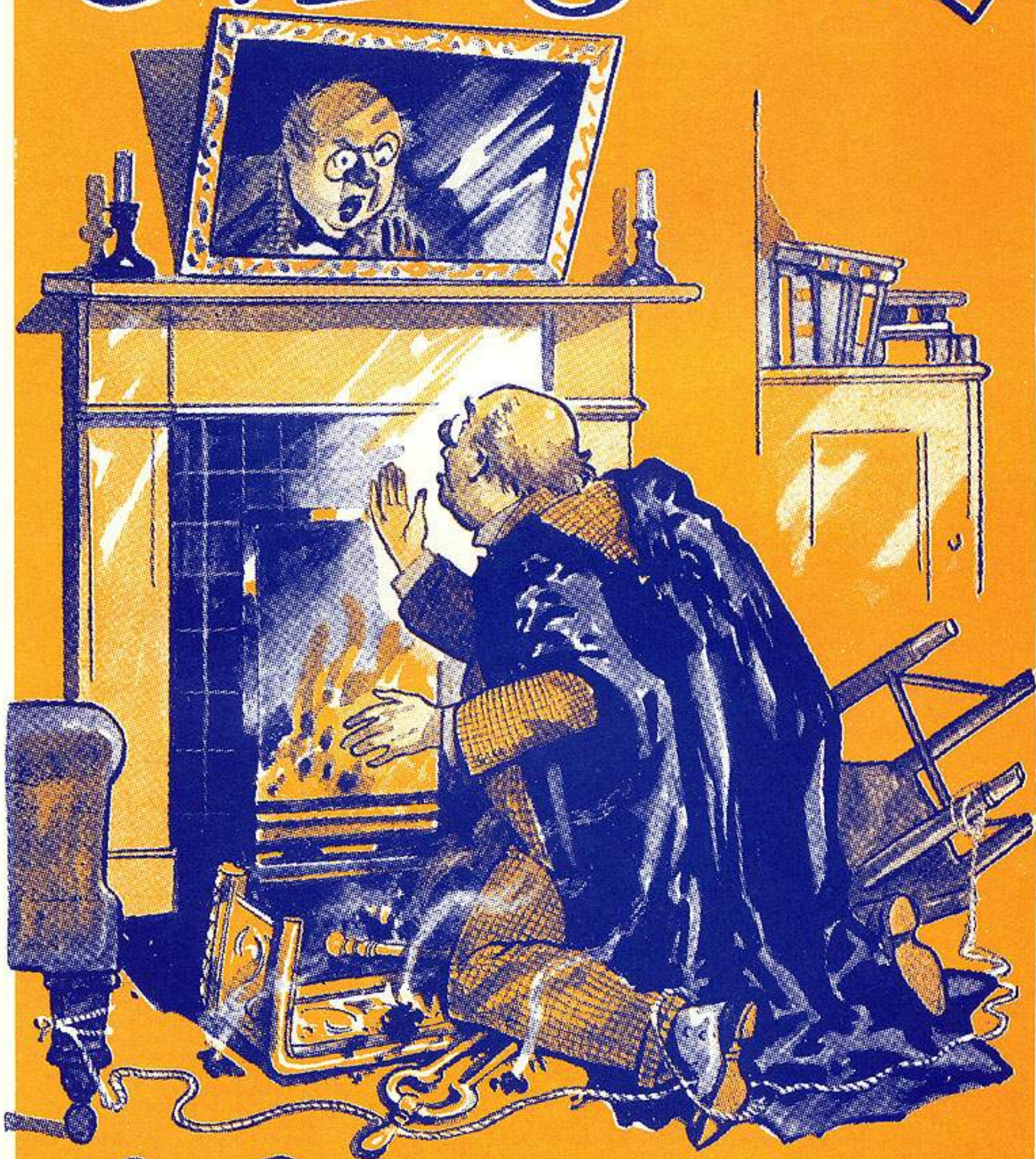


“THE FIFTH FORM MYSTERY!” Amazing Story of Schoolboy Adventure  
Featuring HARRY WHARTON & Co.

# The Magnet <sup>12<sup>D</sup></sup>



*Mr Prout Comes a Cropper!*

# The FIFTH FORM MYSTERY!

By  
**FRANK RICHARDS**



As the schoolboy conjurer struggled, he slipped the envelope into the inside pocket of Coker's jacket!

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Amazing!

"DID I tell you fellows—"

"What!"

"That I was expecting a postal order?" asked Billy Bunter of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

And there was a chuckle in the Remove passage.

There was rather a crowd of Remove fellows gathered there, near the door of Study No. 5, which belonged to Kipps and Elliott.

Kipps stood in the doorway, with a grin on his face, when Billy Bunter came rolling up the passage from the stairs.

Harry Wharton & Co. and a dozen other fellows were giving Kipps their attention. Oliver Kipps, who was a wonderful man at conjuring tricks, had just been telling them that he had a jape on, of which Billy Bunter was to be the happy victim. Just when he was wanted the fat Owl of the Remove rolled into the office.

Whereat all the fellows grinned.

Bunter did not grin.

To Bunter the matter was serious.

For it was close on tea-time; and Bunter's celebrated postal order, so long expected, had not arrived.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter, blinking at the juniors through his big spectacles. "I believe I mentioned that I am expecting a postal order, Wharton—"

"You did!" agreed Harry Wharton.

"Lots of times!" remarked Frank Nugent.

"The lotfulness is terrific!" declared Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Well," said Bunter sorrowfully, "it hasn't come!"

"You don't say so!" grunted Johnny Bull sarcastically.

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"I do, old chap! I say, you fellows, will one of you lend me the five bob till my postal order comes?"

"Will we, you men?" asked Bob Cherry. "Don't all speak at once!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean the half-crown," said Bunter, moderating his transports, as it were. "The postal order's for half-a-crown! I dare say you've got half-a-crown about you, Smithy?"

"Several!" answered Vernon-Smith.

"I mean, one you don't want—"

"No; not one that I don't want."

"Beast! I say, Wharton, you're not stingy like Smithy—"

"I am! Worse!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kipps, old chap!" Bunter turned his spectacles on the schoolboy conjurer, in the doorway of Study No. 5.

"I say, old chap, I've been going to ask you to show me some of your jolly clever conjuring tricks. I'm frightfully interested in them. I think they're fearfully clever. Mind, I'm not just pulling your leg because I want you to lend me half-a-crown—"

"Oh crikey!" said Kipps.

"If you've got half-a-crown, Kippere—"

"I spent my last half-crown in Courtfield this afternoon, to get something for a conjuring trick," answered Kipps.

"Well, you silly ass!" exclaimed Bunter in disgust. "Fancy wasting money on silly, fatheaded, fozzling conjuring tricks! Not that you can do conjuring tricks! Never saw such fozzling, footling rot in my life—"

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

Billy Bunter's estimation of Kipps' powers seemed to have changed suddenly, on the discovery that he had no half-crown to lend.

"Oh, cut the cackle!" hooted Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, where's that new chap, Caffyn? Anybody seen the Snipe!"

There was another chortle from the Remove fellows. Caffyn, as a new fellow in the school, had not heard so much about Bunter's postal order as the older inhabitants. From that circumstance the fat Owl of the Remove drew a hope—a faint hope—that Caffyn might possibly be "touched" for the necessary sum.

Caffyn, as a matter of fact, had stopped in the passage, seeing the crowd there, to see what was going on, and was only a yard or two from the shortsighted Owl. Bunter did not observe him, however.

"I say, you fellows, where's Caffyn?" he asked. "He belongs to your study, Wharton—I suppose you know where he is?"

"Oh, yes, quite!" said Harry, laughing.

"Well, where is he? He's a rotten cad, and a sneak and a snipe, and a rank outsider, and a worm, but he can't be stingier than you lot! I say, you fellows, where's Snipey?"

"Just at your elbow!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter, as he blinked round at Edgar Caffyn. "I—I—I didn't see you, Snipey, old fellow! I say—"

"You fat frump!" growled Caffyn. "Don't talk to me!"

Caffyn was not a good-tempered fellow. But even a good-tempered fellow might have been annoyed by Bunter's description of him.

"Oh, really, Caffyn—"

"Shut up, you fat pig!"

"Yah!" Bunter, shortsighted as he was, could see that there was no chance of a little loan from Caffyn. "Yah! Who wants to speak to you. I'd like to know? You're barred all through the Form; you worm! Who told lies about Coker of the Fifth, and got him into a

fearful row? Who was jolly near sacked for it? Yah!

Caffyn did not answer those questions. But he clenched his fists and stepped closer to Billy Bunter.

Bob Cherry pushed between them. "No, you don't, Snipey!" said Bob cheerfully. "If you want to punch somebody, you can begin on me, not on that fat barrel!"

"You heard what he said?" snarled Caffyn.

"I'll say the same, and you can punch me instead of Bunter!" grinned Bob. "You told lies about your cousin, Coker of the Fifth, and the Head came jolly near sacking you for it! Now punch away!"

Caffyn unclenched his hands. Punching Bunter was one thing, but punching the heaviest fighting-man in the Greyfriars Remove was quite another.

He scowled and backed away. "He, he, he!" came from Bunter. "Rotten funk! Yah! I'd give you a jolly good licking, Caffyn, but you're not worth soiling a fellow's hands on!"

"They're pretty well soiled already!" remarked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Shut up, Bunter!" said Vernon-Smith. "Go it, Kippers! Don't keep us waiting till tea-time, if you've really got a stunt on!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!" said a dozen voices.

"Shan't!" roared Bunter. "Look here, I want one of you men to lend me a couple of bob till my postal order comes! It's not much to ask, I think, after all I've done for you! I've been disappointed about that postal order——"

"Sure it hasn't come?" asked Kipps. "Eh! I've looked in the rack," said Bunter. "No letter for me! It's rather odd, you know, as it's some of my titled relations that I'm expecting to hear from. But there wasn't a letter——"

"It's hard times now for the nobility!" remarked Skinner. "The Duke de Bunter may be short of half-a-crown."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, look here, you're an awful fibber, Bunter!" said Kipps. "But I'll tell you what. I'll hunt up a couple of bob for you, if you really haven't got a postal order about you. But I fancy I could find one in your pocket!"

Bunter blinked at him and the other fellows stared. Certainly, nobody believed that Bunter's famous postal order had arrived; least of all Bunter himself. Why Kipps fancied so was rather a mystery.

Bunter grinned. "Done!" he said. "Mind, I'm holding you to it, Kippers! You've got to stick to it! You can jolly well look in my pocket!"

"Take out your hanky first," said Kipps. "I'd rather not touch that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!"

Bunter removed his handkerchief. It was not what a particular fellow would have called clean. It seldom was. Bunter's hanky was generally of an artistic shade of terra-cotta.

Kipps stepped towards him, and inserted his slim, flexible fingers into the pocket from which the handkerchief had been withdrawn.

It was a postal order for half-a-crown.

Billy Bunter blinked at it, stupefied. Whether Billy Bunter really and truly expected the arrival of the celebrated postal order was rather a question. But certainly, and indubitably, he did not expect it to arrive mysteriously in his jacket pocket without his knowledge.

Apparently, however it had done precisely that.

There was a gasp in the Remove passage.

"Oyez, oyez, oyez!" roared Frank Nugent, in the manner of a town-crier. "Bunter's postal order has come! Roll up and feast your eyes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wonders will never cease!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"The wonderfulness is terrific!" Kipps held up the postal order. There was no doubt about it. It was the genuine article. Almost for the first time in history Billy Bunter's postal order had materialised at Greyfriars School.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Plenty of Postal Orders!

"I SAY, you fellows!" gasped Bunter.

His little round eyes almost popped through his big round spectacles.

**Nothing hurts a fellow's feelings more than being accused of theft. Yet this grave charge is levelled against Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, who, chump though he may be, is as honest as the day is long!**

Bunter was the most astonished fellow there.

He had no recollection of having received that postal order. And if he had received it, it was amazing that he should have slipped it into his pocket, and forgotten that it was there. Generally Bunter's cash did not linger long in Bunter's possession. Indeed, it had no time to be forgotten. It went by the shortest route to the tuckshop.

Yet here was a postal order for half-a-crown, drawn from his jacket pocket by Kipps' slim fingers.

And Kipps, strange to relate, was not finished yet.

He passed the postal order into his left hand, or, at least, appeared to do so. Then he slipped his right into Bunter's jacket pocket again. It came forth with a postal order in it.

"Another!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"That's for two-and-six, too!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "Why, the fat, spoofing bouncer was going to stick us for half-a-crown, when he had two in his pocket already."

"I say, you fellows, I never knew——"

"Gammon!"

"I mean I must have forgotten——"

"Rats!"

"Looks to me as if Bunter's stacked with money," said Kipps; and he dipped into the fat Owl's pocket again.

"Look here!"

Again he held up a postal order, also for two-and-six.

Bunter fairly gaped at it. "Three!" exclaimed Nugent. "That's seven-and-six——"

"Well, some ass said that the age of miracles was past," said the Bouncer. "But here's jolly old Bunter with three postal orders in one day."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Four, you mean," said Kipps, taking another slip of paper from Bunter's pocket. "Look!"

"Great pip!"

"And here's another!"

"My hat!"

Billy Bunter almost fell down in his amazement. His jacket pocket, which he had believed to contain only a grubby pocket handkerchief, certainly of no great value, seemed to have turned into a mine of wealth. Often and often did Bunter talk of the postal order he was expecting. Seldom, very seldom, did he display an actual postal order. Now five postal orders, one after another, had been turned out of his pocket under his astounded eyes.

"And here's another!" exclaimed Kipps.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, as the sixth postal order came into view, Kipps holding it up for inspection.

"And the fat bouncer wants to make out that he never know," said Peter Todd. "Sticking fellows for a loan with a bunch of postal orders in his pocket all the time."

"I—I never——" gasped Bunter.

"Spoof!"

"I—I—I mean, I—I forgot. Of—of course, I—I get so many postal orders, you know—such a lot of tips from my—my titled relations that—that I—I might overlook a few——"

Harry Wharton laughed.

He was the first to "tumble" to Kipps' trickery.

Kipps had said that he had spent half-a-crown in Courtfield to get ready for a conjuring trick. He had said that Bunter was to be the object of it. Now he was producing half-crown postal orders, one after another, from the astonished Owl's pocket. The captain of the Remove guessed that this was the promised conjuring trick.

"Any more there, Kippers?" he asked, laughing.

"I'll see."

There was quite a buzz of astonishment as Kipps produced a seventh postal order from the pocket that seemed to have become like unto the celebrated purse of Fortunatus.

"I—I say, give them to me, Kippers!" gasped Bunter. "They're mine, you know. I say, you fellows, I'm going to stand a spread with all this money! All of you come to tea in my study!"

"Let's see how much you've got first," said Kipps. "Look here, and here, and here! Rolling in it—what?"

Postal order after postal order was fished out, or apparently fished out. Kipps' left hand ought to have been crammed with them, at this rate. He passed them from his right to his left as he produced them from Billy Bunter's pocket.

But his left hand behind him was open, and he allowed the fellows to see that it contained nothing.

The joke dawned on the juniors when they observed that little circumstance, and there was a roar in the Remove passage.

Bunter, however, standing in front of Kipps, could not see that empty hand, and his eyes fairly popped with amazement and delight.

How all these postal orders had got into his pocket was an amazing mystery to Bunter; but it was very delightful, all the same. Already, apparently, more than a pound had accumulated.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

He jammed his own grubby hand into that mysterious pocket, to grab all the postal orders that might possibly be there in a bunch.

His grubby paw came out empty.

Nothing was there!

He had, in fact, killed the goose that laid the golden eggs. Now that he knew that the pocket was empty, Kipps had to chuck it.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "That's the lot, then."

"The lotfulness is preposterous."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Kippers, gimme my postal orders!" exclaimed the fat Owl eagerly. "I say, that's seven, eight, nine, altogether. I say, you fellows, come to a spread in Study No. 7! Everybody, except Caffyn! I don't want the Snipe!"

Caffyn laughed. He was not likely to miss his share of the feast provided by Bunter's imaginary wealth.

"You can cackle, Snipey!" sneered Bunter. "But I'm leaving you out. You're a snipe! I want all the rest of you fellows to come. Nothing mean about me, I hope, when I'm in funds."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give me my postal orders, Kippers! What are you keeping them behind you for?" demanded Bunter warmly. "They're mine, ain't they?"

Kipps winked at the chuckling crowd of Removites.

"That depends," he answered. "You came up here telling us that you'd been disappointed about a postal order. That doesn't square with nine of them in your pocket, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Kipps—"

"That's so," said Squiff. "You'll have to prove that they're yours, Bunter."

"Of—of course, they're mine!" gasped Bunter. "Do you think I've pinched them, you silly ass? They were in my pocket, weren't they?"

"Were they?" grinned Wibley.

"Why, you fathead, you saw Kippers take them out, one after another!" hooted Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you make him gimme my postal orders!"

"I think you'd better explain how you came by them, Bunter," said the captain of the Remove gravely. "It's rather a lot of money."

"The—the fact is—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was clear that Bunter, believing that all those postal orders were real, was going to explain how they had come into his possession. Evidently he was not going to tell the truth, as there was, of course, only one postal order all the time, which the schoolboy conjurer had used over and over again, and which he had himself bought at Courtfield Post Office for the purpose. But nobody expected much in the way of truth from William George Bunter. Truth and Bunter had long been strangers. They had indeed hardly a nodding acquaintance.

The juniors were quite interested to hear what sort of an extraordinary explanation Bunter was going to give, to account for the possession of articles which had no real existence!

"The—the—the fact is—"

"Go it!" chortled Toddy. "Let's hear the facts!"

"The facts!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my hat!"

"The factfulness will not be terrific!"

"Do let a fellow speak!" yapped Bunter. "I rather forgot that I had all that money in my pocket! You see, I'm not hard up like most of you fellows—a pound isn't much to me, as it is to you. I happened to forget that the

money was there. I—I remember now, of course."

"He remembers now!" gurgled Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, where did all those postal orders come from, then?" demanded Wharton.

"One was from my Uncle George, and one from my Uncle William!" explained Bunter. "I had a couple from my Aunt Elizabeth, and one from my Cousin Wally. That's five! And the rest—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do stop cackling! I don't see why you fellows should ask me where my money comes from. Still, I don't mind telling you. My pater sent me the other four! I—I asked him specially to send half-crown postal orders,—I remember that, now! Now you give them to me, Kippers!"

"Oh crumbs!" said Bob Cherry, almost weeping. "He had one from Uncle George, and one from Uncle William, and two from Aunt Eliza, and one from Cousin Wally, and four from his pater—and there's only one, and Kippers bought that in Courtfield this afternoon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wha-a-t?" gasped Bunter.

Kipps held up a single postal order. Bunter made a grab at it, but the schoolboy conjurer jerked it back.

"That one's mine!" he explained blandly. "I bought it this afternoon for this little jape, old fat bean! You can have all the others, if you like! They'll want some finding."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter, as the truth began to dawn on his fat intellect, "I—I say, has—has that beast been playing conjuring tricks on me?"

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

"He's spotted it at last!" gasped Bob.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, ain't there any postal orders after all? Oh, lor'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" roared Bunter.

Kipps, chuckling, went back into his study. The entertainment was over, and the crowd in the Remove passage broke up, howling with laughter.

But Billy Bunter did not laugh. His fabulous wealth was gone from his gaze, like a beautiful dream! He stood with his fat face, the picture of dismay.

Bob Cherry tapped him on his podgy shoulder. In the belief that he had come into sudden, and unexpected funds, Bunter had asked all the fellows to a spread—a feast of the Barmecides, as it turned out! Still, one good turn deserved another!

"Bunter, old fat bean—"

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

"Tea in my study—"

"Eh?" Bunter brightened.

"We've got poached eggs, and jam-roll—"

Bunter beamed.

"Coming?" grinned Bob.

"Dear old chap, I'll come like a shot!" said Bunter.

And he did—like a well-aimed shot straight at the bullseye!

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Hard Lines!

"POTTER!"

No answer.

"Greene!"

A similar result!

Horace Coker of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars snorted.

Edgar Caffyn, of the Remove, grinned.

The Snipe was loafing by the old oak balustrade on the landing. He was waiting for his friends, Skinner and Snoop, to come up. Skinner and Snoop, had undertaken to smuggle in cigarettes; and the Snipe, was, or chose to fancy that he was, keen on a smoke after tea.

Thus it came to pass that he beheld his beefy and brawny cousin, Coker of the Fifth, come down the Fifth Form passage, to the games study at the end of that passage, and heard him call the names of his friends.

