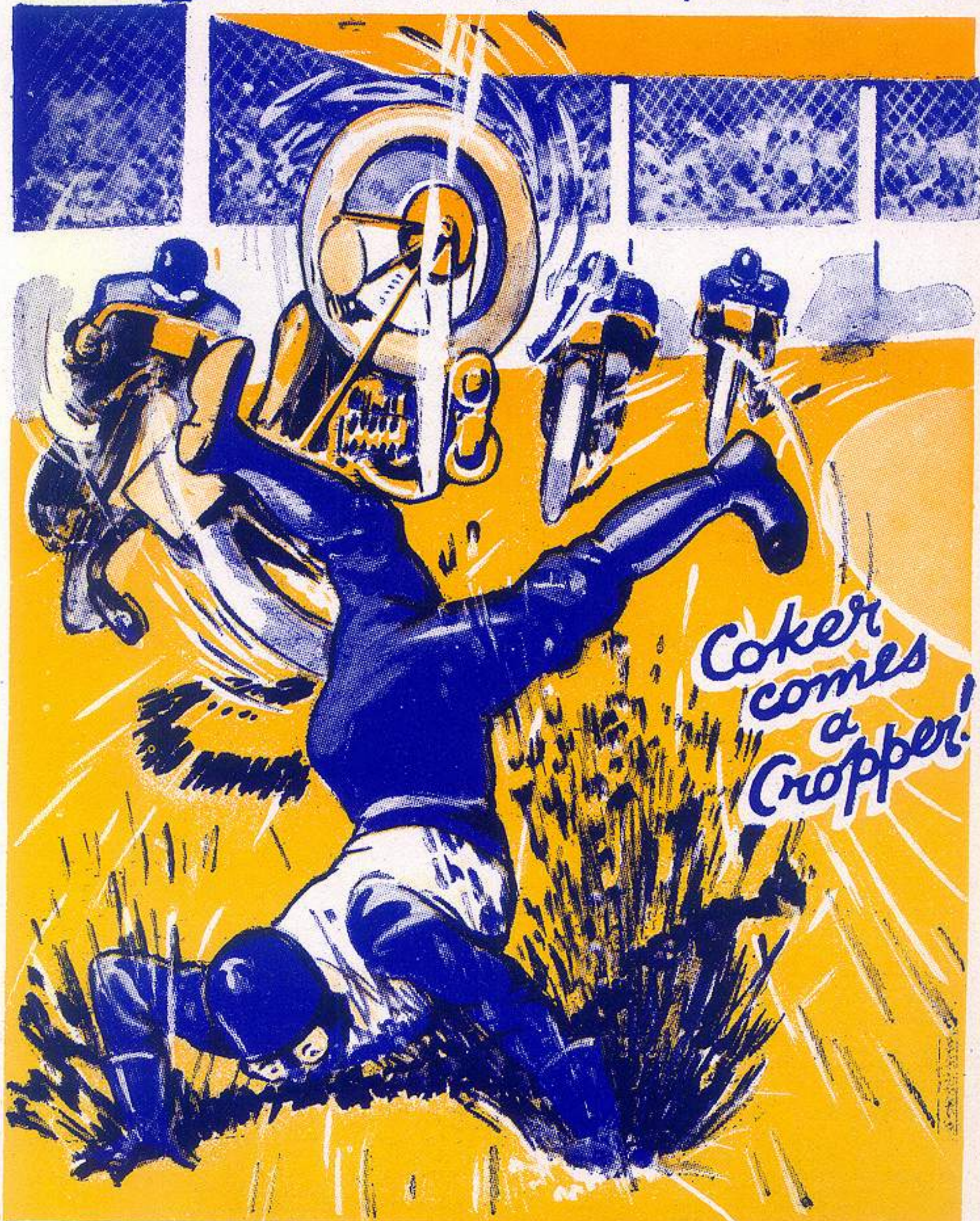


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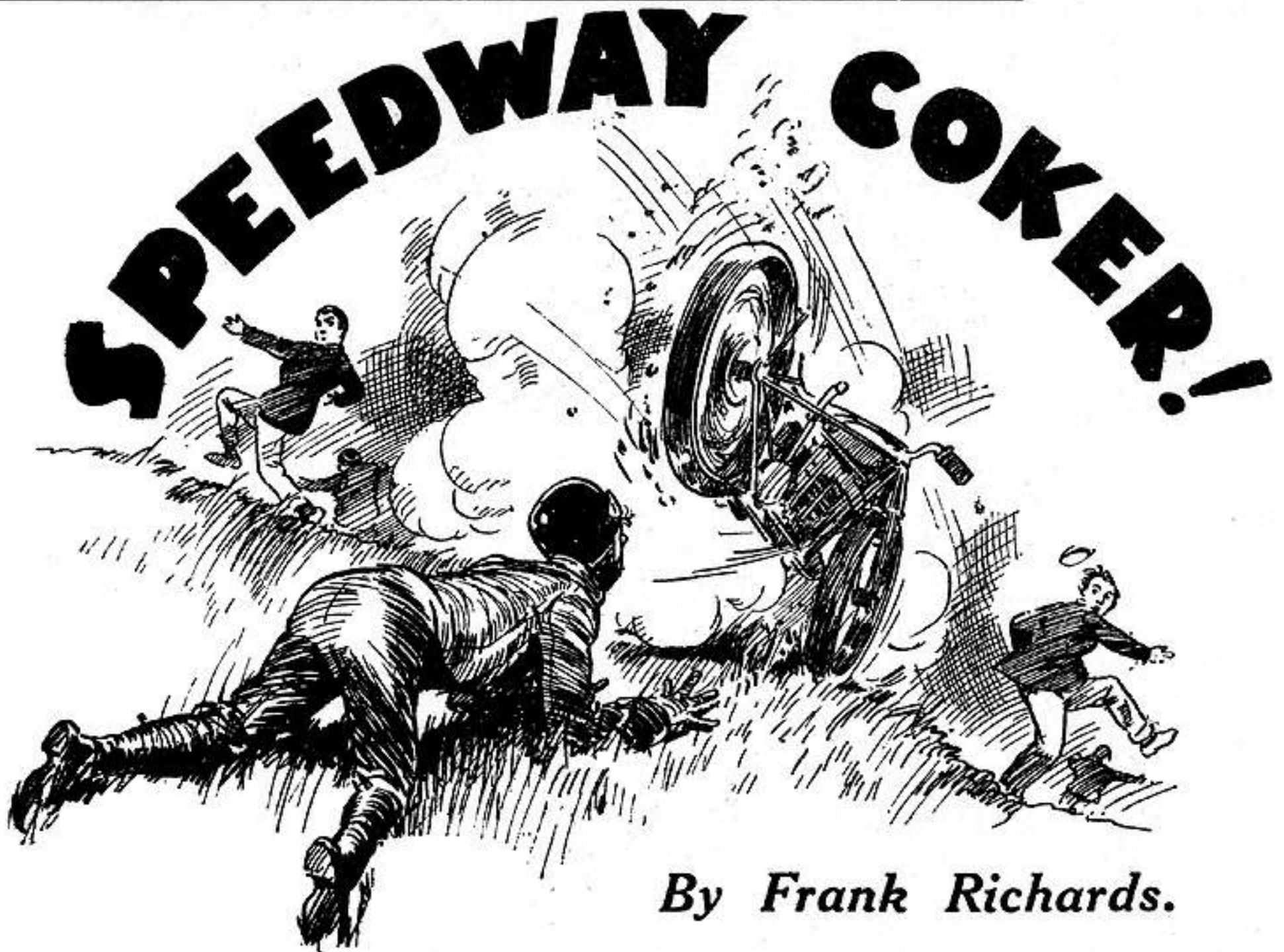
"BANDITS OF THE LINE!" STARTS  
TO-DAY!

# The MAGNET 2<sup>D</sup>



Coker  
comes  
a  
Cropper!





By Frank Richards.

**THE FIRST CHAPTER.**

**Coker Comes a Cropper!**

**B**ANG! Roar-r-r-r-r-r-r! Bang! Whir-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!

Bang! Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, stirred in his sleep, and raised himself in bed on one elbow.

He blinked round the airy Remove dormitory.

"W-what the merry dickens—" he began sleepily.

Whee-e-e-e-e-e-e-e!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, sitting up with a jerk.

It was a bright summer morning, and the rising-bell was due to sound within about half an hour.

Generally the Remove did not wake up until the rising-bell sounded. But on this particular occasion, something else was sounding. In fact, it was more than sounding, it fairly rang and echoed through the lofty Remove dormitory.

It was the shattering din of a furiously driven petrol engine, and it came from somewhere very near the ancient Greyfriars building.

Roar-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r! Bang!

The occupants of the long line of beds were stirring—sleepily rubbing their eyes—and looking round them with looks of anger and annoyance.

"Why, 'tain't rising bell—" yawned Frank Nugent.

"Who—who is it?" mumbled Johnny Bull.

"What—why—where is it?" asked Mark Linley, glancing to and fro, and stretching himself as he sat in bed.

"Echo answers where?" chuekled Herbert Vernon Smith.

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Bang! Bang! Whee-e-e-e-e-e!

"It's somewhere all right!" said Tom Redwing, pushing down his bedclothes.

"The somewherefulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"No harm in looking," remarked Bob Cherry, tumbling out of bed.

Quite half a dozen fellows, all in their pyjamas, followed the energetic Bob's lead to the dormitory window.

"I can't see the fellow!" remarked Dick Penfold, leaning out and straining his eyes.

"Not a giddy sign of him!"

Roar-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r! Bang!

The noise came nearer, and then receded. But the origin never materialised. Like Moses of old, the juniors looked this way and that, and like Moses of old, they saw no man.

"The blighter doesn't seem like putting in an appearance, so I vote we go down and look for him!" suggested Bob Cherry. "Anyhow, it'll be quite impossible to sleep, with this row going on."

"By Jove, yes!"

"Come on, then!"

Bob Cherry's idea caught on. The juniors made a dash for their clothes, and started to scramble hastily into them.

Roar-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r! Bang!

Sound carried far in the still country air, and the thunder of the furiously driven engine reverberated and echoed through the dormitory, as the juniors hurriedly dressed themselves.

Fully a dozen of them finished dressing together. They sprinted towards the door in a body, and were soon out in the open quadrangle.

Bang! Bang! Roar-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r! Bang!

"Come on! This way!" shouted Bob Cherry, running towards the gates of the school.

Out on the open road, the noise seemed even more harsh and shattering. The juniors looked up and down the road, but saw nothing.

A crowd of fellows from other Forms had now joined them. They, too, had been roused by the racket, and they were equally curious.

Whee-e-e-e-e-e-e-e Bang!

"He's still at it!" exclaimed Hoskins of the Shell. "But where the dickens is he? We looked out of our dorm window, but couldn't see anything, and we can't see anything here—"

"Same with us!" chortled Bob Cherry.

Roar-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r! Phut-phut! Bang! "The din comes from that direction, anyhow," said Vernon-Smith, pointing up the Friardale Lane.

"That's right!" exclaimed Fry of the Fourth.

"Well, let's see what we can find there!" said Bob Cherry, starting off; and in two's and three's the rest of the Greyfriars fellows went after him.

They sprinted along the Friardale Lane, in a ragged, uneven line.

The tall hedges, which bordered both sides of the lane, soon came to an end, and the juniors came out on to a long stretch of road, with an uninterrupted view of fields on either side.

In the nearest, where the short grass showed only in patches, they saw the cause of all the deafening racket.

It was a helmeted, goggled figure, furiously driving a motor-cycle round and round.

They halted.

"Hallo!"

"That's where he is, then!"



"What can be his giddy idea in riding round the field?"

"And at this hour of the morning, too!"

"Goodness only knows!"

The Greyfriars fellows watched the mysterious speedster. They were certainly not impressed by his handling of the machine.

He zigzagged along the far side of the field, swerving about jerkily and clumsily, though they could see that he was more or less trying to keep to the borders of the field.

Gung-g-g-g-g-g-g-g! Z-z-z-z-z-z-z-zip!  
Bang!

"My hat!" remarked Wharton. "That fellow would do some damage on a crowded road! He's a rotten rider!"

"Hopeless!"

They watched him as he turned a corner at the far end of the field.

"D'you think he's practising for the dirt track?" asked Frank Nugent.

"I suppose he must be," said Temple.

"H'm! I don't think much of him!" observed the Bounder.

"Rather not!"

A dirt-track racing course had been opened at Lantham—a town about twelve miles from Greyfriars—on the ground of the Lantham Argyle Football Club. Several of the juniors had visited it, and were fair judges of racing on the cinders. The rider in the field certainly did not strike them as being a crack on the speedway.

He came tearing and swerving towards them, two hands gripping the vibrating handlebars, two wheels bumping and bouncing over the rough, irregular surface.

Roar-r-r-r-r-r-r! Bang!

He took the corner at full tilt, one leg scrabbling on the ground to retain his balance.

The scrape of grinding tyres and the jarring rattle of the machine fairly cut the atmosphere.

"Oh crumbs!" exclaimed Hobson.

"The silly chump!"

"Coker!" yelled Vernon-Smith suddenly. "Great Scott! It's Coker of the Fifth!"

"Wha-a-t!"

"So it is!" howled Wharton. "Oh, my giddy aunt! Coker! Good old Coker, training for the dirt-track!"

"Ye gods!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd of fellows shouted with laughter.

The mere idea of Horace Coker on his famous motor-bike, training for the dirt-track was too funny!

Coker and his jigger were well-known at Greyfriars, and, indeed, to all the police within a radius of fifteen miles from the school.

Everyone who knew the pair were of the same opinion—that the bike should be scrapped and the mighty Horace clapped into a home for lost idiots.

Of course, Coker greatly fancied himself on the jigger. He was quite convinced that nobody in the wide world could even hold a candle to him as a motor-cyclist.

The juniors gazed at him as he went roaring and zigzagging away, a thick cloud of smoke trailing behind.

He rounded the three other corners of the field and once more came dashing towards the juniors.

Roar-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!

Over rocked the bike as Coker tried to turn it round the corner, kicking and driving at the ground with his left leg as he did so.

But he had taken the corner at too

great a speed for a rider of his clumsy calibre. His rear wheel lost its grip of the ground, and, with it, Coker lost his balance.

Cras-s-sh!

"Oh crikey!"

"The silly chump——"

The Fifth-Former rolled over and over on the ground, while his machine ricocheted along on its own, to finish up in the middle of the field, its rear wheel still driving furiously.

Pride is said to go before a fall; but in Horace Coker's case, it seemed as if reckless motor-cycling took precedence.

"Oh, my hat!"

"The blithering——"

"Come on, you chaps!" snapped Harry Wharton.

The captain of the Remove led a rush of Greyfriars fellows into the field.

Horace Coker sat up shakily.

His neck, apparently, was still intact.

His helmet had been knocked off by the tumble, and his goggles had been pushed down into his mouth, wedging it wide open very effectively.

"Grooooooh! Ugh!" gurgled Coker.

In another second he was surrounded.

Harry Wharton knelt by his side and pushed the goggles out of the way.

"Don't crowd round too much," he said crisply. "Let him have plenty of air!"

Coker leant heavily against his supporting arm.

His eyes were nearly closed, his mouth hung open, and he was breathing jerkily. But by degrees Coker's robust

**Coker, the champion chump, sets out to collect some Dirt-track prizes; but all he does collect is a prize assortment of bumps and bruises!**

constitution began to assert itself. His eyes opened wide, and his breathing became more regular. He blinked round at the juniors.

"Phew! Groooh! Oh dear!" he gasped.

"Take it easy, old bean," said Vernon-Smith genially.

"Whew! Oh crikey! My head's aching!" exclaimed Coker, practically in his normal voice now. "W-what happened? Oh, I know! I crashed at that blinking bend, didn't I?"

"You did!"

"What about my jigger?" demanded Coker suddenly. "Oh, you've got it, young Linley."

"Guilty, my lord!" answered the Lanchashire junior cheerily. "How are you feeling now?"

"Oh, all right, thanks, kid," replied Coker, rising to his feet with assistance.

"Is the bike much damaged?"

"Doesn't look it to me."

"Good egg! Well, thanks very much for helping me, kids," said Coker, in his usual patronising manner. "You fags are some use now and again!"

"Oh!"

The juniors could see that Horace Coker was now quite his old self. They exchanged glances—and grinned.

"What was the idea of riding the bike in the field, and at this hour of the morning?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes, and why didn't you use your brakes at the corner?" queried Fry.

Horace Coker regarded them haughtily.

"I was practising for the dirt track in that field," he said. "So I decided beforehand not to use my brakes. In

any case, I'll have to take 'em off before I ride in the novices' event at the Lantham Speedway to-morrow!"

"What?"

"You're in the novices' event?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

Coker nodded impatiently.

"Yes! Just that!" he snapped.

"Great Scott!"

"My giddy aunt!"

"Oh crumbs!" chortled Bob Cherry.

"Coker on the dirt track!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Greyfriars fellows—with the exception of Coker—chuckled loudly. The Fifth-Former was naturally a funny chap. He had looked funny while riding round the field. But the mere idea of him and his famous motor-bike on the dirt-track struck them as being even funnier.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What the merry dickens are you fags cackling at?" demanded the mighty Horace.

"You, old scout!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "On the giddy dirt-track!"

"I reckon a scooter in the Greyfriars quad is about your mark!" grinned the Bounder.

"Why, you cheeky——" began Coker wrathfully; and he made a stride at the laughing crowd.

They scattered before his bull-like rush.

In the normal course of events, they would have swarmed over him and bumped him in the dusty field. But Coker had had his full share of bumps, for the present, at any rate. He did not pursue them very far, and was obviously quite recovered, so they made their way back to Greyfriars, leaving Coker to look after himself.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Bumps for Bunter!

"I SAY, Redwing, old chap!"

"Well, Bunter?"

"I've been looking for you everywhere, Redwing!"

Tom Redwing stopped and smiled.

"Well, here I am, Bunter!" he said cheerily. "What's the trouble?"

Billy Bunter blinked rather sorrowfully at Tom Redwing.

"I'm surprised and rather hurt, Redwing," he said, shaking his head—"after all I've done for you, too!"

"Eh—what have you done for me, Bunter?" asked Redwing, looking puzzled. "I'm blessed if I can see what——"

"Oh, really, Redwing——"

"If you've stopped me to ask for a loan——"

"Nothing of the kind!" said Bunter, with some dignity.

"Then if it's grub you're after——"

"It isn't grub!" said Bunter warmly.

"Look here, Redwing, old fellow, you know jolly well what a pal I've been to you, old chap! I've backed you up through thick and thin; I've stood by you when all the other fellows cut you dead, you know."

"You fat ass!"

"Other fellows," went on Bunter, blinking seriously at Redwing, "might look down on you because you happen to be the son of a dashed low-down fisherman, but not me. I'm awfully democratic, you know."

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"You—you fat ass!" exclaimed Tom Redwing, grinning. "What's the game, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Redwing, you know jolly well what I mean! What about this afternoon?" asked Bunter warmly. "You're going with Smithy and Wharton and his crowd to the Lantham Speedway, ain't you?"

"That's so. But—"

"You'll be having tea in Lantham afterwards."

Tom Redwing laughed. He understood now.

Billy Bunter had evidently heard about the outing, and this was his little way of fishing for an invitation.

"I call it dashed ungrateful!" went on the Owl of the Remove reproachfully. "You should have insisted on my joining in."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Redwing. "You cheeky porpoise! There's nothing doing!"

Redwing started to walk away, but Billy Bunter grabbed him by the arm.

"He, he, he!" he cackled. "I know you're only joking, of course. You'll stand by an old pal, won't you, old fellow? You'll put me down for this afternoon!"

Redwing halted.

"You really want to be put down?"

"Naturally, old chap."

"Then here you are!"

Redwing suddenly grasped Bunter by his fat shoulders and sat him down in the quad with a bump.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter. "Ow! Oh dear! Beast! Wharrer you do that for?"

"You asked to be put down, and I've put you down," said Redwing; and he strolled away, laughing.

Billy Bunter scrambled to his feet.

At the bicycle-shed, near the gates of the school, Redwing joined Vernon-Smith and the Famous Five.

"I've pumped up your back tyre, Reddy!" called out the Bounder. "Hallo! Here's that fat ass Bunter!"

The Owl of the Remove halted at a safe distance from the juniors and glared at them through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, let me go with you instead of that beastly scholarship cad Redwing! Dash it all, you can't be seen out with anybody, you know!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"Look here, you fellows," protested Bunter, "he's only the son of a low-down longshoreman! You've got to draw the line somewhere, after all! Let me come with you in his place."

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, you know—"

Vernon-Smith glanced at Redwing. He saw that his chum was not taking the slightest notice of the fat Removite's remarks. He admired him for his restraint. His eyes glinted.

"You can join in with us, Fatty, if you like, providing you keep on the step of my bike!"

"Eh?"

"I say, Smithy—" began Harry Wharton

But the Bounder gestured to him.

Billy Bunter beamed, all over his fat face.

"That's awfully decent of you, old fellow!" he said. "I always knew you weren't as rotten—I mean—"

"Oh, come on!" interrupted the Bounder. "Jump on behind!"

Clutching Vernon-Smith by the shoulders, Bunter placed one foot on the step. He hopped along clumsily for a pace or two on the other foot before gingerly drawing it up on to the step on the other side of the wheel.

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"Mind your step!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, as they passed through the gates, "I—I don't think I'll be very comfortable here!"

"Good egg!"

"Look here, you rotters, if that's your idea of how to treat a fellow when you're taking him out—"

"It is!"

"Oh crumbs!" growled Bunter. "Smithy, old chap—"

Bump!

The fat Removite's words were cut short by Vernon-Smith riding into a pot-hole in the Friardale Lane. He had all his work cut out to keep on the step.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "I s-say, be a bit more careful where you go, old chap!"

