRD CHAPTER!

Coker Takes a Ducking!

"BUNTER!" roared Coker.

"Yah!"

From behind five sturdy juniors in line of battle, Bunter could afford to hurl defiance at Coker of the Fifth.

"You fat sweep—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Bunter.

"What?"

"Shut up! I've a jolly good mind to lick you! I would, if it wasn't so jolly warm! Clear off while you're safe."

Potter and Greene had halted in the road with the bicycles. Their resigned expression was more pronounced than ever. Obviously, there was going to be a row; and Potter and Greene had



With a vice-like grip on Bunter's ear, Coker walked back to the cyclists. "Yow-ow-ow!" roared the Owl of the Remove. "Leggo!"

In fact, it had been quite agreeable to get a morning off without Bunter. But evidently their intervention was required here. Coker of the Fifth was not allowed to throw his weight about at Greyfriars, so far as the Removites were concerned. And he seemed to be throwing it about more than ever on vacation. Obviously, Billy Bunter had to be rescued.

The Fifth Form party came in sight a moment or two later. Coker, Potter, and Greene wheeled their bikes into view in the open space in front of the wayside inn. Billy Bunter, with a red, perspiring, and furious face, rolled along with them. Thrice had Bunter attempted to dodge away by gaps in hedges, and thrice had Coker recaptured him and kicked him. Coker had a hefty kick. Bunter was beginning to doubt his wisdom in leading the Fifth Form party on the wrong road. He had counted on escaping and leaving them

from the road to the table where the Famous Five stood at about seventy miles an hour.

"I say, you fellows, keep him off!" spluttered Bunter. "I say, the beast's made me walk miles and miles to show him the way—I say, I'll have some of that ginger-pop—I say, keep him off!"

"All serene, old fat bean!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "We'll take care of Coker."

"The carefulness will be terrific."

"Line up!" chortled Bob Cherry.

And the Famous Five lined up, with William George Bunter safe behind them, as Horace Coker came striding wrathfully after his lost guide.

Any other fellow might have hesitated on seeing five sturdy juniors barring his path, but not so Coker. He was never one to meet trouble half-way; he waded right into it, and it didn't appear that he would alter his usual procedure on this occasion.

already tacitly agreed to leave the rowing to Coker. If Coker chose to wake up a hornets' nest, Coker could have the hornets all to himself.

"Get aside, you young sweeps," said Coker. "I'm going—"

"Hands off, old bean," said Bob Cherry affably, bestowing a shove on Coker's chest that made the Fifth Form man stagger. "Don't ask for it, old man! You might get it!"

"The mightfulness is terrific, my absurd Coker."

"I've told that frowsting young rascal to guide me to Oakshott!" said Coker, "and I'm going—"

"If you're going to Oakshott, you won't find Bunter very useful as a guide," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "It's the other way."

"What?" gasped Coker.

"You're coming away from it!"

"Kik-kik-coming away from it!" stuttered Coker.

"He, he, ho!" came from William George Bunter. "It was two miles the other way from Wharton Lodge, you silly fathead! He, he, he!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Bunter's been pulling your leg, Coker! Serve you jolly well right, too!"

"Why, I—I—I'll smash him!" gasped Coker. "I'll burst him all over Surrey! I'll strew him about in little pieces! I'll—"

"Keep him off!" yelled Bunter.

Horace Coker needed keeping off! His rugged face was fairly flaming with fury! Having impressed Bunter into his service, in his own lofty, high-handed way, Coker really might have expected something of the sort. But he hadn't! It had never crossed Coker's lofty mind that Bunter was leading him astray. Coker, in his own opinion, was not a fellow to be trifled with. The discovery that the fat junior had dared to trifle with him, and that his lost way was more lost than ever, simply infuriated Coker. He hurled himself at the Famous Five, to scatter them out of his way like ninepins and get at Bunter.

Had he got at Bunter, that fat youth would have suffered severely for trifling with Horace Coker. But he had not the remotest chance of getting at Bunter.

The Famous Five did not scatter like ninepins under Coker's rush. They stood up manfully to the rush and collared Coker on all sides.

"Bag him!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows, keep him off!"

"We've got him!"

"Leggo!" roared Coker. "I'll smash you! I'll spifficate the lot of you! I—

I—I'll—yoooooop! Oh, my hat! Whoooooop!"

Coker went down with a heavy bump. He struggled and roared.

Harry Wharton & Co. were five to one, and they were sturdy fellows; but they had plenty to do to hold Coker for the next few minutes. The hefty Horace put up a terrific scrap.

He struggled and roared and rolled. He scrambled up and bumped down again! He crashed into the oaken table and set it rocking. He crashed into the handsome youth who had been reading Livy, and who had risen from the bench and stepped out of the way of the conflict, with surprise and amusement in his looks. But he was not far enough out of the way for safety. Coker, in the midst of the juniors, who were clinging to him like cats, crashed into him and he staggered and sat down.

"Oh! Sorry!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"The sorrowfulness is terrific!" panted Hurreo Janset Ram Singh.

"Oh, don't mention it!" gasped the young stranger, and he picked himself up and retreated to the inn porch.

There he stood and looked on at the wild and whirling scene, with the astonished waiter, and an equally astonished innkeeper.

Coker was down again! He struggled in vain to rise!

"Potter! Greene! Back up!" yelled Coker

Potter and Greene exchanged a smile and did not stir. Coker was welcome to all the hornets he liked to arouse. Potter and Greene did not want any. Indeed, it had long been borne in on the minds of Coker's chums, that what Coker really wanted was a thumping good hiding. It looked as if he was

going to get what he wanted now. Potter and Greene charitably hoped that it would do him good.

"You young scoundrels—leggo! You cheeky little rotters—yooooop! Gerroff my neck! Ooooooop!"

"Cool down, old bean!" advised Bob Cherry. "Mustn't lose its ickle temper."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll smash you! I'll—I'll—"

Coker showed no signs whatever of cooling down. Rather his wrath seemed to grow hotter and hotter.

"What about the horse-trough?" panted Johnny Bull. "That will cool him down."

"Good egg!"

"The goodness of the egg is terrific."

"Heave ahead, my hearties!" chortled Bob.

The sleepy carter and his sleepy horse had gone on their sleepy way. The horse-trough stood ready for the next comer. The next comer was Coker.

"You—you—you—if you dare!" shrieked Coker.

"A long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together!" gasped Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker resisted frantically. But with a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together, the chums of the Remove got him to the horse-trough.

In the grip of many hands the hefty Fifth-Former was up-ended and then lowered head-first into the trough.

"Groooh! Hoooh! Wooooogh!" spluttered Coker. "I—I—I'll slaughter you for this!"

He struggled furiously, but all to no purpose.

"Now let the silly ass go!" said Wharton.

Like one man, the Famous Five let go their hold on Coker, and the hefty man of the Fifth sank like a plummet into the water.

Splash!

"Grooogh! Ooooooogh!"

Coker sprawled in water. He wallowed in it. He sat up in it, streaming, and spluttered wildly.

"Ooooooooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Horace Coker's aspect, as he sat in the trough, dabbing water from his eyes, and gurgling for breath, made the juniors yell. There was a chortle from Potter and Greene. There was another chortle from the group in the inn porch. Coker of the Fifth was undoubtedly having an enlivening effect on that part of Surrey that sunny morning.

"Grooogh!" spluttered Coker.

"Ooooch! Woooooooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Feel wet, old bean?" gurgled Bob Cherry.

"The wetfulness is terrific!"

"Woooooooch! Oooooogh!"

Coker scrambled wildly out of the trough. There was no doubt that he was wet—frightfully wet! From top to toe Coker was drenched and streaming. Pools of water formed round him as he stood beside the trough struggling for breath. He gasped and gurgled spasmodically. He seemed to have some difficulty in getting his second wind.

"Having any more, old bean?" asked Bob. "Lots more if you want any."

"Terrific lots, my esteemed Coker."

"Groogh! Grooh! Gug-gug-gug-gug!" was the only reply from Horace Coker. If Coker had not had enough, he was, at all events, incapable of asking for more, just at present.

"Time we got off!" remarked Harry Wharton. "We shall be late for lunch at this rate! You coming, Bunter?"

"Yes, rather!" gasped Bunter.

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The ginger-pop was paid for, and the Famous Five prepared to leave. Billy Bunter kept very close to them. Coker glared round at them with a wet and dizzy glare. But he was feeling quite unable to deal with them as they deserved. They walked cheerily away, and left him gurgling and gug-gug-gugging.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Man in the Park!

HALLO, hallo, hallo! Who's that sportsman?" murmured Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton & Co. were taking a short cut across the park to reach Wharton Lodge. They had been rather delayed at the Bunch of Grapes, owing to Coker—though they admitted that the time had been well spent. Still, they did not want to be late for lunch; and they walked home at a good rate, and instead of following the road to the gates of Wharton Lodge, clambered over a fence into the park and cut across. In several parts of the park the plantations were thick, but Wharton knew every inch of the ground, and he did not need to follow a path.

Coming along through the trees, with a glimpse of the lodge in view in the distance, the juniors sighted the "sportsman" to whom Bob alluded.

He was a little distance in front of them, and standing close beside a beech, he was looking towards the house, his back to the approaching juniors. As he was obviously not Jessop, the keeper, or the under-keeper, it was clear that he was a trespasser who had no business there. Neither was he a local inhabitant who was taking a short cut; there was nothing rural in his appearance. The juniors had only a back view of him, so far; and they saw a small man, dressed in tweeds, with a bowler hat jammed down on a head of sandy hair. There was something stealthy in his aspect as he almost hugged the trunk of the beech while he stared at the house in the distance through an opening of the park.

The footsteps of the juniors made no sound on the grass, and the man was evidently unaware of their approach from behind.

"What the dickens is he up to?" said Wharton, puzzled.

"I say, you fellows, if he's a poacher, we'd better go round," said Billy Bunter.

"Fathead! He's not a poacher! Goodness knows what he is, and what he's up to," said Harry. "He seems jolly keen on something."

The Greyfriars fellows walked on, approaching nearer to the man under the beech. They were quite close to him, and still he did not turn his head.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry suddenly, just behind him, in stentorian tones.

The man jumped almost clear of the ground, and spun round like a top. Evidently he was startled.

"Oh!" he ejaculated.

He stared at the schoolboys, and they stared at him. His face was not prepossessing; it was narrow, sharp in feature, with little keen eyes that were watchful as a ferret's. For a second he stood staring blankly, and then he made a movement as if to run. If that was his first intention, however, he changed his mind promptly. The startled scowl vanished from his face, and he grinned and touched his bowler hat.

"Struth!" he ejaculated. "You made me jump, sir!"

"That was the idea!" explained Bob Cherry affably.

"Jest your little joke, sir—what?" said the ferret-eyed man. "No 'arm done, sir! You young gentlemen belong to this 'ere place?"

"Sort of!" said Bob.

"What are you doing here?" asked Harry Wharton, eyeing the man keenly. "This park belongs to my uncle, and trespassers are not allowed here."

"Struth! Am I trespassing 'ere? Sorry, sir!" The ferret-eyed man's manner was very civil. "No offence, sir! I'll get out if you like."

"There's no harm done," said Harry. "But what the dickens are you up to?"

"Jest taking a short cut, sir."

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"Chuck that!" said Wharton curtly. "You're nowhere near a path, and you've been standing under that tree for some time, watching the house. You're not taking a short cut."

"No 'arm in looking round, sir," said the ferret-eyed man, still civil, though the ferret eyes glinted at Wharton for a moment. "I don't often come down to the country, sir, and see a place like this 'ere. But if you say I'm trespassing 'ere—"

"You know you are," said Harry. "You must have climbed a fence to get into the park at all—a high fence, too."

"Think I've come here to steal your blinking trees?" asked the ferret-eyed man, less civilly. "Like me to turn out me pockets?"

"I'd like you to turn out of this park," said Wharton, "and I'll see you off, too! I don't know what you're up to here, but it's no good. I'll see you out."

"Glad of your company, sir!" said the ferret-eyed man, with a sarcastic grin. "I don't often get a walk with a 'igh-class young gent like you."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Wharton sharply. "Come this way, and I'll see you out of the park."

"Anywhere you like, sir, unless you'd like to ask me up to the 'ouse to lunch."

Wharton made no reply to that, but he turned and started for the nearest fence, and the ferret-eyed man walked with him. The other fellows followed.

The fence was soon reached. The little man with the ferret eyes spat on his hands, made a jump, and caught the top. He drew himself up with the activity of a monkey. As he did so, a paper fluttered to the ground. Bob Cherry stooped and picked it up.

The man sat astride of the fence, and looked down, grinning impudently at Wharton.

"All safe now, sir," he said. "You can tell your uncle that none of his trees ain't been pinched. I give you my davy, sir, that I ain't got a blooming oak, nor yet a beech, in my weskit pocket."

"You've dropped something," said Bob, holding up the paper.

The leering grin vanished from the sharp, narrow face on the instant. The man reached down for the paper so suddenly that he almost lost his hold on the fence and came within an ace of tumbling down headlong.

"Give that to me!" he panted.

"Something awfully valuable?" asked Bob, with a grin.

Bob did not even think of looking at the paper; the man's concerns were no affair of his. But as he held it, he could not help seeing that it was covered with pencil marks, in lines and dots, and looked like a plan of some sort.

"Give it to me!" shouted the ferret-eyed man shrilly. "Struth, if you don't give me that paper, I'll set about you, and chance it!"

"Don't let me stop you!" grinned Bob. "You can begin as soon as you like, Sandy."

"I say, you fellows, is it a banknote?" asked Billy Bunter eagerly. "If it is, very likely he's pinched it. I'll take charge of it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. Look here, if that's a banknote, I'd better look after it. The fact is, I dropped a banknote the other day—"

"It isn't a banknote, you fat fraud!" chuckled Bob.

"Oh!" Bunter lost all interest in the document at once. "Well, why don't you give the man his paper? We shall be late for lunch."

"Give it to me! Give it to me, I tell you! I—"

The man was shouting savagely.

"Keep your wool on, old pippin," said Bob soothingly. "Here's your jolly old paper—nobody wants it, I assure you."

He handed up the paper, and the ferret-eyed man clutched it from his hand. He thrust it back into his pocket, scowled blackly at the juniors, and dropped from the fence into the lane outside. The juniors heard his footsteps die away at a run.

"Well, that's jolly queer!" said Nugent. "Who the dickens was he, and what was his game?"

"Goodness knows," said Wharton. "But he was up to something, though I can't imagine what."

"I say, you fellows, I think—"

"Well, what do you think, Fatty?"

"I think we shall be late for lunch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. walked on to the house and arrived, much to Billy Bunter's relief, in time for lunch. Wharton mentioned the strange incident of the man in the park to his uncle, and Colonel Wharton looked puzzled. What the ferret-eyed man had been up to

in the park, if he had been up to anything, was rather a puzzle, and it was finally dismissed from mind, though it was to be remembered later.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Lunch at Last!

"WHAT a life!" sighed Potter of the Fifth.
"Yes, what, indeed!" sighed Greene.

That elusive Surrey village, Oakshott, was as far off as ever. Potter and Greene were hungry. Horace Coker was busy. In a room in the Bunch of Grapes, the little wayside inn on Wheatfield Lane, Coker was repairing damages. Fortunately, Coker had a change of clothes in his pack on his bike carrier. He needed a change. Coker towelled himself down and changed, while his comrades hung about wistfully and wondered whether they would ever get any lunch. They wondered, too, whether life was really worth living in company with Horace Coker of the Greyfriars Fifth. They wondered, for the umpteenth time, whether they had not been asses and duffers to begin that cycling tour with Coker at all.

There were advantages in a tour with Coker. Coker was stacked with money, and he paid all the bills. Potter and Greene got their tour for nothing, with Coker's company thrown in. But for Coker's company it might have been really enjoyable on such cheap terms. But there is always a fly in the ointment. Obviously Coker could not be expected to pay the bills unless Coker was present, and it was Coker's presence that was the trouble. Potter and Greene had to take the bad with the good, but they doubted often whether the good was not outweighed by the bad.

Growing hungrier and hungrier while they waited wearily for Coker, they doubted more than ever now.

There was a good lunch to be had at the inn. But Coker, of course, would be offended if they lunched without him. He was offended enough already by the masterly inactivity Potter and Greene had displayed during the shindy with the Remove fellows. Riding on and leaving Coker behind was a perfectly blissful prospect from one aspect, but from the financial point of view it had drawbacks.

Potter and Greene waited. They loafed about the inn, told one another how hungry they were, and exchanged opinions on Horace Coker. Not a single opinion that they expressed was complimentary. So far from regretting the ducking Coker had had in the horse-trough, it might have been supposed from their remarks that they regretted that he had not been drowned in it.

Lunch was being served in the inn to a young fellow who seemed to be staying there. The lunch had an appetising odour, which made Potter and Greene yearn to massacre Coker. They were still miles from their own lunch; for Coker, of course, would insist on keeping on to Oakshott—when he was ready. Opposition was only calculated to make Coker more obstinate. The waiter had asked them if they were going to lunch. Potter had replied that they were waiting for their friend, in a tone which hinted that they were waiting for their deadliest enemy.

There was one hope—that the appetising smell of lunch would tempt Coker himself. Coker, fortunately, had a healthy appetite. To give him a chance, as it were, Potter and Greene ensconced themselves in the dining-room, where the young stranger was lunching. Coker

would have to come there for them when he was ready, and they hoped that he would be tempted and would fall to the temptation.

But Coker was a long, long time; so long that his friends almost wished that the juniors hadn't ducked him.

A sandy-haired man in tweeds, with a ferrety face under a bowler hat, came along to the inn and entered. Potter and Greene glanced at him carelessly as he passed the window.

His voice was heard in the passage a moment later, speaking to the waiter.

"Is Mr. Lancaster in?"

"Mr. Lancaster's at lunch, sir."