Receiving no answer from any of the fellows in the games study, Coker snorted and frowned, concluding that Potter and Greene were not there.

The Snipe was amused, as, during his wait on the landing, he had seen Potter and Greene go into the games study.

Coker wanted them! They did not want Coker! So, like Brer Fox, in the story, they "lay low and said nuffin'."

There were times when Potter and Greene of the Fifth were prepared to rally loyally round Coker. Such times, for instance, as when one of those gorgeous hampers arrived from his Aunt Judy.

But on this occasion, there was no hamper! Loyal friendship, therefore, was down to zero.

Coker, as usual, was up against trouble. He was loaded—overloaded—with lines! Lines had fallen on Coker, as thick as leaves on Vallombrosa, in olden times.

Mr. Prout, his Form-master, had given him a thousand lines for checking the French master. A thousand lines was awful! Once that term, Coker had had a thousand lines on hand, and it had almost turned his hair grey. Now he had another thousand; and like Cain of old, he rather felt that his punishment was greater than he could bear!

It has been remarked, that a judge who gives a man five, or seven, or ten years, does not realise what he is doing. Thus it was with Prout! In portly, majestic wrath, Prout rapped out a thousand lines. It was so long since Prout had been a schoolboy himself, that he had quite forgotten what such an impot was like. A hundred lines was all right. Two hundred lines was manageable. Even five hundred lines might be contended with. But a thousand lines came down on the unhappy victim like a sledgehammer. It was a huge, tremendous, almost infinite job of work.

A thousand lines was more than a whole book of Virgil! Only in fearfully severe cases was a man given a "book." And a thousand lines was more than a "book."

Coker had struggled and struggled with it. Potter and Greene, perhaps, would have contributed a few; but that was not practicable. The last time Coker had been helped with his lines, there had been trouble; and Prout, not usually suspicious, was very sharp now on Coker's lines.

Like Coriolanus, Coker had to do it, alone, unaided! For days and days he had worked at the Herculean task. Still that stack of lines had not been handed in. Prout was getting angry and impatient. There was a fearful, frightful possibility of the impot being doubled, if it was not finished pretty soon. Coker was buckling down to the task now—as hard as he could, and was getting near the finish, and felt like a storm-tossed mariner, who saw land! But he was tired—he was fed up—and with fifty lines yet to write, he came down the passage to speak to his friends.

Catching sight of the Snipe's grinning face, Coker scowled at him. Then he turned to the open doorway of the games study again.

"Potter! Grocno!" he bawled.

But answer there came none.

"Aren't those duffers there, Fitz?" called out Coker, to Fitzgerald of the Fifth, who was visible inside the room.

Potter and Greene, grinning, had backed against the wall beside the door, out of Coker's view, as he stood outside. Fitz, deliberately turning his back on them, answered cheerily:

"Can't see them, Coker!"

Whereupon there was a general grin in the games study.

Coker grunted with annoyance.

"It's a bit thick!" he said. "Here am

Coker. "What are you hanging about here for, I'd like to know?"

"Have you bought this landing?" inquired Caffyn.

"Don't give me any cheek! I fancy I know what you're after!" snapped Coker. "You've played tricks on my lines before, and you know I've got lines for Prout again. Is that what you're after, you snipe?"

Caffyn shrugged his shoulders. He was not likely to play any more trickery with lines written for a beak; it was too risky to play the same trick twice.

"I wonder if there is any rotten trick you wouldn't play on a fellow?" went on Coker contemptuously. "Look at the lies you told the Head about me the other day—and were jolly well bowled

"Funny, isn't it?" he snarled. "You rotters, you'd back up any other Remove man who was kicked by a Fifth Form bully."

"Quite!" agreed Harry Wharton. "Let us see Coker kicking any other Remove man, and we'll strew him over the landscape in small bits! But he can kick you as much as he jolly well likes! You should leave him alone if you want to keep clear of him. He's keen enough on keeping clear of you."

"He's just kicked me—for nothing!"

"We heard what he said as we came down the passage," answered the captain of the Remove disdainfully. "You've got off cheap with a kicking, after your rotten lies about that ass Coker. Some fellows would lay into you



Kipps stepped forward and inserted his slim, flexible fingers into Bunter's pocket. He drew those fingers out the next moment, and there was a general exclamation as a printed slip of paper was seen held in them. "Bunter's postal order has come at last, chaps!" roared Frank Nugent.

I loaded up with lines, and that old ass, Prout, may be after me any minute. A fellow's pals might at least stick in the study and make themselves useful to a fellow. I told them that I should want somebody to make coffee, too."

Potter and Greene, discussing football matters of deep import, in the games study, seemed to have no keenness for keeping the hapless Coker company and making coffee for him, as, and when required! Possibly they did not see any attraction in the idea of fagging for the great Horace, even when he was landed with a thousand lines. Anyhow they still followed the tactics of Brer Fox, and Horace Coker swung away with another grunt.

Caffyn chuckled.

Coker turned on him. A fellow who was weary of lines, dreading a visit from an angry Form-master, and deserted by his pals, had a natural feeling that it would be a relief to kick somebody. Caffyn was there, all ready to be kicked, and actually asking for it!

"You sneaking little snipe!" said

out, too! I've been going to kick you for it, ever since!"

Coker, who was not a fellow to remember offences or bear grudges, had almost forgotten the Snipe's last offence. But he remembered it now, under the urge he felt to kick somebody after labouring so long at weary Latin lines.

"Look here—" began Caffyn.

He broke off with a yell, as the brawny Fifth Former grasped him, and jerked him away from the balustrade.

He yelled in anticipation; and his anticipations were fully justified. A heavy boot—the biggest in the Fifth—landed on his trousers!

Caffyn flew—and crashed!

"That's a tip!" said Coker; and, feeling better, he walked back to his study to finish his lines.

Caffyn did not feel better.

He scrambled up with a face of fury. Harry Wharton & Co., coming along from the Remove passage, glanced at him, and smiled.

The Snipe gave them a black and bitter look.

with a fives bat till you couldn't howl. Give up your rotten tricks and start telling the truth, for a change, and then we'll chip in fast enough if any Fifth Form man boots you."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snarled Caffyn.

The Famous Five went down the Remove staircase, leaving the Snipe loafing on the landing. Skinner and Snoop did not appear; there seemed to be some delay in getting those smokes. Still, the Snipe did not mind hanging about—idle loafing was one of his usual ways of passing the time, and it was just as good to loaf on the landing as anywhere else.

But he kept an eye open in the direction of the Fifth Form studies. If the great Horace showed up in the offing, he was not going to get within kicking distance again.

About a quarter of an hour later the great Horace did show up.

By a final burst he had finished that tremendous imposition. The thousand

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lines lay complete on Coker's table, and Coker was fed-up to the back teeth.

Having finished the lines, it would have been wise on Coker's part to take them down immediately to Prout's study.

But wisdom was not much in Horace's line.

He was going, of course, to take that impot down to Prout. But he was so utterly fed-up with lines, and Latin, and Prout, and everything appertaining thereto, that he could stand no more. He walked along to the games study, for a little enlivening company for a few minutes. His own company—and Virgil's—had palled on him. He was feeling, really, almost at his last gasp.

Caffyn, hearing the heavy tread coming down the passage, backed round a corner, till Coker had gone into the Fifth Form games study.

Horace had forgotten him, and did not remember his existence at all. In the games study, they were talking football; and he found Potter and Greene there—unaware that they had been there all the time.

Football was a subject of which Coker fancied that he knew more than any other man in the Fifth; indeed, more than all the rest of the Fifth put together. His opinion, Coker thought, was worth hearing. Nobody else thought so; but Coker thought so, and that was enough for Coker. His valuable opinion on the point under discussion was given at considerable length. And the few minutes lengthened into a good many more minutes—for when Coker's jawbone was in action he forgot time and space. Likewise he forgot lines and Prout.

Thus it came to pass that the vengeful Snipe had time—ample time—to slip

into Coker's study, unseen, and make a few arrangements there.

The lines, lying on the study table, he dared not touch. His last exploit of that kind had led to too much trouble. But once before he had fastened a cord across the room for Coker to fall over. Coker was the man to be caught a dozen times over by the simplest trick. Swiftly the Snipe fastened a cord across, just within the doorway from a leg of the table to a leg of the armchair. Then he promptly disappeared.

Skinner and Snoop had not yet appeared, and he decided to go down and look for them. He did not want to be anywhere near at hand when Coker caught his big feet in that cord, and landed on his nose on his study floor.

Any minute Coker might go back to his study to get those lines to take down to Prout. When he did, he was going to meet with a surprise, and the Snipe only regretted that he could not be present to see Coker land.

But Coker was not in a hurry to go back for those lines. Having forgotten time and space, and lines and Prout, Coker, like the strong silent man he was, went on talking! Which would not have mattered much if Mr. Prout, in his turn, had forgotten lines and Coker.

Unfortunately, Mr. Prout hadn't.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

##### Man Down!

"**W**ARE, elephants!" whispered the Bounder.

There was a suppressed chuckle.

Mr. Prout, master of the Fifth, was coming up the stairs. Vernon-Smith and Redwing and Toddy were coming down. They stood aside respectfully for the

beak; and Prout, fortunately, did not catch the Bounder's whisper.

Prout rolled on, majestic. Prout knew that he was majestic, and did not know that he was elephantine. Solid as the old oaken stairs were, they creaked under Prout.

On Prout's plump brow was a frown—a majestic frown, such as might have corrugated the god-like brow of Jovo on high Olympus.

Prout was wrathful.

Day after day he had expected those lines from that troublesome member of his Form, Horace James Coker. Now he had fixed a time-limit. And Coker had exceeded the limit!

Prout was not a hard man. He had, perhaps, realised, on reflection, that such an impot as a thousand lines wanted some doing. Twice he had excused Coker's delays. Now he was at an end of his patience.

Coker had not come to his study. So he was going to Coker's. And if he did not find the impot done, he was going to double it, which would provide Horace with some useful occupation for all his leisure hours during the rest of the term. It was time, Prout considered, to put his foot down!

He rolled past the games study, where Horace was still going strong, and rolled up the Fifth Form passage.

He arrived at Coker's door.

He breathed hard, as he saw that the study was dark. Coker, evidently, was not there! He was not even at work on those lines!

But Prout meant to be reasonable. He meant to be just. If the lines were done, all was serene. He did not want to be hard on Coker, much as that hot-headed, unthinking, egregious fathead exasperated him.

He threw open the door and switched on the light.

His eyes fell on a stack of impot paper on the table. The Jove-like frown dissipated on his majestic brow. It looked as if Coker had done the lines, though he had not yet handed them over to the beak. If such was the case, it was a relief to Prout; really, he did not want to be always ragging Coker.

He walked across the study, to look at the stack on the table.

Then it happened!

Had Coker walked into that room there was no doubt that he would have walked into Caffyn's cord and taken a tumble before he saw it there. Coker could be absolutely depended on to walk into any trap.

But Prout was even more surely doomed than Coker.

Years had added to the experience and wisdom of Mr. Prout. They had also added to his girth.

It was a long time since Prout had seen his knees. Prout's waist was ample. Below his waist, he was constructed rather on the lines of a well-filled balloon. Wherever Prout stood, he hid quite a considerable portion of the globe he inhabited.

Prout, who could not see his knees, could still less see his feet, and still less the cord that stretched taut just in front of his feet.

His majestic roll would have carried him across to the lines on the table, but for the interposition of Caffyn's cord.

As it was, Prout's plump ankles caught on that cord.

He pitched forward.

In his younger days, when, according to what he told the other beaks in Common-room, Prout had been a great athlete, no doubt Prout would have recovered his balance before he crashed.

At the actual moment, however, Prout didn't.

Once he started to hurl forward his



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Forgotten  
the  
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weight did the rest. Once sixteen stone had lost their centre of gravity, they were not to be trifled with.

Prout crashed!

He gave a startled, horrified, amazed gasp as he went. He had time for only one gasp. Then his plump nose hit Coker's carpet.

Thud!

A novelist would have called it a sickening thud. There was no doubt that it was sickening to Prout.

He gurgled.

The study floor almost shook as he banged on it. His plump hands, his plumper waistcoat, flopped hard. His nose tapped. It was rather a hard tap. Indeed, Prout had cause to be thankful that Aunt Judith had sent her beloved Horace a nice thick carpet for his study. That tap on hard oak would certainly have done more damage.

It did damage enough as it was. There was a spurt of claret from Prout's nose.

He lay and gurgled. His mortar-board fell off, revealing the bald spot which Prout always tried to guard jealously from the public eye. His gown ripped. A fat pocket-book rolled from his breast pocket and slid under the table.

Prout noticed none of these things. What he noticed chiefly was the pain in his nose.

"Ooooooogh!" gurgled Prout.

With an effort—for it was not an easy task for a man of Prout's weight—he sat up.

He blinked round to see what had overthrown him.

Then he saw the cord!

Wrath, to which the famous wrath of Achilles, of olden times, was a mere jest, gathered on Prout's brow.

"A—a trick!" he gasped. "A—a trap! Upon my word! That—that—that young scoundrel—upon my word! Unprecedented! Unparalleled!"

Prout, of course, saw it all!

That disrespectful, headstrong, rebellious young scoundrel, Coker, had guessed that he would come up to the study for the undelivered lines, and had prepared this trap for his unwary feet!

His eyes gleamed and glistened.

Slowly he rose. He looked into Coker's glass. His nose, like Marian's in the ballad, was red and raw. It trickled crimson. It was already swelling—and was evidently going to swell some more.

Prout gazed at it.

Nothing could have been more unfortunate. For Prout had week-end leave that week, and had made all his arrangements for a three-day trip across the Channel into France.

That trip, evidently, was off! He could not display a nose like that to the astonished gaze of scoffing foreigners!

If anything could have added to Prout's deep wrath, that would have been added to it. He breathed vengeance.

Coker should pay for this! Flogging—expulsion—though boiling in oil would have been more appropriate.

Prout was rather winded by his tumble. He leaned one hand on the table, and stood gasping for breath, which he needed badly.

As he stood, he heard rather hurried footsteps in the passage.

They were Coker's footsteps.

The fact was that some fellows in the games study had heard Prout's elephantine tread as he passed. The door being shut, they did not see him, but there was no mistaking that tread. So they warned Coker, and Coker, remembering his Form-master's existence, and realising that Prout must have come up

for the lines, hurried homeward. Prout's adventures in Coker's study, thrilling as they were, had not lasted more than a minute. Coker was only sixty seconds after him. But those seconds had been packed with incident!

Coker, in a hurry to avert wrath, ran into the study. He wanted to tell Prout, at once, that he had done the lines, and that he had been just about to bring them down and hand them over.

But Coker never gave Prout that information.

For as he ran into the study his feet caught in the stretched cord that had already floored Prout.

What swept his feet suddenly from under him Coker did not know. But he knew that he took a sudden and unexpected header.

He fairly shot forward in a terrific nose-dive.

Bump!

He hardly realised, at the awful moment, that it was Prout's plump waistcoat that his head crashed into.

Prout did! He realised it only too clearly.

Utterly winded, Prout staggered back, and for the second time landed on the floor of Coker's study. Coker, on his hands and knees, gazed at him. It was quite a remarkable scene.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Rousing the Hornets!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter put a grinning face in Study No. 1 in the Remove.

Harry Wharton lifted his pen and pointed to the door with it.

"Cut!" he said. "Prep!"

"But, I say—"

"Prep!" said Frank Nugent.

"Never mind prep!" grinned Bunter. "I fancy your prep's going to be interrupted. Wait till Coker comes."

Wharton and Nugent sat up and took notice at once. Edgar Caffyn, who was sorting out books for preparation, glanced round quickly.

"Coker coming here!" he exclaimed. "What for?"

Bunter chortled.

"You!" he answered. "He, he, he! I say, he's got a leather strap off a trunk! He, he, he!"

Caffyn set his thin lips. That piece of information left him no doubt that Horace Coker had fallen into the trap in his study, and guessed the identity of the author thereof.

Wharton and Nugent both looked at him.

"What have you been doing to your cousin in the Fifth now, Caffyn?" asked the captain of the Remove quietly.

"Nothing!" answered Caffyn.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "You didn't tie a cord across his study for him to go wallop over?"

"No!" snarled Caffyn.

"Well, he jolly well thinks you did!" grinned Bunter. "Somebody did! I say, you fellows, it was fearfully funny! From what I hear, Prout went up to the study after Coker and tripped over the cord—"

"Prout did!" exclaimed Caffyn, startled. Evidently he had bagged bigger game than he had calculated on.

"Yes, rather! Smashed his nose to—to pieces on—the fender, so I hear," said Bunter. "I haven't seen him, but I hear that he was streaming with blood—soaked in it—drenched from head to foot—"

"Gallons of it?" asked Nugent sarcastically.

"Well, pints at least!" said Bunter, stopping short of gallons. "Quarts, I should think, at least! Frightfully lacerated and mutilated—disfigured for life, you know! Nose completely smashed. Then, it seems, Coker rushed into the study and fell over Prout—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Prout was heard roaring as far as the games study when he got his breath back. Blundell and Bland and a lot more ran in. They had to help Prout away. He was foaming! Grinding his teeth! He thought that Coker had fixed up that cord for him! Only even Prout had to admit that Coker wouldn't have fallen over, it himself if he'd known it was there. But he was in an awful rage! Roaring!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"According to what Fitzgerald was saying, Prout only half-believes it wasn't Coker fixed up that cord. Anyhow, he's foaming with rage. I say, you fellows, Coker thinks it was the Snipe! He's raging in the Fifth now. I heard him tell Potter and Greene that he's coming up here to smash Caffyn into little bits—"

"Serve him jolly well right!" said Nugent. "We won't stop him!"

"No fear!" agreed Wharton.

Caffyn gave him a bitter look.

"You're going to let that bully pitch into me, when there isn't a fragment of proof that I did anything in his study at all!" he sneered.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"I remember you were hanging about on the landing, near the Fifth studies," he said. "That must have been about the time it was done, anyhow. You're always playing rotten tricks on Coker, and if he's making a mistake this time, it's your own fault. Why can't you leave the chap alone?"

"You saw him kick me for nothing and—"

"So that's why you did it; and you've just denied that you did it at all!" said Wharton, with a curl of the lip. "I dare say that nothing can happen to Coker, without his putting it down to you. All the same, it's pretty clear that you did it, and if Coker's going to whop you for it, more power to his elbow!"

"Hear, hear!" said Frank.

"He, he, he!" from Bunter, and the fat Owl rolled on up the passage to tell his funny story in other studies—a much more interesting matter than prep.

Caffyn breathed hard.

"Well, that brute isn't going to whop me with a strap," he said. "I'm going to the prefect on duty—"

"That's Loder of the Sixth!" said Frank, with a grin. "You'll have to look for him! When Loder's on duty in prep, he generally gets into a quiet corner with a novel or a cigarette."

"I'll go down to Quelch!" said Caffyn, between his teeth. "My Form-master is bound to protect me."

"Better make up your mind to leave Coker alone!"

"Oh, shut up!"

Caffyn left the study. Wharton and Nugent exchanged a glance, and went on with their prep. Coker, in adjudging Caffyn guilty of the jape in his study, seemed rather to have jumped to conclusions. Still, they had no doubt that he had jumped on the right man.

The Snipe hurried down the passage to the landing.

He was about to cut across to the Remove staircase, when he stopped suddenly. Coker was coming up.

Apparently the great Horace had looked downstairs for him first, no doubt, in the Rag, where Removes

were generally found till prep. Not having found him there, Coker was coming up again. This time, it was fairly certain, he was bound for Caffyn's study in the Remove.

The Snipe panted.

Instantly, at the sight of Coker he backed away, before the Fifth Form man spotted him. He cut across the landing to the other staircase.

But he knew that he would be spotted on the stairs if he ran down, and that Coker would be after him like a shot.

He passed the staircase, therefore, and the games study, and ran up the Fifth Form passage.

That, as his quick mind told him at once, was the most unlikely place for Coker to search for him.

Coker, unaware that the Snipe had passed almost under his nose, tramped into the Remove passage.

He hurled open the door of Study No. 1 with a crash.

He tramped in.

"Where's that Snipe!" he roared.

Wharton and Nugent rose to their feet. In his continual troubles and feuds with his cousin in the Remove, they rather sympathised with Coker. It was obvious to the least observant observer, that most of the fault was on Caffyn's side. Coker only wanted to keep clear of the fellow, and had Caffyn been content to keep his distance, and stop his monkey-like tricks, there would have been truce, if not peace.