Bump! Another pot-hole!

"Smithy!" panted Bunter. "Smithy, old fellow! I—I wish you'd try to give those rotten pot-holes a miss! You nearly had me off that time!"

"Did I?" observed the Bounder calmly.

"Yes. You jolly well did!" howled the fat junior. "And if my glasses had been broken, you would have had to pay for them—"

Bump! Splash! Bump!

It was more than a pot-hole this time. It was a pot-hole full of water, which splashed up and soaked Bunter as far as the knees.

"Oh crikey!" he wailed. "My legs are soaked, and they're getting jolly tired!"

"They'll be dashed tired by the time we get to Lantham, then!"

"Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter glared at the Bounder and at the grinning Removites with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

Bump!

"Ow! Oh crikey! Oh dear!"

Perspiring freely now, Billy Bunter gingerly edged himself back on the step he had so nearly fallen off. As he did so he shifted his grip on Smithy's shoulders—which was precisely what Herbert Vernon-Smith had been waiting for.

He gave a sudden, savage drive at his pedals. The bike shot forward in front of the other juniors, while the Owl of the Remove's bulky person shot off it. He smote the hard Friardale Lane with a mighty smite.

Biff!

"Man down!" chortled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites slowed down and looked behind them. They saw Billy Bunter sitting in the middle of Friardale Lane.

"Yah! Beasts!" he hooted. "Smithy, you rotter! You did that on purpose!"

"I said you could come with us to Lantham if you could keep on the step of my bike!" called out the Bounder cheerily. "Well, you've fallen off! You can't come. Cheerio!"

"Good-bye, old fat man!" shouted Bob Cherry, waving his hand.

The juniors dug at their pedals and went speeding down the Friardale Lane. Billy Bunter scrambled awkwardly to his feet. He shook a fat fist at the retreating forms of the juniors, and then rolled dejectedly back to Greyfriars.

"Well, that disposes of Bunter!" said Harry Wharton, with a grin.

"Yes," agreed Smithy. "And a good riddance, too! Come on, you chaps! It's a fair distance to Lantham yet."

Cycling was pleasant on that sunny afternoon, and the juniors kept up a

good average. The ride was quite uneventful and the juniors were soon in the busy streets of Lantham, pulling up outside one of the entrances to the speedway. They hastily parked their bikes in one of the spaces provided and hurried towards the turnstiles.

"By Jove!" whistled the Bounder suddenly. "Look!"

He nodded towards a corner of the entrance ground, to where a shabbily-dressed, furtive-faced man was lounging against a fence.

Harry Wharton's lip curled.

"One of Joe Banks' hangers-on, at the Cross Keys!" he said. "I expect Banks himself is about somewhere."

"I'm pretty sure the rotter's not here for the sport!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"No doubt about that," said Smithy, with a grin. "Banks has put him here for the bettin'!"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the juniors saw another man brush against the lounge.

They caught a glimpse of a white slip of paper quickly changing hands. Then the two parted, the man going on through the turnstile while the lounge slouched over to the other side of the entrance.

"Bettin' slips!" said Smithy laconically, and the Removites passed through the turnstile and hurried up to the top-most step of the terraces.

There was already a big crowd inside. The juniors glanced eagerly about them, their eyes sparkling with anticipation.

"We've got the finishing-post pretty near us down there," said Wharton, in tones of satisfaction.

"Good!"

Vernon-Smith, who had been looking behind him, over the top of the banking, turned, with a grim smile.

"That chap outside is doing a pretty good trade," he said. "An' there are five other entrances. The fellow here has taken six bets in the last few minutes!"

"My hat!"

"I don't like the—" began Wharton. Bang!

The sudden report of a finishing-gun cut short the Remove skipper's remark.

"Good egg!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "The meeting's open. The parade of the riders is the first event."

"Coker should be in this," said Frank Nugent.

"So he is!" shouted Wharton, above the sudden din of starting engines, which came from a near-by paddock. "Blue slip, you chaps!"

A ragged bunch of riders, their engines roaring furiously, came swerving out of the paddock.

There was one in a blue slip, and the juniors quickly spotted him.

"Here he is!" bawled Bob Cherry. "Good old Coker! I wonder if he'll get past the first bend?"

"Ha, ha! If he's lucky!"

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### Foul Riding!

**B**ANG! Bang! Phut-phut! Bang!

Roar-r-r-r!

The goggled, muffled figures were fairly streaming out of the paddock and up the straight, in a ragged, uneven line.

Coker had been one of the first out of the paddock, but his machine petered out as he changed gear, and rider after rider went shooting past him.

"Hard luck, Coker!" shouted Bob Cherry, as the Fifth-Former strove desperately to shove off with his toes.



But Coker's engine refused to fire, and in another minute he found himself completely "left."

Some of the rowdy element among the spectators began to get a bit derisive as he savagely dug his toes into the cinders.

"Shove up, mate!"

"Why don't you get someone to push you?"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

It was doubtful whether Coker heard these raucous comments, but he soon seemed to get desperate.

Lurching off his jigger, he jammed the throttle wide open and awkwardly ran the machine a few paces up the track.

With a spluttering roar the engine fired.

Clutching the handlebars, Coker

"Ha, ha! Doesn't look like it!"

Even Coker's spirits seemed to be slightly damped, to say the least, by such a "debacle." He was looking very small as he dejectedly wheeled his bike back to the paddock.

"Well, that's the first part of the entertainment," said Harry Wharton. "What's next?"

"Event No. 2," read Bob Cherry. "The First Heat of the 'Lantham News' Belt Race."

"Who's in it?"

"Walter Hubbard, Bill West, Art Fisher, and Sid Snell," read out Bob.

"I say, isn't Snell a pretty big noise here?"

"I think he is," replied Wharton.

"What is his colour?"

"Yellow."

together fairly woke the echoes as the riders jammed open their throttles. Four clouds of flying cinders signalled the rounding of the first bend, and they swung into the straight opposite the juniors, with Sid Snell only a length behind the white-helmeted Bill West, who was leading.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "They're going pretty well!"

The engines' steady roar changed to a more irregular note as the riders came raking round the bend nearest the Removites. Almost level, Sid Snell, Bill West, and Art Fisher blazed down the straight together, Walter Hubbard dropping behind.

Over leant the bikes at the next curve, the riders scrabbling at the ground with their steel-covered toes. Sid Snell looked like coming out of it

Bump! Splash! The Bounder rode into a pot-hole full of water, which splashed up and soaked Bunter. "Ow-ow! Oh crikey!" wailed the fat junior. "My legs are soaked!"



made a wild leap into the air to mount the bike, his two long legs splayed out like compasses. But the machine was simply torn from his grasp.

Away it went, careering across the track, while the unlucky Horace rolled over and over in a smother of cinders.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a ripple of laughter from the watching crowd.

Horace Coker sat up in the middle of the track, his blue slip knocked crooked by his tumble, and gazed around him.

A marshal and a first-aid man hurried forward to assist him to his feet, while a grinning mechanic fielded the jigger.

Bob Cherry turned a smiling face to his chums.

"Poor old Coker!" he chuckled. "He hasn't started too well."

"Oh, that's the fellow, down there!"

A loud-speaker began to announce the event, and informed the crowd that Bill West was having trouble with his machine. The announcer wished publicly to express his thanks to Boy MacLaren for the loan of his.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "That's jolly decent of him, whoever he is!"

"Rather!"

Four engines woke to life as the riders were pushed off. The Famous Five watched them as they turned the last bend of the lap, and approached the starter's upraised flag. Practically dead level the four speedirons swung towards the motionless signal. Another second and it had sliced down.

Roar-r-r-r!

The din of four engines accelerating

the leader, but Bill West took a length off him by a slightly quicker acceleration for the straight. And by a striking burst of speed Fisher passed Sid Snell, and drew level with Bill West as he thumbed his "cut-out" for the next bend.

"Well played, sir!" shouted the Bounder.

The yellow flag soon signalled the final lap. Side by side West and Fisher blazed towards the first bend of it, with Sid Snell in hot pursuit just over a length behind them.

Roar-r-r-r!

Flattened along their tanks West and Fisher strove to pass one another on the straight, but, in their eagerness, overlooked to go for the best position on the bend. They entered on it, still



level, but both in too near towards the safety fencing.

Their two showers of cinders mingled in the air as they went storming round. Near the end of the curve Sid Snell drew level, thanks to the inside position which was there for him to take.

It may have been lack of foresight, or it may have been a deliberate move to gain a mean advantage over the two men who were seriously challenging him. In any case, Snell also rode in towards the fencing, almost touching Bill West, who, in his turn, was forced nearer to Art Fisher. Practically shoulder to shoulder the three riders came out on to the straight. They were half-way down it before Snell gave them proper space. He edged away suddenly towards the other side of the track.

West and Fisher immediately followed his example.

But, as was to be expected of men who had been restricted against their will, they did so too eagerly. They swerved sharply across the track, and had to swerve as sharply back again to avoid riding on to the grass-covered centre. By the time they had recovered their equilibrium, Sid Snell was two lengths in front of them both.

"By Jove!" whistled the Bounder.

With two lengths lead Sid Snell had the track to himself at the final bend, and he took it in a careful, well-regulated broadside. Art Fisher came storming after him, sprayed with the cinders from Snell's driving rear wheel. It was the last effort of a gallant rider, but he had no time to do himself proper justice. Snell came out of the bend still a length to the good, and, crouching over his handlebars, blazed down the straight past the winning-post.

Bang!

The report of the finishing-gun echoed round the Speedway, quickly followed by a rolling wave of applause.

"My hat!" observed Bob Cherry. "I like the way they take those corners! Slightly different from Coker in the field yesterday morning."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"That fellow Snell—" began Wharton.

"Oh, you noticed it, then!" remarked the Bounder, with a grin.

"Yes. I thought there was something fishy," admitted the Remove skipper.

"There was," said Vernon-Smith. "He deliberately rode close against the other two in the last lap. And he didn't choose to give 'em enough room until they were half-way down the straight."

"Oh!"

"My giddy aunt!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "I didn't think of that!"

"I don't suppose you did," replied the Bounder coolly. "An' nearly all the crowd here didn't smell a rat either, or they wouldn't have applauded the blighter so much when he passed the winning-post!"

"H'm!"

"Of course, Snell would deny that he did it deliberately if the authorities were to question him, or if the other riders were to ask him what about it, which I don't suppose either of 'em would do. Anyhow, I've seen that stunt done before. I went to a good many meetin's in London durin' the vac. That fellow Snell is a dirty rider—you take it from me!"

"Oh, well, he'll be bowled out sooner or later!" remarked Bob Cherry. "Let's see, what's the next event? Heat No. 2 of the 'Lantham

News' Belt Race! Boy MacLaren's in it."

At that moment the loud-speaker began to announce the event, and the names of the riders. They were soon pushed off on the preliminary circuit for the flying start, and coming swiftly towards the starter's upraised flag.

Roar-r-r-r!

Down slashed the flag, instantaneously followed by the sudden thunder of engines answering to wide open throttles. Boy MacLaren quickly took the lead, but the other riders were close to his back wheel. At the end of the third lap MacLaren was still leading, but as he was thundering round the first bend of the last lap he was forced to pay for his generosity in lending his bike to Bill West.

Some cinders must have got into the engine, then, for it backfired as the Boy opened his throttle for the straight.

In less than a minute, second and third man had drawn level—and passed him. The Boy was now third, and it was the last lap of that closely fought-out contest!

By this time the leader had reached the last curve. He took it at full tilt.

Over leant his bike, sending up a thick cloud of dust from his driving rear wheel. Kicking savagely at the cinders with his steel-covered toe, the rider fought to retain his balance. But he fought a losing fight. Unable to turn his front wheel against the raking slide of the back one, he lost his balance and rolled over and over on to the grass-covered centre, his machine careering after him.

Round thundered the second man in hot pursuit—and after him came Boy MacLaren!

Twenty thousand people held their breath as the Boy hurled his bike at that wide, curving bend. Throttle wide open, rear wheel showering the cinders amongst the crowd, he took it in a slashing, blood-tingling broadside.

Accelerating even on the bend, the Boy took a length off his rival before they came out on to the straight. Like a bullet from a gun he shot down it, past the winning-post, amidst a rolling wave of applause from the spectators.

"My giddy aunt!" gasped Bob Cherry, turning a flushed face to his chums, and still clapping vigorously. "That was something like!"

"Rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"My hat!" breathed Wharton. "That's Boy MacLaren when he gets going, is it? We'll be seeing him in the final now, you chaps! What's the next event?"

"Half a mo!"

Bob Cherry picked up the programme from where he had dropped it in his excitement. He burst into a shout of laughter.

"Ha, ha! Oh crumbs!" he roared.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at him questioningly. They could see no reason whatever for mirth.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob. "Can't you guess?"

"No!"

"Coker!" yelled Bob Cherry. "The next event is the Novices' Handicap, and Coker's in it! We're going to see Coker on the dirt track, you chaps!"

"Coker!" chorused the others.

"Yes," said Bob Cherry, "the great Horace is actually in the next event. Look out for fireworks, you chaps. If Coker doesn't give the crowd a good laugh I'll eat my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And at the mere thought the Famous Five roared with laughter.



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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Coker Cuts Up Rusty!

"I'll bet two to one in doughnuts that they handicap Coker the most," said Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"Ha, ha! No, thanks!"

The white-coated official was bending down to examine the last of the four bikes in the Novices' Handicap. When he had finished, one of the marshals stepped forward.

He motioned to scratch, to first, and to second. And he pointed out Coker a place at the head of the line.

The Famous Five chuckled.

"Told you so!" said Bob Cherry, turning to his four chums. "Poor old Cokey! Eight yards handicap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Three riders quickly took up the positions indicated to them. They did not hesitate for a moment. But Horace Coker did—and for more than a moment.

He twisted round in his saddle, to face the marshal, a beefy young man.

"Look here!" he called out.

The Fifth-Former had a powerful voice, and it carried right up to where the chums of the Remove were standing.

The marshal turned to look at Coker, a trifle impatiently.

"I say, this isn't good enough, old man!" said Coker in a patronising voice.

"Eh? You mean you're not satisfied with your handicap?" snapped the marshal.

"No, I'm not!" said Coker. "Not so much for myself, but for these three other fellows. I ought to start scratch. Hang it all, old man, give them a sporting chance!"

"Good gad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh dear!" chuckled Harry Wharton breathlessly. "The one and only Coker!"

"You silly young fool!" exclaimed the marshal. "Why, you were only allowed to ride in the novices' event by the skin of your teeth! Look at the show you put up in the parade!"

"What the—" began Coker.

But the beefy young man raised a muscular hand in the air.

"You either get away first or you don't start at all!" he snapped, his eyes glinting.

"Look here, you crusty idiot!" protested the Fifth-Former.

"Are you riding where I put you," demanded the marshal; "or are you dropping out altogether? Yes, or no!"

The mighty Horace glared at the determined look on the young man's heavy face.

But even Coker could see the type of man he had to deal with. He swallowed something in his throat.

"All right!" he growled. "I'll start where you wish!"

And he shoved his machine up to the eight-yards' mark.

The beefy young man stepped back and nodded to the grinning starter.

Phut — phut — phut! Pop — pop! Bang!

The four novices were shoved off as the flag slashed down, and they got started fairly soon. An ironical cheer from the crowd followed Horace Coker.

The excitement of being in a real dirt-track race seemed to go to the Fifth-Former's head. He jammed upon his throttle, flattened along his petrol-tank, and shot towards the first bend, quite "a la" Boy MacLaren.

Roar-r-r-r-r-r!

A reckless ass like Coker might

manage to approach a bend as fast as a professional rider. But when it came to rounding it—that was a horse of another colour.

His left leg slithered wildly among the cinders as he entered on the curve, and his back wheel described a ragged semicircle.

Then Coker came down!

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Father: "But where is Bobby?"  
Youngster: "At the end of the string, dad!"

**Get Busy Now, Chums.**

The chums of the Remove craned forward to watch their egregious school-fellow.

They saw him skidding along on his face and knees in the middle of the track, while his bike finished up at the fence.

By this time, Coker's competitors had reached the bend, and practically dead-level, were rounding it in pretty good style. With three bikes bearing down on him abreast, the outlook for Horace Coker looked rather unsettled, so to speak!

Still on his hands and knees, he hastily made a bee-line for the grass, while the other riders swept past him. Needless to say, he did not gain anything in dignity by such a method of retreat. Coker, trying to move quickly on all fours, bore a rather too striking resemblance to a well-known beast of burden.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five exchanged grinning glances. It was quite what they had expected of Coker on the dirt track!

But the Fifth-Former was not to be put off by one spill. As soon as his competitors were past, he was on his feet and fielding his trusty jigger.

Fool's luck seemed to come to him for once. His machine fired after a brief shove-off with his toes.

Roar-r-r-r-r-r-r!

He blazed down the full-length straight in a wild effort to make up the two-thirds of a lap he had lost. But even the impetuous Horace restrained himself at the second curve. He throttled down for it, his engine backfiring furiously.

Bang! Bang! Whee-e-e-e-e-e-o! Bang!

Coker approached the second bend at about a quarter of the speed he had essayed the first.

But he had simply a terrific struggle to retain his balance.

His back wheel switched round viciously, kicking up a cloud of dusty cinders. Straining at his handlebars, and driving savagely at the ground with his steel-covered toe, Horace Coker just managed to keep on—but only just!

He finished up his raking slide, still on the jigger, perhaps, but directly facing the direction whence he had come!

Then his engine asserted itself, and Horace Coker went swerving back round the same bend once more!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A perfect howl of laughter went up from the crowded stands.

Then he suddenly realised he was going in the wrong direction and heaved his machine round, the engine blazing away in neutral. He let in his clutch too soon and bumped into the safety fencing, which very promptly bumped him back again.

But Horace Coker's bike was now facing the right direction, and Horace Coker let her rip!

He blazed down the straight in a cloud of dust, and ringing laughter went after him.

The yellow flag signalled the last lap, with Coker still very much behind the other entrants.

"Come on, Coker!" yelled Bob Cherry. "You've got a kick left!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At the last bend but one, the third man, already separated from the second by half a dozen lengths, slithered over on his side. He was up and had restarted, though, very quickly.

But Coker was only about two yards behind him as they shot away together down the last full-length straight!

Roar-r-r-r-r-r-r!

At that very moment, the winner of the event passed the post, with the second man in pressing attendance.

The burst of applause which greeted them, however, was continued as the laughing spectators saw what a close fight third man was having with the egregious Coker.

"My hat!" chuckled Wharton. "I wonder if Coker'll escape the booby prize!"

"Ha, ha! He might!"

The tail, so to speak, of the Novices' Handicap fairly hurled itself at the last bend, obviously forgetting, in its excitement, what little knowledge of dirt-track riding it possessed.

Third man had still a clear lead of two yards, when he entered on it. But in view of the speed at which he took the curve, he did very well to keep his balance for two seconds.

Over he rolled in a cloud of gritty cinders, and, pressing close, Horace Coker rolled over him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang!

The beefy young man let off the finishing-gun at that.

He, apparently, had had his fill of the Novices' Handicap, and did not think it necessary for Coker and third man to prolong the agony, as it were, any more.



"I hope Coker isn't hurt!" remarked Wharton, a trifle anxiously.

"And the other chap, as well!"

Any doubts on that score, however, were very quickly set at rest. The two of them were soon on their feet.

For a moment the Fifth-Former looked at his fellow rider.

"You clumsy idiot!" he bawled suddenly. "What d'you want to make me crash for? Why the merry dickens did you get in my way?"

"Eh? What's bitin' you?"

Horace Coker's bellow carried easily right up to where Harry Wharton & Co. were standing. Some hundreds of people must have clearly heard this noisy and surprising outburst. The mighty Horace's voice was decidedly of the kind that fairly demanded to be heard.

"W-what the thump—" began Harry Wharton.

"You howling idiot! You footling chump!" roared Coker, advancing with his hands up. "You—you—"

Words seemed to fail the furious Greyfriars junior. He made a rush at the astounded novice.

The unlucky fellow was too utterly taken by surprise to have a chance of defending himself.

Biff!

One of Horace's large fists, in its outsize in gauntlets, caught him full on the jaw—and the third man went down as if he had been poleaxed!

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Speedway Thrills!

**A** CHORUS of astonished exclamations arose from the crowd of people who had seen Coker's extraordinary outburst.

The chums of the Remove were flabbergasted. They fairly blinked at each other in utter bewilderment.

"G-great Scott!" stuttered Wharton.

"Ye gods!" gasped Johnny Bull.

"M-my only hat!" ejaculated Frank Nugent.

"He's cracked!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"The crackedfulness is terrific!" exclaimed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh blankly.

The first one to recover himself was Coker's fellow-novice. Scrambling to his feet, he went for the mighty Horace like a tiger, and the Fifth-Former reeled away under his savage attack.

As it happened, the beefy young marshal, and his fellows in authority, had missed the first part of this unofficial entertainment. But it was not very long before it caught their attention.

They very promptly decided to intervene. The beefy young man, and several other marshals, sprinted towards the scene of the combat. They apparently felt their presence was needed.

Horace Coker quickly recovered from the other's furious onslaught. And by the time the authorities arrived on the scene, he and his fellow-novice were going at it hammer and tongs, in a cloud of dust kicked up by their trampling feet.

The beefy young man singled out Coker for his special attention! Knocking up his driving arms, he grasped both of the mighty Horace's wrists in a grip of iron, and with a powerful jerk swung him to his knees on the cinders.

"Leggo, you rotter!" bawled Coker,

struggling furiously, but in vain, his crash helmet knocked on one side.

By this time another marshal had secured Coker's opponent and, panting and gasping, the two of them were dragged apart.

"Lemme gerrat him!" howled the third man, plunging and kicking to free himself.