The ferret eyes glinted into the room where Potter and Greene loafed, and where the handsome youth with the pocket Livy sat lunching near a window. Taking no notice of the two Greyfriars seniors, the ferret-eyed man crossed quickly over to the fellow who was lunching. Evidently they were acquaintances, and the Greyfriars men wondered for a moment idly at that circumstance. The little, mean-looking man with the sandy hair and slits of eyes seemed a rather odd acquaintance for the handsome, well-dressed young fellow who read Titus Livius over his lunch.

"Dick——" began the ferret-eyed man.

The handsome, dark eyes were raised, and the look they bestowed on the ferret-eyed man seemed to check his utterance. The youth made an imperceptible gesture towards the Greyfriars seniors lounging by the window.

"Shut up, Weasel, you fool!" he said in so low a tone that the faintest sound of it did not reach Potter or Greene.

Weasel glanced round at the Greyfriars seniors, seemed about to speak again, checked himself, scowled, and walked out of the room.

The handsome youth, whose name, apparently, was Lancaster, continued his lunch unperturbed. Potter and Greene had noted the incident idly, but only for a moment. Their thoughts and longings were concentrated on food. They wondered if that egregious ass, that unspeakable idiot, Horace Coker, would ever come down.

Heavy footsteps sounded on the inn stairs at last.

"That's Coker!" said Potter.

"Either Coker or an escaped elephant!" agreed Greene.

It was Coker. His powerful voice was heard inquiring for his friends. And then he came into the room. Towelled dry, and with a change of clothes, Coker had a newly swept and garnished look, but his rugged face was red with lingering wrath. Had Harry Wharton & Co. been still anywhere near the inn there would have been no chance of lunch yet for Potter and Greene. Fortunately, the juniors were far out of reach of Coker's wrath long ago.

"Oh, you're here!" said Coker, with a grunt.

"Jolly hungry!" said Potter plaintively.

The waiter was bringing another dish to Lancaster's table. It was roast chicken, and it looked nice, and its aroma was delicious. Coker gave an involuntary sniff, and Potter and Greene exchanged a hopeful look. They wondered whether their strategy was going to be a success.

Had they suggested staying at the inn for lunch, the game would have been up. Coker would have insisted immediately on going on to Oakshott, as per programme. They knew their Coker better than that.

The suggestion had to come from Coker himself if it was to be acted upon. Potter and Greene watched him almost in anguish.

"I suppose those fags have cleared off," said Coker.

"Hours ago," said Greene.

"That's rot! I haven't been an hour."

"Seems like hours!" sighed Greene.

"I'm hungry!"

Coker gave another glance at the lunch table. It was evident that he was wavering.

"We shall be rather late for lunch at Oakshott," he remarked meditatively.

"Frightfully late!" groaned Potter.

"It's all the fault of that young scoundrel Bunter leading us wrong," said Coker. "He will be sorry for it a bit later. And those other young scoundrels, too. If I knew where to look for them——"

Apparently Coker was not yet satisfied with his experience of waking up hornets.

"Well, they're gone," said Greene drearily. "I say——"

"If they're hanging about here somewhere for the Easter hols we may see them again," said Coker. "I want to find that out. I suppose you know that I shan't let the matter rest where it is. I've a short way with fags when they're cheeky. I wonder——"

"Why, yes, rather!" exclaimed Potter brightly. "I—I dare say they're staying near here—quite near here. We might run right into them after lunch."

"Pretty certain to, I think," exclaimed Greene, catching his cue from Potter. "Let's look round for them after lunch."

"You think they're staying near here?" asked Coker.

"Pretty certain!" said Potter and Greene simultaneously. They neither knew nor cared where Harry Wharton & Co. might be staying. But they knew that they wanted their lunch.

"The waiter might know," said Coker thoughtfully. "I believe young Wharton lives in Surrey—somewhere—Wharton Lodge, I think."

Lancaster lifted his eyes for a moment at Coker, and dropped them to his lunch again. Had Coker observed him, he might have observed that the name of Wharton Lodge interested that youth.

"Here, waiter!" called out Coker.

"Yessir! Lunch, sir?"

"Do you happen to know any of those young hooligans who were kicking up a shindy here?"

The waiter blinked at him. Perhaps the waiter had thought that it was Coker who had kicked up the shindy.

"I know Master Harry by sight, sir," he answered.

"Young Wharton?"

"Yes, sir! Colonel Wharton's nephew at the lodge."

"Is it far from here?"

"Under half a mile, sir."

"That settles it, you men!" said Coker. "We're not going on! We'll lunch here—in fact, I think we'll put up here till to-morrow."

Potter and Greene had hung on the waiter's reply, trembling between hope and apprehension. His reply rejoiced their hearts. Coker was glad to hear that reply, for it meant vengeance on the cheeky juniors—or Coker supposed that it did. Potter and Greene were still gladder to hear it, for it meant lunch.

With signs of thankfulness, Potter and Greene sat down to table. It was quite a good lunch at the Bunch of Grapes—and never had a lunch been so thoroughly appreciated.

Coker, over lunch, discussed plans for dealing with the impertinent young scoundrels who had ducked him in the horse-trough. It seemed that it was unthinkable for the cycling party to get

on their journey until that outrage had been signally avenged. Potter and Greene let him talk, and devoted their attention to more important matters. Coker was keen to get on the warpath; and Potter and Greene did not mind, so long as they were not expected to get on the warpath also.

But they were! After lunch Coker was ready to start. "You fellows are backing me up, I suppose?" he asked.

"Oh! Ah! Yes!" murmured Potter. "Of—of course."

"Oh! Ah! Um!" said Greene.

Coker eyed them coldly.

"If you're not," he said, "you may as well clear! No need for you to stay on here with me if you're not backing me up."

"We—we're keen on it!" groaned Potter.

"Well, come on! We'll leave the bikes here and trot over towards Wharton's place and see how the land lies," said Coker. "See?"

"I—I see!" mumbled Greene.

"Well, come on!" Potter and Greene came on.

Perhaps it was by accident that, a little later, they strayed into a path different from that followed by Horace Coker. Perhaps it was not by accident! At all events, Coker lost them quite early in the afternoon.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Luck for Coker!

"STOP!"
"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Harry Wharton. He stopped.

At Wharton Lodge four members of the Co. were playing tennis, while Billy Bunter was enjoying an afternoon nap, dreaming about the lunch he had lately eaten and the tea that he was soon going to eat.

Harry Wharton had walked across the fields to a cottage at some distance, on a mission for his aunt, Miss Amy Wharton. He had carried a basket packed with nice things for an invalid, the visitation of the sick being one of Aunt Amy's chief activities. Now Harry was walking back by the field paths; and ahead of him was a stile that he had to cross. On that stile a burly figure was seated. The stile was screened by an old beech and a bunch of willows, and Wharton did not see the burly figure till he was quite near to it. Then Horace Coker ordered him to stop.

Coker grinned as he slipped from the stile.

This was luck, from Coker's point of view.

Somehow or other, he had lost Potter and Greene. Had Coker been a suspicious fellow he might have suspected

that Potter and Greene had lost themselves intentionally.

Fortunately, Coker was not a suspicious fellow. But he was annoyed. His intention was to get hold of those five cheeky juniors and gave them the thrashing they undoubtedly deserved. He carried a light walking-cane under his arm for that very purpose. But even Coker realised that if he came on the five in a bunch there were difficulties ahead. Even Coker realised that, in such a case, the wrong party might get the whopping. So it was extremely annoying for Potter and

funny to mop me into that horse-trough?"

"A little!" admitted Wharton. "You won't think it funny to be whopped for it?" suggested Coker. "I'm going to whop the whole gang of you before I leave—see! I'll begin with you. Bend over that stile!"

"Wha-a-at!" ejaculated Wharton. Coker pointed to the stile with the cane.

"Bend over that stile! I'm going to give you six!"

"Do you think we're at Greyfriars



The little man made a jump, caught at the top of the fence, and drew himself up with the activity of a monkey. As he did so, a paper fluttered to the ground, and Bob Cherry leaped forward to pick it up!

Greene to get lost in that fatheaded way. He might need their help; he might need it badly.

But fortune smiled on Coker! Sitting on the stile to rest, he glanced up at the sound of footsteps, and beheld the cheekiest of all those cheeky young rascals walking fairly into his hands. It was real luck! Here was the captain of the Greyfriars Remove at his mercy, with not a sign of the other young scoundrels on the horizon at all.

"Stop!" chortled Coker of the Fifth.

Harry Wharton backed a little, and eyed Coker warily. He had not expected to see Coker again; indeed, he had not given Coker a thought since leaving the inn on the Wheatfield Road. But Coker had turned up again—and the way he gripped his cane demonstrated what he had turned up for.

"So I've found you!" grinned Coker.

"Been looking for me?" asked Harry.

"Yes! And I've jolly well found you! I suppose you thought it rather

and that you're a prefect?" demanded Wharton, staring at him blankly.

"Never mind where we are!" grinned Coker. "I've a short way with fags, wherever we are! And I should be a prefect, too, if the Head had any sense; but, of course, it's no good expecting a schoolmaster to have any sense. Bend over that stile!"

"Fathead!"

"What?" roared Coker.

"Ass!"

"Still cheeky?" snorted Coker.

"Well, I'll give you something to cure all that. Mind, if you give me any trouble you'll get it hotter. Now, then—"

"You silly chump!" roared Wharton.

"Keep off, you potty hippopotamus!"

Coker made a rush. He did not like being called a potty hippopotamus. He was not a hippopotamus; and, so far as he knew, was not potty.

Harry Wharton dodged. He could have given Coker yards and beaten him

in a foot race. But he did not want to send back the way he had come. Coker was between him and the stile, so the captain of the Remove dodged round him, ran for the stile, and jumped.

Coker was after him like a shot.

"Stop!" he panted.

There was no time to step over the stile. Wharton would have cleared it and left Coker standing but for the unfortunate circumstance that Coker's cane had a crook handle. Coker reached for him, hooked the crook handle in his arm, and dragged him back as he jumped.

Bump!

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

He came down on thick grass, under the willows. It was rather a heavy bump, and it knocked a good deal of breath out of him. He had no time to rise to try again. Coker was upon him.

"Got you!" gasped Coker.

He had got him, that was certain. Coker's powerful grasp closed on the Remove and dragged him to his feet.

"Now bend over that step!" panted Coker. "Eh? Oh, my hat! Yarooooogh! Whooooooop!"

The captain of the Remove was strong and sturdy, but he had no chance against a hefty Fifth Form man. Coker was twice his weight, but if Coker supposed that the junior was going to take a whopping now that he was collared, Coker was making one more of his many mistakes.

Nothing was farther from Wharton's thoughts than bending over the step of the stile to take a whopping.

Instead of that, he jammed a clenched fist under Coker's chin, and another in his eye, and Coker staggered and roared.

"Why, you—you—you—" gasped Coker. "You cheeky little scoundrel! Punching a Fifth Form man, by gad! Why, I—I—I'll—"

"Let go, you silly idiot!" shouted Wharton.

"I'll jolly well—"

Wharton struggled manfully. A powerful upper-cut jarred every tooth in Coker's head. Coker's leg-of-mutton fist was clenched; but he forebore to smite. He disdained a fight with a Lower Fourth fag. Instead of punching, he grasped the junior hard, whirled him over, and hurled him down, falling with him into the grass.

For a couple of minutes there was a terrific struggle. The junior was hopelessly outclassed, but he fought a losing fight desperately. Even the big and beefy Fifth-Former had hard work to hold him. But he held him, and his

weight fairly squashed the junior to the ground. With a mighty heave Coker turned him over, face down in the grass, and planted a knee in the small of his back.

"Ooooooogh!" gasped Wharton.

He was fairly pinned down now, and well placed for punishment. Coker groped for the cane, which he had dropped in the struggle, and caught it up. It swished in the air.

"Now, you cheeky young sweep—" panted Coker.

"Gerroff, you potty idiot!" roared Wharton.

Whack!

"Oh crikey!" Wharton struggled desperately, and almost escaped from the pinning knee. But the sinewy knee jammed down again in his back, and he was crushed in the grass.

"You rotten bully!" roared Wharton.

Coker gasped.

"Bully!" he ejaculated. "Why, you—you—you—what did you call me?" Coker spluttered, with indignation.

"I'll give you an extra six for that!" Whack, whack!

"Oh crumbs! Ow! Gerroff! Ooooooogh!"

Whack!

"Stop that!" called out a sharp voice; and Horace Coker, to his surprise, found himself suddenly lifted off the struggling junior, and tossed over in the grass, where he landed with a bump.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Not so Lucky for Coker!

HARRY WHARTON sat up breathlessly.

So did Coker.

Both of them stared at the stranger who had so unexpectedly intervened. Both of them recognised him immediately. It was the handsome youth whom the Famous Five had talked with while refreshing themselves with ginger-pop at the Bunch of Grapes, and whom Coker had seen at lunch at the inn.

He was smiling slightly as he looked down at them.

"Oh!" gasped Wharton. "Oh, thanks!"

"Not at all!"

"What the thump!" roared Coker, staggering to his feet and turning a glare of terrific wrath on the handsome stranger. "What the thump do you mean?"

"I mean to stop you walloping that kid!" was the polite reply. "I don't know what the trouble is; but enough's as good as a feast, you know."

"You cheeky fat-head!" roared Coker. "Who are you, I'd like to know?"

"My name is Lancaster, if you would like to know!" said the handsome youth, still polite. "Yours, I imagine, is Bill Sikes."

"What!" gasped Coker. Coker was not a great reader, but he had heard of Bill Sikes, and being likened to that rough-and-ready gentleman gave the finishing touch to his wrath.

"Judging by appearances, of course," said Lancaster.

Harry Wharton laughed breathlessly. He picked himself up with a wary eye on Coker. But Coker was not bothering about him now. Coker's wrath had turned on Dick Lancaster.

"You—you—you think you can stop me?" gasped Coker.

Lancaster looked about a year older than Coker, but, athletic fellow as he evidently was, he was not quite so big as Coker. Coker was an outside in Fifth-Formers.

But the other fellow did not seem alarmed. He smiled.

"You didn't want me to chip in?" he asked.

"I jolly well didn't, you cheeky ass!"

"What about you?" asked Lancaster, turning to Wharton. "Did you want me to chip in?"

"Yes, rather!" gasped Wharton.

"Then I'm chipping in!" smiled Lancaster. "You needn't worry about that fathead. I'll look after him!"

"Did you call me a fathead?" roared Coker.

"Yes. Judging by appearances again," said Lancaster amiably. "Surely it's not the first time you've been called a fathead? It leaps to the eye."

Horace Coker fairly gurgled with wrath.

"You think you're going to stop me whopping that cheeky fag?" he bellowed.

"I think so!"

"Well, you'll have to stop me whopping you first!" roared Coker.

"Oh, cheese it, Coker!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. Whether that handsome, athletic fellow could handle Coker he was not sure, but he did not want to see his rescuer put through it by the burly Horace. "You don't want to drag strangers into Greyfriars rows!"

"Shut up, Wharton! I'll whop you after I've whopped this cheeky, interfering tick!" roared Coker. "Now you, Lancaster, or whatever your silly name is, clear off and mind your own business, or I'll give you such a licking that your tailor won't know you again!"

"Get on with it!"

That was enough for Horace Coker. He got on with it promptly.

Harry Wharton, leaning on the stile and gasping for breath, watched them rather anxiously. Man to man was fair play, but this amiable and obliging stranger was not called upon to scrap with the hot-headed and hefty Greyfriars senior in a Greyfriars row. Wharton debated in his mind whether he had better pile in to his aid and turn it into a ragging instead of a scrap.

But in a very few moments he could see that Dick Lancaster was not the fellow that required aid.

Horace Coker charged at the handsome stranger like a bull, with his leg-of-mutton fists thrashing the air. Had Coker's hefty fists got home on that handsome face certainly its good looks would have been sadly marred. Coker had a terrific punch when he got it home. But Coker's punches did not get home. They were brushed aside with ease, and a hand that was white and well-manicured, but clenched into a fist that seemed like a lump of lead, tapped on Coker's prominent nose.

"Woooooch!" spluttered Coker as he staggered.

There was a spurt of crimson from Coker's nose.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Wharton. He chuckled. Evidently the handsome stranger did not require aid. It was plain already that Horace Coker had bitten off more than he could chew.

Coker did not realise that! If he had

(Continued on page 12.)

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"Half-Time" Gossip!



If you're in doubt over any Soccer problem, "Old Ref" will be only too glad to help you out. He's the world's greatest authority on all footer matters.

WE are getting near the end of this football season, and shall soon be totting up the records of the clubs and the players in various directions. I always think there should be a pat on the back for the players of a first-class football team who go through the whole season without once being absent from their place in the side.

Such a record is a tribute to their physical fitness in the first place; to the way in which they look after themselves, because a whole football season makes a big call on the physical resources of a player. And, of course, the ever-present players deserve a pat on the back because of their consistency. The man who is picked for every match, who is always in good form, relieves the manager of the side of no small amount of worry.

It nearly always happens that the clubs which do best, those which win the championships, for instance, call upon the minimum number of players in the course of the season. There are several reasons for this. Perhaps the most important is that

when a team is doing well there is no call on the manager to chop and change except when he is compelled to do so owing to injuries.

IN my travels I come across many managers who deplore the bad luck of their players in receiving injuries. I am not going to say that there is no such thing as luck in this connection. But I don't think that because one lot of players escape serious injury, and another lot seem to have a succession of injuries that luck is the only possible explanation.

It has been my experience all along that the cleverest players, the most capable footballers, suffer the minimum in the injury line. Players who are confident and clever don't need to play what can best be described as "do or die" football. The best set of players control a match. They can take things calmly, whereas their opponents, trying to make up in energy what they lack in skill, must constantly strain to get effect. They have to play desperately, and playing desperately means running risks of injury.

When I started these notes on men who play in every match during a season I did not mean to let myself run off on the line I have taken. I really started with the intention of answering a seemingly simple query. It is this:

What is the maximum number of League matches in which a first-class footballer can take part in the course of a season?