But, though they rather sympathised with Horace Coker in this feud, they did not want a Fifth Form man throwing his weight about in a Remove study—especially their own.

"Not here!" said Harry briefly.

"I've looked downstairs!" roared Coker. "He's not there! Where is he? Sharp!"

"Find out!" suggested Frank Nugent.

Coker glared. He had come there with a box-strap in his hand, to thrash Caffyn. But he was in a mood to thrash anybody or everybody. He had a short way with fags, anyhow.

"I don't want any cheek!" he roared.

"I want that Snipe! Are you hiding him in this study, you young rotters?"

"I've got him in my waistcoat pocket!" answered Frank sweetly.

"Well, I'll jolly well find him, if he's here!" bawled Coker. "And if you fags chip in, I'll give you some of what I've got for Caffyn. Hiding under the table, I dare say."

Coker might have stooped and looked under the study table. But he was in too excited and enraged a temper for that. He grasped the table and spun it aside.

There was an indignant yell from the owners of the study.

"You fathead!"

"Let that table alone!"

Books and papers flew right and left. The inkpot tipped over on the hearth-rug.

"Barge him out!" roared Wharton.

"Collar the fathead!" yelled Nugent.

Sympathy with Coker had quite disappeared! He could whop Caffyn if he liked, so far as the chums of the Remove were concerned. But he could not carry on like this in a Remove study. Far from it!

Wharton and Nugent fairly hurled themselves at Coker. They grasped him, and rushed him back to the doorway.

"My hat!" gasped Coker. "Why, I'll smash you! I'll spificate the pair of you!"

In the doorway the mighty Horace rallied. He staggered and swayed,

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with the two juniors clinging to him like cats.

"Rescue, Remove!" yelled Nugent.

Study doors opened all along the passage. Remove fellows poured out, and rushed to the spot.

Loder of the Sixth, the prefect on duty in prep, certainly ought to have heard that terrific uproar, and arrived to inquire what it was all about. But as Loder of the Sixth was smoking a quiet cigarette in Walker's study at the time, he did not hear, and he did not arrive.

Vernon-Smith and Redwing, Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull, were the first fellows to reach the spot. Toddy and Hurree Singh and Squiff and Tom Brown were only a few seconds behind. Wibley and Micky Desmond and Kipps, and Russell and Ogilvy and Hazeldene, came after them. More fellows were coming—the whole Remove turning out like a nest of hornets.

But there was really no room for more! All the available space on Coker was already grasped.

In many hands, Coker went along the passage to the landing, head over heels, and heels over head.

He rolled and he bumped and he crashed, and he banged. On the landing the Removites tapped his head on the banisters, and tapped it on the floor; jerked off his collar and tie, and jammed them down his back, and finally left him—as there was an alarm of the Fifth coming.

In a cheery mood the juniors retreated to their own studies. What was left of Horace Coker lay gurgling and gasping on the landing, till Potter and Greene came out of the games study and kindly picked up the remains and helped Coker home.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### A Chance at Last!

**E**DGAR CAFFYN stopped in the Fifth Form passage as he passed an open doorway. It was the door of Coker's study.

The light was on there, and he saw that the study was empty. He darted in and shut the door.

Coker's study, at the moment, seemed the safest possible place for the hunted Snipe. Certainly it was the last place in which Horace Coker was likely to search for him.

So long as Coker continued his search, the Snipe was safe there. If Potter and Greene came in to prep they were only likely to tell him to clear. But the Fifth were not yet at prep.

With Coker tunting him, box-strap in hand, and the other Remove fellows declining to have anything to do with him, Caffyn had made up his mind to go to Mr. Quelch. The Remove-master, it was certain, would very quickly put a stop to Coker's antics.

But he did not want to risk meeting Coker on his way. He wanted to see Quelch before he got the box-strap, not after. Safe for the moment, he resolved to remain doggo, where he was, for ten minutes or so. He calculated that Coker, not finding him in Study No. 1, would draw the other studies, farther up the Remove passage, in quest of him.

That assuredly Coker would have done had he not, with his usual obetrepousness, fallen foul of the fellows in Study No. 1.

Once Coker had fairly started on a voyage of discovery up the Remove passage, the coast would be clear for the Snipe to slip out and scuttle down the stairs.

In the study of his enemy—at least, of the fellow whose enemy he was—the Snipe was not likely to remain idle. He glanced round him, to see what damage he could do in the few minutes he had at his disposal. Up-ending the table and scattering books, and inks, and papers all over the floor appealed to him as a good idea. Certainly, that would be as bad for Potter and Greene as for Coker; but the malicious Snipe cared nothing about that. He stooped to take hold of a leg of the table, to tilt it over.

As he did so his eyes fell on a fat leather pocket-book that lay on the carpet, under the table.

It had lain there ever since it had popped out of Prout's pocket. Prout had not missed it yet. Prout was busy with a damaged nose—and likely to be busy for some time. As for Coker, after getting away from Prout he had thought of nothing but Snipe-hunting.

Caffyn stared at the pocket-book, and picked it up. He could see that it was not the sort of thing that was likely to belong to a schoolboy.

How it came there he did not, for the moment, guess: but he guessed that it did not belong to Coker, or Potter, or Greene. It was the property of some master.

The Snipe was as inquisitive as a jackdaw, and had no scruples whatever about looking into a pocket-book that did not belong to him. But his chief interest in it was the idea that it might serve him against Coker. It was plain that it belonged to a master, and must have been dropped in the study by accident. If, when it was found, it was found damaged, the blame was very likely to fall on the occupants of the study—and especially on the occupant who was already the object of Prout's wrath.

A name was stamped on the leather: "P Prout."

Then the Snipe understood.

Prout, of course, was the only master likely to come to a Fifth Form study. And, from what Bunter had related, Caffyn knew that Prout had been there and had taken a tumble over the cord fixed up for Coker.

Evidently, he had dropped the pocket-book in his fall, and had not noticed the loss of it.

Another moment, and the pocket-book was open. The Snipe's sharp, inquisitive eyes examined the contents.

Letters, folded papers, memoranda of all sorts, filled most of it. There were also some circulars from travel agencies. And there was a folded slip of engraved paper, which was evidently a banknote, though not an English one.

The Snipe stared at it. The figures "5,000" and the words "cinq mille francs" met his eyes.

It was a French banknote for 5,000 francs.

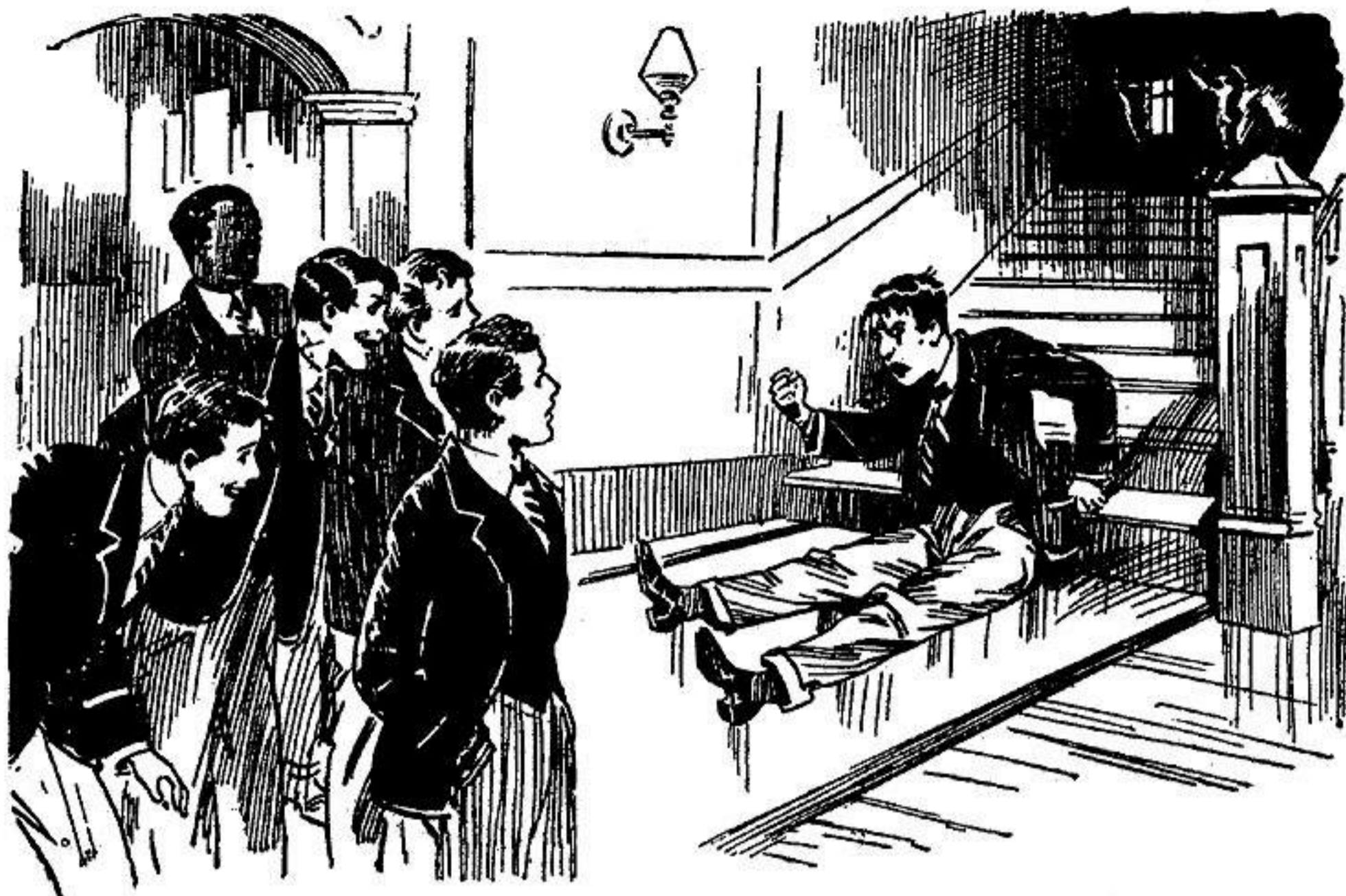
What a Greyfriars master was doing with a Bank-of-France note in his pocket-book, Caffyn could not imagine.

It was a note for a large sum, too. In the old days, before the War, 10,000 francs represented £200. But at the current rate of exchange, in the present year of grace, 5,000 francs was worth about £60.

Caffyn, naturally, knew nothing of Prout's projected trip across the Channel at the week-end.

That, of course, was why Prout had sent to his bank for a supply of French money. It was like "Old Pompos" to have it all in one big note. Most travellers abroad provide themselves with foreign currency in smaller and more manageable denominations. "But "Don Pomposo" was going to change that 5,000-franc note at a French hotel





"Funny, isn't it?" snarled Caffyn, clenching his fist. "You rotters would back up any other Remove man who was kicked by a Fifth Form bully!" "Quite!" agreed Harry Wharton. "But you've got off cheap with a kicking, after your rotten lies about Coker!"

with a flourish. No doubt he was going to give—or hoped to give—the impression that the rich English milord had dozens of such notes!

Anyhow, there it was! Caffyn blinked at it.

A strange change came over his thin, foxy features.

The thought that had come into his mind startled him and caused his face to pale.

He stood for a long minute, quite still.

Then he closed the pocket-book and threw it under the table again, keeping the billet-de-banque in his hand.

Suddenly he thrust it into his pocket.

His face was almost white, and beads of perspiration started on his forehead. But his face was set, hard, fiercely determined. Was this a chance, at last, to get his own back on Cousin Horace, to repay his contempt and dislike with a crushing blow—to cut him out for ever from the favour of Aunt Judith? It seemed to Caffyn that it was!

He had not thought it all-out—he had no time for that! Vague plans were in his cunning mind. Meanwhile, he had the banknote safe—to be used when his plans were out and dried.

He ran across to the door.

If he was to carry out this half-formed scheme it was imperative that it should never be known that he had been in Coker's study while the pocket-book was there.

Even at the risk of a strapping from Coker he had to make sure of that.

He opened the door and peered into the passage.

The passage was clear.

The Fifth were not yet coming along to prep. From a distance the Snipe's ear caught a roar of voices, a trampling of feet. The uproar came from the direction of the Remove passage.

He understood at once. Coker had fallen foul of the Removites, and was

mixed up in a shindy with that lively Form.

Nothing could have suited Caffyn better. He scudded down the passage to the landing.

He reached it as an excited mob came pouring out of the Remove passage, Coker whirling in their midst. In the wild excitement of the moment nobody heeded or noticed Caffyn, least of all, Horace Coker. The Snipe coolly mixed with the crowd and added a thump or two to the many that landed on Coker. And when the Remove went back to their quarters Caffyn went with them.

It was not necessary to go down to Quelch now. Coker, it was clear, was in no state to go on the warpath again. Neither did Caffyn want to draw official attention to the fact that he was at daggers drawn with Coker, in view of what was to happen shortly.

He rejoined his study-mates at prep in Study No. 1. Somewhat breathless after handling Coker, Wharton and Nugent sat down to work, and the Snipe sat down with them. And if there was a lurking, sardonic grin on his ill-favoured countenance, Wharton and Nugent did not notice it.

As soon as prep was over they went along to Bob Cherry's study, and the Snipe was left to himself. He was glad to be left alone. He had some thinking to do—hard thinking. Slowly but surely the dastardly scheme unfolded in his wily mind and he knew what he was going to do.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Lost and Found!

"Ow! Wow! Ow!" Horace Coker made that remark.

He made it many times.

Potter and Greene were at prep in the study. Coker was giving very little

attention to prep. He was not even thinking of the Snipe, and the necessity for administering punishment to that disagreeable youth. Aches and pains, liberally distributed all over his burly form, occupied Coker's attention, to the exclusion of most other things.

Having awakened a hornets' nest in the Remove passage, Coker had been badly stung by the hornets! Really, he might have foreseen it, if Horace Coker had ever foreseen anything!

Aching and paining, Coker grunted, and occasionally groaned, and barely toyed with his prep. Coker was in no mood, and no state, for prep.

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

"You're repeating yourself, old bean!" murmured Potter mildly.

Greene nodded assent.

"Yes we've heard that one!" he concurred.

This was fearfully unfeeling, considering Coker's awfully battered and bumped and damaged condition. But Coker, generally bursting with pep, had not energy enough left to tell his friends what he thought of them. He only glared, and repeated:

"Wow!"

This was the happy state of affairs in Coker's study when an elephantine tread was heard in the passage. Potter and Greene started a little, and Coker breathed hard. Prout was coming!

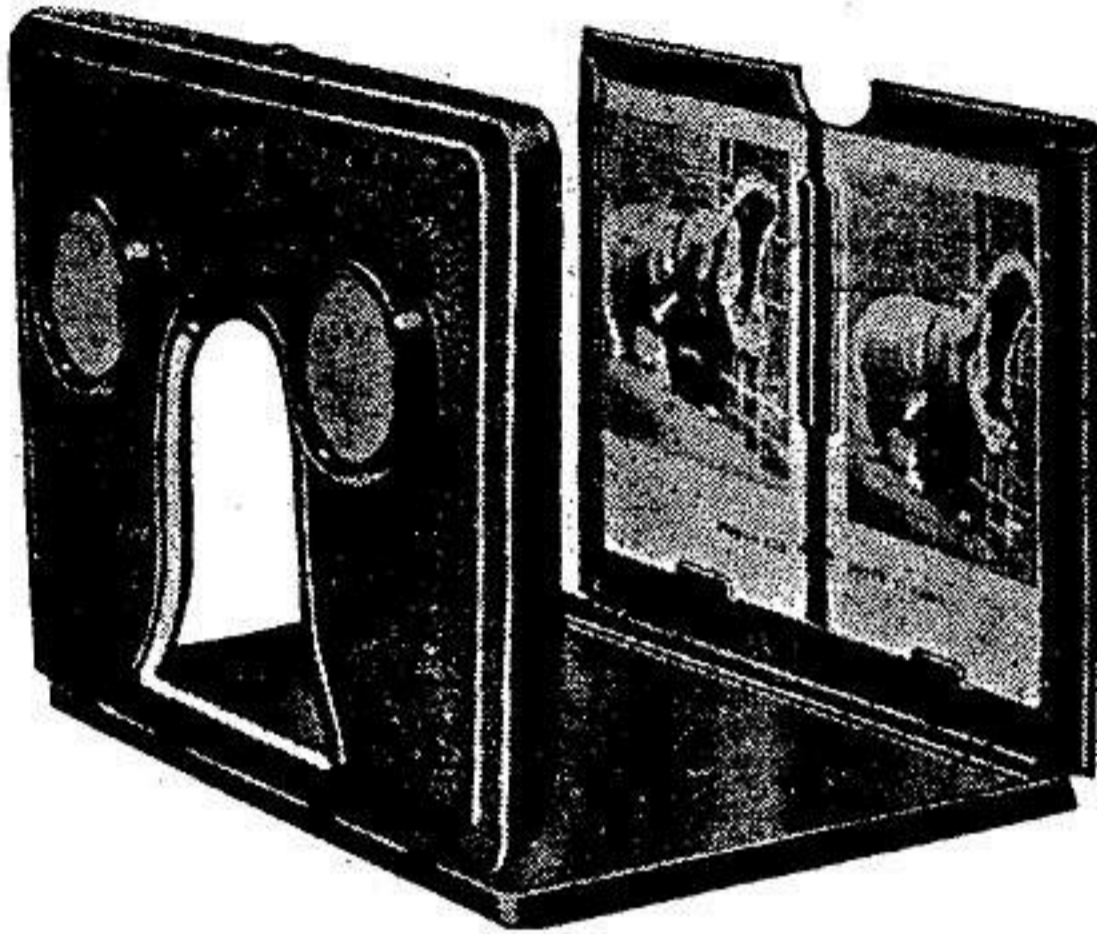
Coker, not unnaturally, felt that he had had enough of Prout for one evening. He was fed up with Prout.

The elephantine tread steadily approached the study door.

"If that old ass is barging in to bother me I shall jolly well tell him off!" breathed Coker. "I'm not standing much more from Prout."

Coker had stood much already. Prout had actually fancied that he, Horace James Coker, a senior and a Fifth Form

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man, had played that silly trick with a stretched cord in the study.

Only the fact that Coker himself had fallen over it, in his turn, had saved him from being adjudged guilty and taken to the Head for terrific punishment. Even yet Prout did not seem free from doubts on the subject.

If he was coming there to rake it all up again, Coker felt that his patience would run out. Prout, no doubt, had a pain in his nose, but Coker had pains all over him.

There was a knock at the door. Prout always knocked at a fellow's study door. It was opened, and revealed Prout.

Coker & Co. rose respectfully to their feet. But there was a gleam in Coker's eye. Let that old ass just begin! Coker was ready for him if he did!

Fortunately, Prout did not begin on the painful subject. It was quite another errand that had brought him back to Coker's study.

"I am sorry to interrupt your preparation," said Prout, addressing Potter and Greene, and taking no notice of Coker. "But I have missed my pocket-book, and I think I must have dropped it in this study, when I—when I—hem! I think it must be here, as it has certainly fallen from my pocket somewhere."

"Haven't seen it, sir!" said Coker.

Prout did not take any notice of his answer or his existence. Whether he was guilty of the taut cord or not, Prout had a pain in his nose, and Coker was in his black books.

"We'll soon find it, if it's here, sir!" said Potter cheerfully.

"Thank you, Potter!"

Potter and Greene started looking round the study. Coker frowned. He felt that his Form-master was treating him with underserved contumely.

Was it Coker's fault that some rascally junior—undoubtedly the Snipe—had fixed up a cord across the study for a man to fall over?

Obviously not! Yet Prout acted just as if it was Coker's fault. Horace felt that it ought not to be left at that.

"I hope, sir," said Coker, with dignity, "that you don't still think that I played that rotten, silly, fag trick with the cord, sir!"

Prout took note of his existence at last. He fixed a baleful eye on Horace Coker.

"I have given you the benefit of the doubt in that matter, Coker!" he boomed. "I have no more to say!"

"As if I'd play tricks like a silly fag, sir!"

"That will do, Coker!"

"I know who did it, sir!"

"Oh!" Prout displayed a little interest in that. "In that case, Coker, I shall be pleased to hear the facts."

"It was a Remove kid, sir!" said Coker. "I know who it was perfectly well. You won't ask me to give his name, sir, to a master; but there's no doubt about it at all!"

Prout eyed him.