"You wait, you rotters!" roared Horace Coker, apparently addressing both his fellow-novice and the beefy young man.

"Who—why—what the deuce are you two playing at?" bellowed the latter. He turned to Coker. "I'll bet you started all this dashed hooliganism!"

"Yus! The blue bloke started it!" called out a raucous voice. "As soon as they got up after crashin', 'e just made a rush at the other chap and knocked 'im darn!"

"That's right, guv'nor!"

"You hear that, you puppy!" roared the beefy young man. "You started this dashed row for no reason whatever, didn't you?"

"I—I—was only sticking up for my dashed rights in going for him!" panted Coker wildly.

"Eh?"

"That fellow crashed first and prevented me winning the race!" spluttered Coker.

pulling off his gauntlet, Coker dubiously held his hand out to the other.

For a moment the novice looked at him.

But it was soon evident that he was made of the right stuff. For, with a good-natured grin, he stepped forward to grip the Fifth-Former's hand in his own.

"Oh, it's quite O.K., old sport!" he said genially.

"Good man!" bawled Bob Cherry, clapping vigorously.

And, under the exuberant Bob's lead, there was a round of applause from the attentively watching and listening crowd.

"Well, that's that!" remarked Harry Wharton. "Next event's a match race between last season's riders of the Lantham Speedway!"

"Good egg!"

"Sid Snell, Tom Hunter, and Ron Bishop are in it," continued the Remove skipper. "I wonder what sort of riding we'll see now—"

Roar-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!

The riders swung into the full-length straight of the course for the flying start, and levelled up into an even line as they came swiftly towards the starter. Then down slashed the flag, and the thunder of accelerating engines burst out once again.

Roar-r-r-r-r-r-r!

Showers of cinders loomed up at the first bend as the riders went raking round and lost formation, spreading out raggedly on the full-length straight. Ron Bishop had taken the lead, and, flattened along his tank, tore towards the next curve.

"That chap's acceleration is pretty good," remarked the Bounder, watching him keenly.

He came broadsiding round the next bend, right in the middle of the track. The juniors watched him until he was charging down the straight, and then turned to see how the other two were getting on.

Snell and Hunter were almost dead level as they rounded the bend, and, still together, they blazed down the straight after Bishop. The riders swept past the juniors again and into the second lap, still in the same positions, Ron Bishop riding hard, though carefully, confident in his lead, while Snell and Hunter kept level, always within a few yards of each other.

Their engines' steady roar changed to a more irregular note as they took the first bend of the third lap. The Removites could not see properly, but Sid Snell seemed to handle his bike very badly on the bend; for Hunter charged into the straight two clear lengths in front of him.

"Go it, Snell!" came a shout from behind the Greyfriars party.

"He must be a bit off form—" began Bob Cherry.

He broke off as Snell caught up to Hunter at the end of the straight. Level once more, the two riders came raking round. But for a second time Snell lost distance on the bend, Hunter coming out of it with two lengths' lead.

But Snell again drew level and passed Tom Hunter on the last full length straight, to the accompaniment of a storm of cheering; for the crowd appreciated his plucky effort to catch Bishop, and it swelled to a steady roar as he

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The beefy young man's heavy face turned nearly purple.

"You silly, bumptious, swelled-headed young cub!" he roared. "D'you realise what you're saying? You—you talk of being prevented from—from winning!"

"Yes, I jolly well do!"

"G-good gad! You—you pin-headed cuckoo! You and this other fellow were nearly a lap behind when the first and second finished!"

"Eh!" gasped Coker.

"It's quite right, you dangerous maniac!" shouted the Fifth-Former's competitor.

Coker's jaw dropped.

He blinked at his fellow-rider, at the beefy young man, at the other marshals, and at the laughing crowd of people near by.

"D'you mean to say we weren't the leaders when we crashed?" he ejaculated, gazing round him blankly.

"Of course not, you—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove, and the crowd on the banking were almost helpless with laughter, as were the professional riders who had turned out of the paddock when the row started. The group of marshals were all chuckling noisily. Even the beefy one's heavy features were now twitching a little.

"I—I say," exclaimed Coker to his late opponent, in great concern. "I've made a jolly silly mistake! I'm awfully sorry, old man! I hope—I hope you don't bear me any ill-will!" And,



Taken by surprise, the astounded novice had no chance of defending himself. Biff! One of Coker's large fists caught him full on the jaw, and he went down as if poleaxed.



came raking round the bend, gradually getting nearer to the leader.

The engines' harsh, irregular note changed to a shrill, rising drone as the riders swung their machines out of the broadside and jammed their throttles simultaneously open. Like bullets from a gun, they shot towards the winning-post.

"Oh crikey!"

"Will he—"

As they flashed past the Removites Snell's front wheel was dead level with Bishop's rear one, and they were forty yards from the finish. The yelling of the spectators now completely drowned the din of the furiously driven engines.

Bang!

It was the report of the finishing-gun. The race was over.

"Who won?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"I couldn't see!" replied Wharton tensely. "Nobody could from here. But it'll be announced in a jiffy."

"I'm pretty certain there wasn't much to choose—" began Johnny Bull.

"Result of the Last Season's Riders' Event!" interrupted the loud-speaker. "First, Ron Bishop, winner by eighteen inches. Time—"

The announcer was interrupted by another wave of shouting from the spectators.

"Fifteen minutes interval now!" bawled Wharton, finding difficulty in making himself heard above the noise. "What about going down to the refreshment buffet for a glass of pop and a bun before the crush comes?"

"Good idea!"

"Come on, then!"

And the Greyfriars party threaded

their way along the packed terraces towards the refreshment buffet.

"Where's Smithy?"

Tom Redwing asked that question as the Removites sat down round a little table in a corner.

Harry Wharton glanced round the room.

"Can't see him!"

"Smithy! Smithy!" called out Bob Cherry. "Show a leg! We're waiting for you!"

But Herbert Vernon-Smith was nowhere to be seen.

"Oh, he'll turn up!" said Wharton at length, shrugging his shoulders.

"Ginger-beer and buns, please, miss," he went on, turning to the waitress.

"Well, not a bad afternoon, chaps," remarked Tom Redwing. "I hope you're enjoying it as much as I am."

"We is—we are!"

The juniors chatted about the racing as they drank ginger-pop and ate buns. Fully five minutes went by before Vernon-Smith put in an appearance, however.

"Hallo, here's Smithy!" exclaimed Tom Redwing, as he entered. "Good egg!"

"Where have you been wandering to, my infant?" asked Bob Cherry, as the Bouncer sat down with the rest of the juniors.

"Oh, just havin' a look round," was the careless reply. "Strollin' about an' keepin' my eyes open."

"Who's going to win the 'Lantham News' Belt?" asked Frank Nugent, after a long pull at his glass of ginger-pop.

"Boy MacLaren," said Bob Cherry,

"I don't know. I think Sid Snell stands a jolly good chance if he can get back to his old form a bit," remarked Frank Nugent.

"Ron Bishop ought to be well in the running," put in Johnny Bull. "He put up a fine display in the last event."

"Yes, that's true."

"I'll tell you a chap who'd sweep the lot of 'em before him, only he hasn't entered for this particular race," said Bob Cherry.

"Who?"

"Coker," grinned Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors chuckled loudly.

"I suppose the struggle will really be between MacLaren, Snell, and Bishop," said Harry Wharton. "By the way, who's the fourth man in the final?"

Bob Cherry pulled the programme out of his pocket.

"Chap named Forbes," he said.

"Oh, I remember! He won one of the earlier heats, didn't he? But I can't recollect anything particular about him."

"What do you think, Smithy?" asked Tom Redwing.

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders. "Wouldn't like to say, myself," he said. "But the bookies outside are givin' the shortest odds on MacLaren, an' the next shortest on Ron Bishop."

"Eh?"

"The bookies?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Smithy chuckled.

"You saw Joe Banks' crony hangin' about outside the entrance, didn't you? Well, there are five other entrances to



this speedway, an' those chaps are at all of 'em, doin' a pretty good trade, too. Joe Banks himself is at an entrance on the other side. Directin' operations, I suppose."

"Phew!" whistled Bob Cherry.

"Great Scott!"

"Is that what you've been finding out while you were away from us?" asked Harry Wharton.

"It is!"

"You've been talking to Banks' pals?"

"Yes, if you don't mind."

"Well, I think you'd have been much better occupied if you had stayed with us," said Harry bluntly.

The Bounder grinned.

"Oh, all right, old bean! Don't get worried," he replied airily. "I knocked across some other interestin' things, apart from what I've just told you."

"What were they?"

"I'm pretty sure that Sid Snell is in league with the bookmakers."

"Eh?"

"Smithy!" ejaculated Tom Redwing. "What do you mean?"

The Removites were looking startled now. They stared at the Bounder. He chuckled sardonically.

"I mean exactly what I say," he replied. "You remember the first heat of the 'Lantham News' Belt race? Snell won it, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"As I told you fellows at the time, he won it by shovin' West an' Fisher up against the safety fencin' at the curve, so that they wobbled about an' lost distance when he gave 'em room. Snell went all out to win that race, by fair means or foul. An' he won it by foul!"

"I don't see how that proves anything," grunted Johnny Bull.

"I know it doesn't prove anythin' by itself," said Smithy calmly. "But let's consider the race between last season's riders! The one just before the interval."

"Well?"

"Snell lost it deliberately, in my opinion, by easing up on the bends, though the crowd thought he was making a plucky effort to overtake Bishop. Doesn't that strike you as bein' fishy? A man who is so absolutely all out to win one race isn't so keen on winnin' another."

"H'm!"

Vernon-Smith paused. He saw that the juniors were following his line of reasoning. He continued:

"I went round to the bookies just now, got into conversation with 'em. In the first race they had been givin' the shortest odds on Fisher, an' the next shortest on West. Those two were first an' second favourites. But Snell won. The bookies raked in the giddy shekels!"

"Oh!"

"In the other race," went on Smithy, "Snell was favourite. But he lost. Joe Banks an' his crowd make money again."

"Phew!"

"In the first race he went all out to win. In the other he went all out to lose!"

"How d'you mean, he went all out to lose?"

"You admit that the bends are the only places where you can't tell whether a man is ridin' all out or not?" demanded Smithy.

"Yes."

"Well, didn't Snell drop behind on the bends?"

"Oh!"

The juniors were silent.

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## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Smithy Proves Right!

THEY remembered the Last Season's Riders' event perfectly. As Smithy had said, it was on the bends where Sid Snell had lost distance.

"But he jolly nearly beat Bishop, you know," said Bob Cherry. "Look how close a finish it was!"

"Of course it was a close finish," replied the Bounder. "Snell is as good a rider as Bishop, an' a better one than Hunter. He meant to lose the race, but he didn't want to make it too obvious. He rode his best in the last part of the last lap; that's why he managed to catch up to Bishop, almost. But he was clever enough not to overdo it."

"Oh!"

"The fellow goes all out to win when the bookies want him to win, an' goes all out to lose when they want him to lose," said the Bounder evenly. "D'you think he is so accommodatin' for nothin'?"

"M-my hat!"

"Fine game!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Of course it's a fine game—from Snell's an' the bookies' point of view," chuckled Smithy.

"But wouldn't the authorities tumble to his little tricks?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Or wouldn't the backers smell a rat?"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"The bookies aren't allowed inside the speedway," he said, "so, officially, the authorities here don't know of 'em. Anyhow, you can be sure that Snell an' his confederates don't always let things look so obvious as they looked today. An', after all, the backers are only a small part of those who come here."

"Yes, that's true——"

Clang, clang, clang!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "There's the bell for the end of the interval. Come on, you chaps!"

In a thoughtful mood the juniors quitted the refreshment-room and went back to their places on the terraces.

They watched the four competitors in the final of the "Lantham News" Belt Race as they went round the preliminary circuit of the course.

"MacLaren is the favourite," said Smithy, with a grin. "So you can be sure that Snell will be ridin' like the dickens, all out to win. If you have tears prepare to shed 'em now. No more of the sportin', unselfish display which we saw in the last event." And he chuckled loudly.

The riders reached the last bend of the preliminary lap. There was a hush over the crowded stands as they swept along in perfect line to the starting-point.

Their engines' throbbing drone swelled in volume as they drew nearer—to burst out into a deafening roar when the flag slashed down. In another second the leather-clad, helmeted figures had reached the first bend. They went raking round, and jammed their throttles simultaneously open for the straight.

Snell and Bishop blazed down it neck-and-neck together, one length in front of Boy MacLaren and two in front of Forbes. Still level, the leaders thumbed their cut-outs for the next bend, and came storming round.

Boy MacLaren entered on the bend when Snell and Bishop were half-way round, and he took it in a smashing, blood-tingling broadside. Bike leaning

steeply over, padded left knee and steel-shod foot scrabbling among the cinders, he quickly overhauled the leaders, in spite of his outside position. A roar went up from the spectators, a roar of spontaneous appreciation for a gallant rider.

"By Jove!" whistled Bob Cherry. "That's the goods, my pippins, the genuine goods, as Fishy would say! I'll tell the world!"

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

Snell and MacLaren were the first to swing their machines out of the broadside. They stormed down the straight past the Removites, and with a rush and a roar, Bishop and Forbes stormed after them.

Still level, the leaders took the next bend. Snell had the inside position, but the Boy seemed to go much nearer the safety fencing than was necessary. He came out of the bend a length behind.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What on earth's the matter with him?"

"Can't you see?" exclaimed Smithy derisively. "I told you! Snell's out to win, an' he doesn't care twopence how he does it!"

"Why——"

"Look!" interrupted Smithy. "Watch Snell comin' round the bend near us, then you'll see!"

The juniors did as they were advised. They gasped as Snell and the Boy came raking round the bend. By a stroke of luck Sid Snell had won the inside position early in the event; and he was exploiting it to his own fullest advantage. He was hugging the edge of the grass now, and at the curves he sent his back wheel out in great swinging slides.

To avoid collision the Boy was forced to keep well away from him, right in the middle of the track—precisely what Sid Snell was aiming at!

"By Jove!" breathed Harry Wharton tensely. "What a low-down game!"

"Some sportsman, Snell!" grunted Johnny Bull.

The race now settled down to a closely fought-out battle between Snell and Boy MacLaren, the former bent solely on using his position to its utmost, the latter fighting superbly to discount it.

It was not until the beginning of the third lap that Boy MacLaren showed his splendid mastery of racing on the cinders.

He took the next bend in such a smashing, blood-tingling broadside that Snell led at the beginning of the straight by barely half a length. At the end of the next curve the Boy was barely a foot behind his rival.

"MacLaren's already got him beaten on the straight, an' he looks like beatin' him on the bends!" said Smithy, with a grin. "It seems as though old Banks won't make so much over this event!"

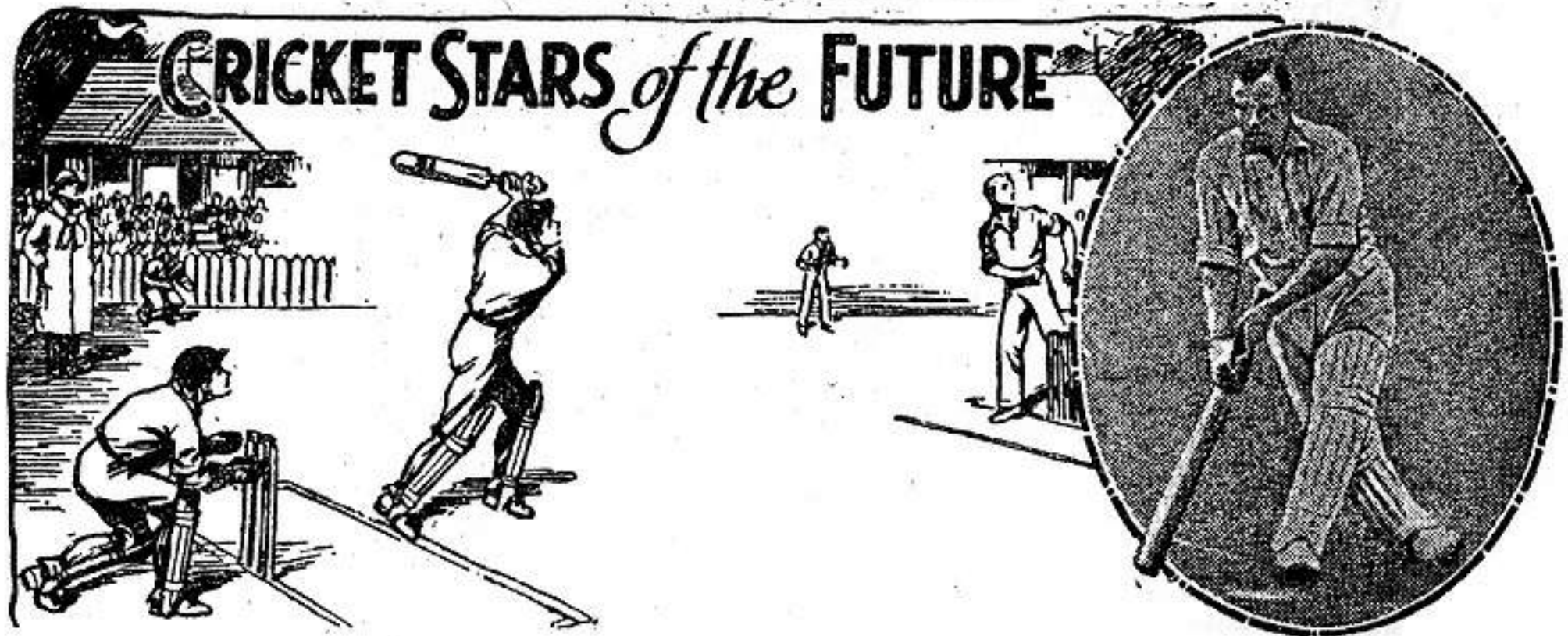
The twenty-five thousand spectators soon began to think the same as Vernon-Smith. The roars of applause for the Boy quickly drowned the thunder of madly driven engines.

The sudden hush, as the riders hurled their bikes at the first bend of the last lap, was almost uncanny in its suddenness. But the roar of cheering went up once more when the crowd saw that Boy MacLaren came out on the straight dead level with Sid Snell!

Every single person in that vast assembly held their breath as the two specdrons went storming into the last bend of the last lap. Exhaust spouting flame, machine bucking and kicking like a wild animal, Boy MacLaren took that

(Continued on page 12.)





THIS WEEK "Old Cricketer" lets you into a few secrets concerning ALAN PEACH, a "live wire" of the Surrey C.C.

### Smile that Won't Come Off!

**M**Y first meeting with Alan Peach was, in a way, romantic.

One very dark night in October, 1901, I was out with a party of gamekeepers and fellow-guests of Lord Cornwallis, down at his place in Kent. We were trying to catch poachers. For what seemed an interminable period we crouched in the undergrowth. The night was by no means cold, yet as we waited for things to happen I began to shiver and was on the point of giving up the game when suddenly the neighbourhood was in a commotion.

A boy's yell started it, then there bolted three hulking poachers, who ran across a small clearing where the moon shone. Shots were fired, dogs barked, we all shouted, and then a small boy of about ten or eleven years of age, whom I had collared, looked up at me with a grin, which, by the way, has now become famous, and said: "It's all right. You can let me go. It was I who gave the alarm! Please let me slide off home! I'm supposed to be in bed, and my father mustn't know I am here!"

"Who are you?" I asked.

"Alan Peach!" replied the youngster. And I let him go because I knew he must be a small son of the head keeper.

The following summer I came across the boy playing cricket with some of his schoolfellows. He was worth watching, and after I had seen him throw the wicket down from a distance of about forty yards, I went up and asked him if he remembered me.

"Yes," he replied. "You're the gentleman who helped to hunt the poachers." And then he proceeded to tell me that while we were all crouching in the darkness he saw something move, and, having a big stone in his hand, he had let fly and hit the poacher on the head. "When I yelled it must have been 'How's that?'" he said, with that wonderful smile of his.

### "Little Tich."

**T**HAT smile has probably made Peach one of the most popular cricketers in England; indeed, I have compared notes with other batsmen, and we have agreed that he is the one bowler to whom one never seems to mind sacrificing one's wicket.

The next time I saw young Peach was in the summer of 1906, when he was in his sixteenth year. I had gone down to the Tonbridge Cricket Nursery to see my old friend, the late Tom Pawley, and I found him watching the youngsters at practice. A short, stout lad was batting, and was doing his best to hit the cover off the ball. I suppose I looked in a questioning manner, for the boy grinned in reply, and I knew it was Alan Peach:

"You've got a promising young cricketer there!" said I to Pawley.

"If you can put three or four inches on his stature, he'll probably make one of the best in England," remarked my companion, "but at the present moment he is what Frank Woolley nicknamed him, 'Little Tich'—and won't be much good as a cricketer. He's too small!"

And that was as far as Peach got in Kent, where he was born. After two months in the Nursery he packed his bag and went back to gamekeeping. I saw him soon after he left Tonbridge and offered my sympathy:

"What for, sir?" he asked, with a grin. Without waiting for a reply he went on: "If I had been good enough to play as a professional I'd have worked in my spare time, so perhaps it's easier as it is." And right up to to-day Alan Peach works in what he is pleased to call his "spare time."

### A Sound Worker!

**I**N 1910 and 1911 Peach was employed near Godstone, in Surrey, where he got quite a lot of local cricket. It was not long before the enthusiasts in the neighbourhood got to know of his prowess, and both batsmen and bowlers in the village teams against whom he played began to fear him. He had a nasty habit of scoring 50 and 60 in half an hour, and his bowling often caused bruises.