The answer appears easy enough. You remember that no League club plays more than 42 League games in a season, and therefore it appears to follow, on the face of it, that no individual player can play in more than 42 League games in one season.

But there is a catch in the question. There have been cases of players appearing in more than 42 League matches in one season. Manchester City have a forward named Eric Brook. During the season of 1927-28 this player took part in 31 Second Division matches for Barnsley. He was then transferred to Manchester City. As it happened, the City had still 12 more League matches to play that season, and Brook, appearing in every one of them, had actually 43 League appearances opposite his name at the end of the season.

Even Brook, however, does not hold the record. I believe it belongs to Walter Rawlings who, in a season a short time back, played 32 games for Southampton and then in the same season played 12 games for Manchester United.

HAVING told you about those records, about players who appeared in more than 42 League matches in the course of a season, I hope you will feel a little bit sorry for me. I am asked to reply to seemingly simple questions, but when I start out to answer a question which looks specially easy I have to put on my studying cap

to look for the snag. Sometimes the snag takes a lot of finding, but it is usually there all right.

A reader of Folkestone wants to know how the Cup draw is made. I think I have referred to the process previously, but perhaps it won't do any harm if the memories of readers are refreshed. I will be as brief as possible.

Little green balls—about the size of bagatelle balls—are placed in a bag. These balls are enumerated according to the number of competitors concerned in the draw for that particular round—say the 5th for instance. The Secretary of the Football Association has a sheet of paper in front of him. On this sheet is written the names of the clubs left in the Cup, in alphabetical order. They are also numbered to correspond with the numbers of the balls—that is, one to sixteen in this case.

The balls in the bag are then given a good shake. After that a member of the Football Association—the President of that body if he is in attendance—dives into the bag with his hand and picks out a ball. It may be number six. Now the name of the club opposite the number six on the written sheet of notepaper may be Everton. That means Everton are drawn at home. Another ball is taken out of the bag. It is number twelve. Number twelve on the written sheet may be West Bromwich Albion. That means that Everton play West Bromwich Albion. That process goes on until the draw is finished; till all the balls are out of the bag and the whole of the clubs have been paired.

While on this subject I suppose it is likely that by now some of my readers will have seen and listened to a talking picture illustrating and describing how the Cup draw is made. Such a film was made of a recent Cup draw, but I can assure you that the F.A. people took a lot of persuading to allow such a film to be made. They had considered the making of the draw a secret sort of business and even responsible Press representatives were kept out of the room in which the draw was made. However, the Football Association, like other people, must move with the times. And I think it just as well that the Cup draw has been made, this season, in a sort of public fashion. There are quite a lot of people I have come across who would not be convinced, previously, that the draw was not wangled in some way. But it is not a wangle, and has never been a wangle.

SCARCELY a week goes past in which I have not one or more letters from boys who are fired with the ambition to make good at football. I have one this week from a Poplar, London, reader. He says he did well with his football at school, playing for the senior team for a couple of seasons. Apparently he has now left school, and his big idea is to get a trial with a first-class club.

I should be the last person in the world to stifle ambition. I am a firm believer in aiming at the stars, because then there is always a chance of hitting the tree-tops. But my correspondent must indeed be a football genius to have the slightest chance of jumping out of a school side to a position as a professional with a first-class team.

My advice to the ambitious boy is

to keep on playing the game, learning it thoroughly, and advancing, as the chance offers, from a good side to a better.

In other words, there is little chance of a young player getting a trial until he justifies himself against fairly good opponents. Then the chance of a trial is sure to come. But keep on trying; never be satisfied that you are as good as you can be. And while waiting for the chance, do some other work.

"OLD REF."

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COKER'S HOLIDAY CAPTURE!

(Continued from page 10.)

realised it, it would not have made any difference to Coker. Coker was a fighting-man, and he had boundless pluck. He came on again fiercely.

Lancaster had to give ground before Coker's heavy rush. He seemed as light as elastic on his feet. With the greatest of ease he kept out of the reach of Coker's frantic drives, or brushed them aside like flies. Harry Wharton knew something about boxing; they were great on the "noble art" in the Greyfriars Remove. But he had never seen boxing like this before. Heavy and hefty and determined as Coker was, the slim and handsome stranger was simply playing with him.

Coker pressed the fighting hard. He came on again and again, with undiminished pluck, but considerably diminished breath. He gasped and he panted, he puffed and he blew in his wild efforts to break through his adversary's defence.

But he could not break through. Not a single punch reached the handsome, smiling face of the stranger, and all the time his fists beat a tattoo upon Coker's scarlet, rugged features.

"Chuck it, Coker!" exclaimed Wharton at last. "You haven't an earthly! Chuck it, you ass!"

"I'll smash him!" gasped Coker.

It was clear to Wharton, though not to Coker, that Dick Lancaster could have lodged the knock-out anywhere he liked, at any moment he chose. Instead of that, he was keeping the burly Horace at arm's length, playing with him, tapping him occasionally, and allowing him to expend his breath in vain efforts to get to closer quarters.

Even Coker, at long last, realised that he was not going to win that fight. But Coker was not the fellow to be beaten so long as he had a kick left. He gathered all his strength and all the breath he had left for a last desperate onslaught, and this time he pressed Lancaster so hard that the handsome stranger had to hit out or take punishment.

He hit out—with disastrous results to Coker.

Coker had never been kicked by a mule, but he learned now what that experience would be like. He hardly knew what happened to him.

He found himself in a heap in the grass, gurgling and guggling. He rose on one elbow and blinked at Lancaster. The latter was rubbing his knuckles with a cambric handkerchief. They seemed to have suffered a little from contact with Coker's countenance.

"Oooogh!" gasped Coker. "Oooogh!"

"My hat!" said Wharton. "You can box!"

"A little," smiled Lancaster.

"Oooogh!" gasped Coker again. He made an effort to rise, and sank back again, dazed and dizzy. His face had not been pushed through the back of his head; but Coker could almost have sworn, at that moment, that it had been. "Oh! Ow! My hat! Grrrrgh! Blow you! Are you a blessed prize-fighter? Oooogh!"

Lancaster laughed.

"Let's chuck it—what?" he asked pleasantly. "After all, what is there to scrap about?"

"I—I—I wouldn't chuck it, not for a minute, if—if I could get on with it," gasped Coker. "I—I'll jolly well lick you another time. Oooogh!"

"Well, I'm satisfied, if you are!" said Lancaster cheerily. "I've barked my

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knuckles on your confounded nose. I believe my knuckles are hurt more than your nose, though it does look rather a tomato."

He turned to Harry Wharton with a smile.

"Going my way, kid? I don't think our friend will be hunting for any more trouble just yet. But I'll walk with you a little way. I'm going to a village called Wharton Magnus, and I was told to keep on past a place called Wharton Lodge, if you've ever heard of it."

Harry Wharton smiled.

"Well, rather," he said, "as I happen to live there. This way!"

He stepped over the stile and Lancaster followed him, and they walked across the next field together. Horace Coker sat up and stared after them with eyes that persisted in winking and blinking. He dabbed his nose with his handkerchief, staining it a beautiful crimson. It was full five minutes before Coker got on his feet.

Then he did not follow Wharton and his late adversary. Even Coker, at long last, realised that he had had enough—for the present, at least. The "whopping" of Wharton had to stand over; the thrashing of that cheeky, interfering stranger had to be indefinitely postponed. Coker was not feeling equal to whopping or thrashing anybody.

Slowly, with many a grunt and gasp, the great man of the Greyfriars Fifth took his homeward way to the Bunch of Grapes, a sadder, if not a wiser Coker.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A New Friend!

"GREYFRIARS!" said Dick Lancaster thoughtfully.

Harry Wharton was still feeling rather ruffled and breathless after his tussle with Coker. But he chatted very agreeably with the tall, slim youth as he walked across the fields with him. Who Lancaster was, and what he was doing in that quiet corner of Surrey, Wharton did not know, and did not think of inquiring. He looked a decent fellow, and certainly he had done the Greyfriars junior a signal service; for there was no doubt that Wharton would have received a terrific "whopping" had not the handsome stranger come to his rescue.

Partly on account of that, and partly on account of his frank and pleasant manner, Wharton had taken a liking to him. He found that Lancaster was interested in his school, and he told him about Greyfriars, about Coker of the Fifth, and about his chums, as they walked over the meadows in the April sunshine. It did not even occur to Wharton's mind that the amiable stranger might be drawing him out, or that he could possibly have any ulterior motive for getting information from him. Wharton was keen enough, but he was not distrustful, and there was assuredly nothing in Lancaster's looks to inspire distrust.

"Greyfriars!" repeated Lick Lancaster. "Of course, I've heard of the school. It's famous. Rather a jolly show, from your description."

"We think so, of course," said Harry, with a smile. "As a matter of fact, when we saw you at the inn this morning, we took you for a senior fellow from some school like Greyfriars—a Sixth-Former."

"No, I'm not a Public school man," said Lancaster. "I've been left to the tender mercies of a tutor. But I've thought more than once of it. There might be some bother in going straight

into the Sixth Form at school, but I rather like the idea."

Wharton gave him a rather curious glance. Lancaster spoke as if he were entirely his own master, and could please himself whether he went to a school or not. Such matters, certainly, were generally decided by parents or guardians. Lancaster caught his glance and smiled.

"I am my own master, to a great extent," he explained. "My people live abroad, and nobody keeps an eye on me except a tutor and a solicitor. I'm allowed my own way in most things. I'm giving myself a holiday at present—with Titus Livius as a companion. If I wanted to put in a few terms at school I should settle it for myself."

"Make it Greyfriars, then," said Wharton, smiling. "You are the age for the Sixth Form, and there are some splendid fellows in the Greyfriars Sixth—old Wingate, and Gwynne, and lots of them. I suppose you play cricket?"

"I've played rather a lot."

"Then you'd like Greyfriars! Jolly to see you in Wingate's team!" said the captain of the Remove. "There's Wharton Lodge!" he added, as the house came in sight over the trees. "Look here, will you come in to tea?"

Lancaster had already mentioned that he was going to pick up tea in passing in the village. That he had any object in mentioning that circumstance did not enter Wharton's mind for a moment.

"You won't get much of a tea in the village," went on Wharton. "Come in with me. The fellows you saw this morning are staying with me, and they'll all be glad to see you—and my uncle and aunt, too!"

Lancaster laughed.

"That's awfully kind of you, kid!" he said. "But I'm afraid your uncle would not be over-pleased to see you walk a perfect stranger in."

"I can answer for that," said Wharton. "Especially if I tell him that you saved me from a whopping from that idiot, Coker. Do come!"

Lancaster seemed to hesitate.

They walked on to the gates of Wharton Lodge, while he seemed to be thinking it out. Wharton stopped at the gateway.

"Trot in!" he said. "I assure you my uncle will be pleased."

Lancaster's manner indicated that he would willingly have accepted the invitation but that he had doubts whether the elders might not regard it as an intrusion. That was natural enough, and the Greyfriars junior hastened to reassure him.

"My uncle's no end good-tempered," said Harry. "He likes young people—actually likes Remove fags about the house in holiday-time. You'll like him."

"I've no doubt of that," said Lancaster. "I've heard Colonel Wharton spoken of many times while I've been staying about here. He seems to be popular in these parts. And my father knew him."

"Really?" exclaimed Wharton. "Your father?"

"He was killed on the Somme," said Lancaster quietly. "I've no parents. Look here, I'll come in and chance it with your uncle."

"He will be jolly glad to see you if he knew your father in the War," said Wharton. "You can rely on that."

And they walked up the drive together.

The Co. were still busy on the tennis court. Billy Bunter could be seen in a wicker chair on the terrace, basking in the sun and contemplating the near prospect of tea. Bunter blinked at them

as they came up, through his big spectacles, but did not trouble to move.

"Is my uncle indoors, Bunter?" called out Wharton.

"I believe he's in the library," yawned Bunter. "I say, Wharton, you have tea rather late here. What about—look here, if you're going to walk away while a fellow's talking to you, you beast—"

Wharton went into the house with his new friend. He did not notice the swift glance from under Lancaster's dark eyebrows that took in all his surroundings in a flash. He led the new guest to the library, where they found Colonel Wharton reading the "Times." The old military gentleman laid down his paper and rose, with a slightly inquiring glance at Lancaster. Harry Wharton hastened to explain, and a pleasant

"My dear boy, you are more than welcome. I am delighted to see you!" exclaimed Colonel Wharton. "Sit down, my boy. Harry, you may run away to your friends for a time, while I have a talk with George Lancaster's boy."

"Right-ho!" said Harry, and he left the library very cheerily.

It was plain that Lancaster had made a good impression on the colonel, and that the old soldier was pleased to see him at Wharton Lodge.

He joined the Co. who were coming in with rackets under their arms.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob. "I spotted you coming in. Was that chap with you the sportsman we saw at the inn this morning?"

"That's it," said Harry. "His

thought you fellows would be glad to see him again."

"Jolly glad!" said Bob.

"The gladfulness is proposterous!" agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Hear, hear!" said Nugent.

Johnny Bull nodded, without speaking. There was a thoughtful expression on Johnny's face. Johnny was not given to taking hasty impressions, or to judging by appearances. Wharton glanced at him.

"You like him, don't you, Johnny?" he asked.

"He looks all right," said Johnny Bull.

"And he is all right," said Harry, rather warmly. "I should have bagged a terrific licking if he hadn't handled Coker."

Wharton dodged round Coker, ran for the stile, and jumped. "Stop!" panted Coker, hooking the crook handle of his walking-stick in the junior captain's arm and dragging him back.



smile relaxed the old soldier's bronzed face.

"Not the son of George Lancaster, of the Loamshires?" exclaimed the colonel, eyeing the visitor with great interest.

"Yes, sir!" answered Lancaster, smiling. "I believe you knew him."

"I knew him very well in those days," said Colonel Wharton, "and I am delighted to meet his son!" He shook hands with Lancaster very heartily. "I can see the resemblance now. Lancaster was the handsomest man in the regiment, and he left you his good looks, at least."

"That's very kind of you, sir!" said Lancaster, smiling. "I was rather afraid of butting in when your nephew kindly asked me, but—"

name's Lancaster, and he turns out to be the son of a man in my uncle's regiment."

"How did you pick him up?" asked Nugent.

"I dropped on Coker, or, rather, Coker dropped on me," said Harry, laughing. "Lancaster chipped in and whopped Coker."

"My hat! He didn't look as if he'd been through a scrap! And Coker's a beefy blighter!" said Bob.

"He handled Coker like a baby."

Bob Cherry whistled.

"Some scrapper!" he said. "Coker doesn't know anything about boxing; but he's as heavy as a walrus, and strong as a horse. Jolly decent of that chap to chip in."

"He's come to tea," said Harry. "I

Johnny Bull nodded again. He was not the fellow to "entuse" very easily.

But Johnny thawed very considerably when Dick Lancaster joined the juniors at tea, with Colonel Wharton and Aunt Amy. Lancaster seemed on very cordial terms with the colonel. And Miss Wharton evidently liked him. And the fact that he had "whopped" Coker was a passport to the esteem of the Co., even if they had not liked him on his looks, which they certainly did. Even Billy Bunter noticed that the new guest was rather an agreeable sort of fellow.

Lancaster seemed, in fact, the kind of fellow to win golden opinions from

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GOKER'S HOLIDAY CAPTURE!

(Continued from page 13.)

all sorts of people. Even Wells, the butler, might have been noticed to regard him with respectful admiration.

When the time came for Lancaster to take his leave, the juniors walked with him half-way to the Wheatfield Road. Although he was several years older than the Removites—as old as most Sixth-Formers of Greyfriars—Dick Lancaster was perfectly at his ease with them, and somehow made them feel as if he were one of themselves.

They parted on the friendliest of terms.

"Splendid chap!" said Harry Wharton, as the slim, athletic figure swung away across the fields, and the juniors turned back towards the lodge.

"Terrific!" agreed the nabob.

"Preposterous!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Yes, he seems all right," said Johnny Bull slowly. "He doesn't talk much about himself, though."

"Bunter will do that, if you're keen on hearing a fellow talk about himself," said Harry.

"Well, a fellow generally mentions things," said Johnny. "Still, I must say he seems a decent sort of sportsman."

When they reached the lodge Wharton went in to speak to his uncle. He found the colonel smoking a cigar, with a corrugated brow.

"You like Lancaster, uncle?" asked Harry, wondering whether that corrugation of the brow was on Lancaster's account.

"Very much, my boy," said Colonel Wharton—"very much, indeed! I should like, in fact, to have another talk with him some time. He is a little reticent." He paused.

The word struck Wharton a little, after Johnny Bull's remark. Apparently his uncle had noticed it, also.

"Judging by looks, I should say that young Lancaster was very well placed in the world," said the colonel.

"I hadn't thought about that," said Harry, a little surprised, in point of fact, that his uncle had thought about it. "But he looks as if he were pretty well off."

"Yes, that is a little odd."

"I don't quite see—"

"I mean his father left him nothing," said the colonel. "George Lancaster left nothing. He had nothing to leave. I knew George Lancaster well, and, so far as I knew, he had no relations except a brother, who—" The colonel broke off abruptly. But the grim expression on his face revealed that he had no high opinion of George Lancaster's brother. "And that brother is dead long since, I believe. Young Lancaster seems to have found friends."

"Perhaps he's come into a fortune," said Harry, with a smile.

"Perhaps," said the colonel. "At all events, I am glad to see that he

appears to be very well off. And he seems undoubtedly a very fine lad."

Colonel Wharton said no more; but Harry could see that he was puzzled. It was clear that he liked Lancaster, and took an interest in him as the orphan son of a former brother officer; but he was puzzled. Whatever was in his thoughts, however, he did not think fit to discuss with his nephew, and Harry left him with his brow still corrugated.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Crook!