"If you can say nothing more definite than that, Coker, you can scarcely expect me to take any notice of what you say!" he snapped. "If, as you say, it was a Remove boy, you may give me his name, and I will not report the matter to Mr. Quelch. I should certainly not desire to place any boy in my Form in the position of an informer. But you may give me the name as I am not the boy's Form-master."

"That's all right, then, sir. It was Caffyn of the Remove."

"You are sure of this?" asked Prout, unbending considerably.

"Quite, sir!"

"How did you discover this, Coker?" Potter and Greene, who were looking

about for the lost pocket-book, looked at one another instead, and Potter winked. Prout's question was rather a poser, as Coker had not discovered anything, but only jumped to conclusions. But Coker answered cheerily enough.

"I know it was Caffyn, sir! The little beast is always playing some trick or other on me, and this is another of his rotten japes. I'm going to give him a jolly good whopping for it, too."

"Have you any proof that it was Caffyn?" demanded Mr. Prout, in a very deep voice.

"Only that I know it was, sir!"

"Has he admitted it?"

"Catch him!" said Coker. "I mean no, sir."

"Did anyone see him in the study?"

"Not that I know of, sir."

Prout gave a snort.

"Then you cannot possibly know that it was Caffyn. You can only mean that you suppose it was Caffyn, because you are on bad terms with your relative in the Lower Fourth Form. You are a stupid boy, Coker!"

"But I know——"

"You know nothing of the sort!" roared Prout. "Be silent! You have spoken, Coker, of administering punishment to Caffyn——"

"Yes, rather, sir! I'm going——"

"If you do anything of the kind, Coker, I shall call you to a very severe account!" said Mr. Prout. "I warn you not to do so, Coker! How many times have I to tell you that you are not a prefect, and have no right to exercise the authority of one? If you lay a finger on one of Mr. Quelch's boys, I shall cane you, Coker!"

"But, sir——"

"Silence!" hooted Prout.

It was difficult for Coker to suppress his indignation and remain silent. Luckily he managed to do so.

Prout, snorting, turned away from him and watched the explorations of Potter and Greene up and down and round about the study.

They had not found the pocket-book.

"It must be here, Potter!" said Mr. Prout. "It was in my pocket when I came here; I am certain of that. I can have dropped it nowhere else. If you have seen nothing of it——"

"Nothing, sir."

"Or you, Greene?"

"No, sir!"

"Or you, Coker?"

"No, sir!"

Potter and Greene looked rather uneasily at Coker. After helping Horace home in his dilapidated state from his battle with the Remove, they had left him in the study, in a state of collapse, and gone back to the games study. It was ten minutes or more later that they had come along to prep.

If the book had dropped where Prout fell, it could not have fallen far out of sight. They had an uneasy suspicion that Coker might have picked it up, and, in his excited and angry state, chucked it out of the window, or even into the fire. Really, there never was any telling what Horace Coker might or might not have done.

Coker, catching their glances, stared at them.

"What are you blinking at me for?" he demanded.

"Oh, nothing!" stammered Potter.

"You silly ass, do you think I've seen anything of the blessed thing, when I say I haven't?" demanded Coker excitedly.

Prout gave him a sharp look.

"Coker! If you have played any foolish, insensate trick with my pocket-book——" he boomed

"I haven't!" roared Coker. "I haven't seen it! I don't believe it was

dropped here at all, or I should have seen it."

"It certainly was dropped here!" snapped Prout. "On that point there is no doubt—no doubt whatever! After what has already happened in this study, Coker, I should not be surprised at any insensate prank that was played here! Have you hidden that pocket-book from sight?"

"I haven't seen it!" almost shrieked Coker.

"Have you been alone in the study since I was here?" demanded Prout.

"Yes, I have, but I haven't seen your pocket-book."

Prout set his plump lips.

"Unless that pocket-book is found immediately, Coker, I shall conclude that you have deliberately placed it out of sight!" he snorted.

Coker breathed hard through his nose! This was the sort of justice a fellow got from Prout!

"If it's here, we'll jolly well find it!" he said. "I'll help!"

The search was made more intensive. Potter and Greene had glanced under the table, but they naturally supposed that an article that had been dropped, by accident would be near at hand.

So it had been before Caffyn found it. The Snipe had thrown it right under the table where it could not possibly have fallen by accident. Potter and Greene could not have seen it without putting their heads under the table, which they did not think of doing.

So there it lay, under the middle of the table, while the search went on up and down and round about Coker's study.

Prout's brow grew darker and darker. He was growing convinced that this was one of Coker's idiotic tricks—as idiotic as the trick with the stretched cord!

But every other possible or impossible spot had been at last combed out. Potter put his head under the table, not in the expectation of seeing the missing article there, but just to make sure that it wasn't there!

To his surprise he spotted it.

"Why here it is!" he exclaimed.

He grabbed it and rose triumphant, with the fat pocket-book in his hand. He held it out to his Form-master.

"Oh!" said Prout. He took the pocket-book, blinked at it, and slipped it back into his pocket. "Coker! Did you push this book out of sight under the table?"

"No!" howled Coker.

"It could not possibly have fallen so far out of sight by accident."

"Look as if it did, sir," said Coker.

"I know I've not touched it, or seen it here at all."

"A fellow might have kicked it by accident, sir, not seeing it on the floor, sir," ventured Greene.

Snort from Prout.

"It is possible," he said. "It is far from probable; but I admit that it is possible. I shall say no more. Coker; but I warn you to be careful—I warn you, sir to be very careful!"

With which Mr. Prout turned and sailed out of the study. Coker & Co. were glad to see the door close on the portly form.

"What do you fellows think of that?" asked Coker bitterly. "Fancying that I'd play silly tricks on his mouldy pocket-book?"

"Well, didn't you?" snapped Potter.

"What?" roared Coker.

"It never got where I found it by accident," said Potter. "It was thrown or kicked there, that's a cert! Prout jolly well knows that, and so do we!"

"Well, it looks like it," said Coker.

"You or Greene must have done it, as I've never seen the putrid thing before!

Just like you, spreading your silly, clumsy feet all over the study, and knocking things about! Why the thump can't you keep your eyes open?"

Potter and Greene gave Horace expressive looks; but they let it go at that. It looked, to them, as if Coker had kicked the pocket-book out of sight; and there was no doubt that Prout thought so.

However, the wretched thing had been found, and Prout had walked off with it; and the matter was at an end. Coker & Co. little dreamed how far it was from being at an end!

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### Sleight-of-Hand!

#### "KIPPERS!"

Billy Bunter whispered to Kipps, in class the following morning

It was third school, and the fat Owl of the Remove was often hungry in third school. The tuckshop was open in break, when fellows could buy any light refreshments they liked to last them over the third hour. But what was the use of that to a fellow who had been disappointed about a postal order?

Billy Bunter would gladly have been Mrs. Mumble's best customer—had that good dame been prepared to run her business on an extensive system of credit! But she wasn't!

When Bunter was hungry, everything else that was going on in the wide universe was of very little consequence in comparison.

Of least consequence of all was the valuable instruction Mr. Quelch was handing over to his Form.

Had Bunter devoted as much thought to his lessons as he did to solving the food problem, he would have pleased and surprised Quelch.

But he was not bothered by any desire to please or surprise Quelch in that way. So long as the Remove-master's gimlet eye did not single him out Bunter was satisfied.

Quelch at the moment was busy looking for a book he needed for the lesson. Having laid it on his desk, ready, Quelch naturally expected to find it there when he wanted it.

But he had stepped out of the Form-room for a few moments, to speak to Monsieur Charpentier, and in those few moments the Bouncer had slipped from his place and deposited that history book in the wastepaper-basket.

Quelch had not looked for it there. Until he did, he was likely to keep his Form waiting.

This gave Bunter an excellent chance for whispering to Kipps, the schoolboy conjurer. Bunter had been thinking—not about his lessons, which did not interest him, but about the postal order for half-a-crown, which interested him very much.

After playing what the fat Owl considered heartiest and unfeeling tricks on him with that postal order, Kipps had put it into his own pocket; and, so far as Bunter knew it was still there. He hoped that it was, at all events. Bunter had designs on that postal order.

Kipps glanced round at him. He was improving the shining hour by making a mechanical mouse run up and down his sleeve. Everybody in the Remove was "wise" to Kipps' conjuring tricks; but he hoped to find somebody outside the Form to startle with that mechanical mouse.

"Kippers old chap! I say!" whispered Bunter. "I say, it was a jolly

good trick you played on me the other day! Ripping! He, he, he!"

"Glad you enjoyed it old fat bean!" said Kipps with a grin.

"Tremendously," said Bunter. "It was as funny as—as anything! I say, that new chap, Caffyn, has been asking me about your conjuring tricks, and—and I told him what a fearfully clever fellow you are."

"Any charge?" yawned Kipps.

"Oh, really, Kippers! I say, it was jolly clever what you did with that postal order the other day. But I bet there's one thing you couldn't do."

"What's that?" asked Kipps.

"You pretended to take it out of my pocket," said Bunter. "But I bet you couldn't get it into my pocket for me to find there without my knowing!"

Kipps sniffed. He was rather proud of his skill as a conjurer and quite ready to rise to a challenge.

"Fathead!" he answered. "It would be as easy as falling off a form!"

"Well, I'll believe it if I see it!" said Bunter. "Quelch ain't looking this way—he's hunting for that book Smithy hid for him. Try it on!"

Caffyn, sitting in the Form behind, was looking on and listening. Kipps glanced round at him.

He had had little or nothing to do with the new fellow, and did not like what he knew of him. Still, if Caffyn had displayed interest in his conjuring, Kipps was ready to be civil to him.

Caffyn gave him a grin.

"Could you do what Bunter says?" he asked.

In point of fact, it was the Snipo who had suggested this wheeze to Bunter.

He had not expected Bunter to get going in class. But he was very keen to see how it worked. He had his own reasons for that.

"Of course I could!" answered Kipps.

"After class—"

"Quelch ain't looking!" said Bunter, in a cager whisper. "Go it, Kippers!"

Three or four fellows, close at hand, who heard the whispering, looked on with interest. Conjuring tricks by Kipps were much more interesting than history, ancient or modern.

"Safe as houses, Kippers!" whispered Bob Cherry. "Fire away!"

"Well, take that grubby handkerchief out of your pocket, fatty!" said Kipps. "Make room for it! Here, I'll take it out for you!"

He jerked out Bunter's handkerchief.

Half a dozen fellows were watching him, but so swift, and so skilful was his sleight-of-hand that nobody saw him slip the folded postal order into the pocket as he removed the handkerchief.

Even Caffyn, who was watching him like a cat, did not see it.

"Here, gimme my hanky!" said Bunter. "And buck up, old chap! Quelch may find that book any minute; he's looking under his desk."

"Count five!" said Kipps, putting his hands into his pockets. "When you've counted five, put your fat paw in your pocket and see what you'll find!"

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles. It did not occur to his fat mind for a moment that the postal order was already in his pocket.

"You mean that?" he asked.

"Yes; and I'll keep my hands in my pockets all the time."

"Say, bo!" murmured Fisher T. Fish. "If you pull that one off I'll say you're some conjurer, and then a few!"

"The conjurefulness would be

terrific!" remarked Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh. "But the possibility is not preposterous."

"Can't be done, Kippers!" said Harry Wharton.

"Wait and see!" grinned Kipps.

Bunter gabbled "One—two—three—four—five!" Then he thrust a grubby hand into his pocket.

"Oh crikey!" he ejaculated, as his fat hand came out with a folded postal order in it.

There was a murmur in the class. Nobody knew for the moment how the postal order had got there.

"Well, that beats Banagher!" said Micky Desmond.

"I—I say, you fellows, here it is!" said Bunter, blinking at the postal order. "Thanks, Kippers, old chap!"

And crumpling the postal order in his fat paw, the Owl of the Remove shoved it into his trousers pocket.

Kipps stared at him.

"Here, hand that over!" he exclaimed. "I'm not giving it to you, you fat duffer!"

"Oh, real. Kippers—"

"Give it back to me, you blithering fathead!" grunted Kipps. "Do you think I put it in your pocket as a present?"

"Didn't you?" grinned Bunter.

"No!" hissed Kipps.

"It's all right, old chap; don't you worry," said Bunter cheerfully. "I'll settle this to-morrow."

"What?" gasped Kipps.

"I'm expecting a postal order to-morrow. It will be for half-a-crown, like this. I'll let you have it when it comes."

Kipps' face was a study.

He understood now why Bunter had wanted him to play that conjuring trick.

Grinning faces surrounded the dismayed conjurer.

"Look here, you footling fathead!" breathed Kipps.

"I suppose to-morrow will be all right?" asked Bunter. "My postal order is sure to come to-morrow, or the next day, at any rate. You can rely on me to square. You'd better put that ruler down, Kippers. Quelch has got an eye on you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence in the Form!" rapped Mr. Quelch, his gimlet eye gleaming at the Remove.

He had not looked in the wastepaper-basket, and had not found his history book. He was going to carry on without it; and the respite for the Remove was at an end.

Billy Bunter sat with a very cheerful face during the lesson. He was hungry; but he had a prospect ahead of half-a-crown's worth of tuck as soon as the Remove was dismissed, to bridge over the awful interval till dinner.

Kipps looked at him rather like a Gorgon. Two-and-six was not a large sum; but he did not want to lose it, and certainly he did not want to wait for its return till Billy Bunter's own celebrated postal order arrived.

But after a while Kipps smiled, as well as Bunter.

He dropped a pencil, and leaned down to pick it up, leaning over the fat Owl to do so. After which he smiled still more broadly.

Bunter was glad to see him smile. He did not want trouble with Kipps after class. The joke was against the schoolboy conjurer this time, and if he was going to take it good-humouredly, all the better.

The Remove was dismissed at last. The moment he was free from the Form-room, the fat Owl rolled away to

the school shop. Kipps, to his relief, seemed to have forgotten the whole matter.

With a happy grin of anticipation on his face, Bunter rolled into the tuckshop, the first man to arrive after morning school.

"Change a postal order for me, ma'am," he said breezily.

"Yes, Master Bunter, if you give me one to change," answered Mrs. Mimble dryly.

She had heard of Bunter's postal orders before. She was willing to cash them, if she saw them, but not till then. She had not seen any of them yet.

"It's only half-a-crown," said Bunter, fumbling in his trousers pocket. "I've got it here. Why, where, what—"

He groped and groped. Several articles came into view—a penknife with a broken blade, and an ancient bullseye sticking to it; a pencil-sharpener choked with toffee, and a bad penny. But there was no postal order.

"I—I—I say, where's it gone?" gasped Bunter.

Mrs. Mimble sniffed. Her sniff implied that she had heard this sort of story before.

Bunter, in amazement and dismay, turned out the lining of the pocket. But that only demonstrated that the postal order was not there.

"I—I—I say, I—I had it!" gasped Bunter.

Sniff!

"I—I must have lost it!"

Sniff!

"Oh, the beast!" roared Bunter, the truth suddenly dawning on him. "He got it off me again, the awful spoofer! I know what he dropped that pencil in class for now! Oh, the rotter!"

Bunter rolled out of the tuckshop, grubless. He blinked round the quad for Kipps, and spotted him, the centre of a crowd of Remove fellows, who were yelling with laughter at something he was telling them. Bunter could guess what that was.

"I—I—I say, Kippers!" gasped Bunter, rolling up to the chortling group.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I say, old chap, I—I—I bet you couldn't get that postal order into my pocket again!" said Bunter. "Try it on, old chap!"

Kipps chuckled.

"You'd win that bet," he answered.

"Once bitten, twice shy, old fat man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

There was nothing for Bunter till dinner.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### Coker's Last Chance!

"O UTRAGEOUS!"

Paul Prout, master of the Fifth Form, addressed that remark, apparently, to his reflection in the looking-glass.

Prout was scanning his nose.

It had, as he had feared would be the case, swollen.

Originally it was not small. At the best of times it was rather a beak. Now it was larger than usual. Likewise, it was redder than usual. It was altogether a nose of which no middle-aged, dignified Form-master could possibly be proud.

"Scandalous!" said Prout.

He passed a plump hand tenderly over his nose. Then he scanned it again. He shook his head regretfully, but decidedly.

That week-end trip to France was off. He could not take that nose to a foreign



"Where's Caffyn?" roared Coker, swishing the box-strap in his hand. "I want that Snipe! Hiding under the table, I dare say!" He grasped the table and spun it aside. "You fathead!" yelled Wharton, as books and papers flew right and left, and the inkpot tipped over on the hearthrug. "Let that table alone!"

country for the entertainment of the natives. He could not, of course, go without it, so the trip was off.

It was deeply and intensely irritating. Prout had made all his plans for a few days in la belle France. Week-end leave did not come often. It was really too bad in every way.

But there it was, and Prout had to make up his mind to it. For the last time he scanned that note, and decided that it was impossible—and that was that! Then, sitting down at his table, he took out his fat pocket-book.

He would not need that five-thousand-franc note now. There would be no opportunity of dazzling French hotel-keepers with that handsome banknote. Naturally, he did not want to keep such a sum knocking about in his pockets, and, having decided that the trip was off, he was going to return the banknote to his bankers. Prout had a well-paid post, and was fairly well off. Still, sixty pounds made rather a hole in his current account at the Courtfield & County Bank.

He sorted through the many papers in that fat pocket-book.

Then, with a puzzled expression, he sorted through again:

It was with astonishment, mingled with alarm, that Mr. Prout realised, after a careful search, that that billet-de-banque was no longer there.

He laid down the pocket-book and sat blinking at it.

He knew that the five-thousand-franc note had been in it. On that point there was no doubt. It had vanished! How? The pocket-book was never out of his possession. Stay! Prout jumped as he remembered that it had been out of his possession for an hour, at least, the previous day.

"Goodness gracious!" breathed Prout. He gave a gasp.

It was impossible—wildly impossible! Outrageously impossible! There could be no thief at a school like Greyfriars—especially in the Fifth. Prout's Form—impossible! A mad idea!

Yet the banknote had been taken. That it could not have fallen out by accident was certain. The fastening of the pocket-book was secure enough. It had been fastened when Prout had it in his pocket yesterday. It was fastened when Potter rooted it out from under the table in Coker's study, and handed it back to Prout. It followed that the French banknote had been deliberately abstracted. Someone had taken it out, and fastened the pocket-book again, and thrown it under the table. There was no other possible explanation.

A thief—no, no, no! Potter, Greene—impossible! Coker, still more impossible! For exasperating fathead as Coker was, it seemed wildly absurd to suspect him of dishonesty. Moreover, he was a fellow with plenty of money, though, of course, sixty pounds was a large sum, much larger than any sum that the richest fellow at Greyfriars ever had. And Coker, though he usually had plenty of money, spent it freely enough. And, like most school-boys, sometimes ran short of the useful article. But sixty pounds was more than enough to tempt an unprincipled fellow. But sixty thousand pounds would not have tempted a decent fellow to steal. And unless Prout's judgment was utterly in error, Coker was as honest as the day.

But the banknote was gone! "Is it possible," breathed Prout, "that that foolish, stupid, insensate boy, Coker, has been so crass, so incredibly dull-witted, as to play tricks with the contents of my pocket-book, with a banknote for a large sum of money? Could even his stupidity go so far?"

It was difficult to believe, even of an ass like Coker. Yet the alternative was to believe that a theft had occurred. Prout shrank in horror from that thought. It gave him a feeling of sickness, even to let it creep into his mind.

Impossible—a thousand times impossible! It was a stupid prank—it must be that! He still doubted whether Coker had not tied the cord for him to tumble over. He was sure that Coker had kicked the pocket-book out of sight under his study table, to puzzle and bother him. It was only a step farther to suppose that the fool of the Fifth had hidden the banknote, to puzzle and bother him a little more.

Prout had to believe that or else that Coker had "pinched" the note. He chose the less terrible theory, improbable as it seemed.

He rang for Trotter, at last, and sent the school page to fetch Coker to his study. He had no doubts of Potter and Greene—they assuredly, would have too much sense to "lark" with money, even if they had had the unlikely fancy to lark with Prout. It was, of course, Coker! Prout hoped, and tried to believe, that this was only folly, insensate folly, and nothing darker.

It was some little time before Coker of the Fifth arrived. He was in the changing-room, where the Fifth Form men had come in after a pick-up, when Trotter sought for him. Coker was arguing with Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, for the umpteenth time, about his claims to be played in the pick-ups. But Trotter found him at last and gave him Prout's message.

Coker did not look pleased when he arrived in his Form-master's study. He had been interrupted when his chin was going strong, and he did not like

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(Continued from page 13.)

his chin-music interrupted. And he was fed up with Prout, and wondered angrily what the old ass wanted this time.