He tells many interesting stories of village cricket, including one about an old umpire who had given eight men "out" when they were "not out." At the conclusion of the match and when nearly everybody had left the ground the captain of the side who had employed the unfair umpire, went up to him and said: "I say, Smith, your decisions to-day were pretty bad, weren't they? However, we won, and here's an extra half-a-crown. Don't fail to turn up next week, we're playing against an extra strong side!"

Mr. H. D. G. Leveson Gower, the old Surrey captain, who lived in the district of Godstone, soon heard of Alan Peach's string of successes, and so he invited the young gamekeeper to play for his side against Caterham Barracks. This was late in the summer of 1911, and when the game was over Alan was asked if he'd like to have a trial at the Oval.

Then came the turning-point of Peach's career. He played for the Young Professionals against Young Amateurs, got two wickets and scored 7 and 62 not out, and was asked to join the ground staff for the season of 1912.

He did very little up to the period of the Great War, but in 1919, when county cricket was resumed, he was drafted into the Surrey eleven, and has since been one of the match-winning factors of the team.

Alan Peach's biggest score was 200 (not out) against North Hants in 1920, and his best bowling performance was seven wickets for 15 runs against Gloucestershire in 1922. I was present on both occasions, and when I congratulated him he merely grinned and said: "Thank you; but luck was on my side."

Peach's value to his side does not merely consist of fine individual performances. He is a sound worker every moment that he spends on the field. He smiles at adversity, he puts fresh heart into the other players when things are going wrong, and in his own quiet and good-humoured way "gingers up" the others when they begin to show evidence of fatigue.

"I think I've strained my back," said a bowler to him on one occasion. "Sure it isn't your heart?" asked Alan, with a smile. The bowler looked at him inquiringly. "Get to it, old boy!" said Alan. "Bowl at the stumps!" And, strange to relate, the other fellow got a wicket—clean bowled—in the next over.

Would that there were more first-class cricketers like Alan Peach!



## SPEEDWAY COKER!

(Continued from page 10.)

last curve in a mighty, daredevil broadside.

The cloud of flying cinders went rattling over the spectators at the fencing. The two riders swung their jiggers level. Boy MacLaren led by a length!

Like a bullet from a gun, flattened along his tank, he hurtled towards the winning-post!

Bang!

It was the report of the finishing-gun. The race was over. Boy MacLaren had won by a length and a half.

Roar after roar of frantic cheering swept over the crowded stands and terraces. Hats and caps were flung into the air by the throngs of shouting people, and the thunders of applause swelled louder as Boy MacLaren came riding round the track, the glittering "Lantham News" Belt fastened about his waist.

But there was one person who showed not the slightest sign of joining in that richly deserved acclamation.

From the entrance to the riders' paddock Sid Snell watched the cheering crowds and the triumphant rider; and he watched with a bitter sneer on his face and a malevolent glitter in his eyes. He did not see Boy MacLaren as the victor of a hard-fought struggle, but as the interloper between him and the Lantham crowd, and the spoiler of a shady arrangement with Mr. Joseph Banks of the Cross Keys.

### THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

#### Not According to Plan I

"IT'S rotten!" said Joe Banks, chewing the end of his fat cigar. "Rotten ain't the word for it!" growled Sid Snell.

The meeting at the Lantham Speedway had finished nearly half an hour ago. Sid Snell and the rascally bookmaker were lounging together by a stile in a quiet part of the Lantham road, a few miles from the market town.

The two of them were deep in conversation.

Vernon-Smith, of the Greyfriars Remove, had made a shrewd guess about an arrangement which existed between them. And the Bouncer had guessed right in every detail.

As one of the best riders at Lantham, Sid Snell was often in a position to arrange the results of races—winning or losing according to how it suited Mr. Banks in his capacity of unofficial bookmaker to the track. In return, Snell received a share in the profits.

For some time now this shady scheme had been working quite successfully. Banks and Snell had felt their way carefully, and were cunning enough not to always let things appear too obvious.

But the takings for that particular afternoon, which they had just finished reckoning up, were far from satisfactory.

Joe Banks blew out a cloud of acrid smoke.

"You won your first 'eat, an' you lost the Last Season's Riders' event, as arranged," he said; "but neither o' those didn't take the backers' fancy. There wasn't much doin' in them, Sid!"

Sid Snell grunted.

"But the race where we should 'ave made the cash," continued Banks gloomily—"that went all wrong! The backers put the money up all right!"

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But the wrong bloke won the bloomin' thing!"

With his hands driven deep in his pockets, Sid Snell kicked savagely at the ground with the toe of his boot. But he did not speak. He was still bitter over his defeat.

"Of course," went on Banks, "we can go on as we're goin' on now, an' 'ope for the best. But I don't think we'll make anythin' worth mentionin' out of it. In fact, I'm sure we won't. That fellow MacLaren's taken the fancy of the crowd. The Speedway bosses'll keep 'im on. No doubt about that. With 'im a member of our little partnership, we'd 'ave a lot more control than we 'ad before. We'd make more money. Don't you think so?"

"P'r'aps!"

"Well, wot about soundin' 'im at the first chance? 'E'll see which way 'is bread's buttered. The feller'll jump at the offer. An' you an' me'll make a darn sight more money than we were makin' before 'e came along."

"We might," admitted Snell grudgingly.

"Might!" exclaimed Mr. Banks heartily. "I don't think there's much 'might' about it. We will, Sid, old man. Do you agree to soundin' 'im at the first opportunity?"

Sid Snell hesitated. He swallowed a lump in his throat. Having a hated rival in the partnership went against the grain, but he nodded.

"All right!" he said.

"Good man!" exclaimed Joe Banks. "That's wot I like to see! A real sport you are! Shake!"

The precious pair shook hands.

"P'r'aps we'd better be gettin' back to Lantham," said the bookmaker, glancing round at the slowly thickening twilight. "Let's get a move on!"

They walked down the Lantham Road.

As they proceeded, Joe Banks talked glowingly. He dwelt on and expanded on the rosy prospects in front of them with Boy MacLaren as a third member of their rascally partnership. At the end of ten minutes Sid Snell was quite won over. The glowing visions of opulence which were painted for him acted as a perfect salve to his wounded vanity and conceit. Very soon he was as enthusiastic as Joe Banks himself.

They turned a bend in the Lantham road.

"Allo!" ejaculated the bookmaker suddenly. "Look!"

Sid Snell glanced up the road.

"MacLaren!" he gasped.

Boy MacLaren was striding towards them, swinging along the road with easy, athletic grace, apparently taking exercise in the cool evening air. The rascally pair stared at him and at each other.

"Wot luck!" said Banks delightedly. "Now's the time! Strike while the iron's 'ot!"

The Boy came up to them.

"Evenin'!" said Mr. Banks affably.

"Nice evenin' for a stroll!"

Boy MacLaren halted.

"Evening!" he replied, civilly enough.

He had a sunburnt, square-jawed face. He looked at the pair with his steel-blue eyes, and Sid Snell shifted uncomfortably. He did not yet know what his fellow-rider might have to say about his tactics in the final of the "Lantham News" Belt Race.

"Sid an' me were just talkin' about you," went on Joe Banks in his most friendly manner. "We 'ave a little proposition which might interest you."

"Oh!"

The Boy looked as though he would have liked to pass on to continue his walk. Banks' oily words certainly did

not seem to interest him. But the bookmaker's bulky form stood in his path.

"It's a little arrangement which Sid an' me 'ave to make a little bit extra," said Mr. Banks, with a great attempt at being jovial.

Boy MacLaren frowned.

"I don't quite get you," he said.

Joe Banks coughed.

He was a master in the art of soundin' a man. He knew exactly what to say, how to show his hand. Years of practice in plucking downy pigeons had made him expert in this particular branch of the world's work. He put his very best into it now. Sid Snell listened in appreciative silence.

He was so taken up with the way his colleague went about the thing that he forgot to look at Boy MacLaren's sunburnt face. He did not notice the tightening of his lips, the frown that gathered on his brow. But his awakening came abruptly.

"You worms!" exclaimed the Boy suddenly.

"Eh?"

"You couple of low-down bounders!"

"Look 'ere!"

"You want me to join in with a shady wangle like that!" exclaimed the Boy, with withering scorn. "So that's a sideline of yours, is it, Snell? By Jove, the Lantham track must be a fine one if there are any more specimens like you attached to it!"

"Half a minute——"

"I thought you were a dirty rider after that final, and now I jolly well know it! The less I have to do with you the better!"

And the Boy brushed past them and strode down the Lantham road, his face flushed with anger.

"Here! Half a minute!" protested Snell, following after him, with narrowed eyes. He caught him by the arm. "No need to go off the deep end! Don't try to make us believe you can't be squared——"

Smack!

There was a sound like a pistol-shot as Boy MacLaren struck him across the face with his open hand.

Snell staggered back.

"Why, wot——" ejaculated Mr. Banks.

Sid Snell quickly recovered himself. He made a rush at Boy MacLaren, his hands up, and his eyes glittering over them. In another second they were fighting furiously.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

To and fro across the Lantham road the combatants swayed, Joe Banks watching them, open-mouthed.

"My heye!" he ejaculated.

That Boy MacLaren might take his suggestions this way had never occurred to him.

MacLaren soon began to gain the upper hand. Snell's breath came quicker and quicker, his punches more wild. He rapidly gave ground before the other's determined attack.

Banks lurched hastily out of the way as Snell was driven backwards. He saw that his shady pal could not last much longer, and his little, piggy eyes glinted.

He cast a quick look round him, drew a deep breath, and sprang at Boy MacLaren from behind.

The winner of the "Lantham News" Belt Race never had a chance to ward off that cowardly attack. Fighting like a tiger, he was borne to the ground, with Joe Banks and the panting Sid Snell sprawling over him.

Horace Coker pushed open the gate of the main entrance to Lantham Speedway and strode out into the road. There was a dark frown on Coker's brow.



After having had tea at the Pagoda Cafe in Lantham High Street at the conclusion of the meeting, he had returned to the speedway to get fixed up for another trial. But the Lantham Speedway authorities had had enough of Coker—too much, in fact. It had been pointed out to Coker—very bluntly—that the speedway wasn't a training school for novices, and that he was the last person to whom they would think of giving another trial. Whereupon Coker had lost his temper and had had to be forcibly ejected. Hence the heavy frown on Coker's brow as he trudged along the road to the garage where his bike was stored.

Five minutes later he had retrieved his machine and had started back to Greyfriars.

His rugged features were grim and set as he hummed along the Lantham road. Horace Coker had come to a decision, and on those portentous occasions he always looked the part.

He was finished—utterly finished—with the dirt-track and all ideas of making his mark in that direction.

But, of course, Coker was still as confident as ever of his ability. His ambitions might have altered, but he was still quite convinced that it was lucky for the present stars of the oinders, so to speak, that he had changed his mind. He had abandoned his object, not because his faith in himself had been shaken, but solely because he met with such objectionable and unpleasant people in the achieving of it. Coker had firmly decided that it was beneath his dignity to argue with the speedway people any more. If they had gone down on their bended knees and implored him to reconsider the matter, the mighty Horace would have spurned them.

The Fifth-Former was getting a bitter sort of enjoyment out of the vision of himself in this mental picture when his thoughts were diverted by something ahead of him in the Lantham road.

As Coker drew nearer, he saw that three people were having a bit of a rough-and-tumble by the side of the road, and as was to be expected, the odd number was getting very much the worst of it.

Coker shut off his engine and slowed down. As he drew level with the trio, he suddenly recognised Joe Banks.

"My hat!" he gasped, and braked to a halt. Coker quite forgot his portentous decision now. Hastily jacking up his machine, he sprinted towards the scene of the combat.

Boy MacLaren, struggling in the grasp of the low-down bookmaker, was putting up the best defence he could against a furious onslaught by Sid Snell. Coker's temper, already pretty

ragged, fairly boiled over at the sight of that grossly unfair and uneven contest.

He rushed towards it. "You rotters!" he bawled furiously. "You cowardly worms! Give that chap a sporting chance!"

Joe Banks half turned a bloated and heated face towards him.

"You 'op it!" he snarled breathlessly. "You ain't wanted 'ere! Ow! Leggo, you—"

With one jerk Horace Coker pulled Banks away from Boy MacLaren, and the next moment they were fighting furiously.

Despite the fact that his movements were hampered by his padded leather suit, Coker quickly began to get the upper hand of Joe Banks, and drove him steadily up the lane.

His gauntleted fists thudded home on the bookmaker's bulky person. Banks

"What, the elder one?" asked the boy breathlessly.

Coker nodded. "Oh, is that so?" Boy MacLaren had more or less got his breath back now. He stood up. "Well, thanks awfully for chipping in. I'm sure I'm very much obliged to you. I was scrapping with the younger chap when the elder blighter went for me from behind."

"My hat!" exclaimed Coker. "Did he really?"

The Boy nodded, his face set. "You live in this district?" he asked, looking at Coker closely. The Fifth-Former was in the full glory of crash helmet and leather suit. The boy thought there was something rather familiar about him.

"Yes," replied Coker. "I'm at Greyfriars School."

"Oh, of course!" said the Boy slowly.



Coker, a weird figure in his dirt-track outfit, rushed to Boy MacLaren's aid. Next moment Coker and Banks were fighting furiously!

quickly decided that he had had his fill. He turned and ran wheezily and clumsily up the Lantham road.

Clump! Coker let fly with his boot at the psychological moment, and Joe Banks got a free lift of about two yards. He took it with a sort of gasping howl.

"Yarooooogh!"

Since the odds were now the other way, Sid Snell apparently decided that discretion was the better part of valour. He also turned and broke away from Boy MacLaren and sprinted after his low-down confederate. The two of them disappeared in the thickening dusk.

"Phew!" gasped Boy MacLaren; and he sat down heavily on a grassy bank. "That was pretty hot while it lasted! Phew!" He pulled out a handkerchief and mopped his streaming brow.

Coker regarded him curiously.

"They set on you, I suppose," he said. "I know one of 'em by sight. He's one of the rotters who hang round the Cross Keys, you know."

There was a slight twinkle in his eye. "Your name's Coker, isn't it?"

"It is," replied Coker, with a stare. "How do you know?"

Boy MacLaren grinned.

"You were riding in the Novices' Event at the Lantham Dirt-Track this afternoon, weren't you?"

"Oh, yes!" admitted Coker. His face fell. He had finished with dirt-tracks. "You were there, too, I suppose?"

The Boy nodded, still grinning.

"Well, you've got the advantage of me," said Coker gruffly. "What's your name?"

"Boy MacLaren."

Coker jumped. "Eh?" he gasped. "You're Boy MacLaren, are you? My hat! Fancy meeting you!"

"Well, I'm very pleased, at any rate," said the Boy, with the same cheery grin. He extended his hand. "You'll shako on it, won't you?"

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(Continued from page 13.)

"Oh, certainly!"

They shook.

Boy MacLaren's steel-blue eyes looked at Coker searchingly. The Fifth-Former gave him look for look. The Boy liked this brawny, plain-spoken fellow.

"Well, I suppose I mustn't keep you," he said. "And I should be getting back. Well, many thanks for your help just now. Cheerio!"

"Don't mench!" said Coker shortly. "So-long!"

Boy MacLaren watched him until he had roared away out of sight. He was grateful for Coker's timely service, but he did not dream of the far greater service which the Fifth-Former was to do for him soon.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### Bunter's Best!

"**O**H crikey!" Harry Wharton uttered that exclamation.

He uttered it in a tone of surprise and annoyance.

"What's biting you?" asked Bob Cherry.

"But look at my back tyre!" replied Wharton. "Flat as a giddy pancake!"

It was the following Saturday, and, cricket being off, the Famous Five, Smithy, and Redwing had decided to pay another visit to the Lantham Speedway.

They had just reached the bike-shed, and were preparing to get their machines out for the journey, when Harry Wharton had discovered that there was a puncture in his rear wheel.

"Oh, hard luck!" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"The hardluckfulness is terrific!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, with a chuckle. "Look at your front wheel, Smithy!"

The Bounder turned.

"Oh, help!" he ejaculated.

His front tyre was as flat as Wharton's rear one.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled Bob Cherry.

"Look at their faces, you chaps!"

"My esteemed Bob," remarked Hurree Singh, "if you will look at your own ridiculous machine you will see that your absurd front tyre is also flatfully."

"Eh?" gasped Bob.

All eyes were turned on Bob's machine. His front tyre was in a similar unsatisfactory state as the other two.

"M-my hat!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"What the—"

All the juniors, with the exception of the Remove skipper, Bob Cherry, the Bounder, and Hurree Singh made a hasty examination of their jiggers.

"Hard cheese, Smithy!" said Tom Redwing sympathetically. "Mine's all right, thank goodness!"

"And mine!"

"Mine, too!"

"Good egg! I'm all right!"

"My giddy aunt!"

The inquest, so to speak, quickly finished, amidst many and varied exclamations. It did not turn out as bad as it might have been, as Johnny Bull remarked. Only Harry Wharton's, Bob Cherry's, and Smithy's bikes were found to have suffered. But, in the opinion of the sufferers, it was three too many.

"There's somethin' fishy about this," said Vernon-Smith savagely, peering closely at his front tyre. "Gad! I'd like to have a few moments with the rotter responsible for it!"

"Rather!"

"Well," said Wharton, looking round at his chums, "there's no time to mend these punctures. Will you chaps go on bikes? We'll follow on by train."

There was a general chorus of disagreement.

"Oh, no!"

"I go the same way as Smithy," said Tom Redwing.

"And we're hanging on to you and Bob," said Frank Nugent.

"There's no bikes we can borrow, I suppose?" remarked Wharton, hopefully looking round the gloomy shed.

"Very few!"

The juniors saw that there had been quite a run on bicycles on that particular afternoon—a fine one, so it was not surprising.

"And the owners of those left are all out," put in Redwing. "You can't take a man's bike without asking his permission. We'll all have to go by train."

"I suppose so," said Wharton, with a sigh. "Oh, well! Can't be helped! As you fellows are willing, we'll all cling together."

"Like the ivy on the old garden wall," chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors quitted the bike-shed, and walked briskly towards the gates of the school.

"I wonder what sort of riding we'll see this afternoon?" said Redwing, as they strode down the Friardale Lane.

"It ought to be pretty good," remarked Vernon-Smith. "There's a match race between Boy MacLaren and Sid Snell."

"Good egg!"

"One of 'em is," went on Smithy. "But the other's a dashed bad egg! Sid Snell, I mean."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"A few riders from other tracks are visitin' Lantham," pursued Smithy. "There'll be some pretty good sport."

"They're not all Snells," remarked Bob.

"That's true!" admitted the Bounder. "Anyhow, it would be a pretty rotten game if they were."

Roar-r-r-r! Bang!

"Look out!" shouted Bob Cherry.

As one man the Removites jumped into the side of the lane. They knew the sound of that engine too well. With a rush and a roar Coker of the Fifth charged past them, and disappeared in a cloud of dust.

"The one and only Coker," remarked Harry Wharton, as they proceeded. "Out for a spin, I suppose. I hope he won't do too much damage."

"I heard he'd chucked up his idea of doing great things on the dirt-track," said Nugent. "His pal Greene said so, I think."

"Perhaps the dirt-track chucked Coker," granted Johnny Bull.

"Yes, that's more likely," grinned Smithy. "Well, I suppose the full story will get round in time."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

The Removites arrived at Friardale Station, and Wharton went to the booking office and got the tickets.

As they walked on to the platform they caught sight of a fat figure adorning one of the seats.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bunter!"

The fat junior blinked at the juniors through his big spectacles.

"Hallo, you fellows! I say, I've been waiting here for you some time! I—I was beginning to think you might miss the train."

"How did you know we were going by train, you fat boulder?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Oh, I—I guessed that, old fellow!" replied the Owl of the Remove quickly. "I'm wide, you know. He, he, he!"

"Yes, you're wide, all right," grunted Johnny Bull. "In more senses than one."

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter feebly. "I can take a l-little joke."

There was a nervous sound in Bunter's giggle, which, fortunately for him, the juniors did not notice. Perhaps Billy Bunter, in conjunction with a pin, knew more about the annoying punctures than the Removites guessed. They did not suspect, luckily for Bunter, that this might be another sample of Bunter's unique methods in gaining his own ends.

The train steamed in.

Before any objection could be raised, Billy Bunter scrambled in the same compartment as the rest of the Removites. The train moved off.

"Rally round!" said Bunter impressively.

"What the merry dickens is the fat chump burbling about?" asked Harry Wharton blankly.

"Oh, really, Wharton," protested Bunter, "I'm only telling you to rally round me, in case of any trouble!"

"Why—"

"You put me off last time you went to the speedway, you know," said the Owl, wagging a fat forefinger at the astonished juniors. "But you're not going to put me off this time."

"You podgy boulder—"

"And if there's any trouble with the ticket collectors, I expect you to rally round. I only got a platform ticket at Friardale."

"G-great Scott!"

William George Bunter was one of those citizens who regarded the railway companies as fair game. He never paid his legal fare unless he was compelled to—unless he failed to dodge the servants of the company in the performance of their duty.

"It'll be quite easy, you know," rattled on Bunter. "They don't collect the tickets until we get to Lantham, and then I'll rely on you fellows to hustle through the barrier. If you do it properly, and all get round me, we'll manage to get through the barrier all right. And the same coming home. Of course, if you bungle it, and I get spotted, it's up to you fellows to pay for me. As I said, rally round!"

And Bunter smirked.

The Removites' expressions were a study.

They knew Bunter for what he was—a fat, unscrupulous idiot. But this fresh example of his unscrupulousness and cheek fairly took their breath away.

"You fat swindler!"

"You low-down bilk!"

"M-my giddy aunt!"

"Oh, really, you fellows," said the Owl, in an injured tone of voice, blinking at the juniors. "I call that dashed ungrateful! Hang it all, I



thought the whole thing out for you! You can't deny that! All you've got to do is to pay for me at the speedway and rally round in case there's any trouble with the railway johnnies!"