THE man with the sandy hair and the ferret eyes took a cigarette from his mouth, grunted, and rose from his chair as Dick Lancaster entered his room at the Bunch of Grapes. There was a thoughtful cast on the handsome face as Lancaster came in, and when he glanced at the man he called the "Weasel," a momentary expression of repugnance flitted over his face. The ferret eyes of the Weasel noted it, and he scowled.

"I been waiting for you, Dick," he grunted.

"Why shouldn't you wait?" answered Lancaster carelessly.

He closed the door, walked across the room to the window, and stood there, staring out.

The room was a sitting-room on the first floor of the inn at the back. It overlooked a balcony, with steps down to the inn garden. The garden was thick with trees and bushes, bright with the green of a sunny spring.

The Weasel waited for Lancaster to speak. But the boy, staring into the green garden, had his back to the ferret-eyed man, and seemed to have forgotten his presence. The Weasel spoke at last.

"What's the matter with you, Dick?"

"Nothing," answered Lancaster, over his shoulder.

"You seem different some'ow."

"Rubbish!"

"Well, I been waiting," said the ferret-eyed man surlily. "I got something to say. You shut me up before I—"

"Hadn't you sense enough not to talk in a public room, with two strangers present?" snapped Lancaster.

"Only blinking schoolboys, from what I see."

"You can't be too careful."

"Well, why ain't I seen you since?" demanded the Weasel. "You go out walking, and leave a bloke not knowing where you are."

Lancaster turned from the window.

"You shouldn't have waited here," he said incisively. "We've got to keep in touch. But the less you're seen hanging about this inn the better. What have you got to tell me? Get it off your chest."

"You'd 'ave 'eard it long ago, if you'd—"

"I'm going to hear it now," said Lancaster sharply. "Don't give me any back-chat, Weasel. I'm not in the mood for it."

The ferret eyes watched him stealthily. The Weasel sensed, rather than saw, some subtle change in "Dick." He was puzzled and angry.

"Well, I got something to tell you," he said surlily. "I ain't been able to see into the house, of course. But I got it all down fine. But I was seen in the park—"

"Who saw you?"

"Some schoolboys. The old bloke's nephew one of them, and the others, some kids that are staying with him. They thought I was trespassing in the park," said the Weasel, with a grin. "They showed me hout. I dropped the paper getting over the fence."

"What paper?"

"The plan I drew up for you, Dick. I got it all down. You'll know your way about the place all right, after a squint at it. After you get into the house, it's up to you. But I reckon it will be pie to the Wizard to—"

Lancaster knitted his brows.

"Don't mention that name here, you fool!"

"You ain't getting rattled, are you, Dick?" asked the Weasel, staring at him in astonishment. "Not you! This is one of the easiest jobs we've ever been on—easy as pie! I reckon when the stuff is missed they won't think of looking for a stocious young gentleman staying at an inn—"

"They might, if anyone notices a fellow hanging about, with sneak-thief written all over him!" said Lancaster.

"Aw, draw it mild, Dick!" said the Weasel. "Them young coves in the park only thought I was some cockney tripper trespassing. They never looked at the paper I dropped—jest 'anded it back to me. I tell you, if everybody was built on the same lines we'd never have to think about the stone jug!" added the Weasel, with a grin.

"The stone jug!" repeated Lancaster. "Yes, we have to think about the stone jug, Weasel! That's the finish for us, after the greatest run of luck. It always ends the same way—the stone jug."

"Not for you, Dick," said the Weasel confidently. "They'll never get the darbies on the Wizard."

"Cut that name out, you fool!"

"You've always been proud of it," said the Weasel sullenly. "Wasn't it your own uncle fust called you the Little Wizard—your uncle that was a wizard in the same line, and might be making his thousands now if he'd let the drink alone! You got the advantage there, Dick—the Old Man would never let you touch it."

Lancaster gave him a moody look.

"He was a good man, to me—in some ways!" he muttered.

"He was a good man all round," said the Weasel. "He never let down a pal, and if he'd kept off the drink he'd have made his fortune, and a fortune for all of us. But I s'pose we'd never have seen him but for the drink. Your uncle was a nob once, Dick!"

"And he made me what I am!" muttered Lancaster.

"What else could he do for you?" asked the Weasel, staring. "And what better could he do for you? What was you left with—you, a kid? He took you when you hadn't a bean. They'd have bunged you into a charity school, p'raps! You got plenty of beans now, Dick, and you owe it all to the Old Man!"

Lancaster made an impatient gesture.

"Cut all that out! Have you anything more to tell me about Wharton Lodge? Not that it's needed."

"And why ain't it needed?" asked the Weasel hotly. "Don't I always nose it out for you? I can give you the lid of the land from A to Z."

"You cannot tell me as much as I know."

"And 'ow's that?" demanded the Weasel. "You been looking at the crib yourself, Dick? That's risky."

Lancaster laughed.

"I've not only looked at it, Weasel—I've been in the house and have had tea with the family."

"Struth!" ejaculated the Weasel. "You ain't pulling my leg? You seen the inside of the crib?"

"I've sat talking in the library, and spotted the safe," answered Lancaster. "It will take me five minutes to get through—to-night."

The Weasel regarded him with great admiration.

"Struth!" he said again.

"But——" said Lancaster slowly. A black cloud came over his brow. "But, Weasel, I'm not sure—I'm not sure that we didn't make a mistake in coming down here! I—I've half a mind to chuck it now."

"Chuck it!" repeated the Weasel blankly. "Why?"

Lancaster gave him a curious look.

"Not for any reasons that you would understand, Weasel," he answered. "I've got to think it out."

"Struth!" said the Weasel. "Dick! You ain't getting afraid? Not you!"

"Don't be a fool, Weasel!"

"Well, I know you ain't, Dick! But if you ain't getting rattled what's the matter with you? I tell you, it's as easy as pie, and there will be a good haul—not less'n five hundred, Dick! We've put in some days here, and spent some money! Mean that you got your eye on a better crib?"

Lancaster shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"I mean nothing that you'd understand, Weasel, so don't give yourself a pain in the brain thinking about it. Clear off now!"

"But look here, Dick——" muttered the Weasel in dismay.

"Clear off, I tell you! You know where I'm to see you again, and when. There's nothing more to be said—and I want to be alone. Hook it!"

The Weasel went slowly to the door. He paused there, the ferret-eyes lingering suspiciously and uneasily on Lancaster. But the latter did not look at him, and the ferret-eyed man left the room at last, closing the door behind him.

Lancaster moved restlessly about the room for a time. From the window he had a glimpse of the Weasel leaving the inn, and he frowned blackly at the top of the bowler hat on the sandy head. The Weasel disappeared beyond the trees and hedges, and Lancaster moved about the room again, his brow clouded, a quiver in his well-cut lips. For a long time he moved restlessly while the sunshine dimmed and the shadows of evening crept over the Surrey downs.

Strange thoughts were working in his mind—thoughts that had, perhaps, risen there before, but had never stirred so deeply as now. The memory of frank and friendly faces haunted him—not with pleasure but with pain. What was he? What would those happy, careless, friendly schoolboys think of him if they knew what he was? They had taken him at face value—as most people did—as the bronzed old colonel had taken him, though with some lingering puzzlement in his mind. If they had known! What would they have thought of him? Left an orphan at an early age, cared for by the only relative he had—an uncle who had gone to the dogs and become the associate of wretches like the Weasel—what chance had he had? Why should he care what they or anybody else might think of him? he asked himself savagely.

He ceased his moody pacing at last. Stooping over a suitcase, he unlocked it and took from it a little leather case. He laid it on the table and opened it,

and with a keen, practised eye examined what it contained—a set of strange tools. His white, slim fingers ran over the smooth bright steel, and his eyes

gleamed. The Weasel, could he have seen him then, would have been satisfied. He would have seen that Richard Lancaster was no longer the frank-mannered fellow who had talked with the Greyfriars juniors; he would have seen that he was once more the "Wizard"—known by that name and by reputation to Scotland Yard and to the police of many cities, though in his own person and his own name unknown to any but his associates in crime!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.
Unexpected!

"WOW!" Horace Coker made that remark.

Potter and Greene looked sympathetic—as sympathetic as they could. If they smiled they did not let Coker see them smile—it would have been hardly safe.

Potter and Greene had had quite a pleasant ramble that afternoon. For hours they had not seen Coker or heard his voice. That alone would have made the ramble pleasant.

They had, in fact, happily forgotten Coker's existence for a time. Only when it was time for tea did they remember that even Coker had his uses. They walked back to the Bunch of Grapes, and found Coker there.

They had wondered whether he had met any of the Greyfriars fellows, and whether he would show any signs of damage. Undoubtedly he showed signs of damage—plenty of them—and they wondered now whether he had met a mad bull or a runaway motor-car.

They strove manfully not to smile when Coker told them what had happened. Coker was not in a good temper: he was morose. Potter and Greene had often thought that a good hiding would do Coker good. Now, obviously, he had had it. It did not seem to have done him good so far as his temper was concerned.

After tea, they loafed on the shady seat outside the inn, while the sun sank in the west and the birds flew homeward, and the peaceful evening descended on the Surrey landscape. Coker, usually a considerable talker, now limited his remarks chiefly to "ow" and "woy." He had doctored his damages as well as he could. But twinges kept on catching Coker. He had a pain in his nose, an ache in his eye—twinges in many places. He had given Lancaster a glare when that youth passed the Fifth-Formers, going into the inn. But he had contented himself with a glare. Punching the cheeky rotter was out of the question. Coker feared no foe; but it had been borne in on his mind that he was no match for this fellow. It was useless to ask for the same again.

"Wow!" said Coker, for the umpteenth time.

Potter and Greene were feeling very pleasant and comfortable. They were quite willing to put up for a day or two at the Bunch of Grapes. It was a pleasant spot, and the grub was good; and it was quite agreeable to ramble around in scented woods and sunny meadows while Coker hunted for trouble. They were willing to hang on at the Bunch of Grapes till Coker had found all the trouble he could digest.

"Wow!" said Coker. "Ow! How does my nose look now, Potter?"

"A bit like a tomato, old chap," said Potter.

"More like a saveloy, if you ask me!" remarked Greene.

LOWER EDMONTON ON TOP!

J. Tingey, of 87, Forest Road, Lower Edmonton, N.9, has been awarded a

HANDSOME LEATHER POCKET WALLET

for the following snappy GREYFRIARS LIMERICK, illustrated by our artist:



Claude Hoskins, the Greyfriars musician,



Plays with marvellous skill and precision.



Beethoven and Bach



He can play in the dark,



But it's strange, not a fellow will listen!

Why don't YOU compose a Greyfriars limerick and have a shot at winning one of these useful prizes?

"That cad's staying at this inn!" said Coker. "The cheeky, interfering cad, you know. Butting in when I was thrashing a fag! I've a jolly good mind to handle him again!"

Potter closed one eye privately at Greene.

"But a fellow doesn't want to be ragging all the time," remarked Coker, with a suspicious glance at his friends. "I fancy I could lick him, if I—if I made up my mind to it. But—after all—"

Coker fell into silence. Perhaps, after all, the hiding had done him good, as his friends anticipated that a hiding would. At all events, he did not seem, for once, hungry for more trouble.

"Wow!" said Coker once more, caressing his nose. "That fellow looks a bit of a tailor's dummy, but I can tell you he's got a punch like the kick of a mule. The meddlesome ass! Owl I think I'll go and bathe my nose again!"

"Might do it good!" assented Potter.

"I must say it looks a bit over-ripe."

"Fruity, and no mistake!" said Greene.

Coker frowned at his friends and went into the inn. He suspected that Potter and Greene fancied that he had been licked by that meddlesome stranger. Of course, he hadn't been; and he had told them that he hadn't been.

The fight, Coker had explained, had not gone on to a finish. But he could not help feeling that Potter and Greene had an impression that he had been licked, which was annoying. He could not even feel sure that they were sympathetic.

Certainly, they gave him sympathetic glances as he left them. It was just as well that Coker did not see them smile after he had gone. He would have felt quite sure, if he had, that they weren't so sympathetic as they ought to have been.

Horace Coker went slowly up the stairs within to the landing on which a good many rooms opened. He had engaged three rooms for himself and his friends for that night.

There were six doors for Coker to choose from, all looking much alike; and it was, of course, like Coker to mistake his room and open the wrong door. Still, it was very dusky within the inn now, and one of Coker's eyes was half-closed and the other blinking, so really a little mistake like that was pardonable.

He threw open a door and marched into the room. There was a sudden, startled exclamation as someone within the room spun round towards him.

Coker stared at the fellow hard. He stared harder at what lay on the table.

It was a black leather case, open, with a number of queer-looking steel tools arranged in their places, held by leather loops. The steel gleamed in the light of the sunset at the window.

Swiftly, Lancaster threw the case shut. Then he turned a pair of glinting eyes on Horace Coker.

"What the thump do you want here?" he demanded.

"Well, I like that!" said Coker. "I'd like to know what you're doing in my room, you cheeky fathead!"

"What! Your room?"

"Yes, my room!" said Coker warmly. "I never asked you into my room that I know of, and I can tell you, I don't like it. I admit, you don't look like a pilferer, but when a fellow finds a fellow in a fellow's room—"

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"You howling idiot!" said Lancaster, staring at him. "This is my room!"

"Rot!" said Coker.

Coker's powerful intellect worked slowly, and he had not yet observed that it was not his room. The rooms, after all, were much alike.

"And the sooner you get out of it the better!" snapped Lancaster. "And don't come butting in again!"

Coker looked round him. On inspection, he discovered that it was not his room.

"Oh, my mistake!" said Coker. "All these blessed doors are alike!"

"Well, get out!" said Lancaster pointedly.

"Oh, I'll get out!" said Coker disdainfully. "I don't know who you are and I don't care; but the less I see of you the better I shall like it! I've no doubt you never wanted anybody to see what you've got there in that case!"

"What do you mean by that, exactly?" asked Lancaster, with a gleam in his eyes, making a step towards Coker.

Coker did not back away. He had been licked by this fellow, and he knew it, though he was resolved not to admit it to himself. But, licked or not licked, Coker was afraid of no man.

"I mean what I say," answered the Greyfriars Fifth-Former coolly. "That's a jolly queer-looking set of tools."

"Is that any business of yours?"

"Well, I don't know that it is," admitted Coker; "but I may have my own ideas about it, all the same. I'm no fool!"

"No?" asked Lancaster, with a smile. "Judging by appearances, I should say you were!"

Coker breathed hard.

"If you've nothing further to say, you may as well go!" suggested Lancaster.

And Coker, unable to think of any adequate rejoinder, went, and slammed the door after him. He proceeded to his own room and there bathed his nose, which needed it. But his brow was very thoughtful as he bathed that damaged nose.

Coker was not quick on the uptake, and at Greyfriars he was supposed, with reason, to be every known kind of an ass. Perhaps his observation was quickened in this case by his resentment of the fellow's meddling when he was giving a cheeky fag a deserved licking, with such painful results to Coker. But, really, a more obtuse fellow than Coker might have had some food for thought after seeing that strange set of steel tools, and the startled, fierce look that had flashed across Lancaster's face as he turned from them on Coker's entrance.

Horace Coker was thinking as he bathed his nose, and he was still thinking as he went down to supper afterwards.

What was that case of queer tools, and why had the fellow looked so strangely, fiercely startled, and why had he shut the case so swiftly?

Greyfriars fellows would have been surprised to hear that Coker was thinking. It was not in his line at all. But he was thinking now, and thinking hard!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Food Problem!

WELLS raised his eyebrows slightly.

Billy Bunter did not notice it, not that he would have cared had he noticed it.

Wells, perhaps, was rather surprised to see a guest at Wharton Lodge going up to bed with an enormous cake under his arm. There was nothing surprising in it, from Bunter's point of view.

A fellow might wake up in the night. If he woke up in the night, it was probable that he would wake up hungry—exceedingly probable, when the fellow was William George Bunter of the Greyfriars Remove. A cake at a fellow's bedside, therefore, was only a reasonable precaution.

Certainly, it was rather a big cake. But then, the bigger the better. It was a good cake—a luscious cake; in fact, a scrumptious cake, and a cake possessing all those qualities could scarcely be too big.

It had graced the supper-table, but the supper-table at Wharton Lodge was always remarkably well-spread when a party of schoolboys were there.

Miss Wharton knew that boys had healthy appetites, and she liked to see them eat a good supper. With so many other good things present, the cake had been spared at supper. That was all to the good, for it remained intact for Bunter.

Bunter stayed on at supper long after the other fellows were finished. Wells wondered whether he meant to clear the table before he left. That, however, was beyond even Bunter's powers. He did his best, of course, but there came a time when he had to give in. And when he joined the Famous Five to go up to bed he was heavy-laden, if not weary, and the enormous cake was under his fat arm.

Harry Wharton & Co. observed it. Harry smiled; Bob Cherry chuckled; Johnny Bull snorted; Nugent stared. Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh looked at the cake with a glimmer in his dusky eyes.

Colonel Wharton's glance fell on the cake, but he made no remark. Miss Wharton gazed at it, but neither did she make any remark. Harry Wharton's relations had already learned that Billy Bunter had manners and customs of his very, very own.

"I say, you fellows, don't call me before ten in the morning," said Bunter, stopping at his door. "And, look here, don't clear off and leave me on my own like you did this morning! I don't like it."

"You'd like us to wait around a couple of hours doing nothing?" asked Bob Cherry affably.

"Yes, that's it, old chap! Just wait till I get up and it will be all right," said Bunter. "I'm afraid you don't know much about the proper way to treat a guest, Wharton. But there's a limit, you know."

"Fathead!" said Wharton politely.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Good-night, ass!"

"Well, look here," said Bunter warmly, "if I find you're all gone out when I get up to-morrow, you'll take the consequences."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob. "You won't whop us all round, will you, Bunter? Spare me!"

"I mean what I say! You might find me gone when you come back!" said Bunter. "I came jolly near clearing off this morning, Wharton—only—"

"My dear chap, you needn't have minded me," said the captain of the Remove. "Look here, you're not going to clear off if we're gone out before you get up to-morrow, are you?"