But even Coker was impressed by the preternatural gravity that sat on the plump brow of Prout when he saw him. Even Horace's intellect caught on to the fact that something of an unusually serious nature was "up."

"Shut the door, Coker!" said Prout, very quietly.

Coker shut the door.

"Now," said Prout, "give me the French banknote."

Coker blinked.

If Prout had asked him to give him the French nation, or the French climate, he could hardly have been more astounded.

"The—the what?" stuttered Coker.

"Give me the French banknote, the billet-de-banque for five thousand francs, which you abstracted from my pocket-book yesterday!" said Prout sternly.

Coker could only stare. He came very near asking Prout if he was mad! Possibly he might have done so had not his breath been taken away.

"You understand me!" said Prout.

"While my pocket-book was in your study last evening, the banknote was taken from it."

Coker gasped.

"It is missing!" said Prout grimly.

"The pocket-book had been out of my possession only once, and that was while it lay in your study, Coker. You found it there—"

"I didn't!"

"You put it out of sight under your table—"

"I didn't!"

"But first you must have opened it and abstracted the banknote. I order you to return it to me at once."

Coker stood petrified. He had wondered what the old ass wanted! He had never dreamed of anything awful like this! He found his voice at last.

"A—a—a banknote! Do you think I'm a thief?"

"No!" said Prout quietly. "I do not think you are a thief, Coker. I think you are incredibly and unimaginably stupid. Others, if they knew, might, I fear, suspect you of intending to steal the banknote. You must know what your action looks like. But I am determined to take a more charitable view! I believe—I am resolved to believe—that you have taken and hidden the banknote for an absurd prank. I shall, of course, punish you severely, but if you return the banknote at once nothing shall be said in public of this matter."

It was a good offer, had Coker taken the banknote, either from stupidity or dishonesty. But it was of no use to Horace, who knew nothing whatever about the French banknote, and had never even heard of it till this moment.

"Have you the note about you?" asked Prout.

"What?" gasped Coker. "No!"

"Is it in your study?"

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"No!" yapped Coker.

"Then where is it?"

"How should I know?" Coker's rugged face was crimson, and his eyes blazed. "What should I know about the rotten thing? I never saw your pocket-book in my study! If I'd seen it, do you think I'm the kind of worm to spy into a man's pocket-book? I don't know anything about it."

Prout's eyes began to glitter.

He was determined, as he had said, to take the charitable view if he could. But if he could not, he had to take the less charitable one! If Coker denied playing a prank with the note and refused to return it, there was only one conclusion to be drawn.

But Prout kept his temper. The matter was too fearfully serious for one of his bursts of wrath. The shadow of a terrible disgrace hung over the Fifth Form of Greyfriars—his own Form!

"Listen to me, Coker!" he said. "I will try to make it clear, even to your dense mind, that denials are useless. I repeat that I do not, so far, suspect you of theft, but of a stupid prank. The banknote for five thousand francs was taken from the pocket-book while it was in your study. Only you had an opportunity of taking it; only you were alone with it. I am already aware that Potter and Greene came in together, after you had been some time alone. It is absurd to suppose for one moment that two sensible boys like Potter and Greene have plotted together to play such a trick."

"I should jolly well say so!" exclaimed Coker. "They're rather fat-heads, but not such fatheads as that."

Prout blinked at him.

"It follows, Coker, that the banknote was taken by you."

"It doesn't!" said Coker.

"Boy!"

"Am I a fellow to play such an idiotic trick?" demanded Coker. "If I had, I'd own up! But I haven't!"

"Is that your last word, Coker?" asked Mr. Prout, in a dangerously quiet tone.

"Of course it is!" answered Coker.

There was a long pause.

"Very well," said Prout, at last. "As you refuse to return the banknote you have taken, Coker, you drive me to a terrible conclusion—that this was not, as I hoped, a stupid trick, but an act of theft. If you have not taken the banknote for a prank, you have taken it to keep."

"Me?" gurgled Coker.

"You! I order you, Coker, to return that banknote. The alternative is to be judged a thief!"

"A thief—me?" said Coker dazedly.

"I think I must be dreaming this."

Prout raised a plump hand.

"I am anxious, deeply anxious, to avoid a scandal in the school," he said. "I am anxious to save my Form from disgrace. I will give you every chance, Coker! I hope, I trust, that your action was dictated only by your crass stupidity, and that you will realise that, in your own interests, the only thing you can do is to return the banknote without delay."

"I never—"

Prout waved the plump hand at him.

"I will give you," he said, slowly and distinctly, "until dormitory to-night, Coker, to return the banknote and take your punishment for an insensate trick. If you have not done so by then, you will not go to the dormitory with your Form, you will be taken to the headmaster and charged with the theft."

"I—I—" gurgled the bewildered Coker.

"Reflect on this, Coker! Make it

possible for me to do what I can for you!" said Prout. "If the banknote does not reach me by the time I have named, you know what to expect. Now leave my study!"

"Look here—"

"You may go for the present, Coker!"

"But, I say—"

Prout rose, with thunder in his brow, and pointed to the door.

"Go!"

Horace Coker almost staggered from the study.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### Kipps is Much Admired!

**H**ARRY WHARTON & CO., fresh and ruddy from football practice, came tramping up the Remove staircase ready for tea.

Caffyn was standing in the doorway of Study No. 1, and he eyed the Famous Five in his stealthy way as they came into the passage. As Wharton paused outside the study, the Snipe did not move from the doorway.

"Look here, you're not teeing in here!" he said surlily. "You hardly ever do, and I don't want you to-day. I've got a friend coming in."

Harry looked at him. Seldom since the Snipe had been at Greyfriars had the chums of the Remove "tea'd" in that study. They did not like the Snipe's company, and they did not like the aroma of his cigarettes. The Snipe, however, had never before appeared to care whether they tea'd in the study or not. And assuredly he had no right to expect them to keep out if they wanted to come in.

"You don't hanker after my company as a rule," went on Caffyn, with his unpleasant sneer. "And I don't like yours any more than you like mine."

"You cheeky ass!" said Frank Nugent, "we shall use our own study if we want to!"

Johnny Bull gave a snort.

"Come on to my study!" he said, "the farther we keep from that snipe, the better I shall like it!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned Bob.

Caffyn scowled. He had the door half-closed, and he stood in the aperture, as if he intended to dispute entrance. Which would not have been very successful; for the least formidable member of the famous Co. could have knocked the Snipe into a cocked hat under a minute.

"Look here, let me have the study, Wharton," he snapped, "I've told you I've got a friend coming to tea."

"You can have the study, and be blowed!" answered the captain of the Remove. "Nobody wants your company, or that of your precious smoky pals. If you've got Skinner coming, I'd rather be at the other end of the passage."

"Well, keep out, then!" grunted Caffyn.

"With pleasure," answered Harry, "I only want a bag of doughnuts out of the cupboard."

"Oh," said Caffyn. He stepped back.

Wharton passed him, without another word, and went into the study, and took the bag of doughnuts. With that addition to the festive board under his arm, he followed his friends up the passage, to Study No. 14, at the other end—Johnny Bull's study.

Kipps of the Remove passed him in the passage with a cheery grin. Wharton called to him as he went.

"Come on and help us with these doughnuts, Kippers."

"Booked!" answered Kipps cheerily. "I'm going to tea in your study, old bean. You teeing out?"

"Yes! You teeing with Caffyn?" exclaimed Wharton, in surprise. He had taken it for granted that Caffyn's visitor was Skinner, or Snoop, or Stott. The Snipe had made no other friends in the Remove; there were no other fellows of his own kidney in that Form.

Kipps certainly was not. He was a thoroughly decent fellow, liked by all the Form; and it was quite surprising to hear that he was going to tea with the unpopular, smoky Snipe.

"Well, he's asked me," said Kipps. "He's rather interested in conjuring, you know." And Kipps went on his way, to Study No. 1.

Wharton smiled. Any fellow who displayed an interest in conjuring, had a passport to Kipps' good graces.

If the Snipe was taking an interest in so harmless an amusement, Wharton was glad to hear it. But, knowing his Snipe, as he did, he would have suspected that Caffyn was pulling Kipps' leg, for some purpose of his own, had it been

possible to imagine any reason why he should do so.

That, however, seemed unlikely enough. Kipps was not a rich fellow, like Mauleverer, or the Bounder. He had no vicious tastes, like Skinner & Co. Unless Caffyn really was interested in his skill as a conjurer, it was difficult to guess why he was taking the trouble to make himself agreeable to Kipps at all. After all, even the dingy, stealthy Snipe might have one or two healthy and wholesome tastes.

Certainly he was taking trouble to make himself agreeable. He nodded and smiled to Kipps when the latter came in. The table was spread for tea, with a dish of jam-roll, and a cake, in addition to other things. And there were no cigarettes on view, and no smell of smoke in the room.

Oliver Kipps was not a suspicious fellow. Keenly interested in the art of conjuring himself, he saw no reason why another fellow should not be.

Caffyn, as a newcomer in the Remove, had not seen much of his weird tricks, like the other fellows. It was natural that he should want to hear more about so interesting a subject; and his interest in it was rather flattering to Kipps.

And it was quite a nice spread. Poached eggs, and toast, and jam-roll, and cake, disappeared one after another; to an accompaniment of conversation wholly on the subject of conjuring and sleight-of-hand.

Kipps did most of the talking; and Caffyn was willing to let him do it. After tea, the schoolboy conjurer proceeded to go through some of his tricks, to the continual and enthusiastic admiration of the Snipe. He drew yards of coloured ribbon from Caffyn's neck; he took beetles from his sleeve; he made his handkerchief disappear, and reappear in another pocket; he smashed Caffyn's watch with the study poker—

(Continued on next page.)



Do talks on tactics pay? Read what "Linesman" has to say on this all-important question. Remember, "Linesman" is at your service, chums; he'll be only too pleased to answer your soccer queries. Write to him, c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

#### TALKS ON TACTICS I

**G**ET together before the start of a match and have a little talk among yourselves about the way you intend to play. I have given a tip on these lines to whole football teams in the past, and I may add my conviction that, no matter whether the game is a Cup Final or just a friendly between two schoolboy teams, benefit should come from such a talk.

On this subject of talks on tactics, however, I have an interesting note from a Wolverhampton reader. He says that at this Cup-tie period of the season he hears and reads a lot about these tactical talks among the players of the big teams, which are usually presided over by the manager. Let me quote from the letter. "I take it for granted," writes this correspondent, "that when the tactical talks are held, the strong and the weak points of the opposition are considered—and the plans laid accordingly. That being so, why do the big football clubs let it be known, before a match the men who will play for them? If they kept back that information until the players were actually ready to go on the field, the opposition would not be able to lay their plans so completely."

Permit me to comment on this suggestion, by way of a start, by saying that it contains a lot of common sense.

**Big football clubs, talking over tactics, do have the names of the likely opponents before them. For example, if the opposing centre-half is known to play a third full-back role, as a general thing, the plans of the other side can be laid accordingly.**

There are, however, one or two snags about this idea of keeping back the names of the likely players in a big Cup-tie. In the first place, there is a rule to the

effect that clubs drawn together in the Cup must exchange lists of the players likely to take part in the game, five days before the game is due to be played. This rule was not put on the books to make the tactical talks easier; it was put there to prevent protests after the game as to whether this or that player was eligible. Protests must now be made before a Cup-tie if they are to be entertained. The rule, however, so works that one club must give the other an idea of the men who are likely to play.

#### A LAST-MINUTE CHANGE I

**A** GAIN, the full strength of each big club is well-known to the officials of every other club, and it is also assumed that the best team will be played in an important Cup-tie. Of course, it would be possible to hold back the definite choice for one or two positions until the last moment, and this "wheeze" has, to my knowledge, been frequently adopted.

Indeed, on this question I can reveal an interesting story. You may remember that earlier in the season Bristol City and Bury were opponents in the third round of the Cup. It was expected that Bury would have as their centre-half a player named Matthewson, and the Bristol players based their pre-match tactical talks on this assumption.

**When the Bristol players were preparing for the game, however, and about a quarter of an hour before the start, it was learned that Bullock and not Matthewson would be the centre-half of the Bury side. So the Bristol manager had another hurried talk with his players on tactics, and the plans for victory were changed.**

I don't know whether the Bury change in the make-up of the team was made

with the definite idea of upsetting the Bristol plans, but I thought my reader friend, and others, would be interested in the little story from this season's Cup-tie, as showing how every little detail is considered when these tactical talks are held.

#### QUICK JUMPS TO FAME I

**T**HERE are many romantic stories which can be told of professional players who have jumped into the limelight at one leap as it were—unknown yesterday, and famous to-day. You may remember the case of Frank Swift, the goalkeeper of Manchester City. Within a very few months of playing in a team connected with a gasworks at Blackpool he was keeping goal for Manchester City in a Cup Final at Wembley. This was the lad who fainted when the match was finished: fainted, I should say, from joy at the thought that he had got a Cup-winners' medal within a few weeks of playing for the first team.

Amateur football provides the same sort of stories of quick jumps to fame. Not long ago England and Wales played an amateur International match, and the Welsh outside-right was J. H. Williams. On the morning of the match this player hadn't the faintest idea that he was even being considered as a player good enough to play in a match of real importance. A sudden vacancy arose in the Welsh team, however, and Williams was sent for. And he played a fine game at outside-right for Wales.

**On the previous Saturday, Williams had played in an Essex Junior Cup-tie on open ground at Wanstead Flats. What a jump! The moral of the story is obvious—don't forget to be "in" when opportunity knocks at the door!**

A Liverpool reader asks me about a report which recently appeared in the newspapers to the effect that the Liverpool full-back, Ernest Blenkinsop, was to be the non-playing captain of the side, occupying a place near the touchline for a Cup-tie, and giving instructions to the players. Why wasn't this idea carried out?—is the question put to me.

The reply is easy. Such a procedure in a big Cup-tie would have been against the rules. The only man who is allowed immediate connection with the players during a big match is the trainer, and if the trainer started shouting instructions to the players of his team he would be liable to be called over the coals by the referee—and warned about his conduct.

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or seemed to do so—the watch reappearing safe and sound in the Snipe's pocket, after he had apparently seen it reduced to fragments.

"Ripping!" said Caffyn, enthusiastically. "I say, you ought to be on the halls, you know. You'll make a lot of money at that game when you grow up, Kipps."

Kipps grinned complacently.

"I wish you could have seen me pulling Prout's leg, once," he said. "I picked beetles off him—he fancied he was covered with beetles. Of course, it was the same spool beetle all the time."

Caffyn laughed.

"You had the nerve to pull a beak's leg?"

"My dear chap, I'd pull the Head's leg, if I had half a chance," answered Kipps. "I'll make a rabbit hop out of his Sunday topper, one of these days."

"It's frightfully interesting," said Caffyn. "I wish I could do it! But, of course, it wants a lot of practice. It's a sort of gift, too. I fancy Does it always come off?"

"You bet!" said Kipps.

"Not with Bunter! He bagged that postal order you planted on him in class this morning."

"Not in your lifetime!" grinned Kipps. "Didn't you notice me stoop down to pick up a pencil? I got it off him then. I've got it in my pocket, now."

"My hat!" said Caffyn.

He drew a deep breath. There was no doubt that he was interested—deeply and intensely interested. So far as that went, he certainly was not pulling the schoolboy conjurer's leg.

Kipps could not help feeling pleased and flattered. He began to think that Caffyn was not quite such a worm as most of the fellows supposed. The Remove men liked to see Kipps at his tricks, sometimes; but no fellow in the Form had ever displayed this keen, absorbed interest in his weird skill as a conjurer.

"What a pickpocket you'd make!" said Caffyn.

Kipps chuckled at the idea.

"And you really got that postal order back from Bunter, without the fat ass knowing it?" asked Caffyn.

"He never missed it till he went to the school shop to change it!" answered Kipps.

"Ha ha, ha!" roared Caffyn. "Look here, Kipps, I wish you'd lend me a hand in a jape I've been thinking of."

"What's the game?" asked Kipps.

"That ass, Coker, my cousin in the Fifth you know—"

Kipps' expression changed.

He knew all about the feud between Caffyn and Coker; every Remove man knew. And he was well aware that Caffyn's monkey-like tricks were not of a good-natured kind. Kipps was an easy-going fellow, but he had no intention of being dragged into the Snipe's feud with Coker of the Fifth.

"Wash that out," said Kipps. "I don't want any row with Coker."

"It's just a harmless jape."

"Um!" said Kipps dubiously. "Well, let's hear it, anyhow. I've pulled old Coker's leg before now. You should have seen his face, once, when I took a rat out of his pocket. He thought it was a real rat. That was before you came, of course."

"Jolly funny," said Caffyn. "I wish I'd seen it! Look here, I'll show you the idea."

He fumbled in his desk. Oliver Kipps watched him, with a doubtful

expression on his chubby face. If it was a harmless jape on old Coker, Kipps had no objection to taking a hand, and making a success of it. If it was not, Kipps certainly was not going to take a hand in it. And knowing what all the Remove thought of Caffyn, he had reason to be dubious.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Just a Jape!

CAFFYN turned from the desk with a paper in his hand. That paper, apparently, contained the "idea."

"Look at that!" he said, "No harm in that, what?"

He handed the paper to Kipps.

The schoolboy conjurer looked at it in some surprise. A number of lines were written on the paper, in "print" letters, in the form of a limerick.

"There's a footling big fathead,  
named Coker,  
With just as much brains as a poker.  
And when he plays Soccer,  
He looks off his rocker,  
Or like a weird practical joker."

Kipps laughed. As a limerick, it was not bad, in its way, and the description of Coker's football was certainly accurate.

Undoubtedly it was likely to get old Horace's "rag" out, if he saw it. Coker was proud of his footer, though on what grounds, nobody but Coker knew. Coker's Soccer was a standing joke at Greyfriars, and was indeed a thing to astonish gods and men and little fishes!

"That will make the old ass sit up!" said Kipps. "But I wouldn't advise you to hand it to him. You'd have to be carried away in an ambulance afterwards."

Caffyn laughed.

"I'll watch it!" he answered.

"Then what's the idea?" asked Kipps.

"I want him to find it in his pocket!" explained Caffyn. "He will come across it some time or other and see it, and wonder how on earth it got there."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kipps chortled at the mental picture of Horace Coker finding an unexpected paper in his pocket, looking at it, and reading that limerick.

Really it was quite a jape—just such a rag as Kipps might have thought of himself.

"Some jape, what?" grinned Caffyn. "I was going to try it on myself, but, of course, I can't do these things like you can, Kippers. And Coker's paws are jolly dangerous at close quarters." He laughed. "I suppose you could plant that paper on Coker, as easily as you planted the postal order on Bunter?"

"Quite!" said Kipps.

"Of course. I don't want you to run any risk of being spotted at it, and thumped by that hefty fathead."

Kipps sniffed. That remark touched his pride as a conjurer, as it was intended to do.

"Rot!" he answered. "I could plant it anywhere I liked, on Coker, or anybody else, without the chap knowing. Of course I could."

"Well, after what I've seen, I think you could!" agreed Caffyn. "Keep it dark, though—Coker will want to know who did it, and he doesn't stop to think before he ladles out a lives hat."

"I shan't put my name and the number of my study on it!" grinned Kipps. "I'll wangle it all right, old bean. Fancy old Coker's face when he comes across it in his pocket, and reads it!" Kipps roared.

Caffyn laughed, too.

"Well, there it is!" he said. "Take it away with you! Hold on, though, I'll slip it into an envelope first. He mightn't find it for a day or two, and if it got crumpled, he might chuck it away without looking at it. He won't chuck away an envelope without opening it."

"Right-ho!" agreed Kipps.

Caffyn took the limerick again, and turned to his desk. In that desk he picked up an envelope.

His back was to Kipps; his movements were swift, and the schoolboy conjurer had not the remotest suspicion what he was doing.

In the envelope was folded a French banknote for five thousand francs. Caffyn did not place the limerick in it.

The limerick was dropped, unseen, into his desk.

His back was to Kipps for hardly more than a second. He turned from the desk again, wetting the flap of the envelope with his tongue.

Under Kipps' suspicious eyes he stuck down the flap. Not for an instant did it cross the schoolboy conjurer's mind that what the envelope contained was not the limerick.

Having fastened the flap, Caffyn passed the envelope across to Kipps.

Kipps carelessly dropped it into his pocket.

Caffyn was breathing rather hard. Coolly, cunningly, unscrupulously, he had planned to "plant" the missing French banknote on Coker of the Fifth. The schoolboy conjurer's skill offered him the means; if he could throw dust into Kipps' eyes.