"Is th-that all?" stuttered Harry Wharton.

"Yes, that's all," replied Bunter. "I'm giving you the pleasure of my company at the Pagoda Cafe for nothing!"

"Ye gods!"  
Vernon-Smith jumped to his feet. "Just a little more of that fat worm," he snapped, "and I'll explode! Come on! Bump him!"

"Oh really, Smithy—I say, yow—ow! Leggo!" roared Bunter, as some of the juniors rose and laid violent hands on his fat person. The others obligingly stood on their seats to make room for bumping Billy Bunter. The fat Removite was swung in the air.

Bump!  
"Ow!"  
Bump! Bump!  
"Yarooooogh!"

Bump, bump, bump!  
"Ow! Help! Fire! Murder!" howled Bunter, struggling furiously but ineffectively. "Leggo, you rotters! Whooooooop!"

The juniors eventually released the panting and breathless Owl of the Remove. He flopped back in his seat, and glared at them with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

"You rotters—"  
"Shut up!"  
"If that's what you call gratitude for my being clever—"

"SHUT UP!" roared the Remove skipper.

Bunter relapsed into sulky silence. The Removites sat looking at each other, and breathing hard. They did not yet quite know how to take this latest example of Billy Bunter's unparalleled nerve and audacity.

The train clattered to a halt at Courtfield, where the juniors would have to change on to the main line for Lantham. They streamed on to the platform.

"Look here, Bunter," said Harry Wharton as he rose to his feet. "This sort of thing won't do at all! We're not going to pay for your fares, we're not going to pay for you at the speedway, and we're not going to stand you tea afterwards—"

"I should dashed well think not!" exclaimed Smithy wrathfully.

"If you like," continued Harry, "I'll pay your fare back to Friardale. And that's a jolly sight more than you deserve!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"  
Pheep! Pheep!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob Cherry from the platform. "There's the whistle for the Lantham train. Buck up, you fellows!"

Doors were slamming, flags were waving, and porters were shouting on the Courtfield platform, as the main line train prepared to start. The remaining juniors made a dash for it—Bunter included—and were just in time.

The fat Removite had not yet, apparently, given up hope.

"Phew! My hat!" gasped Wharton, when he was inside the compartment. "That was pretty close!"

"And all through Bunter!" grinned Bob Cherry.

The main line train was a corridor one. Glad of a chance to stretch their legs, some of the juniors were out in the corridor, walking up and down it, or gazing through the long window at the rolling Kentish countryside. Wharton, Smithy, Redwing, and Bob

Cherry were the only ones left in the compartment with the Owl of the Remove.

Harry Wharton looked at him. "I've made you a fair offer, and you haven't accepted it," he said bluntly. "If you get caught bilking and have to tramp back to Greyfriars, it'll be your own funeral. None of us'll help you!"

Billy Bunter blinked at him furiously.

**A POCKET WALLET**  
is  
**ALWAYS HANDY!**

Send in a Greyfriars limerick and win one like Harold Clark, of 78, Queen's Road, Peckham, S.E.15, whose effort is illustrated below.



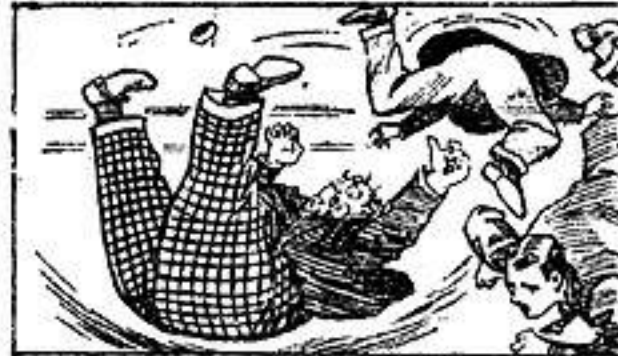
With a yell Bunter rushed for the door.



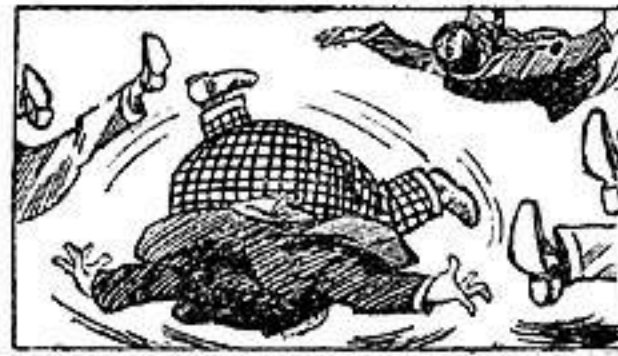
Behind him followed fifty or more.



Then some soap in his track



Laid him flat on his back



And the rest looped the loop by the score!

Set your mind on winning one of these **USEFUL PRIZES** to-day!

"Yah! Mean beast!" he hooted defiantly. "If that's what you call being grateful for planning how to save you expense—"

Frank Nugent put his head into the compartment.

"There's a ticket-collector coming," he said, with a glance at Bunter.

"Oh!"  
Billy Bunter stiffened.

He had not thought that they might collect the tickets en route, instead of at the end of the journey. He bit a fat lip. It wasn't fair. It didn't give a bilk a sporting chance.

He blinked at the juniors in the faint hope that they might show some signs of relenting at the eleventh hour.

"I—I say, you fellows—" he began.

Four voices answered him simultaneously, and they answered in tones of finality and decision.

"Nothing doing!"  
"Oh dear!"

Billy Bunter rose to his feet.

He blinked along the corridor, and glimpsed a uniformed figure coming out of one compartment to disappear into the next—one nearer to Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove did not like that uniformed figure. He felt repelled by it, and retreated away down the corridor.

Passing an empty compartment, he had a sudden brainwave. It was a first-class compartment, and the seats were high from the floor, and well-cushioned.

Bunter dodged inside, and dropped to the carpeted floor.

Slowly and painfully, he squeezed his bulky person under one of the seats, and hoped for the best; which wasn't much to hope for, in Bunter's opinion.

**THE NINTH CHAPTER.**

**Bunter in a Fix!**

**T**ICKETS! All tickets, please!" Billy Bunter quaked, as much as was possible in that cramped position under the seat in the first-class compartment. He had heard the voice of the ticket collector in the compartment next to him.

"Tickets! All ti—" As the official pushed aside the next sliding door, his call rose automatically to his lips. But it died away when he saw that the compartment was, seemingly, unoccupied.

Billy Bunter scarcely dared to draw the small amount of breath that was possible. He waited for the moment when the official would depart.

But Bunter's expectations were not realised.

The ticket-collector sat down in a corner seat, and put his feet up on the other one. Bunter heard the rustle of the leaves of a book, and the click of a pencil. The collector, having come to the end of a coach, was making official entries of some kind; and he made himself comfortable while he did so.

The Owl of the Remove fairly fumed.

He made up his mind, there and then, to report the ticket-collector for cheek and inefficiency directly he was out of the present compromising situation.

The train jogged on.

An ache came to Billy Bunter's fat head, cramp to his body, and pins and needles to his throbbing limbs. In spite of the risk, he tried to shift his position a little, in the hope of getting a little relief. But he found that he was unable to move his bulky person, no matter how little. He was too firmly



wedged. Stifling a groan, he gave up the attempt.

The ticket-collector began to whistle. Billy Bunter gritted his teeth.

At that moment the ticket-collector abandoned his comfortable position and rose to his feet, still whistling. The train began to slow down, and soon drew to a halt.

The Owl of the Remove heard the name of the station called out, but was not interested. He waited anxiously for that obnoxious ticket-collector to fade away.

He heard him open the door and get out on to the platform. But the beast did not do the thing properly, and clear off. Bunter knew he was still standing outside the compartment, for he could hear his whistle.

Just as the train was about to move off two passengers got into the compartment. And to make matters worse, to add insult to injury, as it were, the ticket-collector got in as well. He walked across the compartment to the corridor, and stayed there, leaning against the window.

Billy Bunter almost gave up the ghost.

One of the passengers leant across the compartment and slammed the sliding door shut. But the ticket-collector did not take the obvious hint, if one were meant. He stayed where he was, admiring the view, for Bunter could still hear the beast's beastly whistle.

"All safe now," said a gruff voice. "That feller can't 'ear, with the slidin' door shut!"

The other passenger grunted.

Billy Bunter pricked up his ears.

He had recognised that gruff voice. It was Joe Banks, of the Cross Keys. And from what Banks had just said, Bunter deduced that he wanted privacy—which was a very good reason for Bunter to make up his mind not to miss a word of what would follow.

"Smoke?" asked Banks.

"Thanks!"

Bunter heard the scratch and splutter of matches, and smelt the pungent smell of cigar smoke.

"Well, let's 'ear it," said Banks, settling himself comfortably in his corner seat. "Let's 'ear your little scheme for gettin' rid of that"—his voice grew venomous—"that perisher MacLaren!"

Bunter's little round eyes widened behind his big spectacles.

He had heard that name mentioned several times in the last day or two. And he remembered seeing it in the local papers, and placed the connection at once.

"Well, Boy MacLaren—burn him," said the other voice, which, of course, Bunter did not recognise as Sid Snell's—"he's borrowed a car an' gone over to Canterbury to see some relations. I know he won't be back in Lantham for the meetin' until pretty near the time when it's due to start!"

Joe Banks drew deeply at his cigar, blew out a pungent cloud of smoke, and nodded.

"Yus!" he said.

"He left his speediron in the pits at Lantham, and I was lucky enough to get a few minutes there by myself, just now," went on Sid Snell. "And I've loosened the nut in the valve stem of his front-wheel tyre!"

"That is the bike 'e'll be ridin' this arfternoon, I suppose?" queried Joe Banks.

Snell nodded.

"Him an' me will be ridin' together in a match race early in the meetin'," he continued, leaning forward. "Before  
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two laps of it are up, at the most, what with the tearin' and pullin' effect of the cinders on the tyres, the blinkin' valve will be wrenched clean out of the inner tube!"

Joe Banks removed the cigar from his mouth and sat up erect in his seat. His bleary eyes glittered as he listened intently to what Sid Snell was saying.

"His front wheel tyre will burst at once, an' he'll come such a cropper! I'll keep behind him till that happens! And then I'll ride into him as he falls over. And I know how to ride into a man who's crashed, and injure him, as well as I know how to fall myself!"

The scoundrelly dirt-track rider was breathing heavily now, and his vicious face was flushed.

"I guess that'll settle Mister Boy MacLaren's hash!" he snarled. "We can reckon on him bein' crocked badly, and kept out of it for the rest of the season, or my name's not Sid Snell!"

Bunter recognised that name, too. But he did not see Sid Snell lean back in his seat, nor his maliciously satisfied grin; and quite as well, for it was unhealthy to look at.

The pair sat in silence for the next few minutes, apparently enjoying the contemplation of their dastardly scheme.

The train slowed down.

"'Allo!" remarked Joe Banks.

"'Ere's Lantham!"

Billy Bunter breathed a silent prayer

of thankfulness.

The obnoxious ticket-collector had disappeared, outwitted by the Owl of the Remove. Harry Wharton & Co. could scarcely refuse to stand by him now!

The train stopped. Joe Banks and Sid Snell got out and walked away.

The Owl of the Remove tried to follow their example. But he couldn't! He was stuck!

He writhed and struggled and twisted his fat person in a savage effort to crawl out from under the seat. His spectacles dropped off, his podgy face grew red, and his swelling neck almost burst his collar.

"Oh d-dear!" he panted. "Oh lor'!"

Whistles shrilled along the Lantham station platform, and porters shouted. Only too well did Bunter realise the difficulties under which bilks travelled on the railway.

The engine gave a puff, and the train began to move. Bunter gave one of a series of puffs, but did not begin to move.

The train steamed out of the Lantham station, rapidly gathering speed. Harry Wharton and the rest of the Removites did not think of Billy Bunter as they passed through the barrier.

Bunter's struggles got frantic. The seat in that first-class compartment creaked and groaned, the wall creaked and groaned, the carpeted floor creaked and groaned. William George Bunter creaked and groaned.

With a final movement that split his coat up the back, Bunter writhed from under the seat!

He staggered to his feet and collapsed—on the right side of the seat this time.

"Oh dear!" he gasped, feeling as though he had spent a long time passing and repassing through a mangle.

He fielded his glasses from under the seat, set them on his fat little nose, and blinked around him.

He could not wait until the next station, and leave the train in the constitutional way. That would bring him in collision with the ticket-collectors. All Bunter had was a penny platform ticket which he had bought at Friardale.

Even Bunter hadn't got the nerve to produce that—for a journey from Friardale to past Lantham. Besides, he had no money to pay for a proper ticket. The beast who might have paid for him had left the train at Lantham, now some distance behind.

And Billy Bunter wasn't going under that seat again. He had finished with that method of travelling for the rest of his life as a railway bilk. Wild horses wouldn't have made him repeat his recent experience, let alone mere ticket-collectors.

The train slowed down, almost to a walking pace.

Bunter blinked out of the window.

A road ran along beside the railway-line, thirty yards away. A wire fence separated the two. The permanent way was scarcely six feet above the level of the road.

The Owl of the Remove came to a sudden decision. He gingerly opened the door. But on the brink so to speak, Bunter hesitated—until he thought of ticket-collectors and travelling under seats again. Then he drew a deep breath—and jumped.

Crash!

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

Any active fellow could have done it without any trouble, the train was moving so slowly. But William George Bunter wasn't an active fellow. He slipped as he landed, fell on one side, and then rolled down the banking to the level of the road.

The train rumbled past him, one door hanging open.

"Wow! Ow! Oh dear!"

Billy Bunter slowly sat up in the long grass, and dizzily blinked at the train until it disappeared from sight.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### Coker in a Crash!

BILLY BUNTER halted.

He had clumsily surmounted the wire fence, and now stood on the road which ran beside the railway line. Once at Lantham, Billy Bunter relied on being able to attach himself to the Remove party.

Although he thought he could not be so very far from the market town, Bunter didn't at all fancy walking there. He was now looking round for some Good Samaritan who might give him a lift.

The Owl of the Remove blinked up the road, and down the road. Like Moses of old, he looked this way and that. But, like Moses of old, Billy Bunter saw no man.

"Oh dear!" he growled.

Bunter had no thought for the rascally plot which he had overheard in that first-class compartment, nor for the rider whom it was directed against. He was far too much taken up with his own plots for hooking himself on to Harry Wharton and his chums, and too discontented with the way they were working out.

Bunter gradually realised that it was no good standing still, waiting for someone to come along who might give him a lift to Lantham. The best thing, under the circumstances, was to walk towards the town and hope to meet somebody en route.

With a snort, Billy Bunter started off.

The road soon turned away from the railway line into a direction at right-angles to it. The road was a nice, quiet one, lined on both sides with high trees. The air was crisp, and the sun



shone brightly. But Bunter quickly got tired.

He rolled slowly and disconsolately along.

Owing to his short-sightedness, the fat junior did not see a motor-cyclist on the otherwise deserted road in front of him until he was only about fifteen yards away. The motor-cyclist had jacked his machine up by the side of the road, and was vigorously pumping up the back tyre.

Billy Bunter's fat face cleared.

"Good egg!" he exclaimed, and quickened his pace.

The motor-cyclist pumped away vigorously.

Bunter came up to him.

"I—I say, excuse me—" he began nervously.

The vigorous pumping stopped. A helmeted head, with goggles pushed up on to the forehead, jerked round and faced the Owl of the Remove.

"Oh!" he gasped.

It was Horace Coker of the Fifth!

"Hallo! What are you doing out here, you podgy fag?" demanded Coker. "Up to some mischief, I bet!"

"Oh, really, Coker—" protested Bunter breathlessly.

In spite of his pride in his short way with fags, Coker was a kind-hearted fellow, and he permitted himself to feel some slight sympathy for Bunter's tattered and bedraggled condition.

"What have you been up to, young shaver?" he asked almost genially, eyeing Bunter. "Some fag pranks, I suppose!"

The Owl of the Remove blinked at him.

He saw that Coker was in one of his genial moods, and his eyes glimmered behind his big spectacles. A certain amount could be got out of Coker on such occasions, in spite of his prejudice, if one went the right way about it. William George Bunter decided to be very careful to go the right way now, to tell a tragic tale, as it were.

He coughed discreetly.

"Oh, I was going to the Lantham Speedway with Wharton and that crowd," he said nervously. "But—"

The fat junior broke off when he saw that Coker's face changed at the mention of the speedway. He wondered whether he had said anything injudicious.

"No place for fags, the Lantham Speedway!" said Coker gruffly. "Anyhow, you say you were going there with Wharton and his pals?"

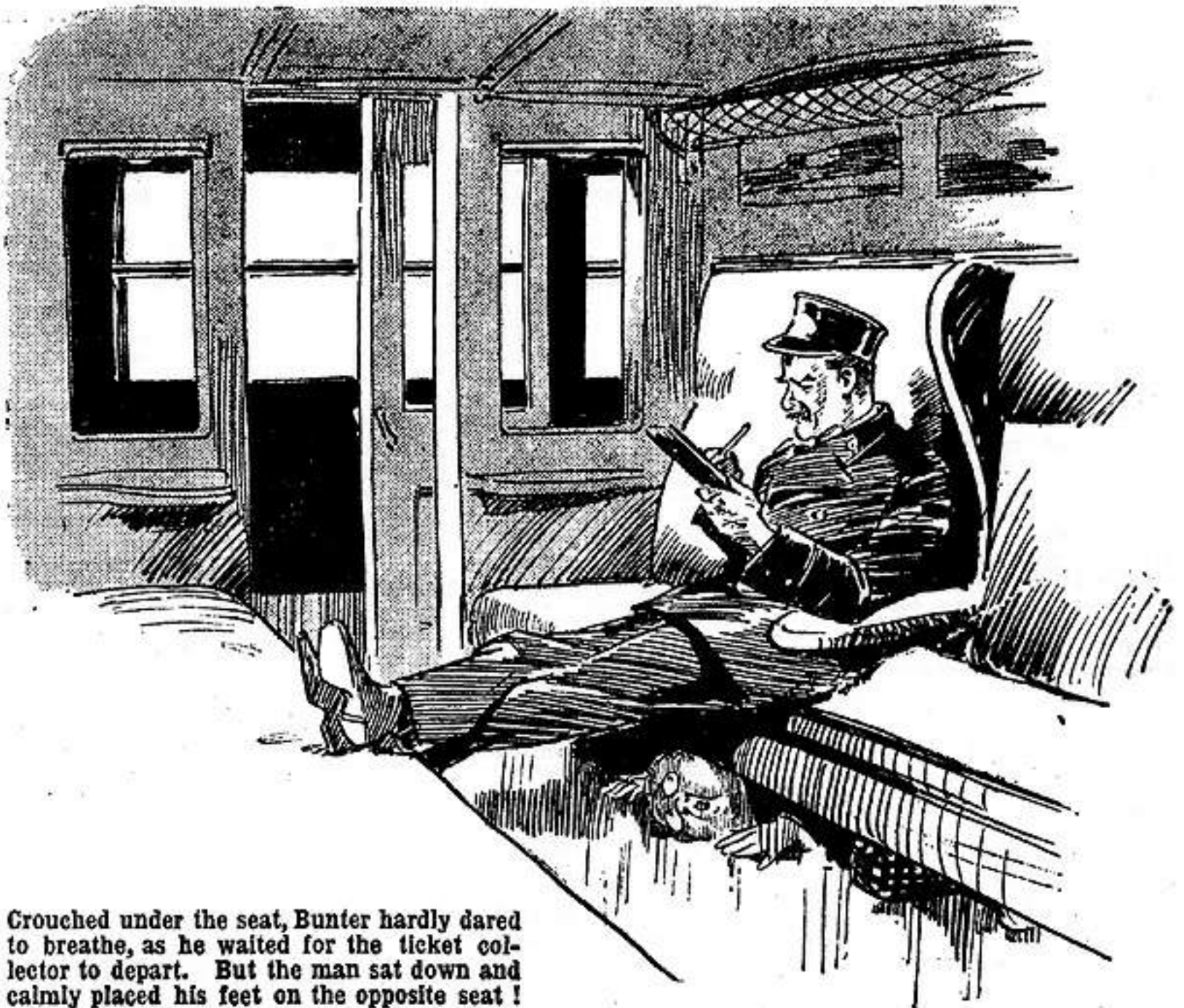
"Yes."

"Well, I passed them near Friardale Station about half an hour ago," observed Coker, "and you weren't with them then—"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Come on, fat man, stick to the truth!" said the Fifth-Former, in his most grandiose manner.

"Oh, I mean—not exactly—" gasped



Crouched under the seat, Bunter hardly dared to breathe, as he waited for the ticket collector to depart. But the man sat down and calmly placed his feet on the opposite seat!

Bunter. "I meant to say I joined them at Friardale Station. And then I—I lost my ticket, and they wouldn't pay for me, the rotters, so—so I had to travel under the seat in an empty compartment because the collector was coming—"

"You lost your ticket, did you?" interrupted Coker magisterially. "I've heard that one before! Huh! I suppose that's how your clothes got so messed up?"

"Yes, that's it!" said Bunter eagerly. "It was awful, I can tell you! And then that rotter Banks got in, with another rotter. The two of them talked, you know, and there was the dashed ticket-collector still outside in the corridor—"

"And, of course, you listened to every word that was said," remarked Coker, still in the same magisterial voice. The mighty Horace always fancied himself in the reprimanding role, so to speak.

"Well, I couldn't help it," said Bunter peevishly, and feeling that he had already fully earned that lift into Lantham. "Yes. They talked about some rotten scheme they'd got for making that Boy MacLaren fellow crash, and the other rotter was going to ride over him—"

"What's this?" interrupted Coker, frowning.