"I am," said Bunter firmly. "If you don't want to find me missing when you come in, do the civil thing, see?"

"Let's have this clear!" said Wharton gravely, while his comrades grinned. "You're staying in bed till ten, and if we don't stay in till you're ready to go out, you're going home?"

"That's it!"

"Well, we'd arranged to go out at nine—" said Harry thoughtfully, "We'd better alter that now."

"You'd better!" agreed Bunter.

"We'll make it eight—"

"Eh?"

"To make sure!" said Wharton blandly.

And the juniors, chuckling, went to their rooms, leaving Billy Bunter glaring after them.

"Beasts!" hooted Bunter. "Beasts!"

And with that polite valediction to his host and his fellow-guests, Billy Bunter rolled into his room.

The cake was deposited on a little table beside the bed, within easy reach if Bunter woke up hungry. It was very

he had entered it, bearing away the cake. Evidently the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur was in a humorous mood; though Bunter was likely to feel anything but humorous when he woke up and was ready to start on the cake.

The night grew older. The last light was extinguished; the last door closed in Wharton Lodge. The whole household slept.

And Bunter awoke.

He had been dreaming; and through his dreams he was haunted by the vision of a large, luscious, scrumptious cake. Had he been in the dormitory at Greyfriars, Bunter would doubtless have snored on till the rising-bell rang out in the morning. But circumstances alter cases. In the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars there was no scrumptious cake for a fellow who woke up hungry

There was something wrong with that cake! Bunter's fat fingers groped over it. It felt like a hassock, not a cake! It seemed like black magic to the Owl of the Remove. He had placed the cake by his bedside with thoughtful care, and it really seemed as if some magician had changed it into a hassock while he slept! For it was undoubtedly a hassock that Bunter held in his fat paws, resting on his fat knees.

But the truth dawned on Bunter's horrified mind. One of the beasts had done this for a lark. This was what those beasts thought funny—bagging a fellow's cake and leaving him to famish!

Bunter hurled the hassock across the room. Billy Bunter could eat almost anything; but even Bunter could not eat a hassock.

There came a sudden brilliant flash of light, and Bunter, crouching in the darkness of the big oak sideboard, caught a glimpse of a burglar only a few yards from him.



probable that he would do so, with that scrumptious cake haunting his dreams.

Five minutes later, a sound like the rumble of distant thunder was heard. Billy Bunter was asleep, and Wharton Lodge echoed with the resonant snore with which the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars was wont to echo.

Fifteen more minutes passed, and then Bunter's door opened softly. In the glimmer of starlight from the window, a dusky face loomed through the gloom, with a grin upon it.

"My esteemed Bunter!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "Snore!"

The dusky junior trod softly into the room. He paused by Billy Bunter's bedside. Lightly he lifted the cake from the bedside table. But the space was not left empty. In the place of the cake, the grinning nabob deposited a hassock, of similar size and shape.

Then he quitted the room as softly as

in the middle of the night. At Wharton Lodge, there was!

Bunter opened his eyes, blinked in the darkness, and sat up. Faintly through the silence of the night came a chime from somewhere. It was two o'clock.

Five hours had elapsed since Bunter had eaten his supper. Certainly he had done rather well at supper. But he woke up at two in the morning fully prepared to do justice to the cake, and with a feeling of deep relief that he had been so thoughtful as to bring it up to his room.

His fat mouth watered at the thought. He blinked round him and saw its dim shape—or a dim shape very much like it—on the bedside table. He reached out and lifted it to his fat knees.

Then he started a little. It seemed to weigh lighter—it had no luscious aroma—and it had not the feel of a cake!

"What the thump—" ejaculated Bunter,

"Beasts!" he gasped.

The cake was gone—gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream. And Bunter was hungry—frightfully hungry! The mere thought of the cake was enough to make him hungry. The anticipation of the feed had made his mouth water. He groaned as he laid his head on the pillow again.

He could not sleep!

He was too hungry to sleep! He sat up in bed again. He thought of visiting the other rooms in search of the cake. But it was only too probable that if he woke up the other fellows at two in the morning he would receive a pillow or a bolster instead of a cake. In fact, it was pretty certain that he would bag nothing better than a pillow or a bolstering.

But a fellow had to eat. Probably the pantry was locked up; it would be just like that beast Wells. But there were, at least, biscuits in the sideboard in the dining-room. Bunter remembered that. He remembered that they were quite nice biscuits; he had sampled them often enough to know.

He rolled out of bed at last, and donned trousers and slippers. It was a case of any port in a storm; and a few pounds of biscuits would at

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least partially fill the aching void inside Bunter. He rolled out of his room and groped his way downstairs. There was plenty of starlight from the windows; it was a fine clear April night. Bunter did not like lonely staircases and passages at nocturnal hours; but when Bunter was hungry, all other considerations faded into nothingness.

He reached the hall and rolled along it to the dining-room door. He opened the door and blinked in. Tall windows let in the starlight; there was plenty of light for Bunter. He did not care to switch on the electric light at that hour. Even Bunter would not have liked to risk discovery in the act of burgling the biscuits at two in the morning.

He reached the old oak sideboard. His fat fingers groped over it. Then he breathed deep with fury.

The sideboard was locked!

There were no biscuits for Bunter!

He groaned.

Desperate thoughts worked in Bunter's fat mind. He thought of cracking open the sideboard somehow! If it could have been done without noise, undoubtedly Bunter would have done it. But even the hungry Owl paused at the thought of waking the household.

There was nothing for it now but to return to the bed-rooms, and make an attempt to recapture the cake at the risk of a pillowing and bolstering. Bunter rose to his feet.

Click!

Bunter jumped.

In amazement and alarm he spun round towards the windows.

One casement was open, and in the opening, a dark, scarcely perceptible figure blocked the starlight. One startled, terrified blink Bunter gave, and then, trembling in every fat limb, he crouched low in the darkness.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Just Like Coker!

"COME!" said Coker.

"Eh?"

"Come!" repeated Coker impressively, and rather mysteriously.

Potter and Greene looked at him.

Horace Coker that evening had rather puzzled Potter and Greene. At supper he had been very silent. This was unusual; but they attributed it at first to Coker's damaged state. He had glanced many times in the direction of the other guest at the Bunch of Grapes, with inimical eyes. Lancaster took no heed of Coker or his companions, but Coker heeded him very considerably. Lancaster disappeared after supper, and Coker's glance followed him to the door.

By this time, Potter and Greene had realised that Coker's interest in that handsome young fellow was not wholly due to the licking he had received at his hands. There was something else. They wondered what it was. Coker, having finished his supper, remained with wrinkled brow, evidently thinking. This was still more unusual on Coker's part. When he rose from the table at last, and said "Come!" in an impressive and mysterious manner, and in a low voice, Potter and Greene eyed him very curiously. There was something "up" with Coker, that was clear.

"Bed?" asked Potter.

"Don't be an ass, Potter!"

"Well, where are we to come?" asked Greene.

"Don't jaw! Come!"

Coker led the way out of the inn, and his comrades followed him, in deepening wonder. Coker's manner was mysterious; and they began to wonder whether Coker had gone off his rocker. They agreed that he had not far to go. However, they had no objection to a stroll in the inn garden before turning in, and they followed Horace Coker.

Coker led them to a distance of a hundred yards, at least—to the end of the long inn garden. He stopped at length in the deep shadow of a tree, round which the bright spring starlight fell.

He looked this way and he looked that way, like Moses of old. Like Moses, he saw no man.

"Safe here!" whispered Coker.

"Safe!" repeated Potter blankly.

Potter and Greene had been under the impression that they were quite safe in the inn, or, indeed, anywhere else in Surrey.

"Yes. We can't be overheard here."

Potter and Greene could only stare. Nobody, so far as they knew, was likely to attempt to overhear Coker's conversation. They had known fellows to sould along passages and turn corners to avoid hearing Coker's conversation.

That any fellow might go out of his way to avoid hearing it was natural enough. But that anybody in the wide world should go out of his way to hear it was unimaginable.

Coker peered round him again, and seemed satisfied. Then he fixed his eyes on the amazed Fifth-Formers.

"That rotter's gone to his room!" he said.

"Eh! What rotter?"

"That fellow who calls himself Lancaster."

"Calls himself! I suppose his name's his name," said Potter. "I—I say, Coker, old man, you—you're not ill, are you?"

"No!" said Coker. "What do you mean, you ass?"

Potter hesitated to explain what he meant. A hinted doubt as to Coker's sanity was not likely to be taken in good part by Coker.

"I've got my suspicions of that fellow!" Coker explained.

"Oh, he won't bother you so long as you let him alone," said Greene. "He seems to have forgotten all about you, far as I can see."

"He doesn't want any trouble," said Potter. "I dare say he's gone to bed. Time we did, too."

"Don't be an idiot, Potter! Try not to be a silly chump, Greene! Listen to me! There's something fishy—awfully fishy—about that fellow!"

"Do you mean that he's been fishing?"

"No, I don't!" hissed Coker. "For goodness' sake have a little sense! You remember what the waiter mentioned at lunch—"

"About the pie, do you mean?"

"No!" hissed Coker. "About a burglary that had taken place at Wimford, only a mile or two from here."

"Did he?" said Potter. "Yes, I remember he did! They're not used to such things in these parts; they don't get a crime here once in a blue moon. Old-fashioned spot! But what about it?"

"When I went up to my room before supper, to bathe my nose, I went into that fellow's room by mistake—"

"You would!" agreed Potter. "Did he turf you out?"

"Don't be a fathead! He was taken by surprise and looked fearfully startled—almost scared—"

"When you put your face in?"

"Yes," said Coker.

"Your face did it, old bean!" said Potter flippantly.

Coker breathed hard and deep.

"This is a serious matter," he said. "He had a leather case on the table, with a set of tools in it—jolly queer-looking tools. He shut it up instantly, so that I shouldn't see it. But I'd seen it. He looked frightfully startled and savage. That fellow loaf about with a Latin classic under his arm, and the innkeeper thinks he's some sort of a student, or something. He keeps a case of weird-looking tools in his room, and shuts them up like lightning if a fellow happens to see them. And there was a burglary a mile or two from here a few nights ago. What do you think of that?"

Potter and Greene jumped simultaneously.

"You—you don't mean—" gurgled Potter.

"You—you can't mean—" gasped Greene.

"What does it look like?" demanded Coker. "You saw that man who was hanging about the inn this afternoon—a ferret-eyed blighter. I heard him ask the waiter twice if Mr. Lancaster had come in. He knows him."

"We saw him speaking to him," said Potter. "But—"

"What does that blighter look like?" said Coker.

"Blessed if I've noticed! Some Cockney tripper."

"Looks a shady sort to me," said Coker.

"But—but what—" Potter blinked at Horace Coker. "You—you—you can't mean that you suspect that fellow Lancaster of burgling the bank at Wimford because he punched your nose?"

"Not because of that, you fathead! But it looks fishy to me—very fishy! What has he got that case of tools for?"

"Might do fretwork as a hobby."

"You born idiot, they weren't fretwork tools!"

"Might be an amateur carpenter."

"They weren't ordinary carpenter's tools. And I tell you he jumped like—like anything, and shut the case up in a flash. I've got my suspicions of him," said Coker. "I told him I was no fool—"

"Bet you he didn't believe it!"

"If you can't be serious, Potter—"

"Oh dear!" said Potter. "How the thump can you expect a fellow to be serious when you spring such rot on him? A fellow punches your nose, and you think he must be a burglar—"

"It's not that, you chump! I should think the same if I'd never had a row with him!"

"You jolly well wouldn't!" said Greene, with conviction.

Coker paused a moment. Perhaps he realised that the painful state of his nose had something to do with his suspicions of the handsome guest at the Bunch of Grapes. Certainly Coker was not, as a rule, a suspicious fellow. Nor was he given to bothering about anybody's affairs but his own. At least, it was his trouble with Lancaster that had fixed his attention on that young gentleman and opened his mind to suspicious impressions.

"Then you think there's nothing in it?" demanded Coker.

"Of course there isn't!"

"Nothing at all, old bean," said Greene soothingly. "Your nose will feel better to-morrow, old chap."

Coker breathed hard. He preferred to attribute his suspicion to his uncommon intelligence and alertness.

These fatheads persisted in attributing it to the damaged state of his nose! It was annoying.

"You're a fool, Greene!" he said.

"Thanks!"

"You're an idiot, Potter!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And you can both jolly well go and eat coke!" snorted Horace, and he stalked away up the garden, leaving Potter and Greene grinning.

"Poor old Coker!" murmured Potter. "He thinks young Lancaster burgled a bank because he punched his nose. Why doesn't he think young Wharton did it because he ducked him in the horse-trough?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Greene. "Or young Bunter," said Potter. "Bunter pulled his leg and led him astray. Shall we suggest to him that young Bunter burgled the bank?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Horace Coker heard that disrespectful laughter as he went back to the inn. It was distinctly irritating. He was powerfully tempted to return, to collar Potter and Greene, and bang their mocking heads together.

He went to his room without stopping to say good-night to Potter and Greene. They passed his door a little later, and he heard them chuckling as they passed. Evidently they did not share his suspicion of young Lancaster in the very least.

Coker laid his weary head on the pillow, and wooed slumber. But he wooed it in vain. An aching eye, a painful nose, a throbbing head, and all sorts of twinges in all sorts of places did not conduce to slumber.

As he turned, and turned again, restless and sleepless, Coker of the Fifth heard the weary hours chime, and longed for morning—and longed still more longingly to bestow a record "whopping" on the meddlesome fellow who had reduced him to this unhappy state

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Hint in the Night!

"O dear!" groaned Coker. He could not sleep. His eye throbbed and throbbed; his nose twinged and twinged. Sleep was impossible.

He turned out of bed at last. It was long past midnight; and sleep would not come.

Coker dressed himself, in the silvery starlight. It was a fine, clear, starry spring night. Coker's room, like those adjoining, had a french window on the creeper-clad balcony that ran along the back of the inn. He resolved to sit by the open window for a time, as a change from turning and tumbling in a sleepless bed.

He opened one leaf of the window, pulled a chair towards it, and sat down. The soft breeze playing on his face had a soothing effect, and Coker began to feel a little better. Beyond the balcony the garden was spread out before his eyes, bright with starlight, the trees standing out black. And he was glad to feel that, at long last, he was growing drowsy.

But his drowsiness vanished all of a sudden, and Coker sat up and took notice, as it were, as a figure passed silently in the starlight on the balcony.

He scarcely believed his eyes for a moment.

But the next moment he was staring hard, his heart thumping.

It was a slim, athletic figure that had passed, in cap and overcoat. It came from the direction of Lancaster's room, and it moved swiftly towards the steps that led down into the garden.

Coker was more than startled.

His suspicion of young Lancaster had been strong, but rather vague. This sudden confirmation of it startled Coker considerably.

For he knew that it was Lancaster who had passed him. He had barely glimpsed the passing profile; but he knew the handsome figure well enough. It was nearly one o'clock, and Lancaster had left his room by the window on the balcony, to descend into the garden—and though the old wooden balcony was given to creaking under the tread, it had not made a sound as Lancaster passed. He trod cautiously—stealthily.

Coker rose to his feet, his brain almost in a whirl. Where was the fellow going, so stealthily and secretly, at one in the morning?

Did it mean that he was sleepless, like Coker—that he was going to take a turn in the garden—that he trod softly to avoid waking the sleepers in the rooms near at hand? Coker would have thought so, but for the suspicions already in his mind. Now he did not think so.

Looking from his window he glimpsed the handsome figure disappearing down the steps into the garden. He glimpsed it again, passing swiftly out of sight among the trees. That swift movement was not the movement of a fellow who had gone out for a stroll. It was the movement of a fellow who, once out of his room, was anxious to get off the spot as rapidly as possible.

"My hat!" breathed Coker.

(Continued on next page.)

One two, three!



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For some moments he stood undecided. Coker had plenty of faults; indeed their name was legion. But anything in the nature of spying or prying was quite out of Coker's ways. There was something repugnant in the idea of watching even a suspected crook.

But Coker made up his mind to it. What had been a suspicion in his mind before was now crystallised into a certainty. If that young scoundrel was bent on some rascally expedition, Coker was going to chip in—as was any law-abiding citizen's plain duty.

Coker had put on a pair of carpet slippers, on turning out of bed. Otherwise he was fully dressed. He did not stop for his boots. He stepped out on the balcony and almost in a twinkling he was down in the garden, treading the way Lancaster had gone.

Faintly, in the distance, he heard a gate click. The fellow had left by the gate at the bottom of the garden, which gave on a footpath. He had not cared to go round to the front of the inn to the lane. Where was he bound, silently and secretly, at that hour? What was his object? Horace Coker meant to know.

Shadowing was quite a new experience to Coker of the Fifth. It was just as well, for his purpose, that he was wearing carpet slippers; Coker was not a light walker, or a quiet one, as a rule. He made no sound as he hurried down the garden. Remembering that he had heard the gate click as it shut after Lancaster, Coker, with great astuteness, did not open the gate; he drew himself over it. In the distance, in the starlight, a swift figure vanished beyond a hedge as Coker started in pursuit. And Coker, as he went, wondered what Potter and Greene would have thought now if they had been with him, instead of snoring in bed like a couple of silly fatheads.

He reached a cart track that led down to Wheatfield Lane. A few minutes later he was in the lane, at a little distance from the inn. There came a faint sound of footfalls from the dimness ahead, through the dead silence of the countryside.

But there was no sound from Coker's slippered feet. And aware that the fellow ahead might glance back, Coker walked cautiously in the deep shadow of trees beside the lane. The middle of the lane was a bar of silver in the starlight; under the branches at either side it was black, and Coker was invisible as he went.

"The rotter!" murmured Coker. "The awful rotter! I know jolly well what he's after—and if I don't jolly well nail him he can jolly well use my napper for a football!"