That had proved easy enough!

A few minutes later, with a friendly nod, Kipps left the study, with the envelope in his pocket containing, as he believed, a limerick to make Coker sit up; containing, as Caffyn knew, a French banknote which it was probable that Mr. Prout had already missed.

Caffyn wiped his forehead when Kipps was gone.

Would it work?

How could it fail?

Kipps, unsuspecting, would do his part. Coker would never know that the banknote was on him till it was found on him.

That would be the finish for Coker, at Greyfriars and with Aunt Judy! Miss Judith's money would never go to a fellow condemned and kicked out of school for stealing.

Could it fail?

Kipps, like the rest, would hear that a purloined banknote had been found on Coker of the Fifth. But he would not connect that with the limerick he had slipped into Coker's pocket.

Why should he?

There was no clue in a plain envelope. It was not even likely to be mentioned that the banknote, found on Coker, had been found in an envelope. Why should such a trifle be mentioned?

Kipps could and would suspect nothing. He would never dream that he had been made use of by an unscrupulous young rascal.

Nobody else knew anything at all about it.

It was all clear—at last!

Very soon now, Caffyn would have good news to send to his guardian, the legal gentleman, Mr. Sarle, who was hand-in-glove with him in this game to divert Miss Judith's moneybags from her elder nephew to the younger.

Indeed, Caffyn, bad as he was, would probably never have thought of entering upon this course of wickedness, but for the cold, hard, worldly counsel of that very illegal legal gentleman.

Perhaps, now that he felt that success was certain, the wretched Snipe felt some twinge of remorse and shame.

Perhaps, had Coker been a little less





"I order you, Coker, to return that banknote!" boomed Mr. Prout. "The alternative is to be judged a thief!" "A thief—me!" said Coker dazedly. "I will give you until to-night to return the banknote," continued Prout. "If you have not done so by then, you will be taken to the Head and charged with theft!"

heavy handed, a little less overpowering and contemptuous, the schemer might have repented, and recalled what he had done before it was too late.

But the memory of scornful words, contemptuous looks, and wrathful thumps, was not likely to soften him.

The die was cast now! Matters were moving with the precision of clockwork, to their appointed end; and it was all up with Coker of the Fifth.

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### Wrathy!

**H**ORACE COKER left his Form-master's study in such a bewildered frame of mind, that his head, never very clear, was in quite a whirl.

Quelch and Hacker, talking in the corridor, glanced at him as he passed, struck by the strange expression on his face. Coker did not even notice the two masters. He went tramping on his way, dazed.

At the corner of the passage a hand dropped on his arm. He blinked round at Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars.

"What on earth's up?" asked Wingate, quite concerned. If ever a fellow looked as if he had "taken the knock," Horace Coker did just then.

"Eh? What?" stammered Coker.

"You're looking like a jolly old ghost!" said Wingate. "Row with your beak, or what?"

He noticed that Coker was coming from the direction of Prout's study, and Coker's rows with his beak were far from uncommon.

"The ass!" said Coker.

"What?"

"The dunderheaded dummy!"

"Look here—"

"The blithering goat!" gasped Coker.

"Me, you know!"

"You!" repeated Wingate blankly. He had supposed that Coker's epithets referred to Prout. Now it sounded as if they referred to himself, in which case they were true, but unexpected.

"Me!" said Coker. "Me! Me, you know! Blithering idiot! Howling ass! Footling fathead!"

"What are you calling yourself those fancy names for?" asked the astonished Sixth Former. "What have you been doing?"

"Eh! Don't be an ass! It's old Prout!" snorted Coker. "That chump! That dummy! That footling, frabjous, fozzling frump!"

"You mustn't call a master names like that!" admonished Wingate. "But what the thump's up?"

"Me!" gasped Coker.

"You're up?" ejaculated Wingate, misunderstanding again.

"Eh! Don't be a chump! Me!" gasped Coker. "He thinks it was me!"

"Has anything happened?" asked the mystified captain of Greyfriars.

"No! I don't believe so! Prout seems to think so, but you know what an idiot he is, I suppose? Let him get on with it, that's all!" said Coker fiercely. "Let him say it right out if he dares! Blow him!"

"But what—"

"Blow him!" hooted Coker. "See! Blow him!"

"Oh, my hat! But—"

"Fat lot I care what he thinks! Ass! Fathead! Footling fozzler! Oh, there ain't a word for him! I wonder the Head don't sack him! I would, if I were Head! A home for idiots is the place for him. What was he doing with a French banknote, if you come to that?"

"A—a—a French banknote!" repeated Wingate.

"So he says. Mad, I suppose!" said Coker. "Old ass! Let him say it out if he wants to. I'll show him! Idiot!"

Coker, fuming, marched on, leaving Wingate of the Sixth staring blankly. Bewilderment was giving place to wrath in Coker's mind.

He was not flattered by Prout's hopeful view that he might be idiot enough to play pranks with money. But the suggestion that he had "pinched" that banknote roused his deepest fury.

That the evidence against him was overwhelming, that in the circumstances Prout could hardly think anything else, mattered not a whit to Coker.

He breathed wrath and indignation.

He tramped up the stairs. The Fifth Form men had left the changing-room and gone to tea in Hall or the studies. Coker wanted to see Potter and Green, and relate to his sympathetic and indignant friends what had passed with Prout. He had no doubt that they would be sympathetic and indignant.

As he came on the landing he ran into a Remove fellow.

It was Oliver Kipps.

Kipps of the Remove had been hanging about there for some little time. He had ascertained that Coker was not in his study, and as it was past tea-time he expected to see him come up any minute.

Now he had come.

Kipps, apparently not seeing Coker, barged into his way on the dusky landing and there was a collision.

Coker gave an angry snort.

In his present mood he was in no humour to be patient or tolerant with a junior kid barging carelessly about.

He grasped Kipps by the collar and shook him.

"You clumsy young ass!" hooted Coker. "Can't you keep your eyes open and see where you're barging?"

"Leggo, you ass!" gasped Kipps.

He struggled in Coker's hefty grasp. As a matter of fact, nothing could

have suited the schoolboy conjurer better. As he wriggled Caffyn's envelope was slipped swiftly and neatly into the inside pocket of Coker's jacket.

Coker, in coming to such close quarters of his own accord, was playing into his hands and making things as easy as possible for the practical joker.

The fathead of the Fifth, utterly unconscious and unsuspecting of the trick that had been played on him, shook Kipps with energy, twisted him round, and planted a boot on him.

"Yaroooh!" roared Kipps, as he flew across the landing.

"Now mind where you're barging, you clumsy little ass!" snorted Coker, and he marched on to his own quarters.

Kipps wriggled rather painfully—but he grinned while he wriggled. The envelope was safely planted on Coker. Coker had not the remotest idea of what was in his inside pocket as he tramped on to his study.

Neither, in point of fact, had Kipps.

He would have been utterly horrified had he even dreamed what Caffyn's envelope contained. It never occurred to him to doubt that it contained the limerick describing Coker's football.

So, though Coker's kick was rather hefty and left rather a pain, Kipps grinned as he sauntered back into the Remove passage and stopped at the door of Study No. 1 to tell Caffyn that he had brought it off.

Coker tramped up the Fifth Form passage, red with wrath.

Wingate had thought that he looked like a ghost when he came away from Prout's study. Now that fury had succeeded to bewilderment he looked more like a Red Indian on the warpath.

Prout probably expected Coker to say nothing of the matter, which would have been judicious. But Coker was far from judicious. So far from saying nothing, he was likely to say a great deal—and to say it at the top of his powerful voice.

He barged into his study, where Potter and Greene were waiting for him in happy anticipation of one of Coker's lavish spreads.

They fairly jumped as they saw him. Achilles in his wrath could hardly have looked so enraged as Horace Coker at that moment.

"What's the row?" asked Potter.

"What did Prout want?" inquired Greene.

"Oh, only to call me a thief!" said Coker, with fierce sarcasm. "Just that! Nothing much! He's gone mad, you know! I've fancied before that he was a bit barmy in the crumpet! Now I know!"

"A—a—what?" gasped Potter, aghast.

"You remember the spluttering old lunatic left a pocket-book strewn about the floor here yesterday," said Coker. "You remember the ribbering idiot came up here after it, and we rooted it out. Well, now he says there was a French banknote in it, and that it's missing. He thinks I've pinched it! It's time his relations took care of him, I think."

Potter and Greene forgot about tea; they gazed at Coker in horror.

"Of course he's mad!" said Coker. "Mad as a hatter! I don't suppose he ever had a French banknote in his silly pocket-book. Why should he?"

"Very likely he had," stammered Potter. "I've heard that he was going on a trip abroad this week-end. He's jawed about it with the other beaks."

"Oh!" said Coker. "Oh, I remember now I heard something of it! He may have had a French banknote, I suppose."

I wonder what the old donkey's done with it, then?"

Potter and Greene did not wonder. Coker might be impervious to evidence and common-sense. His friends were not. They knew perfectly well that the banknote must have been in the pocket-book dropped in their study, and that it must have been taken out while the pocket-book was there. They knew that they had not touched it—and that left only Coker.

"He's awfully good!" went on Coker in the same vein of withering sarcasm. "He doesn't want a disgraceful row in the Fifth, the dear old bean! He's willing to believe that I took the banknote out of the pocket-book for a silly joke—if I give it back to him! The old ass!"

Potter gasped.

"For goodness' sake, Coker, take it back to him at once!"

"What?" roared Coker.

"Can't you see what a chance it is?" exclaimed Greene eagerly, almost desperately earnest. "Prout's jolly decent to let it go at that! Let him have his silly banknote and—"

"Are you as mad as Prout?" bawled Coker. "Do you think I've pinched the old gargoyle's banknote, if he ever had one?"

"No, you ass, we know you wouldn't pinch it; we know what a fool you are, and so does Prout! I tell you it's jolly decent of him to take it as a practical joke. There's hardly a beak at Greyfriars who would give you such a chance! For goodness' sake, cough it up at once and—"

"You stuttering idiot, I never touched the rotten banknote!" shrieked Coker frantically.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Potter. "We knew you had been up to something. We thought you had only kicked the pocket-book out of sight to worry old Prout, but now it comes out that something has been taken from it—"

"I never touched it!" raved Coker.

"Who did, then?" yapped Potter.

"One of you fellows, if it was touched at all!"

"Oh, chuck it! Neither of us touched it, but it was jolly well shoved out of sight right under the table!" howled Potter. "If you're playing a mad fool jape on Prout with his mouldy banknote, for the love of Mike don't carry on with it! I tell you he'll think you've pinched the note if you don't hand it over. What else is he to think?"

"Do have a little sense, Coker, old man!" urged Greene. "We know you all right, but other fellows will think that—"

Coker stood gazing at them. This was what he was getting, instead of the sympathy and indignation upon which he had so confidently relied. Wild wrath boiled up in Coker and boiled over. He did not answer Potter; he did not answer Greene. He made a jump at the bookshelf, where a fives bat lay handy. He grasped it and leaped at them.

Potter and Greene made a frantic rush for the door.

It never was any use arguing with Horace Coker. Now, evidently, it was less useful than ever.

Coker at close quarters with a fives bat and boiling with rage was a dangerous character.

They fairly bounded to the doorway. Reaching it together, they jammed.

Bang, bang, bang, bang! came the fives bat before, yelling wildly, they got out and fled.

Three or four Fifth Form men looked out of their studies.

"Phwat's up?" shouted Fitzgerald.

Potter and Greene did not answer;

they rushed past. Coker, in his doorway, brandished the fives bat and roared:

"Come back! Come back, you rotters! Come back, you blithering idiots! I'll jolly well smash you! I'll slaughter you! I'll spificate you! Come back, I tell you!"

Potter and Greene did not come back. All the king's horses and all the king's men could hardly have dragged them back to the infuriated Coker and the fives bat. They vanished!

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Off the Deep End!

"I GUESS Coker's got his mad up!" chuckled Fisher T. Fish. There was no "guessing" about it.

Horace Coker, of the Fifth, had his "mad" up, that was undoubted; and Hurree Janset Ram Singh would have declared that the upfulness was terrific.

Greyfriars School was a rather extensive establishment. But the bull-voice of Horace Coker could be heard over most of it.

Coker was fairly roaring.

Prout had taken it for granted that Coker would be silent about this painful affair. Prout's chief desire was to make the very best of a bad job; and above all, if he could, to keep the shadow of disgrace off his Form. Even if he was driven to the dreadful conclusion that there was a thief in his Form and it came to sacking Coker for that inexplicable offence, he hoped that somehow it might be done quietly—that the delinquent might be sent away softly, as it were, without a fearful crop of rumours and chatters, and an indelible stain on the Form of which he was beak.

Alas for Prout's hopes!

Coker was, as Fishy would have expressed it, telling the world. Coker was shouting it, so to speak, from the house-tops! Coker was broadcasting it far and wide. He was, at least, telling all Greyfriars; but in a tone of voice which hinted that he had no objection to the inhabitants of China and Peru hearing all about it.

He told them in the Fifth Form games-study. He told them up and down the passages. He told them on the stairs. He told everybody who would listen, and everybody who wouldn't.

Coker was boiling—boiling over!

Prout, he supposed, was mad! That was the only possible excuse he could find for Prout. But the disloyalty of Potter and Greene enraged him more than the insanity of Prout. He had expected them to back him up. He had counted on their faithful support. Instead of which, they had taken the same view as Prout.

True, they did not fancy that he had pinched that mouldy banknote. But they believed that he had taken it for a jape.

"As if I'd be such a fool!" Coker bawled for the hundredth time.

"Aren't you every kind of a fool?" asked Hilton of the Fifth, raising his eyebrows.

"I ask you men," said Price, "is there a kind of fool that Coker isn't?"

At which there was a laugh.

Laughter, in Coker's opinion, was out of place, at this awful crisis. He had no use for funny stuff from Hilton and Price.

He made this clear by jumping at them, grasping them by their collars, and banging their heads together, before they knew what he was up to.

"Ow!" yelled Hilton.

"Yarooop!" shrieked Price. Coker hurled them from him like wretched things that he despised. He glared at them as they sprawled.

"Now laugh!" he roared. "Go it—laugh!"

Hilton and Price did not laugh. They did not feel like laughing, with their skulls nearly cracked. They scrambled up, with deadly looks, to hurl themselves at Coker.

Wingate of the Sixth intervened.

"Chuck that!" he said curtly. "Coker's going to get enough, without any of that. It's not a joking matter, anyhow."

"He's cracked my nut!" yelled Hilton.

"Nothin' in it to damage, old bean!" suggested the Bounder. And there was a chuckle from the Removites in the crowd.

Removites were there, as well as fellows of other Forms. It was getting near time for call-over, and fellows were coming into Hall. Fellows who heard that Coker of the Fifth was going strong in Hall, hurried there as they might have hurried to a circus or any other entertainment.

Coker's tale of wrong and grievance was known all over the school now; he had shouted it already into most ears, and fellows were interested, not only in the affair itself, which was serious enough, but in the way that Coker was taking it.

Coker was an original fellow. Merely the way he played football was a proof of that. The way he spelt was another proof. Now he proved his originality once more.

Most fellows in Coker's extraordinary position, whatever they had done, would not have done as Coker was doing. Guilty or not guilty, most fellows, accused of so hideous a thing as theft, would not have wanted to become the cynosure of all eyes, the centre of all attention.

Coker did!

Coker only stopped short of going below stairs, and tolling the cook and housemaids all about it. Everybody above stairs was told, over and over again, at the top of Coker's voice. Coker's chin had hardly ceased to move since his interview with Prout. It was still going strong. Fortunately, his chin, well-developed by continual exercise, was able to stand the strain.

"Me!" roared Coker. "Me!" Hall was crowded, round the irate and indignant Horace, and he bawled at the crowd. "He thinks it was me!"

"Don't they teach you grammar in the Fifth?" inquired Cecil Reginald Temple.

"What?" roared Coker.

"You mean, he thinks it was I?" explained Temple of the Fourth, kindly putting Coker right in his cases.

Coker was not quick on the uptake. He did not realise that Temple was giving him a tip not to use the accusative case when the rules of grammar required the nominative.

"You young ass, he never said anything about you," said Coker. "He thinks somebody's pinched his mouldy banknote, but so far as I know, he doesn't think you had anything to do with it."

"Oh, my only aunt!" gasped Temple.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He thinks it was me!" said Coker, reckless and regardless of grammar, or perhaps considering himself above it, like the ancient gentleman who was nicknamed Super-Grammaticus. "Me, you know! If you know anything about it, though, young Temple—"

"Oh crumbs! You footling ass!" stuttered Temple. "I was only saying—"

"So far as I know, he hasn't got his eye on you," said Coker. "Look here, have you done anything with Prout's banknote?"

"No, you idiot!" shrieked Temple.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, if the mouldy thing really was snaffled, I suppose it must have been a fag did it!" said Coker. "You seem to know something about it, Temple. I advise you to own up if—"

"Idiot!" Temple began to wish that he had not started to give the fathead of the Fifth instruction in grammar.

"Look here—"

"Lunatic!"

Coker reached out with a mighty hand, and Cecil Reginald backed away. Grinning faces surrounded Coker.

The matter was serious—fearfully serious! It could hardly have been more serious! But, somehow, nobody could take Horace Coker very seriously. It seemed really to be his mission in life to make Greyfriars laugh; and awfully serious as the matter was, they couldn't help laughing.

"Me!" repeated Coker. "He thinks it was me!" Temple did not point out any more that he ought to have said "I." "Me! Mad as a hatter! He's taking roll to-night, too—fancy roll taken by a man who ought to be in a lunatic asylum, or at least in a home for idiots."

"Better not let him hear you say so!" suggested Loder of the Sixth.

"I'll tell him so to his face!" roared Coker. "Think I'm going to have him calling me a thief! I'll watch it! If he doesn't apologise, I'm going to ask the Head to sack him."

"Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But he hasn't called you a thief, from what you say!" gasped Harry Wharton. "He thinks you've bagged the silly thing for a joke."

"I know that, you cheeky young ass; but he says that if I don't hand it over before dorm, I'm to go to the Head and be charged with pinching it!" hooted Coker. "I can't hand over what I've not got, can I?"

"Then you did not—" The captain of the Remove did not finish asking that question. He jumped back out of reach.

"I say, you fellows, I wonder if he's got it on him now?" remarked Billy Bunter. "Of course he had it."

"What's that?" roared Coker. The fat Owl's words had not been intended for his ears, but he had caught them,

Billy Bunter blinked round through his spectacles in alarm.

"Oh! I—I mean, you—you never had it, Coker!" he gasped. "That's what I really meant to say. We all know that you wouldn't— Whooooo!" Bunter rolled under a mighty swipe.

"Now, all you men know the sort of mad idiot Prout is!" Coker went on, in tones compared with which the roar of the celebrated Bull of Bashan would have seemed a cooing whisper, "The old ass—"

"Shut up!" gasped Potter. "Here he comes!"

"What do I care?" bawled Coker. "For goodness' sake cheese it!" gasped Greene.

"Don't be a fool, Greene! I want Prout to know exactly what I think of him. I want him to hear me say— Leggo, you silly idiot!"

Mr Prout was entering Hall. Half a dozen well-wishers caught hold of Coker, up-ended him, and cut short the flow of his eloquence. For the next few minutes Coker was chiefly occupied in gurgling and spluttering, and Mr. Prout, did not, therefore, hear what the bright member of his Form thought of him. By the time Coker had got his second wind Prout was calling the roll.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Brought to Light!

"ADSUM!" Coker called out "adsum" loudly and clearly when Prout came to his name on the list. Everybody saw Prout glance at him as he called—or, rather, shouted—and noted that Prout's brow was grim and his eye gleaming.

(Continued on next page.)

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Even Coker felt constrained to keep quiet while Prout called the names, though he was not finished yet—not by any means. But he wanted to make it quite clear to Prout that he was not afraid to face him, and to face all Greyfriars. He made it quite clear. His "adsum" rang through Hall almost like a thunderclap.

Prout frowned darkly, and went on with the roll.

Coker snorted contemptuously.

"Be quiet, you ass!" breathed Blundell of the Fifth.

"Shut up, Blundell!"

"Silence, there!" called out Wingate.

Coker gave him a glare, but remained silent. He was anxious for Prout to get through. He had something to say when Prout was through.

All the fellows knew that, and there was a hush of expectation. On one face in the ranks of the Remove, was a trace of uneasiness. That face was Edgar Caffyn's.