"Oh, nothing important!" said Bunter deprecatingly, and blinking at the Fifth-Former. "I s-say, c-could you—w-would you be so decent as to give me a lift on your pip-pillion into Lantham?"

"Tell me about this stunt for making MacLaren crash, and not so much jaw!" snapped Coker.

"Oh, really, you know, it's not worth mentioning!" protested Billy Bunter. "It would be an absolute waste of time."

With one stride Coker of the Fifth

stepped up to Bunter. He caught him by the collar and shook him vigorously.

"Come on, cough it up, you fat little bounder!" he said curtly.

"Ow! Wow! Leg-leggo!" roared Billy Bunter, shaking like a jolly.

"W-why sh-should I t-tell y-you?"

Smack!

"Yaroooooh!"

For about the thousandth time in his career at Greyfriars Horace Coker demonstrated his short way with fags. He gave Bunter a stinging box on one fat ear.

The fat Removeite abandoned all hope of coming to terms at that. In a few gasping sentences he told Coker all he had heard in the first-class railway compartment.

The Fifth-Former's face was a study. "G-great Scott!" he breathed. "What a— My hat! I suppose this is to get rid of him so that Snell can have it all his own way."

"I say, Coker, old fellow," began Bunter, "what about that lift into Lantham Ow!"

The Fifth-Former did not answer Bunter's request in words. He answered it in deeds, and jerked the fat Removeite away from him.

Crash!

"Yooop!"

Bunter sprawled by the side of the road as Horace Coker dragged his machine into the middle of it.

Phut, phut! Bang, bang!

The engine fired without any trouble. Coker lurched into the saddle, and jammed open his throttle.

Roar-r-r-r!

"Here! Half a minute! Look here!" howled Bunter, frantically striving to make his voice heard above the deafening roar of Coker's engine.

He staggered to his feet. But in another second Coker had let



in his clutch. He shot away from the yelling Billy Bunter.

The one thought in Horace Coker's mind was to get to the Lantham Speedway, and warn Boy MacLaren of the rascally plot which threatened him.

Getting to Lantham was easy enough, but getting to Lantham and warning the Boy in time was a horse of another colour.

Coker gritted his teeth as he thought of the time he had wasted talking to Billy Bunter. And he gritted his teeth again when he thought of Bunter's nonchalant attitude towards the whole affair.

With a rush and a swerve and a loud blast from his horn, Coker came out into the main Lantham road, with its smooth, wide macadam surface. Coker jammed open his throttle and roared along.

He was so intent on getting the maximum amount of speed out of his machine, that he did not hear the warning note of an electric horn which came from a turning off the Lantham road.

But he suddenly saw a big, roomy touring car coming into the road in front of him, temporarily blocking up the way as it turned.

Frantically Coker shut off, and jammed on his brakes.

But it was too late.

Cras-s-s-sh!

His front wheel drove into the side of the car's long bonnet. Coker was simply hurled over the handlebars.

He rolled over and over in the Lantham road, to finish up in a senseless heap nearly ten yards away.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Forewarned!

"GOOD heavens!"  
Hastily drawing into the side of the road, the driver of the touring car jumped out. He hurried towards Coker's prostrate form.

But his companion reached the unconscious figure first. He was a square-jawed, sunburnt young man, and his

steel-blue eyes widened in surprise when they fell on Coker's pallid, senseless face.

"G-great Scott!" gasped Boy MacLaren. "Why, it's Coker, of Greyfriars School!"

"Eh?"

"The fellow I told you about, Ken, who put up that funny show in the Novices' Event at the last meeting, and who gave me a helping hand when Snell and the other bouncer tried to scrag me together."

"That fellow!" ejaculated Ken. "Are you sure?"

"Of course I'm sure!" replied the Boy. "I'd know his face anywhere, I tell you! Poor chap! Fancy meeting him under circumstances like these!"

The Boy gently slid a cushion under Coker's head. He had taken a liking to the Fifth-Former at the first time of meeting him, and he now had more than a concerned expression on his determined face.

"A doctor must see him—the sooner the better," he said quickly. His face changed. "I know. Let's take him to the speedway. There's a doctor and several first-aid people attached to the staff."

"That's the idea!"

"Come on, then!" snapped Boy MacLaren.

They tenderly lifted Coker and carried him to the back seat of the touring car, and arranged his body comfortably with the help of several cushions.

"What about his bike?" asked Boy MacLaren's cousin, nodding towards the Fifth-Former's machine which lay in the road, its front wheel hopelessly buckled.

"Shove it in as well," replied the Boy. "There's plenty of room on the floor at the back."

"Right-ho!"

As he slammed the door shut, Ken happened to glance at his watch.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "Five minutes to three. The meeting starts at three, doesn't it?"

Boy MacLaren nodded as he stepped into the seat beside the driver's.

"We stayed at Canterbury too long,"

he said shortly. "Well, it can't be helped. If I'm late, I'm late, that's all."

A minute later the car had started again, and was humming along the Lantham road.

The Boy sat half-turned in his seat, anxiously watching Horace Coker's face for the first signs of returning consciousness as the car flew along. But the Fifth-Former lay motionless, breathing heavily, his mouth hanging open. Concerned as Boy MacLaren felt, he did not dream how much his concern was justified.

They entered Lantham very soon, but were compelled to slow down to thread their way through the busy traffic. Boy MacLaren bit his lip impatiently.

At last—it seemed ages to the dirt-track star—they reached the speedway, and drove into the members' car park.

The car slowed down and the Boy jumped out.

His face cleared when he caught sight of a first-aid man who happened to be standing near.

"Here! I want you!" he shouted.

The man came up at the double. "Go to the accident-room, get a stretcher and another fellow," said Boy MacLaren crisply. "And take this poor chap"—he nodded towards Coker—"to the doctor for attention!"

"Right, sir!"

The man hastily saluted and sprinted away.

The Boy leant over the side of the car, and, biting his lip, watched Horace Coker anxiously.

As yet the Fifth-Former showed no signs of recovering consciousness. He lay motionless in the back of the car. With a careful hand the Boy gently adjusted the cushions which supported him. He was interrupted by the arrival of the stretcher and bearers.

Just as the stretcher had disappeared inside the main Speedway building, the secretary passed by. He halted when he saw the Boy.

"You're late, MacLaren," he said mildly.

"I'm very sorry, but—"

"It happens to be all right this time, because neither West nor Fisher have arrived yet," said the secretary, shrugging his shoulders. "Still, it's never policy, you know!"

And, with a nod, he passed on.

"Good egg!" breathed Boy MacLaren, glancing to and fro. "So there are others late as well. The meeting won't be starting until they have put in an appearance. I'll go up to the accident-room until they arrive."

"Well, take your crash-helmet and gauntlets with you," suggested his cousin Ken. "Then you'll be ready to ride at a moment's notice."

"Oh, that's it!" agreed the Boy quickly.

Ken fished those necessary articles from under the front seat of the car. The two of them hurried into the building and soon reached the accident-room.

The white-coated doctor looked up as they entered.

"How is he?" asked the Boy quietly, nodding towards the bed where Coker lay, a cool bandage about his forehead.

"Quite fair," replied the doctor, with professional calm.

"He's not hurt seriously?"

The doctor shook his head.

"No. Only stunned. The skull isn't broken, and I've given him an injection. He shouldn't be long recovering consciousness now."

"Good egg!" exclaimed the Boy softly, in tones of deep relief.

He took a long, thoughtful look at Horace Coker; his gaze wandered to

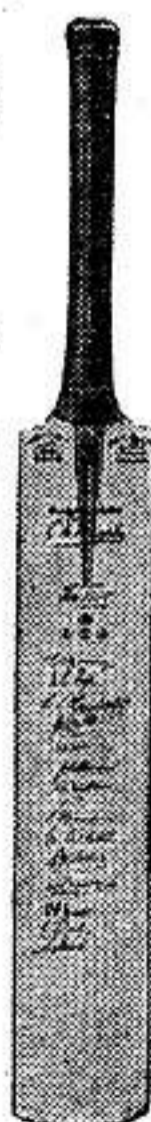
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one of the high windows. He stepped towards it, and stared down on the crowded terraces of the Speedway.

"Was he injured near here?" asked the doctor casually.

"No."  
"Well, how—"

"His motor-bike collided with our car about two miles away," said Boy MacLaren. "We thought we might as well bring him here for attention. He belongs to Greyfriars School," he said. "Coker's his name. I say, those chaps over there," he went on, "pointing out of the high window, 'near the pillar; aren't they wearing Greyfriars caps?"

The doctor crossed over to the window.

"That's right!" he said.

"What about sending across and asking one or two of them to come along, so that they can be here when he recovers consciousness?" suggested Boy MacLaren. "In any case, I'll have to clear out pretty soon!"

"Of course!" exclaimed the doctor.

He turned to one of the first-aid men and told him what was wanted. The man disappeared.

A faint murmur came from the bed. The doctor and Boy MacLaren turned quickly.

The Fifth-Former's rugged features twitched a little. His eyelids flickered. At that moment the door of the accident-room opened. Harry Wharton and Vernon-Smith came in, with curious, startled faces. The Boy tiptoed over to them, and explained the position in a few quiet sentences.

"Whew!" ejaculated the Bounder. "My hat!" breathed Wharton. "Poor old Coker! I say, it was jolly decent of you to bring us along!"

Boy MacLaren gestured. "He's coming round now," he added, and approached the bed.

The two Removites followed him. Coker drew a deep, unsteady breath and opened his eyes wide. He stared vacantly about him.

"Quiet, old man!" said the doctor steadily.

The Fifth-Former gazed at him blankly.

The medical man put a glass to Coker's lips and gently tilted it. Coker drank greedily.

The effect was immediate. The colour came rapidly into Horace Coker's pallid cheeks, his eyes lost their vacant look.

"Oh, where am I?" he gasped. "I—I was on my way to Lantham. I crashed into a car—"

"My car, old chap," said the Boy quietly, leaning forward. "This is the Lantham Speedway accident-room, and I brought you here!"

"Eh, what!" said Coker jerkily. At that moment the door opened and a burly form stood on the threshold.

"Oh, you're here, are you, MacLaren!" said the beefy young marshal impatiently.

"Come on, my lad! All the other riders are in the paddock waiting for you!"

"Right-ho!" Boy MacLaren rose to his feet and walked towards the door.

"So-long, Coker!" he called out. "I'll come back when the meeting's over!"

Horace Coker stared after him. His gaze grew suddenly fixed, and he dragged himself on one elbow.

(Continued on next page.)



# 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.

**T**HE following question, which comes from P. C. Pinton, of Langport, Somerset, will also interest other loyal readers of our paper. P. C. wants to know the name of

## THE FIRST "MAGNET" STORY,

and when it was published? Well, the **MAGNET** is one of the oldest—and still the best—of British boys' papers. Its first issue appeared as long ago as February 15th, 1908, and the first story was entitled "The Making of Harry Wharton." Since then, Frank Richards has continued to write a long complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars every week, without fail—a record that will take some beating!

## Are any of you interested in AUTOGRAPH COLLECTING?

Fred Elliott, of Handsworth, Sheffield, wants to start a collection, and asks me how he should go about it. The first thing, of course, is to get a good album, which can be procured from any stationers. You can get them to suit any pocket, but the more you pay, of course, the better album you will get, and if you want to collect the autographs of celebrities, it is worth while having a good album for them.

There are no set rules on collecting autographs. One simply has to ask the various celebrities if they will write in the book. For the autographs of film stars, the album should be sent to the office of the film company by whom the star is engaged, and sufficient stamps should be enclosed to cover the cost of return postage. In cases where an autograph

album has to be sent to America, the owner must take the risk of it being lost, and therefore it is better to write direct to the person concerned, and ask for an autograph on a slip of paper, which can be pasted into the book, or else to ask for an autographed photograph.

The same reader asks me whose autograph is the most valuable. I should say that of past celebrities the autograph of Shakespeare would bring the greatest price if put up to auction. Of living people, perhaps that of King George V. would be one of the most valuable—but it is useless for my chum to write to Buckingham Palace and ask for it!

**I** SUPPOSE most of my readers have seen dozens of American "talkies," and therefore they will be interested in the query which comes from Alfred Dawson, of Edmonton, who has been considerably puzzled by some of the

## "TALKIE" ENGLISH"

which he has heard in these films. He wants to know the meanings of such words as "bunkie," "baloney," "gat," "hot squat," and so on.

A "bunkie" is a room mate; "baloney" means nonsense; "a gat" is a gun; the "hot squat" is the electric chair; a "dumb-bell" is a stupid person; a "snooper" is a spy; a "pineapple" is a bomb; and a "typewriter" is a machine-gun.

When a gangster says he is going to "talk turkey," he means he is going to speak plainly. When he talks of "putting on the Ritz," he means "swanking." And if he calls you a "sep and a sucker,"

he means that you are stupid and gullible. But there is no end to the picturesqueness of American slang. Before long we will all have to buy "English-American" dictionaries if we are to keep pace with the new words which the "talkie-makers" are constantly inventing!

## WHAT HAPPENS TO BIG STEAMSHIPS

when they become old? Have you ever wondered? S. K., of Tweedmouth, wants to know. Well, they generally go to a shipbreaker's yard, where they are broken up. But they are not wasted! Their valuable metals are used again, and so is the steel and wood-work from them. The famous *Empress of Scotland*, which was the twentieth largest ship in the world until recently, is the latest ship to go to the "knocker's yard."

But whenever a big liner is withdrawn in this manner, the shipping company who own it invariably put an even larger ship in its place, and the old *Empress of Scotland* has been replaced by the *Empress of Britain*, which is 42,500 tons, and the ninth largest in the world. Modern liners are certainly the last word in luxury, for this one—in addition to being fitted with every conceivable electrical device—also has its own "talkie" cinema apparatus!

Ready for next week's programme? Right!

Frank Richards' fine, complete yarn of the chums of Greyfriars is entitled

## "BILLY BUNTER'S BARGAIN!"

and, as you have learned to expect from this author, it is packed full of thrilling and amusing incidents, which are guaranteed to hold your attention from the first line to the very last! Don't miss it, chums! It's a winner.

Don't forget to write and let me know what you think of our new serial, "Bandits of the Line!" Remember, I'm always anxious to know your opinion of our stories.

There'll be our usual shorter features, of course, and more prizes for readers who send in winning limericks and jokes! Cheerio till next week, chums!

**Your Editor.**

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"MacLaren—yes! Half a minute!" he said huskily. "That rotter Sid Snell—he's loosened the valve stem nut of your front wheel. The inner tube'll burst after a few laps. You'll crash. He's going to ride over you on purpose!"

"Eh!"

"Wha-at!"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated the Bounder.

The beefy young man frowned and came farther into the room. His jaw dropped when he recognised Coker.

"Hallo! That bloke!" he exclaimed. "What did he say?"

"MacLaren! I say, Bunter overheard it all on the train, MacLaren," continued Coker, in the same gasping voice. "Snell and Joe Banks talked about it in the train. They're down on you because you wouldn't join in with them, or something. Bunter heard it all. I met him. He told me. So I started for Lantham at once; but smashed into a car—your car, was it? Gad!"

Coker sank back exhausted.

Boy MacLaren stood motionless in the doorway.

"W-what did he say?" ejaculated the young marshal, staring at Coker.

"As far as I can make out," said the Bounder quickly, "Sid Snell has got some grudge against MacLaren. In order to satisfy it, he's tampered with MacLaren's bike to make him crash in the Match Race, when he'll be able to ride into him and injure him!"

"That's it—that's it!" gasped Coker. There was a deathly silence.

Boy MacLaren's square-jawed face might have been carved out of granite.

"Gee! Tampering with machines!" snapped the marshal, with a glint in his eye. "This'll be thoroughly investigated in due course, or I'm not senior marshal here!"

Roar-r-r! Bang! Phut-phut!

The distant rumble of starting engines reached the accident-room.

"Hallo, there!" ejaculated the marshal, turning towards the window. "They've started the parade of riders, then! MacLaren, we'll have to be going!"

The Boy stepped towards the bed, took the Fifth-Former's hand in his own, and gripped it firmly.

"I don't know how to thank you properly yet, old man," he said slowly. "Perhaps I'll have thought out how to put it better after I've beaten this worm Snell in the Match Race! Until then, so-long!"

"Cheerio, and good luck, old bean!" said Coker warmly. "Don't talk about the other!"

"Good luck!" called out the Removites.

With a nod and a smile the Boy quitted the accident-room and sprinted after the beefy young man. His square-jawed face was very grim.

There were already a good many riders on the track by the time they reached the dimly lit paddock, and every moment others were streaming out and joining them.

Dodging several starting machines, they hurried across to where Boy MacLaren's bike stood. The Boy knelt down beside his front wheel and peered at it closely.

"Yes, the nut's loosened, just as Coker said," he shouted, above the din. "Good gad! The last place anybody would think of looking!" and his steel-blue eyes flashed.

The beefy young man snatched up a spanner.

"We'll go into it, all right, in time!"

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he bawled. "Let's put the bike in order, first!"

Under his deft fingers, Sid Snell's rascally work was soon undone.

Hastily adjusting his crash helmet and gauntlets, the Boy ran his machine out of the murky paddock. The engine quickly fired, and Boy MacLaren, vaulting quickly into the saddle, opened his throttle and joined in the parade of riders.

Roar-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!

He blazed up the straight amidst a wave of applause from the crowded stands and banking. From the window of the accident-room, his cousin, Harry Wharton, the Bounder, and Horace Coker—the latter comfortably propped up in a cushioned armchair—watched him eagerly.

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### The Match Race!

**B**ANG!

Whir-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r! The finishing-gun banged deafeningly, and the throb of a score of engines died gradually away.

The parade of riders was over.

Boy MacLaren shut off his engine as he completed the lap, and waited for the loud-speaker to announce the next event—his Match Race with Sid Snell.

His machine came to a halt at the first bend. Drawing in near the grass, the Boy pushed up his goggles and looked about him. His face was grim and set as he watched rider after rider pass him on their way to the paddock.

Very soon they all disappeared—with one exception. Half-way down the full-length straight in front of him, a rider in a yellow slip sat astride of his machine.

It was Sid Snell, and the Boy's steel-blue eyes glinted when he saw him.

A burst of clapping went round when the announcer finished. A marshal signalled to the two riders to start up.

Bang, bang! Roar-r-r-r-r-r!

As they entered on the preliminary lap for the flying start, Boy MacLaren drew level with his rival.

Snell turned as he did so, and the man against whom his dastardly plot was threatened, looked at him squarely.

Sid Snell's heart gave a bound.

The scornful loathing on that sunburnt face, the furious glint in those steel-blue eyes, spoke as clearly as any words. In a flash, Snell realised he was found out, but it didn't alter his resolve, born of jealous hatred, to wreck MacLaren if he could.

After that one scornful look, Boy MacLaren turned away. He pulled down his goggles and tried out his speediron's acceleration as he went raking round the bend, close against the safety fencing.

Together, they rounded the last bend, and swept towards the motionless starter, side by side, their engines' throbbing drone rising steadily in volume.

Roar-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!

Simultaneous with the downward slash of the checked flag, the two riders shot towards the first bend. And from the beginning it was obvious that Sid Snell was riding like a man possessed.

With something like the desperate courage of a cornered rat, he fairly flung his machine at the curve, and went storming round in a reckless, skidding broadside. More by luck than control, he kept his balance, and came out of the bend nearly half a length to the good, in spite of his outside position. Flattened along his tank, he tore down the straight, with the Boy blazing along in hot pursuit.

Roar-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!

They reached the next bend.

Once again Snell hurled himself into the broadside and sent his speediron bucking and swerving round in the middle of the track, in a series of tearing, jerky skids. Boy MacLaren came storming up close against the grass, rapidly reducing the space between them.

But, with a sudden swerve, Snell abandoned his position in the middle of the track, and rode direct in his path.

To prevent a collision, Boy MacLaren was forced to abruptly slacken speed. His rival stormed down the straight nearly four lengths to the good and went broadsiding round the first bend of the second lap with the same desperate, almost hysterical courage, kicking up spurts of flying cinders. High above, the party at the long window of the accident-room watched him closely.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "He's got a good lead now—"

The Removite skipper's voice was drowned as Boy MacLaren came roaring towards the bend. He took it in a deliberate, wide-sweeping broadside which was all the more breath-taking because of its daring.

Exhaust-pipe spouting flame, padded left knee and steel-shod foot scrabbling among the cinders, he came raking round, bike leaning farther and farther over. Smaller and smaller became Sid Snell's lead, and the Boy swung his machine out of the broadside less than a length behind him.

A roar of applause went up from the crowded speedway. The contrast between that and Snell's frantic efforts was plainly evident.

The roar of engines merged into a regular, distant drone as the riders hurtled down the full length straight. By the time they had entered on the next bend Boy MacLaren had crept level.

By now, apparently, the Boy had sized up his opponent's tactics. For he gave Snell ample room on the curve, and rode in close against the safety fencing, hazing it with the cinder spray of a long-drawn-out, raking slide.

From their place at the other end of the speedway the Removites were unable to see him properly. But they heard the hoarse roar of applause which went up from the spectators near him, and knew that he had taken the bend at the very top of his form. And as he hurtled down the straight towards them they saw he was leading by two lengths.

The juniors caught their breath as the Boy went raking round the bend beneath them, throttle full open, rear wheel showering the cinders over the spectators behind the fencing. That dashing effort was a delight to see, and the easy way he swung his speediron level for the straight acted as a perfect finish. He clamped his left foot on to the rest, leading by nearly a quarter of a lap.

They did not trouble to watch Sid Snell as he came tearing round in a frantic effort to make up his lost distance. They strained their eyes to see MacLaren at the farther curve, and joined in the storm of cheering which greeted him there.

The yellow flag flashed up and down as Boy MacLaren droned into the last lap and thumbed his cut-out for the bend. Another superb, wide-sweeping broadside was followed by another burst of cheering which drowned even the deafening scream of that furiously driven engine.