That part of Surrey was new country to Coker; but as he progressed, he realised that he had been over this ground before. He had been over it during the previous day. Guided by occasional glimpses of the swift figure moving ahead, Coker traversed lanes and fields that were dimly familiar in the starlight, and passed the very spot where he had met Harry Wharton at the stile, and where his disastrous encounter with Lancaster had taken place. From that spot the pursuit led him in the direction Wharton and Lancaster had taken after leaving him, after that strenuous scrap. It looked as if Lancaster was heading now in the direction of Wharton's home.

A doubt smote Coker! But he banished the doubt, for even if Lancaster had made friends with Wharton, if he was on calling terms at the lodge, it was impossible that he could have any busi-

ness there after one o'clock in the morning. Wharton Lodge, it was certain, was shut up for the night, its inmates fast asleep. Lancaster's present expedition could have no concern with the Greyfriars juniors.

But Wharton Lodge, Coker began to feel sure, was his destination. Coker knew now that the building near where he had encountered Billy Bunter the previous morning was Wharton Lodge. And the dim figure ahead of him, leaving the lanes and entering on the road, passed the very spot where Coker & Co. had fallen in with Bunter, and vanished into the deep shadow of overhanging branches under a park wall on the other side.

Coker—very cautious by this time—did not cross the open road in chase. The road lay like a pool of silvery light, and if the fellow was wary—as undoubtedly he would be if Coker's suspicions were well-founded—he would spot anyone who came out into the light.

The Fifth Form man stopped, waited and watched for a few moments, and then crept along the inner side of the hedge by the road. He knew that Lancaster had halted under the park wall; there was no sound from him, and he did not reappear in sight. Coker crept along a score of yards or more, and then, emerging through a gap in the hedge, cut swiftly across the road to the park wall on the other side.

Once in the deep shadow on that side Coker crept towards the spot where Lancaster had halted.

From the silence a muttering husky voice came to his ears. Coker's heart beat faster.

He knew now why Lancaster had stopped. He was meeting someone there—some confederate, if Coker was right. The remembrance of the sandy-haired, ferret-eyed man came into Coker's mind.

Keeping close to the park wall, in black shadow, Coker crept a little nearer; and the muttering became distinguishable words. Blackness lay ahead of him, as it lay around him; he could see neither Lancaster nor the man who was speaking. But he was certain that the speaker was addressing Lancaster, and he was sure that the speaker was the ferret-eyed man who had hung about the inn that day.

"I don't get you!" the muttering, husky voice was saying. "I don't get you, Dick! What you thinking of backing out for? I ask you, Dick, what's the matter with you? You ain't the same as you were—"

"Possibly not!" came the quiet, clear voice that Coker knew—the voice of Lancaster.

"Well, what's the trouble, then, Dick? It's all clear—you ain't gettin' nervy? Not you!"

"Don't be a fool!"

"Well, I don't get you! Look 'ere, Dick, I s'pose we ain't wasted all our time for nothing! Struth—"

"Leave me alone!"

There was a savage note in the quiet voice. A minute of silence followed, and Coker, pressed against the park wall in the darkness, wondered. The husky voice was audible again at last.

"Look 'ere, Dick—"

"Quiet!"

"Can't you tell a cove what's rattling you, Dick?"

"You wouldn't understand."

"Well, I don't get you!" muttered the husky, sullen voice. "I'm 'ere to help, Dick, if you want help—"

"I don't need your help!" The clear voice was incisive. "I'm going on—you needn't be afraid about that! I was

thinking—never mind of what! It's over now, anyhow! I'm going on."

"Well, I'm glad to 'ear that, anyhow. You got me puzzled, Dick—"

"That's enough!"

It was all Greek to Coker of the Fifth. He heard the husky voice mutter a curse; then there was a sound of footfalls, and he saw a small figure in a bowler step out into the road, and glance up and down with swift, searching eyes. The figure stepped back into shadow, but Coker had recognised the ferret-eyed man who had hung about the inn. There was no doubt now who Lancaster's companion was.

He had not seen Coker. Pressed to the park wall, in thick darkness under overhanging branches, Coker was invisible. Neither Lancaster nor the Weasel had a suspicion that he was at hand.

There was a whisper again.

"Wait!"

"You'll find me 'ere!" muttered the Weasel.

Then silence.

The silence was broken by a faint sound from within the park wall. And Coker, though he had seen nothing, felt that while the Weasel waited where he was, Lancaster had clambered over the wall and dropped within.

Horace Coker breathed hard.

He could have no doubt now. Lancaster was within the precincts of the park—for what? What Coker had suspected before, he felt that he knew now, beyond the shadow of a doubt. Lancaster was a thief of the night. Like a thief in the night he was creeping through the wooded park towards Wharton Lodge, his confederate waiting for his return under the park wall. Coker knew it—at all events, he had no doubt about it. And his mind was soon made up as to his own plan of action.

A robbery was intended—that seemed clear. It was for Coker to prevent it, and to nail the young scoundrel who was seeking to carry it out. The Weasel could wait where he was. Lancaster was Coker's game.

Coker crept back along the park wall to a distance, to make sure that the wary Weasel should not hear him. Then he clambered over the wall, with the aid of overhanging branches, and dropped within. In the bright starlight, through the openings of the trees, he could see Wharton Lodge in the distance. There was no sign of Lancaster. Coker had no doubt that he had already reached the house, and was at work there.

Horace Coker hurried through the trees, and approached the house. The building was dark; not a gleam of light came from a single window. A glance at his wrist-watch showed Coker that it was two o'clock. At that hour no one was likely to be wakeful in the household. Coker stepped on the terrace, and paused.

The idea had been in his mind of clattering at the door, and ringing the bell, to alarm the household, and warn them that a cracksman was on the spot. But Coker's brain was working under pressure now, and by the time he reached the house he had realised that such an alarm would simply scare off the intended thief. He would make his escape, leaving Coker without a vestige of proof against him. That was not good enough! Coker was going to catch him in the act—if he could!

And as he stood on the terrace, peering about him in the shadows, a sudden gleam of light reached Coker's eyes.

It vanished in a moment; but it was enough to guide Coker. Swiftly he

reached the window where the momentary beam of light had gleamed.

A casement at the side of tall french windows stood open.

The cracksman had forced the lock of the casement and entered; Coker was assured of that. He had turned on an electric torch for a moment, and then shut off the light. He was in the house now, and the unfastened casement showed the way he had entered.

Coker set his teeth.

He listened intently. There was no sound within. Quietly—as quietly as Coker could—he clambered in at the open casement, and stepped down into the room. All was dark, and Coker peered about him for a second. The next second a clenched fist that seemed



Tightly gripping Bunter's hands behind his fat back, Coker blinked in the dazzling light. "This way!" he panted. "I've got the burglar!" "What—what!" roared Colonel Wharton. "Why—why it's Bunter!" "B-h-b-Bunter!" gurgled Coker.

like a lump of iron crashed on Coker's chin, and he went over headlong with a bump and a howl.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Mistake in the Dark!

BILLY BUNTER quaked.

Crouching down in the darkness by the corner of the big oak sideboard, the fat junior listened with palpitating heart.

He forgot that he was hungry. He forgot everything but that dark figure which had, for a moment, blocked the starlight at the window, and that was now within the room.

Through the darkness of the long, lofty room came a brilliant flash of light as an electric torch was turned on for a second.

It was shut off the next moment.

That one gleam of light was sufficient to give the intruder his bearings. Bunter heard a sound of faint, stealthy footfalls.

Someone was in the room! Someone who had entered by a forced casement at two o'clock in the morning! Bunter did not need telling what it must mean. He knew that a burglar was within a few yards of him.

In utter terror, Bunter crouched low.

Grub-raiding had more than once landed William George Bunter in trouble. But never had it landed him like this. Alone in the darkness, far from the sleeping apartments, far from help, Bunter was at the mercy of the night-prowler, if he was discovered.

The stealthy footsteps were moving along in the gloom. They were approaching Bunter.

Faint as they were, Bunter knew that they were nearing him.

His fat heart almost ceased to beat.

It did not occur to his terrified mind that the unseen intruder was coming along, closer and closer to him as he gave on the hall, in order to pass out of the dining-room. The safe was in the library, and that was the night-prowler's objective.

Bunter did not think—he quaked. He knew that the stealthy tread was coming along, closer and closer to him, as he crouched at the end of the sideboard. The unseen figure, if it passed him, would pass within a couple of feet. But to Bunter it seemed that the night-thief knew he was there, and was making directly for him. And as the footsteps came closer and closer, a terrified gasp came from the Owl of the Remove.

The footsteps ceased instantly.

Silence followed.

That gasp, certainly, had reached the

ears of the unseen prowler and alarmed him. He had stopped dead, only three or four feet from the crouching Owl.

A deep, quick-drawn breath reached Bunter's fat ears. In sheer terror, the fat junior leaped up and plunged away.

Crash!

There was a muttered exclamation as Bunter plunged into a dim figure, a shadow in the starlight from the tall windows.

A grip closed on Bunter's collar.

"Ow! Wow! Ow!" gasped Bunter, in helpless terror. "Leggo! Ow! Wow!"

Another muttered exclamation told of surprise and suppressed rage. Bunter, with a frantic effort, tore his collar loose and plunged away. He bumped into a chair, rolled over, and landed on the floor, gasping.

A moment later the open casement was darkened by another figure clambering in. Coker of the Fifth had arrived.

The dim figure of the night-prowler was making a movement towards the sprawling Owl; but now it spun suddenly back towards the window.

Bunter, almost fainting with terror, heard stealthy, swift footsteps receding in the direction of the window.

Coker had dropped in.

Before his peering eyes could pick up the dim figure of the cracksman in the

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gloom, the night-prowler's clenched fist shot out, and Coker went sprawling.

He roared as he sprawled.

The night-prowler did not linger a second. Possibly he recognised Coker in the glimmer through the window. But Coker was in no state to see anything but stars.

Coker rolled and roared, and the active figure of the night-prowler leaped out of the open casement. Almost in the twinkling of an eye it had vanished across the terrace, and was gone.

"Oh! Ow! Wooooh!" spluttered Coker. He sat up dizzily. "Oh! Ow! Whoop! You villain! Ooooooh!"

Coker staggered to his feet.

With his hands up for defence, and glaring over them with infuriated eyes, Coker sought his assailant. He was not even aware that the night-prowler had already gone.

"You rotter!" panted Coker. "You rotten thief! I've jolly well got you now! Where are you, you scoundrel?"

A gasping sound drew Coker's attention. He charged in the direction of the sound, crashed into an overturned chair and sprawled. As he sprawled, he established contact with another figure that was sprawling.

"Got you!" gasped Coker.

His grasp closed instantly on the other sprawling figure.

"Ooooooh!" came in a gasp from his unseen victim.

"I've got you! Help!" roared Coker.

He had got his man now—at all events, he had no doubts that he had! Now it was time to awaken the household!

Coker roared at the top of his voice.

"Help! Help! Burglars! Help! Help!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" squeaked Bunter.

Coker had got him! Burglar or not, there was no doubt that Coker had got him! Coker pinioned the fat junior's arms behind his back and held him prisoner.

"Ooooooogh!" came in gasping accents from the Owl of the Remove.

"Got you!" grinned Coker, breathless but triumphant. "I've got you, you scoundrel! Help! Burglars! Help!"

"Moooooh!"

Billy Bunter struggled frantically.

"Help!" roared Coker. "Burglars! Help! Wake up! Help!"

There were sounds of alarm all through the house now. From one end to the other of Wharton Lodge, Coker's powerful voice rang like the trumpeting of an elephant.

Doors opened, voices called, lights flashed on. Footsteps echoed on the stairs. Help was coming.

"This way!" roared Coker. "This way! I've got him! The burglar! I've got the scoundrel! Get a light! Help! This way!"

Thronging footsteps reached the dining-room door and the light flashed on.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Only Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON leaped out of bed.

Wharton had been fast asleep; and if he was dreaming, it was not of burglars. He had slept soundly, but the soundest sleeper would have awakened when Coker's stentorian voice boomed through the house. Rip van Winkle or the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus would have been roused out by those powerful tones.

"What the thump—" ejaculated Wharton.

He ran to his door and flashed on the light in the passage. Four other doors had opened.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo—"

"What the thump—"

"What the absurd dickens—"

"It's burglars! Come on!" panted Wharton.

From somewhere below a booming voice that seemed to have a familiar note was roaring.

"Burglars! Help! This way! Help! Burglars!"

"Come on!" shouted Bob Cherry.

The Famous Five rushed for the stairs. They came down into the hall in a breathless bunch. Wells, half-dressed, was already there. Colonel Wharton, in a dressing-gown, with his

Army revolver in his hand, was hurrying down the stairs. Wells switched on the light.

"It's in the dining-room, sir—" stuttered Wells.

"Stand back, boys!" called out Colonel Wharton. "Let me go first."

Unwillingly, the Famous Five held back. Colonel Wharton took the lead and strode to the open door of the dining-room, from which apartment came the terrific uproar that rang and echoed through the house.

The colonel switched on the light and strode in, the juniors at his heels, Wells bringing up the rear.

"What—what—what—" stuttered Colonel Wharton.

The old soldier's eyes almost started from his head. There was a yell from Bob Cherry.

"Coker!"

In the glare of the electric light, Horace Coker was revealed. Still pinning Bunter's arms behind his back, Coker stared round in the light, blinking.

"This way!" he panted. "I've got him!"

"Coker!" yelled Harry Wharton. "My only hat! Are you off your rocker, Coker?"

"I've got him—"

"Wow!" came in a horrid gurgle from the hapless person that Coker had got.

Coker, looking round as soon as the light came on, had his face turned from his prisoner and did not see him for the moment. All the newcomers saw him, and wondered. How Bunter came to be downstairs at two in the morning, and how Horace Coker came to be there, were amazing mysteries.

"Who are you? What are you doing?" roared Colonel Wharton.

"Eh? I'm Coker—"

"It's Coker, uncle!" gasped Wharton. "Coker of the Greyfriars Fifth! But what he's up to here—"

"Release Bunter at once, whoever you are!" roared the colonel.

"Eh? What! I've got him—"

"Release him instantly!"

"I've got the burglar—" gasped Coker, staring in amazement at the colonel. "The burglar, you know—"

"Mad as a hatter!" gasped Bob Cherry. "You utter idiot—"

"Let Bunter go, you fathead!" shouted Harry.

"Bunter!" repeated Coker.

He turned his eyes back to his prisoner. He fairly jumped as he saw a fat, crimson face, and the bulging eyes glaring through a pair of large spectacles. Up to that moment, Coker had not doubted that he had hold of the burglar. He had to doubt now.

"B-b-b-Bunter!" gurgled Coker.

He stared at Bunter with unbelieving eyes. Evidently, there had been a mistake in the dark; and it was not the burglar that Coker had collared.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Coker.

He released Bunter. His prisoner was of no use to him now that he knew who that prisoner was.

Bunter wriggled uncomfortably.

"Groooooh! I say, you fellows—oooooh! Woooooh! I'm hurt! Keep him off! Ooooooh!"

Coker stared at him. He stared at Colonel Wharton and the juniors. He stared at Wells. He stared round the room in search of the burglar. He stared at the open window, and understood.

"He's gone!" gasped Coker.

"Who's gone, you howling ass?" roared Johnny Bull.

"The—the burglar!"



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"What burglar, you idiot?" howled Bob Cherry.

"The—the—the burglar! I thought I'd got him—"

"Groogh! I say, you fellows, the silly idiot got hold of me—wow—he jammed his knee into my tummy—groogh—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! I'm hurt! I'm killed! Oh dear! Oh! Wow!"

"What are you doing downstairs, you fat idiot?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Ow! Some beast bagged my cake! Ow! I came down for some biscuits—ooogh—and then that beastly burglar came in at the window—ooogh—"

"Coker—if your name is Coker—kindly explain, at once, how you came here?" rapped out Colonel Wharton. "For what reason have you forced an entrance into this house at such an hour?"

Coker jumped.

"Eh? I didn't! I followed the burglar in—"

"Nonsense!"

"Puzzle—find the burglar!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"I tell you, I followed him in!" roared Coker. "He got in at that window and I followed him in to nab him. Then he handed me one in the dark, and I was knocked over! Then that silly idiot, Bunter, must have got in the way, and in the dark I took him for the burglar—"

"Ow! You idiot! Wow! You fat-head! The beastly burglar knocked me over, and then that fathead Coker grabbed me in the dark!" groaned Bunter. "Ow!"

"Why didn't you say you weren't the burglar, you fat chump?" roared Coker indignantly.

"You dummy!" hooted Bunter. "How could I say anything when you had your knee jammed in my tummy—groogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is it possible that there has been an attempted burglary, or is this some absurd practical joke?" exclaimed the colonel.

Wells was looking at the opened casement, with a startled expression.

"This lock has been picked from outside, sir," he said.

Colonel Wharton strode across to the window. A very brief examination showed that the casement had been opened from without by a skilled hand. Coker of the Fifth, certainly, could not have done that, even if it had been imaginable that a Fifth Form man of Greyfriars had burglarious tendencies. It was clear that there had been a burglar!

"Good gad!" muttered the colonel.

"I say, you fellows, there was a burglar," said Bunter. "I saw him—just like a shadow, you know—and he biffed me over, and then that idiot Coker got hold of me—"

"I followed him in!" snapped Coker. "I should have had him if that fat dummy, Bunter, hadn't been in the way! Of course, he bolted while I was holding that dummy, thinking he was the man—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, you cheeky fags!" bawled Coker. "This isn't a laughing matter! The scoundrel's got away now—"

"Coker!" broke in the colonel's deep voice. "It appears that the house actually has been entered by some unknown person. You and Bunter, between you, appear to have prevented a burglary."

"Rot!" said Coker.

"What?"

"Bunter had nothing to do with it,

except getting in the way. I prevented the burglary!" said Coker.