The fact was that Coker, egregious ass as he was, was going the right way to work, for his own behoof. All this loud-voiced publicity was far from favourable to Caffyn's own plans.

Caffyn knew that Prout could not fail to suspect Coker. That was as certain as night after day. He had taken it for granted that Coker would be marched to the Head, either suspected or actually accused. Search of his person and his belongings would follow. The banknote would be found in his pocket; and it would be little use for Coker to declare that he did not know how it had got there. And that would be the finish!

Thus had the Snipe calculated, and he did not see how he could have calculated otherwise.

Coker would be judged guilty, not only by his headmaster, but by everybody else in the school who heard the details.

At the first news that Coker was already under suspicion the Snipe's eyes had gleamed with a wicked satisfaction. But he was not feeling so satisfied and secure now.

For Coker's proceedings, bull-headed and unthinking as they were, had at least one effect. They convinced everybody that he had not stolen Prout's banknote.

That a thief, conscious of guilt, would carry on as Coker was carrying on, was inconceivable. That hectic display of mingled indignation and stupidity demonstrated one thing clearly to everybody's conviction—that Coker, whatever he was, was no thief.

Which did not suit the Snipe at all.

However, he consoled himself by the reflection that the climax would come in the Head's study, in the presence only of masters, so what impression Coker made on the fellows did not, after all, matter much.

He little dreamed what was coming! Coker was not done yet!

He was waiting for Prout to finish the roll. He waited impatiently; but he waited. The climax was coming, not in the privacy of the Head's study, as the Snipe took for granted. It was coming here and now!

Prout finished at last. He had hardly called the last name when Horace Coker detached himself from the ranks of the Fifth and marched up Hall, heading for the raised dais where the Fifth Form master stood.

All eyes were on him breathlessly.

"Come back, you awful ass!" almost wailed Potter.

Coker did not even hear him.

He marched on. Prout looked at him.

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Thunder gathered in his plump brow. But thunder in the brow of Prout had no terrors for Coker now.

Nobody thought of leaving Hall. Fellows seemed glued in their places. Caffyn felt a spasm of uneasy fear—he hardly knew why. What was that fool, that fathead, going to do? What could he do? Nothing, surely, that would or could disarrange the Snipe's cunning plans. Yet, in his guilty heart, he felt a pang of deep disquiet.

"What does this mean, Coker?" Prout's voice was deep. "What—"

"About that banknote, sir," said Horace Coker, in a voice that was heard in every corner of the Hall and echoed from the oaken rafters. "I want that settled before the whole school. That's why—"

"If you mean that you have chosen this injudicious moment, Coker, for restoring the banknote, you may hand it to me," boomed Prout.

Snort from Coker.

"I don't mean anything of the sort, of course!" he retorted. "As I never touched the rotten thing, and never saw or heard of it, I can't hand it to you, or anybody else. That's what I want all the fellows to hear. I wish the Head was present. I'd like him to hear me! You've accused me of pinching a banknote!"

"Coker!" gasped Prout.

"If I've pinched a banknote, or anything else, you needn't give me till dawn to shell out," bawled Coker. "If I'm a thief the sooner I'm kicked out of a decent school the better!"

"Boy!"

"What I want," roared Coker, "is justice! I'm not going to have fellows thinking me a pincher because you've made a silly mistake."

"A—a what?"

"A silly mistake!"

Prout gazed at him. Some of the fellows grinned. Most watched with intense interest. Coker was talking to Prout as no master in Hall had ever been talked to before. Even Prout had to realise that it was improbable that a guilty fellow would carry on like this. Headstrong stupidity was serving Coker better than wisdom.

"It's got to be proved!" went on Coker's bull-voice. "And proved before all the school. Fellows who pinch banknotes don't eat them, or chuck them into the fire. If I pinched that banknote I've got it, haven't I? Well, if I've got it you can find it. See?"

Prout just gurgled.

"Here I am!" said Coker. "I'm ready to be searched. Let a prefect, or anybody you like, go through my pockets. I won't stop him! Let him search my study, and my locker, and my box in the dorm—and my football boots in the changing-room, if you like! If you find any filthy banknote about me, or in anything belonging to you, take me to the Head to be sacked—or send me to chokey! I believe in sending pinchers to chokey!"

"Good old Coker!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Anybody ever see such a howling ass?" asked the Bounder.

"Well, it's pretty certain Coker never had that banknote," said Harry Wharton. "He would want a lot of nerve to carry on like this if he had."

"Prout looks flummoxed."

"The flummoxfulness is terrific!"

Prout seemed, indeed, at a loss for words. He found his voice at last.

"Coker! Be silent! I shall take you to the Head's study, and there—"

"You won't!" said Coker.

"Wha-a-at?"

"All Greyfriars knows what you've accused me of!" bawled Coker. "All

Greyfriars is going to see that it's a silly mistake. No hole-and-corner business for me, thanks! Get on with your searching. Go through my pockets. I'm ready!"

"I shall do nothing of the kind!" hooted Prout. "And I order you—"

"I'll turn them out, then! Everybody in this school is going to see whether I have a banknote about me or not. If you ain't satisfied with seeing the lining of my pockets I'll take off my shoes and socks, if you like!"

"Silence!" roared Prout.

He glanced at the Sixth Form prefects, hesitating whether to call upon them to remove Coker from Hall by force. Prout was not quick on the uptake, and this unexpected and amazing scene had taken him quite aback. He was at a loss to know what to do.

Coker, however, knew what he was going to do, and was there to do it! He proceeded to turn out his pockets.

Various articles came to light, and Coker carefully pulled out the lining of each pocket, to show that there was nothing more in it.

From the inside breast-pocket of his jacket an envelope appeared, and Coker stared at it.

The envelope was blank, but he could feel that it contained something. He was unaware of having placed any paper in his pocket inside a blank envelope.

He stood with it in his hand, blinking at it.

Kipps, in the Remove, grinned, and nudged Caffyn on the elbow. Caffyn's face was pale and contracted.

Kipps chuckled in his ear.

"I say, they'll see that jolly old limerick now, Caffyn."

Caffyn looked at him without speaking. He could not speak. He knew, if Kipps did not, what was in that sealed envelope.

"That's the envelope I planted on him," whispered the schoolboy conjurer. "It must be, for he's taken it from his inside pocket, and there was nothing else there when I slipped it in. I say, Prout will jump when he sees that jolly old limerick."

Caffyn did not speak. Beads of perspiration were trickling down his thin face. His heart almost ceased to beat. Kipps, noting his strange look, stared at him.

"What's the trouble?" he asked. "Coker won't know you did the limerick, any more than he knows I put it in his pocket. What's worrying you?"

The Snipe made no answer. His eyes were fixed intensely on Coker. What was going to happen now?

Coker's puzzled look at the unexpected envelope caught Prout's attention, and that of the watching crowd of Greyfriars fellows. After blinking at the envelope for a few moments, Coker inserted a thumb into it and ripped open the flap. He had not the remotest idea that that envelope was in his pocket, and he could not begin to guess how it had got there. But there it was, and he was going to demonstrate that there was no French banknote inside it, if anyone fancied there might be!

Having ripped the envelope open, he inserted his finger and thumb, and drew out the folded slip of paper inside.

Then Coker almost fell down.

The figures "5,000" and the words "cinq mille francs" caught his astounded eyes. It was a French banknote. Coker had seen French banknotes before, and knew one when he saw it. Holding it up in full view, Horace Coker gazed at it, as he might have



As Horace Coker lunged with the fives bat, Potter and Greene made a frantic rush for the doorway. Reaching it together, they jammed. Bang, bang, bang! The fives bat fairly rang on them as they roared and struggled to get clear. "Yaroo!" "Wow-ow!"

gazed at an adder unexpectedly turning up in his pocket.

Prout gasped.

"The banknote!" boomed Prout.

"Great pip!" gasped Coker.

There was a deep buzz in Hall! Coker, deliberately and of his own accord, turning out his pockets before all the school, had turned out the purloined banknote!

## THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Honesty the Best Policy!

**K**IPPS of the Remove stood staring. Every fellow present in Hall was amazed. But the most amazed of all was the schoolboy conjurer.

He had "planted" that envelope on Coker. He had had no doubt that when it was opened Caffyn's limerick would come to light.

What had come to light was Prout's stolen banknote!

Kipps stood as if stunned. His jaw dropped in his petrified amazement, and he stood looking like a fish out of water.

Nobody heeded him, however. Every eye was tensely on Coker and Prout.

Coker's voice was heard stammering: "It—it—it's a—a—a banknote—a—a Froggy banknote!"

"Give me that banknote, Coker!" came Prout's deep boom.

Coker handed it to him.

Prout gave it a glance. It was undoubtedly the Bank of France billet for five thousand francs, which he had received from the Courtfield & County Bank a few days ago. It had been found—in Coker's pocket—by Coker!

By Coker—that was the amazing circumstance! Found, and produced before all the assembled school, by Horace Coker himself!

"Is—is—is that your banknote, sir?" stuttered Coker. That amazing development had somewhat subdued Coker's indignant aggressiveness. He felt as if his head was turning round.

"That," said Prout, in a deep boom, "is my banknote, Coker! It is the French banknote that was taken from my pocket-book in your study yesterday. What have you to say now?"

Coker, for the moment, had nothing to say! He was too utterly bewildered to think of anything to say.

The deep pause that followed was interrupted by a stir in the Remove.

Oliver Kipps emerged from that Form, with a red, excited face, and barged up the Hall. Caffyn made a clutch at his sleeve as he went, but Kipps, without even looking at him, shook him off, and barged on, followed by the amazed stare of his Form-fellows.

"Go to your place, Kipps!" called out Mr. Quelch.

Kipps did not heed.

Wingate stepped towards him to drop a hand on his shoulder. Kipps gave a yell:

"Let me alone! I've got to tell Prout!"

"Get back!"

Kipps dodged round the captain of Greyfriars and ran up to the dais. He was panting with excitement. Coker did not heed him; but Prout gave him an angry glance.

"Boy, how dare you! Go back at once! Mr. Quelch, this boy of your Form—"

"I've got to tell you!" yelled Kipps. "I put that into Coker's pocket!"

"You—you—you—what?"

"It was I!" howled Kipps. "I did it!"

"Is he mad?" whispered Bob Cherry.

This was really the dramatic climax. Kipps of the Remove was the centre of attention now, and every eye was glued on him in wonder. Mr. Quelch, stepping towards him, stopped. Prout gazed at him.

"Boy! You—you say—what do you say? What do you mean? What have you to do with this matter?"

"I'll tell you, sir!" panted Kipps. "I landed that envelope in Coker's pocket this afternoon. It was done for a joke—I thought it was a joke, Coker never knew it was there."

"Bless my soul!"

"Why, you cheeky young rotter!" hooted Coker. "You—"

"Silence, Coker! Kipps, explain yourself at once!"

"I never knew it was in my pocket!" bawled Coker. "Think I'd have turned it out like that, here in Hall, if I'd known? I never—"

"Silence!" roared Prout.

"Kipps," exclaimed Mr. Quelch, "tell Mr. Prout at once what you know of this matter, if you know anything!"

"Yes, sir!" panted Kipps. "I did it! It was a jape on Coker, put in his pocket for him to find afterwards."

"Do you mean that you purloined my banknote?" boomed Prout.

"No!" howled Kipps. "I never knew that the banknote was in that envelope. I thought it was a limerick in it, a joke on that ass, Coker, about

his football. That beast Caffyn took me in!"

"Caffyn!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "What has Caffyn to do with it?"

"Caffyn!" murmured Harry Wharton. "The Snipe! Is this another of the Snipe's dirty tricks?"

All the Remove fellows looked round at Caffyn. His white, terrified face told them enough.

Kipps was explaining, listened to with breathless attention.

"Caffyn made up a limerick, sir, guying Coker's fatheaded football. He said it would be a joke to slip it into Coker's pocket, for him to find afterwards, without knowing who had put it there. Of course, he couldn't do that himself; but I could, being a conjurer. So he asked me to do it."

"But the banknote——" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"He said he would put the limerick in an envelope!" howled Kipps. "He turned his back to me to do it. I thought he had done it! But he must have put the banknote in instead!"

"Good heavens!"

"It's true, sir!" gasped Kipps. "I suppose he never guessed it would all come out in the open like this. I was taken in. I thought it was a limerick about Coker's silly football!"

"You cheeky young tick!" hooted Coker.

"Silence, Coker!"

"Caffyn!" Mr. Quelch's voice was not loud, but deep. "Caffyn! Come here at once!"

The miserable Snipe could hardly move. But several of the juniors round him, with contempt and loathing in their faces, shoved him out of the Remove, and he tottered up the Hall.

Coker gave him a glare of scorn.

"You snipe!" he yapped. "I might have guessed that you were at the bottom of it! I might——"

"Silence, Coker!"

Caffyn stood, white, fear-stricken, his knees knocking together. His brain was in a whirl. Not only had he failed—the most ghastly failure in all his cunning scheming—but what was going to happen to him now? Fear was like ice at his heart.

Falsehoods cost the wretched Snipe little; but falsehoods could not help him now. To deny what Kipps had said—what was the use of that? But what else was he to say?

"Caffyn!" Mr. Quelch's voice had a cutting edge like a razor. "What have you to say to this?"

The Snipe licked his dry lips.

"A plot!" boomed Prout. "A plot against a boy of my Form! A wicked and dastardly plot against a boy in the Fifth Form—a boy who, however stupid and ungovernable, is honest as the day!"

"Hear, hear!" called out Bob Cherry.

"Good old Coker!"

"Good old fathead!"

"Silence!" hooted the prefects.

"Silence!"

"Caffyn!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Speak!"

"I—I——" stammered the Snipe.

"I——"

"You do not deny what Kipps has said?"

Caffyn hesitated a brief moment. Was it any use? He knew that it was not. That was a chicken that would not fight.

"N-n-no, sir!" he faltered.

"You confess that Mr. Prout's banknote was in your possession?"

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

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"It was you who abstracted it from Mr. Prout's pocket-book?"

The Snipe groaned.

"Yes, sir! It—it was meant as a joke——"

"A joke!" repeated Mr. Quelch in a formidable voice, while Prout gave a snort of scorn.

"I—I happened to be in Coker's study, sir, and—and saw the pocket-book there, and—and I thought it would be a—a joke to—to hide something from it; and—and—and then I thought I'd land it on Coker, sir, for—for a joke! Of course, it was only a jest, and I—I never imagined that Coker would be accused of stealing it——"

"I hope that is true!" said the Remove-master contemptuously.

"I—I should have spoken out, sir!" groaned the Snipe. "Of—of course, I should have spoken out, sir, if Kipps hadn't——"

"Gammon!" came a voice from the Remove, recognisable as the Bounder's.

"Silence!"

"I—I assure you, sir, it was only meant as a practical joke!" groaned the trembling Snipe. "I—I thought it—it would mystify Coker to find the—the banknote in his pocket! I—I never supposed it would all come out in Hall like this!"

"That much, I have no doubt, is true!" said Mr. Quelch dryly.

"I—I swear, sir!" groaned Caffyn.

"Nonsense!" boomed Prout. "Nonsense! Mr. Quelch, it was no joke! No boy could be so inconceivably stupid as to play such a trick! It was a plot, sir—a dastardly plot to disgrace a boy of my Form!"

"I fear that you are right, sir!" said Mr. Quelch. "This is not your first offence, Caffyn! The matter will be placed before the headmaster, and I fear that I shall be able to say nothing whatever in extenuation of your conduct! It is for the headmaster to decide; but I have no doubt that you will have to leave Greyfriars! You may go for the present."

Caffyn tottered away.

A prolonged hiss followed him as he limped out of Hall and disappeared.

"Coker!" Prout was booming again.

"Coker, you are completely exonerated—absolutely! Not the faintest suspicion can possibly attach to you! I regret—I deeply regret—that a wretched trickster's cunning deluded me so far as to doubt you for one moment! I regret it, Coker!"

Prout raised a plump hand.

"Dismiss!"

"Bravo, Coker!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Good old Coker!"

"Hurrah!"

Horace Coker walked down Hall through a cheering crowd. Potter and Greene took his arms, and walked with him like loyal chums, and Coker, in that happy hour, forgot that they had been of little faith, and that he had had to take the fives bat to them! Coker was happy and glorious, and, like the classical gentleman of old, seemed like to strike the stars with his sublime head!

It was all serene for Coker! It was not all serene for the wretched Snipe, skulking out of the sight of scornful eyes, and dreading the summons to his headmaster, which was only too likely to lead to the "sack." The way of the transgressor was undoubtedly hard!

THE END.

(Next Saturday's MAGNET will contain another grand long story of Greyfriars, entitled: "Coker the Reformer!" You'll enjoy every line of it, chums!)

## COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS!

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

I DARE say most of you have read Dumas' famous book,

### "THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO,"

and many of you must have wondered—as J. Duncan, of Whitehaven, does—if this romantic figure ever existed. I am sorry to tell you he didn't. The real Monte Cristo is an Italian island, about twenty-five miles south of Elbe, and it is six miles in circumference. It is the seat of a penal colony. The Chateau d'If, in which the fictitious count was imprisoned, stands in Marseilles Harbour, and, until recently, visitors were shown a cell there which was claimed to be the original cell in which the Count of Monte Cristo was imprisoned.

Unfortunately for the legend, a friend of mine who paid a visit there while alterations were being carried out, tells me that a notice was exhibited to the effect that "owing to alterations, the cell of Edmond Dantes (the hero of 'The Count of Monte Cristo') has been removed to another floor!"

This is just one case of where a fictitious character has gained such a grip on readers that people have come to believe that he was a real person. By the way, visitors to Denmark have been shown a grave which, it was asserted, was the actual grave of Hamlet!

Authors are often guilty of

### TAKING LIBERTIES WITH HISTORY

and twisting round the facts to get a better story. You've all heard of Dick Turpin, the famous highwayman, and his equally famous ride to York. Harrison Ainsworth wrote a book called "Rookwood," in which Turpin was the principal character, and a large number of people imagined that the book was actually based on history. Unfortunately, while Ainsworth describes in great detail the famous ride to York, it was discovered that Dick Turpin never made that ride at all!

It was an entirely different highwayman who accomplished the ride, and he did so for a particularly sordid reason. He had murdered a man in London, and he rode madly to York, where he mixed with a number of people, and drew their attention to the time. When he was eventually arrested he claimed that he was in York at the time of the crime, and brought people to prove that they had talked with him at a time when it seemed impossible for anyone to have reached York from London. The swiftness of his horse saved him.

Apart from that, however, Ainsworth's story was a rattling good one, and you'll say the same about next week's tip-top story of the chums of Greyfriars, entitled:

### "COKER THE REFORMER!"

By Frank Richards.

This is the final yarn in our series telling of the feud between Coker and his rascally cousin, Caffyn.

YOUR EDITOR.

# THE SEA SPIDER

By GEORGE E. ROCHESTER



## THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

*Nursing a feeling that little has been done for him since the War, Ulverst, the greatest U-boat commander Germany ever had, decides to wage war against the world. In consequence of this, he seeks out his old chief petty-officer, Wesel, and asks him to turn pirate. Down on his luck, Wesel readily agrees. Boarding a twin-engined amphibian monoplane, piloted by Ulverst, he is taken out over the North Sea to Ice Rock, the lair of the Sea Spider, the strangest steel craft ever constructed to move beneath the seas—and the most deadly. After showing Wesel over the Spider and introducing him to his brother officers, Ulverst informs his men that he intends to sink the Minneapolis, a thirty-five thousand tons vessel bound for Cherbourg from New York, with five hundred thousand pounds worth of bullion aboard. The following morning, the Spider is in position, when into the field of the periscope there appears gradually the smoke stacks, decks, and hull of the bullion liner. "Prepare to flood!" orders Ulverst.*

### DOWN IN THE DEPTHS!

**S**TEADILY the oncoming bows of the liner crept towards the sighting wire on the periscope mirror, and now both she and the Spider were dead in line and holding the same course, the Spider being fifteen hundred yards ahead with only her periscope, like a tiny piece of driftwood, marking her presence beneath the waves.

"Keep her hard at ninety-four degrees! Both motors dead slow! Centre vertical torpedo-tube stand by! Flood! Take her down to twenty fathoms!" Ulverst was giving his orders.

Right in the path of the oncoming liner the Spider sank down into the depths, her fangs bared, and her deadly poison—in the form of high explosive—ready to launch at her prey.

Through the water phones in the control-room came plainly and distinctly the rur-rurr-rr, rur-rurr-rr, rur-rurr-rr, of the liner's powerful propellers.