It slackened for a moment as the Boy roared down the last full length straight, but burst out again while he went raking round the final bend. The checked flag rose up in the air and



slashed down as he hurtled past the winning-post.

The report of the finishing-gun was hopelessly lost in the frantic roar of cheering from every part of the crowded speedway. Boy MacLaren had won by three-quarters of a lap!

"I see," said the beefy young marshal, compressing his lips.

He had come up to the accident-room during the interval, where the rest of the Greyfriars party had joined Harry Wharton and the Bounder, by special permission. Coker had told his story in fuller detail, as well as how he had rescued the Boy from Banks and Snell that evening in the Lantham road. And the Boy's cousin had related how the same shady pair had tried to get the winner of the "Lantham News" Belt Race into their rascally partnership. By now they were all in full possession of the facts of that dastardly plot and the sensational way it had been foiled.

"So Sid Snell and that other fellow have an arrangement about the betting, have they?" said the marshal grimly. "And they tried to get MacLaren to join in with them! He never told me anything about it!"

"I don't suppose he did," replied Ken. "Tale-bearing isn't in his line."

The beefy one grunted.

"Well, I suppose I must be getting back," he said, and quitted the accident-room.

"Still time," remarked the Bounder after a short pause.

"Eh?"

"I said there's still time!" repeated Smithy.

"What for?"

"For some dirty work from Snell. The next event is the second race between him an' MacLaren. If the Boy wins it, he will have won the match; but if he doesn't, there will be a third race, in which case the winner of that will have won."

"H'm!"

"Anyhow, there's this second race," continued Smithy. "An' Snell has the inside position, which is a distinct advantage. That's what I mean when I say there's still time for some dirty work."

"Oh!"

The group in the accident-room were silent.

Bang, bang! Roar-r-r-r-r-r!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "They've started up for the second race, then!"

The juniors crowded round the window.

Far away on the track beneath them they watched Boy MacLaren and Sid Snell rounding the last bend of the preliminary lap. Snell had the inside station,



As the cheery party made their way down the path, they ran into a fat, pathetic, dusty figure. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Bunter!" "I say, you fellows," wailed the Owl, "I'm tired and hungry!"

The checked flag slashed down.

Roar-r-r-r-r-r!

Dead together the two riders jammed open their throttles and rushed towards the first bend. In a second they had reached it, and the juniors gazed down on them, with bated breath.

Sid Snell flung himself into the bend in the same tearing, reckless manner, and right in the middle of the track. Boy MacLaren was forced close against the safety fencing, and the juniors could hear the cinder-spray from his driving rear wheel rattling over it.

Half a length behind his rival, the Boy swung his speediron level for the straight, and their engines' blurring roar changed to a shrill, regular drone as they went hurtling down.

The party in the accident-room heard the engines' notes change once more as the riders reached the next curve. They saw the bikes lean steeply over as they went raking round, and saw the curtain of cinders rise up and fall, to rise and fall again.

Feet clamped on foot rests, goggled eyes glaring over the handlebars, MacLaren and Snell droned down the straight, the former close in against the fencing, the latter in the middle of the track. But Snell, thanks to the use he was putting his inside position, now led by more than a length.

"Snell will try some dirty work, soon," said Smithy, through his clenched teeth. "But the Boy has tumbled to him. He's giving him plenty of room!"

Ken nodded.

They saw MacLaren's left foot move down from the rest to go scrabbling amongst the cinders and send up a shower of sparks, his speediron banking steeply. It was a fine, typical MacLaren effort, and a shout of applause went up from the crowd—which

swelled into a roar when they saw Snell's lead reduced as they came out of the bend.

Roar-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!

Along the full straight they blazed, engines functioning perfectly. Then, quite suddenly, Sid Snell rode in towards the grass and flung his machine at the curve in the most strategic position.

Utterly neglecting to control his throttle, he went tearing round in a reckless, skidding broadside. The Removees could see his shoulders bunch as the rider fought to control his kicking handlebars.

The very pace at which he took the curve, coupled with his position, carried Snell into a five yards' lead. But it was too good to last. Just over half-way round, he overbalanced and slid to the ground in a smother of cinders.

With one lithe movement, Snell wriggled into safety. But his machine lay dead across the path of the hotly pursuing Boy MacLaren!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Harry Wharton. "He'll be—"

The Remove skipper broke off, petrified with suspense, like the rest of the thirty thousand odd people who watched.

But with one powerful, backward heave, like a rider checking an unruly horse, Boy MacLaren lifted his front wheel two clear feet from the ground and swung it towards the other side of the track—away from the machine spreadeagled across his path.

In another second it had bumped down fifteen inches to the good and sent up a spurt of flying grit. The Boy

(Continued on page 27.)

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# BANDITS OF THE LINE!



## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Wreck of the "Night Scotsman"!

**W**HEELS thundering, the great pistons of the locomotive beating out their pulsing rhythm of power and speed, the long, lighted express raced through the night along the moonlit ribbons of steel.

The famous midnight express, the Night Scotsman, was roaring south across the Border.

She had left Edinburgh at eleven o'clock to the second. At seven o'clock in the morning, she was due to steam into her London terminus. With an angry, crimson glare leaping out against the smoke that poured from her squat smoke-stack every time the big fireman swung back the door of the firebox, she thundered southwards at nearer eighty miles an hour than seventy. Over a high viaduct, waking the dark valley to rumbling echoes; along the crest of high embankments, silhouetted against the stormy sky like a great lighted snake; through rock-walled cuttings—then with a long-drawn scream from her whistle into the black mouth of a tunnel in a great hillside—to emerge again with a roar into the valley beyond, and race on down the gleaming iron road to the south.

Leaping piston-rods, flying wheels, streaming smoke ghostly above her in the gloom—beating the wind from Scotland to far-off London!

In the cab, his grizzled face staring ahead in search of winking signal lights, the driver of the famous express clenched his teeth on the stem of his pipe.

"We're running into a storm, Tom," he shouted, making his voice heard

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above the echoing noise in the cab. "It's going to be dirty to-night—"

"I don't mind a dirty night, Sam—so long as we don't run into them train bandits!" grinned the fireman, pausing for a moment in his work. The smile that had appeared on his coal-grimed face was grim, however.

"The train bandits?" The driver's eyes flickered savagely. "I see they stopped another train, last night. Near Liverpool. It's reckoned their loot from the passengers alone was worth a couple of thousand quid. Then there's the mails. They shot a man dead, too—some poor chap that resisted 'em."

The fireman swung up his hammer, and turned to smash one of the massive lumps of coal behind him.

"And even yet they can't find out

"there's only one man in the country who could solve it."

"Who's that?" grunted the driver. "Now then, a bit more steam for the up-grade, Tom!"

"Who do I mean?" shouted the fireman, as he swung his shovel into the coal. "Why, that chap they call the Wizard Detective, o' course. Ferrers Locke!"

A hundred yards behind the two men in the cab of the locomotive, Jack Drake, the boy assistant of the very man whom the fireman had spoken of—Ferrers Locke, the Wizard Detective—lay in the bunk of one of the first-class sleeping compartments, staring across at the narrow window where the dark countryside could be seen dimly flashing past.

And it was of the mysterious, sinister train robbers whose exploits had startled the country so tremendously during the last few weeks, that Jack Drake, too, was thinking!

Jack had been in Edinburgh for "the gov'nor," shadowing a man concerning whom Ferrers Locke had required information.

That job was now finished, and the youngster was on his way back to London, to rejoin Locke at the flat in Baker Street, with the comfortable knowledge that he had done his job well.

Hé had been wondering, as he lay in the cosy bunk, watching the dim shapes race past the window, the rhythmic throb of the train in his ears, what the next case would be that he and Locke would be called upon to tackle. Then his thoughts had turned to the great mystery that had set all England puzzling! The secret that still remained unsolved, in connection with the

## RAILROAD MYSTERY.

No brakes were applied, yet the express came to an uncanny standstill in a lonely stretch of country. Then the shadows of night melted and armed bandits appeared as if by magic!

how it is they stop the trains, to rob 'em!" he cried in wondering tones.

"It's like black magic! A train's going along, everything O.K.—then suddenly on goes the brakes, without the men in the cab having touched 'em, nor bein' able to prevent it! The perishin' train stops, the bandits come aboard armed with perishin' guns, and help themselves to the passengers' valuables as cool as you please! And no one in the whole blessed wide world, except themselves, knows how they can stop the trains to do it! It's like black magic!"

"It's a thundering mystery," agreed the driver. "And even Scotland Yard can't solve it."

"If you ask me," said the fireman,



amazing train crimes that had recently been perpetrated throughout the country.

The staggering mystery of it filled Jack Drake's mind now as he lay in his bunk, while the Night Scotsman roared on through the night.

"My word!" he muttered. "If only the gov'nor would tackle the job!"

His thoughts had kept him wakeful. But the steady throb of the speeding train was making him sleepy at last. His eyes closed—and after a while Jack Drake found himself, apparently, back in the cosy study at Baker Street, with Sing-Sing, Ferrers Locke's Chinese servant spreading out on the table a delicious feast of his own weird and wonderful Chinese cooking—sharks' fins and birds' nests, and eggs that were guaranteed to be a thousand years old. In reality, Jack could not stand even the sight of Sing-Sing's recipes from the Flowery Land, but in his dream he found himself having the feed of his life, watched over by the bland, smiling yellow face of the little Chinese.

And then the scene of his dream vanished in a blaze of vivid light.

He heard a roaring confusion of sound in his ears—awoke to see the wall of the carriage lurch up and splinter like matchwood. He was flung heavily against the floor. And in his ears he heard screams in the midst of other ghastly sounds that filled the darkness.

Dazed though his senses were, one thing Ferrers Locke's boy assistant knew clearly.

The Night Scotsman was smashing to its doom—wrecked!

How he found himself out on the lines he never quite knew. He was staggering blindly over the sleepers, with the piled wreckage of the express looming beside him, screams and groans echoing in his ears. Steam was hissing in a tortured whine from the overturned locomotive. Jack Drake saw a lurching figure stagger from somewhere near it and collapse across the down-line.

"Wrecked!"

He found himself repeating the word stupidly as he clutched at his left shoulder, which was racked with burning pain.

A vague figure came scrambling up the steep embankment on to the lines. It was followed by others—hurrying men, their faces hidden beneath broad, white masks, automatics in their hands.

Jack Drake stared at them dazedly.

White masks!

It was the sight of those sinister masks that cleared the swimming mists from Jack Drake's brain. He knew now what had brought about the wreck of the Night Scotsman. The wreck was the ghastly work of the mysterious train bandits whose evil exploits had so startled the whole country—the men who had been in his mind as he had fallen asleep aboard the racing train.

He was face to face with the dreaded scoundrels who were taking toll of the railways of England and Scotland. Before, this reckless band of criminals had in some mysterious, unknown way stopped the trains they had marked down as their prey; but this time they had wrecked it. Whether intentionally or not, he could not know.

And now the men in the white masks were coming for their loot!

#### Looted!

"STICK 'em up!"

A harsh voice barked the command in Jack Drake's ear. Instinctively he raised his arms above his head, despite the agony of his injured shoulder. Swift hands ran over

his pockets. One of the men in the white masks was searching him for valuables, while a second held the snub nose of an automatic pressed to his ribs.

All along the gleaming rails beside the wrecked express the bandits were robbing the dazed passengers and the senseless forms of the injured. There seemed to be scores of the bandits, each armed with an automatic, each utterly callous to the groans of the victims of their ghastly crime that came from the splintered shapes of what had once been carriages.

The man searching Jack Drake gave a mutter of satisfaction as he drew from the youngster's breast pocket a wad of notes. Jack was wearing his coat over his pyjamas. He only realised now that he must have found it beside him in the wreckage and slipped it on instinctively. The money that the scoundrel had taken from him was what was left of the expenses Ferrers Locke had given Jack for his job in Edinburgh—a matter of fifteen pounds or more.

"Every little helps!" grinned the man in the mask sardonically.

"You hounds!" panted Jack hoarsely.

"You fiends!"

Near him a number of the bandits were dragging luggage from an overturned van, splitting the trunks open with axes, evidently brought with them for the purpose, and rifling the contents. He saw two others drag a wounded man from the wreckage with rough hands and tear from his finger a diamond ring. A wave of blind fury swept through the youngster at the fiendish callousness of it all.

He forgot the automatic held in the hand of the man who was still covering him. All he knew was that he had to treat at last one of the inhuman scoundrels to some extent as he deserved. Jack Drake's fist flashed out, straight from the shoulder, and smashed home on the centre of the white mask, between the dark eyeholes. The man staggered back with a curse, and the mask, half torn with the force of the blow, revealed for a moment the evil face of its wearer.

The man whipped up his weapon and pressed the trigger, intending evidently to make Jack pay dearly for that blow. But the youngster had learnt to dodge that kind of thing as quick as light during service with Ferrers Locke. The bullet missed its mark, and the next moment Jack's fist had landed once more, this time full on the man's jaw.

The dark figure went down heavily across one of the gleaming rails, his automatic flying from his hand.

Crack!

One of the other bandits had fired at Jack, with a savage ejaculation, as he saw his companion felled by the youngster's fist. For a second time that night Jack escaped death by a hairs-breadth, the bullet whining past his ear. And when the crack of an automatic barked out once more it was from the fallen man's weapon—held in Jack's fingers.

The bandit who had fired at him a moment before flung up his arms and toppled sideways on to the track. The bullet had taken him in the chest.

Jack Drake, a curl of smoke floating from the weapon in his hand, leapt back against one of the overturned carriages, expecting that his rashness had brought him his last hour. The bandits would get him for that, he felt convinced. But he meant to sell his life dearly.

"Go for 'em!" he yelled. "Tackle 'em, you cowards!"

The passengers who were within ear-shot, standing in scared silence as they were robbed by the men in the white masks, heard his cry, but dared not

act upon it. Half a dozen of the bandits were racing towards Jack now at sight of the two men he had downed.

The youngster's automatic barked twice, and one of the oncoming scoundrels fell with a groan, a bullet in his shoulder. The two men whom Jack had already sent sprawling on the line in inert heaps were recovering. One staggered up, reeling dazedly.

But Jack Drake had no time to see any more. Round the curve, some hundred yards away, a train had come roaring. There was an ear-splitting scream from its whistle as the driver caught sight of the shadowy groups of figures on the line beside the piled wreckage of the Night Scotsman. The white-masked figures who had been closing in on Jack while the other passengers stood with upraised arms, scared and helpless, broke for safety, scattering into the darkness before the giant locomotive came screaming upon them.

Just in time, the man whom Jack had knocked out with his fist was dragged clear of the rail on which he had been lying.

The long, lighted train came thundering by within a yard of the spot where Jack Drake stood pressed back against the smashed roof of the overturned carriage. He realised that the driver had applied the brakes at sight of the wreck. The train that had cut in between him and his would-be murderers in the nick of time was coming to a stop.

Not until afterwards did Drake learn that it was a "special" that had saved his life. The bandits had been careful to work their ambush at a place and time when they knew no other train would be passing in the normal way. They had not reckoned on the "special" that had come upon the scene of their dastardly work.

With brake-blocks spitting fire as they gripped the racing wheels, the "special" drew up, with its end van almost opposite Jack Drake. Fortunately, the Night Scotsman had toppled over on the other side of the up-line, so that there had been no wreckage on the down-line to cause disaster to the other train.

Already dark figures were leaping from the lighted coaches of the "special," racing through the gloom towards the wreck.

This unexpected turn of events seemed to unnerve the railway bandits. They vanished down the dark side of the embankment, carrying with them their loot. The woods that flanked the line swallowed them.

A hoarse cry broke from Jack's lips.

"After them! After them!"

The young detective's assistant scrambled under the couplings of the van opposite him, and some of the other passengers raced to the edge of the embankment, too. But a ragged dozen shots drove them back, as the bandits disappeared into the trees.

It was quite clear to Jack Drake that it was useless to hope for an organised pursuit of the wreckers of the Night Scotsman. He turned with a helpless exclamation to the excited, dim figures near him. Then he took a few stumbling steps—and pitched face downward on the metals.

In the thrill of it all Jack had forgotten the wound in his shoulder, had not realised that all the time he had been losing blood in a dangerous quantity. But now he could carry on no more.

Eyes closed, his left arm twisted under him, Jack Drake lay inert and senseless, one cheek against the moonlit





As Jack Drake pointed, one of the struggling figures dropped from the parapet, to fall in a twisting silhouette to the earth below!

steel of a rail of the down line—a crumpled, unconscious shape in the moonlight.

### On the Trail!

**W**ELL, young 'un, how do you feel?"

Ferrers Locke had entered his study in his Baker Street apartments, to find Jack Drake sitting at the table, busy with scissors and paste and newspaper-cuttings. It was several days later.

Jack still had his left arm in a sling, as a souvenir of the wreck of the Night Scotsman, a fact which had rather hindered his afternoon's work on the cuttings. But despite the deep cut that had been found in his shoulder, and the blood he had lost that night, Jack's glowing health had stood him in good stead, pulling him round with amazing quickness. He was well on the road to complete fitness again.

"Feeling fit as a cat, thanks, gov'nor! Arm's a bit stiff, that's all. But in a couple of days I'll be chucking this sling away, I can tell you!" grinned Jack cheerily.

"Good!" murmured the detective.

He crossed towards the window, and stood staring down thoughtfully at the traffic in Baker Street, as he filled his pipe. The late afternoon sunlight lit up the strong, aquiline face, with its deep-set eyes and strong, almost remorseless lips—a face that had brought terror to so many crooks and lawbreakers. The relentless strength of purpose stamped there, despite the underlying kindness, together with the needle-sharp intellect revealed by the lofty forehead and piercing eyes, made a combination of characteristics which even the cleverest of the criminals whom Locke had pitted his wits against had failed to combat successfully in the long run.

Jack Drake leaned back in his chair, glancing across at Ferrers Locke eagerly. But he knew his gov'nor too well to burst out with the questions he wanted to ask—he knew that the detec-

tive would tell him everything in his own time.

But it was not until Ferrers Locke had lighted his pipe and paced the carpet, with a thoughtful frown, a dozen times that the detective glanced towards his young assistant.

"Well, Jack, I've seen the railway chiefs," he said quietly. "All the big pots of all the railways were there." A grim smile played for a moment at the corners of his mouth. "It was a lucky thing you weren't killed in that wreck, because I want your help now to fight the villains who caused it!"

"Then—then it was to ask you to tackle the train bandits that the railway chiefs asked you to see 'em?" gasped Jack Drake, with excited eyes. "We guessed it was, of course—"

The Baker Street detective nodded, expelling a cloud of smoke.

"Yes; they've decided they can't wait for Scotland Yard to bring the elusive scoundrels to book. They want me to take on the job. I told them I would, of course. It's going to be a difficult business, my lad—thundering difficult! But that's not going to scare us off—even though we've got to remember we shall be fighting men who stop at nothing, not even murder!"

"We're used to ticklish jobs, gov'nor!" grinned Drake coolly.

"That's the idea!" chuckled Ferrers Locke rather grimly.

He dropped into a deep leather chair, absorbed in thought, the smoke-clouds from his pipe wreathing round his head.

"We've precious little to work on, Jack. All we know is that these mysterious train bandits appear to have some amazing way of stopping trains at their will! It sounds like a wild, impossible theory, that anyone could stop a train by some sort of 'fluence, as you might say, absolutely outside the train itself. But what else is one to think? Even the Yard have given up their first pet theory that the brakes were applied by some accomplice on board the ambushed trains.

"No, it's clear enough to me that

these scoundrels have discovered some extraordinary method, quite unknown to general science or engineering, of stopping trains by an outside agency! Their chief, whoever he is, must be a clever villain—we've got to admit that right away."

"But the wreck——" began Jack.

"That was not intended, I believe," said Locke promptly. "My idea is that the bandits made use of their uncanny power of braking moving trains as before, and owing to the speed at which the Night Scotsman was travelling, the sudden braking of the train caused it to leave the rails. You've got to remember that the experts who examined the scene of the wreck could find no trace of anything that might have been put on the lines to wreck the train."

"But how on earth——" exclaimed Drake, jumping up with a hopeless gesture.

"Look here," cut in Ferrers Locke quietly, "we've all heard of the wireless control of ships, for example. A ship without a living soul on board can be directed entirely by the will of people on shore. People have been talking of controlling trains in the same way. In fact, trains are already in existence, for experimental purposes, that can be controlled from a distance by means of wireless waves. Well, if these bandits have used that idea, and discovered a method of working the braking system of ordinary trains by means of wireless waves——"

"My giddy aunt!" breathed Jack Drake excitedly. "I never thought of that!"

"Neither have Scotland Yard!" chuckled Locke. "That's why they're still so mystified by the bandits' methods. They just can't figure it out, that's all—the whole thing stumps 'em! But wireless waves must be the solution to the problem. Against the will of the drivers, and without their being able to counteract the force of it, wireless power must have been applied to those trains, bringing them to a standstill



just where the bandits wanted 'em to stop!"

"Phew!" Ferrers Locke's boy assistant whistled. "It sounds impossible, but—"

"But the facts are staring us in the face," said Ferrers Locke laconically. "Of course," he added, "the theory assumes an inventor of amazing genius, who must be behind the robberies—some criminal-minded scientist who has turned his brains to this unscrupulous scheme, aided by a gang of desperadoes who do the actual work of looting for him. The inventor's the man we've got to track down, Jack—the brain behind it all, the man who orders the exploits of his masked followers, the pawns in his grim game! We've got to find him—but how we're to hit on a jumping-off point for getting on his trail, Heaven knows. But we will, before we've done. Got those cuttings?"

"Just finished 'em, guv'nor! Every blessed line the newspapers have published about the train bandits is in here."