"But I cannot understand how you came to be here," said Colonel Wharton. "My nephew has mentioned that you are staying at an inn about half a mile from this house. But for what reason—"

"I followed the fellow!" said Coker. "He's staying at the same inn, and I suspected him, and when I saw him sneaking out in the middle of the night I followed him—see? It's that fellow Lancaster."

"What?" yelled the Famous Five, with one voice.

"You know him—young Lancaster—"

"You utter idiot!" said Harry Wharton blankly. "Are you mad?"

"Quite potty!" said Bob Cherry.

"The pottiffulness is terrific!"

"Coker!" exclaimed the colonel. "What do you mean? Do you know what you are saying? Young Lancaster is the son of an old brother officer of mine."

"I don't care!" answered Coker. "He's the man! I tell you I saw him sneaking out of the inn in the middle of the night, and followed him—"

"You followed him here?"

"As far as the park wall," said Coker. "I lost sight of him there. But I knew where he would be, and came on to the house to catch him in the act."

The colonel drew a breath of relief.

"You do not state that you saw him enter my house?"

"No; he was inside when I got here—"

"You did not see him here?"

"I'm not a cat to see in the dark!" snapped Coker. "Besides, he knocked me down the instant I got in—"

"It is evident that you have made an absurd mistake," said Colonel Wharton. "What Lancaster's motive may have been for leaving the inn at night I do not know, but he may have had a dozen different reasons. Probably he desired to take a ramble by starlight, and there was no reason why he should not follow a public road that led by my park wall. Certainly I do not believe for a moment that he came to this house."

"I tell you he did!" roared Coker.

"It is clear that he did nothing of the kind. By your own statement you followed him as far as my park wall, and lost sight of him there. Your extraordinary suspicion of him led you here, with the result that you have prevented a burglary. But that the burglar who has been here has any connection with young Lancaster is an absurdity."

"I should jolly well think so!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"The absurdfulness is terrific!"

"You silly ass, Coker—"

"Of—of course, I—I can't say I saw the fellow here!" gasped Coker. "But I jolly well know—"

"Nonsense!" rapped out Colonel Wharton.

"Look here—"

"Nonsense! Do not repeat such an absurdity, Coker! I have no doubt that young Lancaster has returned from his walk and gone to bed long ago. It was by sheer chance that a burglar was here at the same time."

Coker stared at the colonel blankly.

"I—I'm absolutely sure—" he gasped.

"Nonsense! You are excited now. When you reflect calmly you will see that such a suggestion is absurd. You came here under a foolish mistake; but, as it happens, your arrival was a fortunate one, and I am much obliged to

you. If you care to remain for the rest of the night—"

"No fear!" said Coker. "I'm going back to the inn to nail that young scoundrel Lancaster—"

"My dear boy—" exclaimed the colonel impatiently.

"I tell you he's the man!" roared Coker. "And I think you're an ass, sir!"

"What?" ejaculated the colonel.

"And I'm jolly well going!"

And with that, Coker of the Fifth swung himself out at the open window and tramped indignantly away.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Innocent or Guilty?

BANG!

That was Coker's gentle summons at the door of the room occupied by Dick Lancaster at the Bunch of Grapes.

Coker had returned to the inn, bristling with indignation and full of resolve. Whatever view Colonel Wharton and the chums of the Remove might take, Coker had no doubts.

There was a yawn within the room, and then a sleepy voice called:

"What's that? Who's there?"

"Me!" answered Coker, savagely and ungrammatically. "Let me in, you rascal!"

"What are you disturbing me at this time of night for?" came Lancaster's quiet voice.

"Because I jolly well know what you've been up to!" snorted Coker. "And if you don't let me in I'll bust the door—see?"

There was a sound of someone getting out of bed and the scratch of a match. A lamp was lighted and the door opened. Lancaster, a graceful figure in silk pyjamas, looked out at Coker.

"Well?" he said.

"So you've got back?" jeered Coker. Lancaster raised his eyebrows.

"Yes, I've got back," he said evenly. "How the deuce did you know that I had been out?"

"Oh! You don't deny that you've been out?" said Coker, rather taken aback.

Lancaster stared.

"No. Why should I? I went for a ramble—I often do when I'm sleepless. What about it?"

"And you jolly well went to Wharton Lodge!" snapped Coker.

"Certainly I passed it," assented Lancaster. "Why not?"

"Mean to say that it wasn't you burgled Wharton Lodge and biffed me on the jaw when I followed you in?" demanded Coker.

Lancaster stared blankly for a moment and then burst into a laugh.

"Nightmare, I suppose," he remarked. "Have you woke me up at three in the morning to tell me your nightmares? Why me, instead of your friends?"

"Why, you—you—you—" gasped Coker. "You're going to deny it—you're going to make out that you didn't—"

"Better go back to bed," suggested Lancaster. "If you seriously fancy anything of this kind, I advise you to go to the police in the morning. In any case, don't disturb me again, or I shall have to complain to the innkeeper."

With that, Lancaster closed and looked his door, turned out the lamp, and went back to bed.

(Continued on page 28.)

THE ISLAND OF SLAVES!

BY STANTON HOPE.

The "Fish of Death"!

THE Vixen stood farther out to sea. Her job was to watch and wait until the arrival of the Falcon, which had been delayed by her voyage to Aden to land Sayyid and the other prisoners. Meantime, Ras Dhin and Sheikh Haji must have no suspicion that a British warship was in the vicinity of the island.

The air became alive with naval wireless messages, all coded in the most difficult of the many secret ciphers issued by the Admiralty. The slave-dhow hunters were taking no chances!

Guy received an order from Captain Knox, the senior officer in the distant Falcon, to watch the island unseem himself. The gunboat would arrive shortly after dawn, and throw ashore a landing-party of bluejackets and marines under her guns.

"We've got old Haji up a gum-tree!" Guy exulted. "Likewise that yellow-eyed son of a seacock, Ras Dhin! To-morrow, Tony, so far as they're concerned, we're going to wipe the slate clean."

All aboard the Vixen were "full of beans"—except the engineers. The chief reported that there had been a mishap with the Diesel motor which was used for driving the boat while submerged. This, however, did not damp the spirits of the chums. There was no immediate need for any diving operations, and the gas-engine was working sweetly as a chronometer.

Hidden away in some secret lair in Khoof were slaves and ammunition. The morning bade fair to see their discovery, some hot scrapping with the Arabs, and the round-up of a number of the most dangerous slavers.

Then dramatically the wireless operator of the Vixen picked up a lengthy message in code from H.M.S. Hawk, sister-ship to the Falcon. The report produced a sensation, and steeled every man when Guy had the signal circulated through the submarine.

Hawk reported that through information of native fishermen she had located a dhow lying up in a palm-fringed creek of Kohut Island, sixty miles from Khoof. Owing to the shallow waters the warship had been forced to anchor three miles from the island and send a cutting-out party in two picket-boats. The boats had almost got alongside when down went a painted screen on the dhow's forward deck, much in the manner of the Q ships' ruse in the Great War, and a Q.F. gun leaped into view!

That quick-firing gun had barked half a dozen times in swift succession, and the waters of the creek had been filled with wreckage and dead and dying British seamen. A single unwounded bluejacket had got under the dhow's counter, swarmed up a rope, and made his way undetected through the holds. No slaves had been aboard, but ample guns and ammunition in boxes.

The gallant seaman, to avenge his comrades' death, had attempted to blow the dhow sky-high, but had been knifed and flung overboard. The dhow had weighed anchor and gone creeping farther up the creek, and with no one

to "spot" for the guns, the warship had been helpless. Through a tangle of waterways the dhow had picked its way to the sea and eluded her.

The bluejacket, badly wounded, had struggled on to the muddy bank of the creek and had remained unnoticed in the dhow's haste to make a get-away. Here he had been found by another of the Hawk's boats, and he had been able to make a statement before he died.

According to this, the dhow, besides being armed, was fitted with an auxiliary motor for use in close waters and calms. He had recognised the skipper as Sulaiman, whom he had once seen before when boarding another craft of a more innocent type. The dhow had a square of green paint on either bow, evidently a representation of the flag of Islam.

This lengthy and dramatic cipher message made a tremendous impression on Guy and Tony.

Although without definite proof, they were convinced that this armed dhow was under the control of the same syndicate to which Ras Dhin and Sheikh Haji belonged. That men of their own race, Service men like themselves, had been butchered in cold blood in a dirty island creek, made their blood boil in their veins.

Like a ghost ship in the night, a rakish dhow glides towards the Vixen, her camouflaged quick-firing gun trained full on the submarine's conning-tower!

"When we've done our job here, old scout," Guy said, as they stood together in the conning-tower, "I'm going to request leave to hunt down that dhow if I have to chase her up the length of the Persian Gulf to the Shatt-el-Arab! By Heaven, I'll give give her no quarter, as she gave those poor matloes of ours no quarter!"

"A Q.F. gun! An auxiliary motor-engine!" muttered Tony. "You see what we're up against. There's a fleet of these dhows on the job, and they're pushing slaves and guns across to Asia, and not caring a hoot if one or two are caught."

Guy nodded. "It all goes to prove what we thought at Ahkab. The whole business is organised as efficiently as a railway clearing house. Hanging Ras Dhin and Haji will only dislocate things a bit, old son. Back of the show is a master mind, and we've got to find out who is the real brains of the slave and gun-running trade. Scuppering slavers will help, but it's the Big Boss we've got to nobble."

He looked at the illuminated compass and gave an alteration of course.

"We'll patrol round the island till sun-up," he said. "You can carry on, Tony. I'm going below for an hour's shut-eye."

He turned to descend the perpendicular steel ladder, when the Vixen gave a lurch which flung them both hard against the bridge rails.

"Phew!" Tony gasped. "She's bumped somethin'!"

Guy shoved over the handle of the engine-room telegraph, but already the engine was stopping.

The gruff voice of the engineer rumbled through the voice-pipe.

"Propeller's fouled, I should judge, sir. One of the intake pipes is choked with weed."

"We'll clear the propeller first," Guy answered. "Then we'll heave-to while you get the pipe free."

He rammed over the indicator to "Slow astern," and as the Vixen backed she rattled like a dice-box. A cylinder blew out of the gas engine under the strain, and the submarine wallowed helplessly as a harpooned whale in the oily Arabian Sea.

"How long will you be over repairs?" Guy demanded, after the engineer's report.

"Full two hours, sir."

"When can you get the motor going?"

"In about an hour, sir. Say an hour and a quarter."

"Fix that first. We must have motive power as soon as possible."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

Shrugging his shoulders, Guy faced Tony.

"Our luck's out. Confound this driftweed! There's lashings of it round this dratted coast!"

The patrol of the coast was delayed, and the submarine rolled lazily, six miles off the island, in the deep-sea swell.

"There's not much chance of any dhow leaving Khoof to-night, anyway," Tony said cheerfully. "The slavers are lying low, and there's no fear of our missing the big show to-morrow."

Guy stood by the rail, staring moodily over the star-lit sea, broken here and there by the pale blue phosphorescent eddies made by some leaping fish. Then suddenly he stiffened.

"Here," he exclaimed, "lend me those night glasses of yours!"

He put the glasses to his eyes and stared fixedly towards the northward.

"Great sea-serpents!" he breathed.

"My hat! What's up, sir?" Tony cried. "Seen the Flying Dutchman?"

Guy passed over the glasses.

"She looks like a ghost ship," he said. "But I'm a Dutchman myself if it isn't a dhow without navigating lights!"

"Standing out from the island, sir?"

"No; standing in."

The sub focused the powerful glasses.

"By jingo, you're right, old mugwump—er—sir, I mean! Just our footling luck to be drifting about like a dead mule when we might have been tootling after her!"

There was a worried look in Guy's face.

"It's a cert we can't go after her and board her," he said. "We've no more chance of doing that than flying the moon. What's biting me is that the dhow might come up with us."

Tony whistled. After that news from the Hawk he was red-hot for a scrap with any suspicious dhow; but if this strange craft caught sight of the submarine, it might run for Khoof and report. At all costs the presence of a submarine in these parts must be kept secret for a time from the slavers.

The Vixen had a four-inch gun forward, and Guy knew he could stop that dhow from reaching Khoof. But it was no part of the Navy's job to smash a dhow merely because she showed no lights and was heading for a notorious island. That was like sentencing without a trial. Guy had no wish to figure prominently in a court-martial or transfer from the Royal Navy to one of his Majesty's prisons; nor did he wish to give away the fact that a warship was lying off Khoof.

Ten minutes showed that the dhow was standing dead on a course towards the hapless submarine.

It was easier for the naval watchers to see her with her gaunt hull and high rakish mast than for the Arabs to see the squat, motionless submarine.

His heart beating fast, Guy watched the dhow's progress. A dead calm had fallen, and the sea was running in long, oily swells towards the island. The approaching craft lowered her sail, which had become useless, and there came the faint sound of the clatter of blocks and tackle and the gruff voices of men. Under a bare pole the dhow came on at increased speed, which was plain to tell by the amount of phosphorescent glow under her bows from the disturbed water.

"By Jove!" Guy exclaimed. "Do you savvy, Tony? It's Sulaiman!"

Here, he was convinced, was the self-same dhow responsible for the massacre at Kohut, and it was now running for the shelter of Khoof. On its present course the Vixen was bound to be discovered, and it was necessary to prepare for all emergencies.

Chotajee, who was acting as chief's "slushy," came up the ladder with some sandwiches and a cup of coffee on a small tray for Guy.

"Kindly partake of tasteful grub, sahib," he suggested. "I requestfully submit that it is high times you partook of nourishment for honourable breadbasket."

The young commander took no heed of him.

"Action stations!" he commanded.

The order was piped through the submarine, and the men, learning the nature of the approaching craft, went to their stations and prepared to give fight with eager alacrity.

"We can't dive, so we must take no chances," Guy said to his sub. "If that's Sulaiman, he's got a Q.F. gun, remember!"

All was on the top line aboard the Vixen, but Guy was anxious to make more certain about the unlighted dhow before striking. He remembered that the miscreant craft at Kohut had two square green patches on its bows, and a kind of painted canvas screen for the gun.

Tony went down to the control-room, while Guy himself remained on the bridge, as the boat was on the surface.

"Stand by the searchlight!"

The signal ratings were ready at their post. When the dhow drew a little nearer Guy was prepared to turn on the searchlight, and if it bore those green patches, to hit hard and take full responsibility afterwards.

Like a ghost ship in the night, the rakish craft approached. Then, with startling suddenness, a thing happened which for the moment left the young submarine commander high and dry, like a stranded porpoise.

A great burst of light shot out from the dhow's fo'c'sle-head, and the Vixen became brilliantly illuminated in its glare. Instinctively Guy screened himself from the dazzling glare.

"Yoo-hoo!" Chotajee gasped.

Thump!

He dropped the tray with its contents of coffee and sandwiches on the deck; then hastily retrieved the stuff, and beat a hasty retreat down below, where he "went to ground" in what he believed to be the most secure corner of the vessel.

"Great smoke!" Guy gulped.

The look-out aboard the dhow had had sharper eyes than he had expected, and not for a moment had he thought that the ancient-looking craft had a high-power modern searchlight among its other fittings. Hastily he rapped out the order for the Vixen's own searchlight to be switched on. This was more powerful still, and the dhow in its turn became illuminated.

"Ay! That's Sulaiman!"

The ratings in the conning-tower raised a cheer rather like the gruff bark of dogs straining on the leash. Not much more than four cables' length away was the murderous villain and his crew, who had scuppered their comrades some hours before!

"Fire!"

The four-inch gun spat flame and steel over the heaving sea, and the shell hit part of the dhow's rigging, ripping it like pack-thread.

A yellow lightning-flash appeared momentarily over the dhow's fore-deck. The crashing detonation of shell burst two cables' lengths beyond the submarine, and sent a white column of water leaping towards the stars.

The last shred of doubt that the dhow was Sulaiman's murderous craft had vanished from Guy's mind. He must destroy his enemy, and by the quickest possible means. Those Arabs on the Island of Khoof would be alarmed by the firing, but no member of the dhow's crew must get ashore to report the presence of a submarine in those waters. Better for Ras Dhin and Sheikh Haji to think that some small naval patrol craft of the ordinary kind was lurking in the neighbourhood.

Crash! Crash!

The second shell from the Vixen was a clean hit in the wooden hull of the opposing craft, and part of the bulwark went leaping out of its place in great splinters. The dhow's answering shot screamed past the submarine's conning-tower, struck the water a cable's length beyond, ricocheted in the air, and plunged into the sea again a mile nearer the shore.

Sulaiman saw the type of craft he had to deal with, and obviously reckoned that his heavily built dhow could better stand the pummeling than the thin-shelled submarine. But Sulaiman, cunning fighter though he was, had never been forced to tackle a naval craft of this type before, and he had forgotten one thing. Guy had it right in the forefront

THE OPENING CHAPTERS RETOLD.

LIEUTENANT GUY EASTON, SUB-LIEUTENANT DUNN and CHOTAJEE, a Bengali interpreter, of H.M.S. Falcon, 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. Gathering information that slave-trading is being carried on between Sheikh Haji of Khoof and Ras Dhin, a giant Abyssinian, the trio, disguised as Arabs, board a mahalla bound for Aden. The mahalla is attacked by a villainous crew of cut-throats in the pay of the slave-traders, but Guy proves equal to the occasion and the enemy are made prisoners and handed over to Captain Knox of the Falcon. Subsequently Guy is put in charge of the Vixen, the fastest submarine in commission. Leaving the Vixen on guard out at sea, Guy and Chotajee land on Khoof and discover that a dhow has unloaded slaves and ammunition on the island and pushed off again. Failing to trace the whereabouts of the slaves, however, Guy and Chotajee return to the Vixen.

(Now read on.)

of his mind, and gave a brusque order to Tony down in the control-room. The reply came almost instantly:

"Tube ready, sir!"

The submarine had veered round with the tide; the dhow was broadside—Sulaiman, though he knew it not, made a perfect target for the torpedo!

"Stand by!" Guy warned. "Fire!"

The last command reached Tony like the crack of a pistol, as he stood waiting in the control-room, his hand upraised. And simultaneously with the word of command his hand dropped down to his side.

Forward in the boat, the torpedo-man had his eyes fixed on the sub and the firing-key in his grasp.

In one of the tubes was a 21-inch Whitehead, with a heavy charge of compressed air straining at the valve and ready to do its work.

A mere fraction of a second after Tony's hand went down there was a sharp hiss, as though a giant python had been roused suddenly. No explosion—no fuss—only just that hiss that signified that the compressed air had done its job and had driven the torpedo out of the tube.

By its own weight the torpedo plunged deeply, and began its course rather like a sportive porpoise under the sea, until it settled on an even keel at the set depth below the surface.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

The guns went to their work. So thin a hull had the submarine that a lone hit might send her and all on board down to their death like rats in a steel trap. Watertight compartments might be closed, but the hungry sea would reach the batteries and form the deadly, throat-tearing chlorine gas which is the terror of all who serve in this type of craft.

A fragment of shell from the dhow ripped through the shoulder of one of the seamen working the four-inch gun and made an ugly flesh wound. The bluejacket was assisted below.

On the bridge, Guy grimly watched a wake of tiny blue bubbles in the black, oily swells.

"If the 'fish' doesn't get him, we're done!" he muttered to himself.

The shooting of the Arabs was bad, although they had managed to scupper two naval boats at very close quarters. Had there been naval gunners working that Q.F., the submarine could not have lasted a minute.

At a high speed the "fish"—which is the naval term for torpedo—streaked away toward the dhow. The safety-fan fitted over the detonator in her nose had unscrewed by the action of its own progress through the water and had dropped off. That fish was very much alive, and under its own motive power and laden with a huge charge of the most powerful explosive known, raced on its grim errand.

Too late Sulaiman and his cut-throats saw the tell-tale streak of bubbles. The Arab gunners flung themselves down on the deck for shelter, unaware of the exact nature of the new peril, but instinctively realising that some fateful portent lay in that dancing lane of bubbles.

The murderous Arab skipper put his helm hard over with the auxiliary motor going, but the fish, of death sped straight for the target!

(It seems that nothing can save the murderous Sulaiman and his cut-throat crew from the "fish of death." But it is no more than they deserve. Next Saturday's gripping instalment is packed with thrills—don't miss it!)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,209.

COKER'S HOLIDAY CAPTURE!*(Continued from page 25.)*

Coker remained for some moments rooted to the floor.

Then he slowly trailed off to his own room.

Was it possible that he had made a mistake? It was true that he had only trailed Lancaster as far as the park wall of Wharton Lodge. Beyond that point all was suspicion and conjecture. Certainly there was nothing in the nature of proof.

Was it possible, after all, that Lancaster had never entered Wharton Lodge, but that Coker, led there by suspicion, had arrived while some utterly unknown burglar was at work?

If so, it was a strange enough coincidence! But the possibility of it certainly existed, as Coker had to realise.

Coker did not get much sleep for the remainder of the night; and he turned out early in the bright spring morning. Having risen early, he saw that Potter and Greene rose early, also. Potter and Greene would have preferred to leave it a little later; but, as usual, Coker had his way. At breakfast they saw nothing of Lancaster. After breakfast, Coker led his comrades from the inn, and in a quiet spot, related his wild adventures of the night. Then he demanded their candid opinion.

"Sure you didn't dream it all?" asked Potter flippantly.

"Most likely you did, old chap!" remarked Greene.

Horace Coker clenched his fists.

"If you fellows are asking for it—" he began.

"Um!" said Potter. "Of—of course, we know it all happened, Coker, old man. But—but it wasn't Lancaster, you know! You—you'll think differently when your nose gets better."

"Blow my nose!" roared Coker. "I mean, leave my nose out of it, you silly ass! You don't think he's the man?"

"Nunno!" gasped Potter. "Not quite!"

"I dare say he went for a walk," said Greene. "Why, you did yourself, if you come to that! If the scrap kept you awake, why shouldn't it keep him awake? I dare say he was damaged, too! You lost him at Wharton Lodge, and butted in there when some burglarious johnny was at work! That's all."

"I—I suppose it's possible!" said Coker slowly.

"Oh, quite!" said Potter. "More than possible, old bean."

"All the same, I'm sure of him!" said Coker. "If I went and reported this to the police, what do you think they'd do?"

"Laugh!" suggested Potter.

"Cackle!" said Greene. Coker breathed hard.

"Well, I'm not going to the police," he said.

"Oh, good!" said Potter and Greene together, in great relief.

"But I'm going to keep an eye on the scoundrel—"

"Eh?"

"We're staying on here—"

"Oh!"

"That's settled!" said Coker.

"But—but what about our cycling tour?" demanded Potter and Greene.

"Blow our cycling tour!" answered Coker; and he turned and walked back to the inn, leaving his comrades to digest that reply.

Potter and Greene exchanged glances.

"What about going on, and chucking Coker?" asked Greene.

"Ripping!" said Potter. "But—"

There was a "but."

"After all, we're in comfy quarters, and the grub's good," said Potter.

"Let's hang on till Coker's tired of playing the giddy ox. Lancaster may give him another jolly good hiding, and then perhaps he'll be ready to start."

"Let's hope he will!" agreed Greene.

And comforted by that hope, Potter and Greene resolved to remain loyally with their great leader.

Harry Wharton & Co. that morning were discussing Coker of the Fifth. They acknowledged that Coker had come in useful. Billy Bunter, it was true, claimed the whole credit of the cracksman's discomfiture. But the view of the other fellows was that Coker's remarkable butting-in had not only prevented the burglary, but had probably saved Bunter from damage at the hands of the burglar. There was a good haul for a cracksman in Colonel Wharton's safe; and it seemed that the contents of the safe had had a narrow escape. All this the juniors acknowledged; but at the same time, they felt, and expressed, a desire to give Horace Coker the ragging of his life.

"The silly chump!" said Wharton. "Of course, he only got that silly idea about Lancaster into his silly head because Lancaster whopped him."

"Of course!" agreed Bob Cherry. "But even Coker ought to have a little sense! Nobody expects him to have much sense; but he ought to have a little."

"Well, he's got a little!" said Nugent—"precious little!"

"Well, I'd jolly well like to rag him bald-headed!" said Wharton. "He came in useful by accident, but I'd jolly well like to rag the silly ass—"

"The ragfulness is the proper caper," agreed the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"That chap Lancaster is one of the best—"

"Yes, rather!"

"And we're jolly well going to see him again," said Harry, "and if we see Coker again, we'll jolly well rag him. And if we don't see him again in the vac, we'll rag him first day of term at Greyfriars!"

"Hear, hear!"

And the same was passed unanimously.

THE END.

(Next week's MAGNET will contain another ripping yarn of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled: "COKER'S DESPERATE VENTURE!" If you miss it, chum, you'll feel like kicking yourself!)

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LATEST EXTRA GOOD EDITION

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 Support Home Industries and smoke English tobacco grown in my own cabbage-patch and made in my own lodge! Just the thing for the novice! "Hardened Smoker" writes: "I tried one of your home-made cigarettes and have never smoked anything like it before or since." Send for a trial tin of 50. Price 2/6!—William Gosling, Porter's Lodge.

No. 41.

LAUGH AND GROW FAT.

April 18th, 1931.

TELESCOPIC TOPICS

Remove Astronomer's Striking Discoveries

STRIKING PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MAN IN THE MOON

Let's talk about stars, dear readers. Not film stars, or the kind you see when somebody hits you on the napper, but the stars that twinkle over the quiet when you break bounds at night. Now is the time of the year when enthusiastic astronomers work overtime. If you take your stand on the other side of the quiet near the truck-shop any evening, you will see the Pole Star and Evening Star, not to mention several others whose names we can't remember without consulting our pocket diary. If you lean against the newly-decorated fence by Mumble's allotment, you'll find Mumble's Tar at the back of you!

By the way, don't choose a rainy night! Astronomers have found after exhaustive mathematical calculations that the clouds render it difficult to see all you want to see when it's raining. Besides which the rain is inclined to get in the eyes. This Remove Astronomical Group has discovered several new stars lately. One is a low-lying star with a yellow streak running through it. It has been named Skinner. A recently-tread group of stars forming a long line with a twist on the end

has been given the title Quately's Case, and another shapely cluster suggested the cognomen Boley's Fish.

Professor Alonzo Todd, the great astronomical expert, last week secured a striking photograph of the moon, which revealed the face of the Man in the Moon in amazing detail. A profound sensation was created in scientific circles when it was found that the Man in the Moon was clearly seen to be wearing spectacles. The sensation died away somewhat when it transpired that the Professor's camera had slipped at the crucial moment and that the photograph was actually one of Bunter!

The following calculations made by Professor Todd may be of interest to readers:

The weight of the sun is 198 trillion tons. This has been carefully checked and found exact by Messrs. Wayit and Seales Ltd., the jockey-stables and bacon-cutter manufacturers, who add that 198 trillion tons is the net weight as the crow flies. The distance from the hutchshop to the Evening Star is 3,000 trillion miles, 2 yards, 11 inches. Lord Maulverer has been informed, and states that he is willing to race anyone there and back, provided he is given a start of 3,000 trillion miles.

If you started travelling to the Milky Way at the rate of 60 miles an hour, it would take you 7,000,000,000,000 years to get there. Bob Cherry makes a sporting offer of 2 to 1 in doughnuts that by the time you get back Bunter's postal order would have arrived!

DO'S AND DON'TS

Rules for the Rag Spectator at Remove Footer Matches

PEA-SHOOTERS TO PEPPER PLAYERS

Don't trouble to express a wish to eat your hat if you couldn't do better. Everybody knows you could do better already.

Always leave a number of ink-stains on your fingers and jam-smears round your mouth. It has the desirable effect of putting the other side off their stroke.

Don't say "Yah!" when the players annoy you. "Bah!" or "Pah!" sounds ever so much more refined!

Be careful not to step over the line into the field of play. There is always a danger that one of the footballers will mistake you for a worm and step on you.

When you don't like the result, no good pulling faces at him. He won't recognise any difference. Bring your pea-shooter with you and pepper the players at regular intervals. This inspires and encourages them in their task. Start an argument and free-fight with your pals on the slightest provocation. A free-fight makes a pleasing diversion from the game and impresses the visiting team with the excellence of Greyfriars manhood and deportment!



FISHER T. FISH BOOTLEGGER

Fisher T. Fish has broken out in a fresh place. He has become a bootlegger. It is against the law at Greyfriars for lack of any description to be smuggled into the dormitories. Many of the juniors would like a drink of ginger-pop in bed, but it is taboo. Fisher T. Fish, however, has altered this.

Fishy has devised an elaborate scheme for sneaking ginger-pop and lemonade into the dormitories of a night. We give our orders to Fishy during the afternoon, and after lights out he brings a

bottle of the best to our beds. He charges seven cots a bottle for the stuff—thus making a profit of three cents on each bottle sold.

Harry Wharton, yesterday night, declared warmly that something ought to be done about it. Fishy was deliberately breaking the rules. Wharton spoke rather angrily because his bottle of pop was a little flat.

Fishy is rapidly making his fortune at the bootleg game. But we fear if Quately finds out, the boot will be on the other leg.

NO POCKET-MONEY CUTS AT GREYFRIARS

Stormy Meeting in the Rag

SKINNER CAUSES SENSATION

A howl went up at Greyfriars the speaker said the other day. The reason was that now he was a disillusioned to be found on the notice-board man. At one fell swoop, the in the Hall, where the following notice had suddenly made its appearance:

"POCKET MONEY.
 The Committee of Parents appointed to inquire into the question of pocket-money has now submitted its report, which recommends that every Greyfriar's boy's pocket-money shall be reduced by 10 per cent forthwith. The recommendation will be put into effect immediately."
 (Signed) A. SKINNER, Chairman.

Naturally, the Remove weren't going to take that lying down. So they took it standing up—at a Mass Meeting which was at once called in the Rag.

H. Wharton, Esq., acted as Chairman of the meeting and rose to the accompaniment of deafening cheers, yells of "Are we down-hearted? NO!" and a fusillade of pass from some stray fags who had wandered into the meeting.

Mr. Wharton, in a brief introductory speech, said that as Chairman he was debarred from expressing any views of his own. He would therefore content himself by saying that the suggested pocket-money out of 10 per cent was scandalous, disgraceful, and a crying shame! (Laughter.) With those few words he would call on Johnny Bull, Esq., to move a resolution.

Mr. Bull then jumped to his feet with a furious growl and moved the following resolution:

"That this Mass Meeting of Removees thinks the suggested wage-cut jolly bad form on the part of the Parents, and a wicked trick, anyway." (Loud and prolonged cheers.)

Mr. Bull, in a hard-hitting speech, said that this was the saddest moment of his life. He had always been under the impression that the parents of Greyfriars chaps were pretty good sports. Of course, they had their peculiarities. (Heartily hear!) There were one or two mean old hunkers among them, but he wouldn't mention names, but Skinner's pater, for instance—The speaker paused here to remove from his eye a tomato which Skinner had shied from the body of the hall.



A voice: Couldn't blame 'em if we all had faces like yours! (Commotion.)

At this juncture, Mr. Bull decided to take off his coat to one or two interrupters. The Chairman therefore called on Job Cherry, Esq., to second the resolution.

Mr. Cherry said that it had been given as a reason for the suggested cut that the cost of living had fallen. Well, had it? It was true the price of jam-tarts had fallen, but a chap couldn't live on jam-tarts, and anyway, they were making them smaller!

What else had fallen, anyway? Had foot-booies fallen? Had hobber fallen? Had—

A voice: Something's going to fall in a couple of shakes, anyway! It did! "It" was the electric light bowl under which Mr. Cherry was standing, and it had the effect of terminating Mr. Cherry's speech rather suddenly.

The Chairman then rose to put the resolution to the meeting, before he could do so, there was a sudden yell from Mr. Bull, who had been banging Skinner's head at the floor.

"Half-a-no, chaps! Look what I've found!"

THE PUT-U-DOWN SETTEE

ANTI-GORGING DINING CHAIRS

Furnishings for the Modern Study

CAKE PINCHERS FOILED

Oyez, oyez, oyez! Home-makers and study-lovers, lend us your ears, and we will tell you something about some of the indispensable articles of furniture combining utility with beauty which have lately made their appearance on the market. No aspirant after the Home Beautiful can afford to neglect them!

To begin with, there's the Put-u-down Settee. You all know that feeling of annoyance which arises when you've been entertaining friends for the evening and you simply can't get rid of them. The Put-u-down solves the problem in a novel and scientific manner. Your friends have been reclining all the evening on a nice, comfortable settee. Little do they suspect that this handsome addition to your study is convertible at a moment's notice into a catapult! yet such is the case! Having come to the conclusion that they really do not intend to go, you simply press the knob at the back of the settee. Instantly the seat shoots up in the air with terrific force and hurls them out of the window, to land in a huddled heap on the flagstone below. For a trifling addition an automatic arm is provided which gives them their caps as they depart. The whole thing is neat and most effective.

Then there's the ladder-bed. This is a fully-sprung, triple-section, dormitory bed which can, on operating a lever, transform itself into a long ladder reaching from the dormitory window to the ground. Bounded breakers and burglers will find it most helpful. A free insurance policy against broken necks will be found concealed in the bedpost of each set.

The Bookcase Larder, again, is a useful adjunct to any study where tuck is kept in big quantities. To all appearances it is a bookcase, filled with large, uninteresting volumes; but when a secret spring is pressed underneath the case, the "books" swing out bodily and reveal jam-pots, steak-and-kidney pie, and whatever else the owner has previously left there. Buy a Bookcase Larder to-day, you chaps, and foil the cake pinchers of the Remove passage!

The Anti-Gorging Dining Chair is another brainy affair. It should be reserved for guests with unduly large appetites. An electric switch is provided which can be turned on by the host at any moment. The effect on the chair is such that every time the gorging guest leans forward to help himself to yet another jam-puff or sausage-roll, the chair whizzes back from the table, putting the grub out of reach. Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, we can positively say about this chair that no home is complete without one!

We have just room to mention the chessboard-trovers-et-uffar. In the evening, this is a strongly-made chessboard, capable of being used in an emergency for hitting an argumentative opponent on the nose. During classes it becomes a pliable shield for stuffing into the trousers when ordered out for a larping far superior to the old-fashioned exercise-books. Buy one and enjoy chess all the evening and laugh at your perspiring Form master's efforts to make you yell during the day!



THIS WEEK'S INVALIDS

Billy Bunter's New Malady

False alarm! When the Beed understood Mumble to say he had got the chicken-pox, he hastily summoned the doctor. It then transpired that Mumble had said not "chicken-pox" but "CHICKEN BOX"! Mr. Quetch recently caught Bunter meddling with a penny-in-the-slot gas meter in the servants' quarters. We hear that Bunter has since experienced "gas-attack," trouble.

Bob Cherry writes: "I was DISTRACTED with toothache, had the molar EXTRACTED, and afterwards CONTRACTED a chill, being thereby ATTRAPED to bed." This sounds as if it had been ABSTRACTED from a book of jokes, but nothing coming to our knowledge so far has DETRACTED from Bob's pathetic story!

Alonzo Todd has developed a strange habit of trotting round whispering: "It is runnoured, and-so" and "It is runnoured such-and-such." It is officially pronounced that he is suffering from "runnoured-ism."

Coker's Aunt Judy, who is worried over Horace's recent cold, has promised him a tonner when he recovers. This offer, surely, is one not to be sneezed at!

The doctor takes a grave view of Gosling's nose, which is getting redder and redder. He expresses the opinion that the trouble is (gin-and) water-on-the-brain.

WHO SAID "FATHEAD"?
 £5 Reward!

I will pay the sum of £5 to any person giving information as to the identity of the horrid boy who called my precious nephew a "fathead." Horace is clever as well as a dear, sweet, lovable little boy, and I won't have him called a "fathead," so there!—Aunt Judy, c/o "Herald" Office.