Jack Drake handed Locke the scrapbook, into which he had been busily pasting cuttings. The detective took it, turning over the pages thoughtfully in search of some point which his keen brain might pick upon as a possible starting point for investigation.

Jack crossed to the window, and stood watching the pedestrians in the street.

Suddenly a shout in healthy Cockney accents came to his ears:

"Six-thirty paper!"

A newsboy was hurrying up the street, a placard fluttering at his knees. As the boy drew nearer along the pavement below, Jack Drake could make out the words printed on the big sheet:

"ANOTHER TRAIN AMBUSH!"

With a shout to Ferrers Locke, Drake darted for the door. He was soon back in the room, an evening paper in his hand.

"In full daylight this time, guv'nor!" the youngster gasped, thrusting the newspaper eagerly out to the detective. "An express in a lonely stretch of line in Essex—mysteriously stopped and looted—in broad daylight!"

The Baker Street detective had jumped to his feet. He snatched the paper from Jack's hand, and his eyes glimmered with the light of battle as he stared down at the great headlines.

"In daylight, this time! The bandits are learning their power, Jack! They are growing more daring still. This was near a village called Wytting, I see—"

He crashed a fist on the table with a force that shook the objects standing on it.

"Jack, tell Sing-Sing to get the car ready!" he continued. "And get ready yourself! Look alive, young 'un—in ten minutes we start for Wytting. That's where I mean to get on the track of these train bandits—to-night!"

### The Clenched Hand!

"LOOK!" Jack Drake had flung out a pointing hand, staring across the darkening desolate waste of Essex marshes with intent eyes.

It was later that evening. Ferrers Locke's powerful car, the famous White Hawk, had taken very little time to eat up the miles between Baker Street and Wytting, the lonely little village on the edge of a vast stretch of salt marshes, near which the latest of the

railway bandits' hold-ups had occurred. Arrived there, the detective had wasted no time in interviewing the driver, fireman, and guard of the ambushed train, and in examining with an expert's eye the locomotive which had been drawing it. But the result of his investigations in that direction had been disappointing. The three railway employees had been able to tell him nothing other than the bare facts—that the train had been stopped as if by supernatural power in a lonely, hidden stretch of line between thick woods, from which the white-masked bandits had appeared to rob the passengers and loot the mails and luggage. And Locke's examination of the locomotive—a big three-cylinder four-four-nought type—had convinced him that everything in its braking system had been in perfect order—there was nothing to indicate remotely by what uncanny power the bandits had been able to apply the brakes of the speeding train.

Locke had now set himself the task of exploring the country round the scene of the ambush, in search of the clue he wanted as the starting-off point for further investigations.

Beyond the strip of wood on the south side of the line lay the great stretch of salt marshes, with tidal inlets running in among them from the distant sea, which he and Jack Drake were now gazing across towards a dark,

## SPEEDWAY COKER!

(Continued from page 23.)

shot forward on two wheels once again. For a moment it looked as if he would dash into the safety fencing, but with superb control he managed to turn in time, and just grazed it with his padded shoulder before blazing up the straight.

A sudden, thunderous roar of applause went up from all round the crowded speedway.

Snell scrambled to his feet and picked up his machine.

From then the race became a mere formality. By the time Sid Snell had restarted the Boy was more than half a lap in front of him, and he settled down to give the crowd a faultless display of cindercraft.

Those daring, wide-sweeping broadsides, those easy swings-back into the perpendicular, were a delight to watch. And as the yellow flag fluttered to signal the last lap the crowd stood up and gave full vent to their feelings.

The steady roar of applause completely drowned the blurring song of

Boy MacLaren's madly driven engine as he whirled into the first bend of the last lap. Its shrill drone as he hurtled down the last full length straight was equally eclipsed; and the steady roar must have been heard for miles around as he shot past the winning-post, and the checked flag sliced down.

He had won his race, after a superb display. The das-

stumpy shape outlined against the darkening sky. It was an old tower, far out in the heart of the marshes—an ancient place called Danes' Tower, as they had learned from a passing dyke-worker.

"Look, guv'nor—"

Jack Drake's voice held an excited note, as he pointed across the desolate saltings towards the distant tower.

Two human figures had appeared at the top of the structure. Far off though they were, it was clear enough that they were locked together in a savage struggle, reeling and swaying on the high, ruined parapet.

"My giddy aunt!" gasped Jack Drake. "The silly asses! What do they want to have a row there for? If one of 'em falls—"

He broke off sharply, with a stifled ejaculation. Even as he had spoken, one of those tiny outlined struggling figures had been seen to swing the other high into the air above his head. Whoever the man was, it was plain that he was of tremendous strength. The next moment the struggling victim had been dashed down from the parapet, falling in a twisting silhouette to the earth below.

(Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake have been set a fine problem to solve, but they're not worrying. You'll revel in next week's all-thrilling instalment, boys. Order your MAGNET now!)

tardly plot to wreck his career on the cinders had been foiled in the nick of time. All that remained to be done was to mete out justice to the schemers, whose schemes had so ignobly failed.

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Lickings for Two!

"WHERE'S Snell?" The beefy young man asked that question, and he asked it in a loud and authoritative voice.

It was the close of that afternoon's meeting, and the secretary of the Lantham Speedway had just taken his seat at the big roll-top desk in his wooden office.

Boy MacLaren was there, flushed and grimy from his recent gruelling struggle. The Removites were there, with tense interested faces, only the Bounder looking cool and collected. Ken and Horace Coker, the latter completely normal now, except for his bandaged head, occupied two chairs at either side of the roll-top desk.

(Continued on page 28.)

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## SPEEDWAY COKER!

(Continued from page 27.)

"I sent a mechanic to him, with a message to report here directly the meeting finished," said the beefy young marshal crossly, "and he hasn't come!"

"This matter must be thrashed out without any haste or ill judgment," he continued quietly. "For that reason, let there be no bickering or useless argument. Certain charges have been made—serious charges—which compel a proper and thorough inquiry. All the allegations must be proved before we can act upon them!"

"That'll be difficult!" said Vernon-Smith, in a loud voice.

"Why?" demanded the secretary. "The Boy's front wheel valve being loosened, for a start?" demanded the beefy young man. "I saw that myself!"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. "You'll never be able to prove conclusively that Snell did it," he said placidly.

"What about the conversation which was overheard in the train?" queried Coker gruffly.

"A make-up!"

"His suggestion to me that evening!" snapped Boy MacLaren, with a stare.

"Another make-up!"

"The way he crashed, right in front of the Boy!" exclaimed Ken.

"An accident!"

"What?"

"You've said that you want everything proved, sir," said Smithy, looking at the startled secretary. "Well, that will be jolly hard. A policy of denial, right along the line, would carry Snell through!"

There was a breathless silence.

"I thought somethin' like this would happen," said Smithy quietly. "So I took the liberty of gettin' both Banks and Snell to compromise themselves, bein' thoroughly convinced in my own mind that all the charges are true—"

"Smithy—" began Tom Redwing; but the Bounder continued.

"Just before the last event I slipped out and sent a note to Snell, via a first-aid man who happened to be loungin' about. I wrote: 'Maybe a chance to do for him yet. Meet behind the members' garages at the finish.' An' I took the liberty of signin' it 'J. Banks.'"

The Bounder paused, and cleared his throat.

"Usin' another page from the same

notebook," he said easily, "I sent a message to this fellow Banks, who, if you don't know already, is usually hangin' about outside the north entrance to the speedway. To him I wrote: 'Idea all gone wrong. Meet behind the paddock after the last event. Urgent.' An' I took the liberty of signin' that one 'S. Snell.'"

And the Bounder looked round at the circle of startled faces with a sardonic grin.

"Surely that'll be a pretty conclusive proof," he said. "Anyhow, it's the best I can think of!"

The secretary rose to his feet.

"I leave it in your hands!" he exclaimed, looking at the beefy young man.

"Personally, if these two people fall into the trap which our young friend here has set for them, I would be inclined to accept that as proof. As I said before, I leave the matter to you, and you have my full authority to give Snell a cheque for a month's salary in lieu of notice, if you think that step is justified! Now, I must ask you all to leave the office."

And he looked down at the desk, all littered with papers.

The beefy young marshal's square jaw set even squarer.

"Come on," he said, with almost an admiring glance at Vernon-Smith.

"We'll see if that pair have swallowed the bait!"

And he led the crowd out of the secretary's office of the Lantham Speedway.

Smithy's forecasts turned out perfectly correct.

The party went first to the back of the members' garages, where they found Sid Snell lurking stealthily, a picture of guilt and despair. The marshal did not waste much time in words. He told the shady dirt-track rider all in a few curt sentences, and dismissed him from the speedway for good.

After that, Boy MacLaren took control, and took his coat off at the same time. The juniors stood round in a ring while the Boy got some of his own back. By the time he had finished, Snell looked as though he had been mixed up with several prizefights all together. He limped out of the speedway with both eyes blacked, a crimson nose, and a cut lip, and disappeared for ever.

The party next went behind the paddock, where they found Mr. Joseph Banks enjoying a quiet smoke. But he

did not enjoy it for long. The fat cigar was pulled out of his mouth, stamped on the ground, and then stuffed into the bookie's thick-lipped mouth. His bowler hat was crushed flat on his head, and then rammed down his neck. A thorough Greyfriars bumping wound up the meeting, so to speak, and Mr. Joseph Banks was kicked all the way to the Lantham road.

"Well, that finishes that!" remarked Boy MacLaren, a trifle breathlessly.

"There's just one more thing!"

"What's that?"

"Will you fellows all join me in tea at the Pagoda Cafe?"

"Oh!"

"We'll come, won't we?" asked Harry, looking round at his chums. "Coker, you'll come, too? We're only Remove fags, we know; but try to forget your Fifth-Form dignity, for once!"

"Oh, all right!" replied Coker gruffly. "I'll come—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a cheery party which walked down the asphalt path to the Lantham road; and just as they turned the corner, they ran into a fat, pathetic, dusty figure, blinking lugubriously around.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, my hat! The old fat man!"

"Bunter!" shouted Bob Cherry. "I say, MacLaren, let me introduce you! This is Billy Bunter, the world's prize porker, and the chap who heard Snell and Banks talking in the railway compartment!"

"Oh!" exclaimed the Boy. He extended his hand. "How d'you do? Very pleased to meet you!"

Billy Bunter put out a grubby paw. "How do? I say, you fellows, I've walked for miles—I'm jolly glad I found you! I say, I'm hungry, and tired—I'm not going to walk any more—"

"Come along to the Pagoda with us!" said the Boy cordially.

"Oh, certainly!" exclaimed the Owl of the Remove. "I s-say, when I said I was tired, I meant to say I wasn't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Bunter followed the party to the Pagoda!

THE END.

(Frank Richards scores another triumph in next week's ripping yarn of Greyfriars, entitled: "BILLY BUNTER'S BARGAIN!"—a story that will hold your interest from the first line to the very last!)

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# Greyfriars Herald

LAUGH AND GROW FAT.

No. 52.

**ANY VOLUNTEERS?**  
Will one of you young sweeps kindly go along to the Sixth Form passage and walk into my study? The door is partly open, and I suspect a booby-trap. Thanks!  
GERALD LODGER.  
Sixth.

## AMERICAN JUNIOR ARRESTED

**Detained on "Slight" Charge**

**FISHY**  
Inspector Russell and P.-o. Bull were in attendance at Study 14 this morning to arrest Fisher T. Fish, who was taken away in a plain van. It is understood that the charge against him is not serious, being merely: *Share swindling, confidence tricking, bogus company promoting, long-firm frauds, misrepresentation, giving, stealing, begging, robbery with assault, mock-auctioneering, faking, house-breaking, illegal lotteries, falsifying accounts, absconding, petty larceny, felony, perjury, uttering threats, carrying unlicensed fire-arms (sea-shooter), continuing, snacking, window-smashing, disorderliness, resisting the police, receiving stolen goods, arson, high treason, sedition, espionage, sacrilege, juggling, speeding, drinking, stunts, ludd, victimising, and deserting.*

It is not quite clear why he has been arrested, but it is thought that he has broken the law in some way or other. He will be brought up before Mr. Justice Wharton this afternoon, and the trial is expected to last until next Leap Year.

## Unsolved Mysteries

In another column we draw attention to the disgraceful slowness prevailing at Jotland Yard. It is high time that something was done to remedy this matter.

The "Greyfriars Herald" is tired of reporting unsolved crimes. Only a few months ago an important criminal called "Nemo" defied the law in the Remove. He has never been brought to justice. Although Jotland Yard was given an excellent description of the man—a tremendously fat person, with spectacles and oblong trousers; believed to be a good ventriloquist and fond of muttering things about a postal order—although given this description, they immediately arrested a fellow named Snopoo, who does not agree with the description in the slightest.

The citizens of Greyfriars demand that the whole routine of Jotland Yard should be looked into by the Home Secretary, Mr. Mark Lintley. It is not enough to let Detective Penfold and Russell continue to hoodwink the public by promises of early arrests.

If Jotland Yard does not soon wake up to the fact that its duty is to put down crime, Greyfriars will become almost as bad as Chicago.

Even while I have been writing this article some villain has come up and boned my pen, and I have had to finish my remarks with Cherry's pen—which, fortunately, I managed to steal while his back was turned. This sort of thing is going on all the time. It must stop!  
Wake up, Jotland Yard!

## ANNUAL MEETING AND BANQUET OF THE "G.H." STAFF

**MOVING SPEECH BY BILLY BUNTER**

Held in Doim

On Monday last the staff of the "Greyfriars Herald" held their annual meeting and banquet in the Remove dormitory. The host of the evening was the Chief Editor, Mr. Harry Wharton, and the whole Form were invited (and came).



The guest of the evening was to have been the Editor of the Companion Papers, but owing to the difficulty of smuggling him into the dormitory it was considered better not to invite him.

Frank Nugent drew up the menu in his best French. It looks classier that way.

**MENU.**  
Consomme (Clear soup).  
Oxtail hors d'oeuvres.  
Poisson (Fish).  
Sardines.  
Volaille (Poultry).  
Eggs de poulet durs.  
(Eggs of chicken, hard-boiled.)  
Meat (Cold).  
Beauf a la cornet.  
Jambon sandwiches.  
Fromage (Cheese).  
Cheddar.  
Sweets.  
Compote d'abricots dans l'etain.  
(I fancy this is meant to be stored apricots in the tin.)  
Vin (Wine).  
Pop de gingembre.  
Vin rhubarbe.  
Ade de limon.  
Dessert.  
Pommes, bananes et poires.  
(Apples, bananas and pears.)

Some of the fellows cackled a good deal over this menu, but we didn't mind them. They were glad enough to pitch into the good things, you bet!

Naturally, the most prominent guest present was William George Bunter, who started at the beginning of the menu and worked his way through to the end without missing a single item. Bob Cherry,

who was taster and wine steward, called on Mr. Vernon-Smith to propose the health of the Chief Editor.

"I don't always agree with Wharton in everything he says and does, but I will say this for him—he's a rattling good fellow. (Hear, hear.) No man could have put more energy and enthusiasm into the job of producing the "Herald" than Wharton has done, and this in spite of a hundred other duties as head boy and Form captain. (Hurrah!) I am convinced of this: that the Remove will never be the same Form if, suddenly, Wharton leaves us. And I have much pleasure in proposing his health. I ask you, gentlemen, to drink the health of our Editor in flowing pop de gingembre." (Loud laughter, during which "gent" turned a trifle red.)

Wharton's health was drunk with a hearty (but subdued) three times three, and Wharton, in returning thanks, proposed the Sub-Editors, namely, Nugent, Cherry, Bull, Lintley, Penfold, and Browney. After this, Hurree Singh toasted the Editor of the Companion Papers, Johnny Bull proposed the Contributors—Dicky Nugent, Bunter, Skinner, etc.—and Mark Lintley proposed the health of Frank Richards.

When these toasts had all been honoured—including that of Skinner—who proposed himself and drank the toast with three times three—Bunter made a long speech, in which he dwelt upon the fact that, though the banquet was not in the same street as that he would

## BANISTER-SLIDING RESULTS

**Yesterday's Meeting**



2.30. Remove Yelling Plate. (One fight.) Prize: Two doughnuts.  
1. R. Cherry. 2. P. Bolsorov.  
Seven slid. Won by a neck (broken). Squirt was third.  
2.40. Two-Flight Handicap. (Second door to Hall.) Prize: Tacket of Spearman.

1. T. Browne. 2. T. Dutton. 3. P. Todd.  
Wharton fell at first landing. Eight finished—six on their necks. Won by a head (broken). Also slid: Skinner, Lintley, Hillary, Vivian.  
2.50. Mascot Gold Cup. (Two flights.) Prize: Cup of ice-cream.  
1. Bunter. 2. Wharton. 3. Cherry.  
Bunter was disqualified for having rubbed his trousers with lard. An objection to Cherry for bumping and boring was overruled. The winner, owing to the lard, couldn't stop at the ground floor, but went on out into the quad, being afterwards taken to hospital in an ambulance.  
3.0. Grand Smash-'em-all Sleepchase. 1. Prefecto.  
Also ran: Everybody else.

**ATHLETE WANTED.**  
My doctor has ordered me to take a two-mile run every morning; but I fear it is too much for me. Who will offer to take the run in my place? Five lob a week salary. Apply LORD MAULIVERER, Study 12. (If I'm asleep when you apply, don't wake me up. You can have the job without disturbing me.)

**SOCIETY GOSSIP**

**News from the Upper Six**

Cecil Reginald Temple has formed a club in the Upper Fourth for the purpose of conversation and improvement—which is sadly needed. This tremendous exclusive; nobody who is not related to an earl is eligible for membership. So far, the club consists of Cecil Reginald himself, and he can be heard talking to himself and improving himself all day.

Lord Maulverer would join the club, I understand, but he finds it "too much for" to listen to Temple all the time, and we quite see his point.

Mr. Herbert Vernon-Smith gave a Domino Drive in his palatial study at No. 4, Remove Passage, last night. Mr. Vernon-Smith is himself a very fine domino player, and he intends to write a book about the difficult points of the game. Mr. Harold Skinner, who are informed, tried to cheat, as usual; but, like the dominoes, he was "spotted."

We understand that Mr. William G. Bunter has accepted an invitation to shoot over Lord Alastair Bunterbury-Bunter's game preserves in Scotland during the coming vac. He asks us to express regret to his numerous other titled relations who have requested his company during the hols. Lately he

have had at Bunter Court. It was good. He was sorry, he said, that Wharton was mean. Mean-ness and petty jealousy were his chief faults; but he had a million others.

A part from this, he was a good sort.

Bunter went on to deplore the fact that somebody had just rammed a jam tart down his neck, and expressed his opinion that the Remove, as a whole, was a mouldy, rotten, third-rate Form which was a disgrace to the School. Bunter's further remarks were inaudible, as they came from under Toddy's bed.

General hilarity set in at this point, and by the time Mr. Quetch came with his cane everybody was having a real good time. For the next five or ten minutes, however, the Editorial Staff of the "Greyfriars Herald" were regretting bitterly the fact that they had overheard a banquet.

**TWO DISAPPEARANCES—WONDERFUL COINCIDENCE**

**WAKE UP JOTLAND YARD**

**Princely Salaries—But no Returns**

A mystery, unparalleled in the annals of crime, took place at Greyfriars yesterday afternoon. Two amazing disappearances took place within a few minutes of each other, and the mystery is still partly unsolved.

At 2.35 p.m. yesterday Mr. Peter Todd called at Jotland Yard and informed Detective Penfold that his study-mate, Mr. W. G. Bunter, had completely disappeared.

"I've looked for the ass everywhere," explained Mr. Todd, "but he seems to have vanished off the face of the earth. It is up to the Yard to find him."

"We'll do our best," said Detective Penfold. "It is possible, of course, that he has been put on the spot by the Bol-sover gang and taken for a ride."

"Let's hope so!" agreed Toddy.

has been rather in the habit of staying at Wharton Lodge, Mr. Harry Wharton's place in Surrey; and the news that he has decided to go to Scotland may possibly disappoint Mr. Wharton.

Mr. Robert Cherry has cancelled all his engagements for the next half-holiday, at the urgent request of Mr. Quetch.

Mr. Snopoo was "nighted" by Mr. Justice Wharton this evening. He will be out again to-morrow morning, when he intends to give a "Coming-out" party in his study.

Mr. Richard Nugent is now quite well again. It will be remembered that he was taken queer recently, and was moved from his cell to the prison hospital.

**SCHOOL OF BANKER.**  
If there is any fellow at Greyfriars who does not know how to play the noble and inspiring game of Banker, he is invited to attend AUBREY'S SCHOOL OF BANKER in the Fourth-Form passage.

**NO CHARGE FOR INSTRUCTION.**  
Instruction is quite free; but novices are warned to bring along some tin, in the unlikely event of their losing a game or two.

**I.O.U.'S NOT ACCEPTED.**  
AUBREY ANGEL.  
Fourth-Form Passage.



He had hardly finished speaking when Mr. Wharton burst in, flushed and angry. "Look here!" he bawled. "My study cupboard's been raided and every spot of grub has disappeared!"

"Disappeared?" cried Penfold. "What an amazing thing! Toddy has just brought the news that Bunter has also disappeared."

"Astounding coincidence!" gasped Wharton. "Is there any connection between the two events, do you think?"

"I hardly think that likely," he said. "But still, I'll look into the matter. I'll send a detective round to Study No. 1 at once."

"Good!"

The mystery remained unsolved for an hour, when it was partly cleared up by the discovery of Bunter, fast asleep, in a box-room. The fat junior was very jammy and sticky, as though he had recently gorged himself on pastries, and the remains of a large feast lay upon the floor at his feet.

Peter Todd found him, and informed the Yard of the fact. Detective Russell,