Rapidly the noise grew in volume, and the hair-like pointer of the position finder—an instrument controlled by outside propeller vibrations, and giving the relative position to the Spider of any vessel on the surface—crept steadily to zero.

Aboard the Spider not a man moved. All stood waiting with bated breath, whilst louder and louder sounded the rur-rurr-rr, rur-rurr-rr, rur-rurr-rr, of the bullion ship driving on towards her doom.

Ulverst, tense and rigid, his face strangely drawn, stood watching the pointer of the position finder.

Two hundred yards—one hundred and thirty yards—ninety yards—

"Stop motors! Centre vertical torpedo-tube—prepare to fire!"

The thumb of Torpedo-Officer Zutloss rested lightly on the firing-push.

Seventy yards—forty yards—fifteen yards—zero—

"Torpedo-tube—fire!"

The thumb of the swarthy Zutloss pressed hard on the firing-push, and next instant there came a terrific explosion, causing the Spider to roll violently in the percussion.

But already Ulverst was shouting orders:

"Blow tanks three and four! Clutch up crank gear! Stand by the suction pumps!"

Through the water phones came a heavy gurgling, audible in the control-room above the hiss of compressed air driving the water out of the ballast tanks.

"She's sinking!" cackled Dubowsky, his head inclined towards the water phones. "That gurgling noise is the swish of water into her hull."

Slowly, with emptying tanks, the Spider commenced to mount from the depths, and as her crank gear rumbled into life, slowly and horribly she elevated her great steel legs until they were curled out above her like gigantic tentacles.

And tentacles, indeed, they were. For as they touched, bumped, and finally reared on the bottom of the hull of the stricken vessel, the suction pumps thudded into life, creating a vacuum in each tentacle which kept it riveted on the hull of the sinking ship.

Meanwhile aboard the Minneapolis, all was panic and confusion.

At that hour of the morning the majority of the passengers had been still in their bunks, whilst those who were up had been seated at breakfast, some eagerly, some quietly, discussing the end of the voyage which was almost in sight.

Then, without warning, somewhere in the very bowels of the ship, had occurred a terrific and deafening explosion, which had shaken the huge liner from stern to stern.

Almost immediately the Minneapolis had developed a heavy list to starboard, and to the haggard-faced American captain on the bridge had been brought the report that through shattered hull plates the water was pouring in at an appalling rate.

Instantly the wireless flickered into life, sending out across the sea that most stirring and tragic of all calls, the SOS.

Simultaneously the order was given to

those aboard the Minneapolis to don lifebelts and clear away the boats.

Already the bullion liner was settling lower in the water, and it was apparent to every man amongst her officers and crew that there was not the slightest chance of saving her.

How the explosion had occurred, what exactly had happened, none knew, nor was this the time for either speculation or hazardous guess.

The boats were slung outboards, and hastily clad and frightened passengers crowded into them, herded and shepherded by the ship's officers, every one of which carried a drawn and loaded revolver.

One strange phenomenon with regard to this sinking was noted by the captain and his officers. And that was, that after the first few minutes the Minneapolis settled much more slowly in the water than was commensurate with the apparent size of the hole in her hull and the first terrific inrush of water.

It seemed as though in some extraordinary manner her final downward plunge into the depths was being delayed.

It was being delayed, too, but in a fashion which none of those who had been aboard the Minneapolis could have imagined in their wildest dreams. For beneath the vessel, holding her up by means of her giant tentacles, was the Spider.

Almost every drop of water in the great ballast tanks of the Spider had had been pumped out and the air in her enormous bulk had converted her into a mighty buoy.

In the control-room Ulverst glanced at his watch.

"We can hold the vessel no longer!" he said harshly. "She is becoming too waterlogged and already we are being forced down. If those aboard her have not cleared away their boats by this time, they must take the consequences!"

He turned to the voice-pipe.

"Prepare to flood all tanks! Stand by the electric motors! Stand by to run Diesels under compressed air! Move

hydroplanes for rapid dive! Prepare to stop suction pumps!"

A few moments of silence, and then: "Flood! Electric motors half-speed ahead! Clutch up Diesels!"

Almost immediately, as the Spider began to go rapidly down under the weight of her flooding ballast tanks and the weight of the crippled liner, Ulverst's voice rang out again:

"Electric motors full speed ahead! Stop action pumps! Diesels full speed ahead!"

For an instant the Spider groaned and quivered like a live thing under the thrust of her thundering screws. Then, as the suction pumps were stopped, releasing the tentacles, she shot away from the massive hull directly above her in a surging, roaring dive like some terrified monster of the undersea streaking for cover.

At forty fathoms the Spider was well clear. The Diesel engines were stopped, her hydroplanes levelled, and with electric motors running from half-speed to dead slow, and, at a depth of fifty fathoms, crept cautiously back to the scene of the attack.

Ulverst, his face pressed against the look-out window, suddenly wheeled.

"Stop her!" he shouted. "Stop both motors!"

The quiet hum of the electric motors died away and, joining Ulverst at the look-out window, Wesel Braden, and Dubowsky saw a sight which surely had never before been witnessed by the eyes of man.

Far ahead dimly visible in the half-light of the depths, was the Minneapolis, sinking slowly to the ocean floor in a fantastic aeration of streaming bubbles and a wild welter of loose wreckage which was being torn from her decks.

Fascinated and appalled, the four men at the look-out window stood watching their victim. None spoke save Braden, and his face was deathly in its pallor as he uttered a stifled,

whispered word which might have been either oath or prayer.

Smoothly and without a jar, the Minneapolis settled on the ocean floor. Then slowly she heeled, lying on her port side and disclosing the warped and twisted plates on the bottom of her riven hull.

It was then that, with all tanks flooded, the Spider dropped sluggishly down to the ocean floor. Her crank gear rumbled into life. Slowly and hideously she heaved herself up on her gigantic legs. Then, like some great evil monster of the deep, she commenced to crawl forward towards her prey.

Reaching it, she halted. Lower and lower sank her giant belly, until there on the ocean bed she squatted, her great luminous eyes fixed balefully on the victim which she had come from cold and desolate seas to claim.

Inside her, Surgut and Karn, two of the divers she carried, made ready to sally forth to the looting of the sunken liner's bullion-room.

### Devils of the Depths!

**T**HE heavy and massive steel diving suits into which Surgut and Karn were fastened were of a type far in advance of any Wesel had ever seen before.

Each suit was electrically illumined inside, and below the look-out window was a small dashboard bearing a compass, depth-gauge, pressure-gauge, oxygen-gauge, and thermometer.

Just above the look-out window was the mouthpiece of the telephone, with which the diver could keep in communication with the Spider. There were no air lines. Each suit had its own oxygen supply, and the carbon dioxide breathed by the diver was absorbed by chemicals in his breathing-mask. The arms and legs of each great steel suit moved easily and with little effort on ball socket joints, and the hands were electrically controlled claws of steel.

When both were enclosed in their suits and the last nut had been screwed tightly into place, Surgut and Karn moved into the diving-chamber on the starboard side of the control-room.

An electrically controlled steel door slid shut, cutting them off from the control-room. Then another similar door in the outer hull was raised, allowing the water to flood into the diving chamber.

Cumbersomely, Surgut and Karn stepped out through this open doorway on to the ocean floor, and, watched by the man on duty at the look-out window of the Spider, they laboriously made their way towards the Minneapolis.

Entry to the sunken liner was gained without difficulty through the great jagged hole which the Spider had blown in the vessel's keel plates.

Until mid-morning, keeping in regular telephonic communication with the Spider, Surgut and Karn laboured in locating the position of the strong-room in which the bullion-boxes were stored and in preparing the charge of high explosive with which to blow the strong-room open.

When the high explosive had been placed in position, the two divers quitted the wreck, and, carrying the electric firing cable in their claw-like hands, slowly retreated to a safe distance, in order to be out of the way of any possible effects of the repercussion.

It was Surgut who fired the charge, and, after he and Karn had investigated the result, they came back aboard the Spider, to indulge in a well-earned rest and rub down.

"The bullion-room is open, sir," Surgut reported to Ulverst, after being divested of his breathing mask and assisted out of his diving-suit.

"Excellent!" nodded Ulverst. "You and Karn lie down for an hour before resuming your operations."

He turned to Wesel. "You, also, had better snatch some sleep, Wesel, whilst we are here on the bottom," he said.

"Yes," answered Wesel, and he turned thankfully away to seek his bunk.

He was, indeed, very tired, for he had not turned in since taking over the four a.m. watch the morning before. And already, contributing no little to his listlessness and fatigue, the air in the Spider was becoming vitiated and oppressive.

Wesel turned in, fully dressed, and scarcely had his head touched the hard pillow of his bunk than he was sound asleep.

How long he had slept he did not know—he learnt later that it was about two hours—when he was suddenly startled into instant wakefulness by the deafening clang of the alarm reverberating with thunderous clamour throughout the Spider.

Swinging his feet to the floor, Wesel dashed through the open bulkhead door and into the control-room. Ulverst, standing at the look-out window with Braden and Falzo, turned his head.

"Wesel," he rasped, "come here!"

"What is it?" demanded Wesel, joining him in two strides. "What is wrong?"

"Look—out there!" said Ulverst harshly.

Thrusting Falzo roughly aside, Wesel pressed his face to the thick glass of the look-out window.

"Gott in Himmel!" he gasped. For out there, in the half-light of the depths, there was being enacted a night-



## THAT TOUGH GUY HOBBS!

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marish scene which caused the blood of the stolid Wesel to run momentarily cold.

The whole ocean floor seemed to be alive with horrible and grotesque creatures which were fish—and yet not fish. Six feet in length, with great, scaly, fish-like bodies, these strange beings of the underseas were moving erect, half shuffling and half floating along the ocean floor. Their great staring and unwinking eyes and cruel, curved mouths were on the under side of the head, giving them a horrible and revoltingly human-like appearance as they moved erect.

On each side of the body, just below the slowly moving head gills, protruded a stunted and scaly arm-like growth, ending in a webbed and yellowish claw. The great thick, finny tail was split up the middle, giving the impression of two short, wide, and grotesque legs about a foot in length. And legs of a sort indeed were these two stumpy sections of tail, for it was on them that the creatures were shuffling along.

What had caused Wesel's cold spasm of horror, however, was the fact that these dreadful, human-like creatures of the depths had seized one of the divers, and, swarming round him, were bearing him down on the ocean floor.

The other diver was moving with frantic, but laborious effort towards the Spider. Evidently he had seen his danger before his companion, and had started to make for safety, for the sea creatures were shuffling in pursuit of him, their horrible, stunted arms outstretched to clutch him in loathsome grasp.

"That is Karn they've got!" Ulverst's voice was hoarse and shaking. "Pray Heaven Surgut can reach the diving-chamber!"

Dubowsky, dirty, unshaven, and clad in dressing-gown, obviously roused from his bunk by the clamour of the alarm, pushed his way fustily forward to the window.

"What is the matter?" he chattered. "What has gone wrong?"

Then as his deep-set and glittering eyes took in the bizarre scene outside, he gave vent to a shrill ejaculation of astonishment.

"What are those—those things?" he babbled wildly. "Where have they come from?"

Without speaking, almost without breathing, the other four men at the look-out window watched Surgut's awful race for life.

Nearer and nearer to the Spider Surgut staggered and lurched. But the sea creatures were moving faster than he, and already the nearest of them was but feet only from him, its great, staring eyes and half-open gash of a mouth giving it the appearance of some devil possible only in a disordered mind.

Ulverst swung from the look-out window, his face white and haggard.



Dimly visible in the half-light of the depths was the Minneapolis, sinking slowly to the ocean floor!

"Stand by to close the diving-chamber!" he shouted. "I'll shoot the man who fumbles!"

Again he wheeled to the window. Surgut had by now almost reached the Spider. But the nearest of his pursuers was closing up on him.

Falze turned livid.

Surgut was so close now to the Spider that another three steps would take him to the diving-chamber. But even as he blundered towards it, the sea creature closed in on him, its webbed hands clawing hideously at his suit of steel.

Springing back from the window, Ulverst dashed across the control-room to the inner door of the diving-chamber. From the other side of the steel door came a faint and muffled metallic thump.

"He's in!" shouted Ulverst. "Close the outer door!"

Instantaneously came the whir of the small electric motor which operated the diving-chamber doors.

"Outer door shut, sir!" reported Chief Petty Officer Dorok brusquely.

"Pump out the chamber!"

Mingling with the sucking action of the pump came the hiss of air flowing into the emptying diving-chamber as the water was forced gurglingly out.

"Diving-chamber empty, sir!" reported Stuxberg.

It was in a strange, tense silence that Ulverst gave the order to open the inner door. Men pressed forward, watching, wondering. Then slowly the inner steel door of the chamber slid back, and into the control-room stumbled Surgut, to fall with a heavy crash, face foremost to the iron floor, the gasping sea creature still clinging remorselessly to him.

#### Shipmates!

"STAND back!" screamed Dubowsky. "Do not touch it!"

With outflung arms he kept back the press of men who were surging to the assistance of Surgut.

"Do not kill the thing!" he shrieked excitedly. "We must take it alive!"

"We want Surgut out of that suit!" said Ulverst harshly.

"No—no!" cried Dubowsky. "Wait! Surgut is all right! Prod the creature off him! We must keep it alive!"

He swung on Verek and Dorok.

"Get boat-hooks! Get something!" he babbled. "Push the thing off Surgut!"

He backed nervously away, for the sea creature, sprawling atop of the prostrate Surgut, had raised its hideous head, to stare evilly through great and lidless eyes at the men confronting it. Its massive bulk was heaving labouredly, and, suddenly from its half-open mouth, there issued a long-drawn and awful moan which echoed through the control-room.

With trembling fingers Dubowsky gripped Dr. Valendorf by the arm.

"What—what do you make of it, Valendorf?" he whispered. "What is it?"

"I do not know," replied Valendorf, his voice strangely even. But there was something approaching a human note in that noise it made.

"Well, human or not," cut in Ulverst roughly, "I'm going to let the life out of it!"

With drawn revolver in his hand he moved forward. Releasing Valendorf's arm, Dubowsky sprang after him.

"No—no!" he pleaded. "Don't kill it! Let us keep it alive as long as possible! See, it is expiring already!"

The head gills of the creature had opened wide, and were slowly assuming rigidity, whilst its laboured gasps for breath were becoming shorter and more agonised.

"Yes, it's dying all right, curse it!" laughed Ulverst harshly, and, raising a sea-booted leg, he gave the creature a savage thrust which sent it slithering off Surgut to lie sprawling on the floor.

"Now get Surgut out of his suit!" he rapped.

Willing hands raised the prostrate diver, and hurriedly the bolts of the steel diving suit were unscrewed.

Surgut was quite unconscious when they lifted him out of the suit and, under the direction of Dr. Valendorf, he was carried gently to his bunk and artificial respiration applied.

Being reassured by the doctor that Surgut still had a faint pulse and would live, Ulverst wheeled on Wesel.

"Now we'll pick up Karn!" he said harshly. "But first I'll blow those fearful creatures out there to purgatory!"

Crossing to the look-out window, he took one swift glance through the thick glass. The ocean bed between the Minneapolis and the Spider was still aswarm with the sea creatures. Karn was lying where he had fallen, a motionless and inert heap of steel surrounded by these strange beings of the depths who had borne him down.

"Stand by the starboard stern torpedo tube!" roared Ulverst.

The torpedo crew leapt to their posts. Again Ulverst's voice rang out stridently.

"Stern torpedo tube prepare to fire!"

The thumb of the tall and swarthy Zutloss rested lightly on the firing push.

"Stern torpedo tube—fire!"

The thumb of Zutloss pressed hard, and right into the mass of sea creatures flashed the torpedo, tearing its way through their midst to explode with sudden devastating and muffled roar in a welter of swirling, boiling water and torn and bleeding fragments of disintegrating bodies.

In spite of her massive bulk the Sea Spider rocked in the repercussion of the explosion, and almost instantly the water about her became clouded red with blood.

Ulverst turned to Wesel.

"You and I are going out there to bring Karn in!" he barked. "I will use Surgut's suit. You will get into the spare!" Then he wheeled to the others in turn. "Clear those bullion boxes out of the diving-chamber!" he shouted. "Versk, you take the wheel and lay the Spider alongside Karn. You, Braden, take the look-out window!"

Then, whilst he and Wesel struggled into the great steel diving suits, the Spider rumbled into life and men hurriedly cleared the diving-chamber of the bullion boxes which Surgut and Karn had brought aboard the Minneapolis before being attacked.

Quivering under the drive of her crank gear, the Spider raised herself on her gigantic legs, then slowly she commenced to crawl forward towards where the steel-encased body of Karn now lay visible in the clearing water.

Inch by inch, foot by foot, the great steel monster moved forward, and

reaching Karn, squatted down by his side, her great, luminous eyes glaring defiantly out into the shadowy half-light of the depths as though daring any to touch again that prostrate form to which she was giving her protection.

Before having his breathing mask fixed into place, Ulverst turned to Braden at the look-out window.

"Has the torpedo shifted them?" he asked grimly. "Or do they require another?"

Braden turned from the window.

"No, they are gone," he answered.

"The water is clear of them at present."

Ulverst nodded.

"The diving-chamber," he said, turning to Wesel, "will only hold one of us, and Karn, at the same time. When we have pulled Karn into the chamber, I will wait outside the Spider until you

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have got him into the control-room. Then have the chamber flooded again and I will come aboard."

"No, I will wait outside the Spider and come aboard after you and Karn," said Wesel stolidly.

"You will obey my orders!" blazed Ulverst.

For a moment the eyes of the two men met in direct gaze, Ulverst's aglitter with anger, Wesel's calm and steady. Then Wesel inclined his head.

"Very good, mein Kapitan," he answered. "I will bring Karn in!"

Together, he and Ulverst, encased in their heavy diving suits, moved into the diving chamber. The inner steel door slid shut and the outer door was raised.

From the flooded chamber, commander and second-in-command moved cumber-somely out on to the ocean floor.

One quick glance Ulverst took ahead into the depths, where vague shapes were beginning to gather again, grim

evidence that the sea creatures had not entirely fled.

Wesel saw them also. And although both men knew the deadly peril which must lie in the slightest delay, it was coolly and unhurriedly that they bent over the prostrate form of Karn and commenced to drag him into the diving chamber.

With difficulty, for his bulk was very heavy, they got him in. Then, straightening up, Wesel raised a steel-encased arm to point to the vague shapes which were half-floating and half-shuffling closer and closer again to the Spider.

That gesture of Wesel's was merely meant to serve as a warning to Ulverst. For, although he hated the thought of leaving one who was his commander and his friend to probable attack by these devils of the depths, Wesel had had his orders, and he was far too good a sailor and disciplinarian to disobey them, or waste precious moments in futile argument which could only, of necessity, be carried on by gesture.

So, with an anxious and heavy heart, he stepped back into the diving chamber and banged with his steel-encased elbow on the inner door, as a signal to those inside the control-room to close the outer door and commence emptying the chamber.

Ulverst, standing grim and motionless beside the Spider, saw the outer steel door of the diving chamber slowly close. Then, turning his back on the strange and monster craft which he commanded, he waited.

He knew that, at best, it would be six or seven minutes before the outer door of the diving chamber could be opened again. And he realised that, unless something strangely unforeseen happened, he would, before that time, be engaged in a desperate fight for life.

It did not occur to Ulverst, as he stood there with his back against the mighty hull of the Spider, to wonder why he had deliberately dared the approaching peril in order to rescue one, who, the chances were, was already dead.

No, it did not occur to him to wonder, nor to question. For, whatever else he might be, Ulverst was a seaman, first and last, and Karn was a shipmate—one who had sailed the seas and underseas with him—and because of that Ulverst would never have abandoned him, no matter what the cost might be.

The sea creatures, converging towards the Spider, were very close now, and Ulverst could see the staring eyes.

Well, he told himself grimly, as long as he kept his back against the Spider, the devils could only attack him from the front.

(Look out for more big thrills and surprises in next week's chapters of this gripping adventure story, chums. Be sure and order your copy early!)

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# THE BOOLY of the FOURTH!

By DICKY NUGENT

Crash! Bang! Wallop!  
Mr. I. Jollifwell Lickham, the master of the Fourth Form at St. Sam's, tapped timidly on the door of Dr. Birchmell's study.  
"Trot in, fathead!" came a yell from within, in the Head's refined voice, and Mr. Lickham entered.

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Mr. Lickham, a moment later.

The master of the Fourth was a man who was accustomed to keeping his feelings well under control; but he needed all his self-discipline to control them at the site that met his eyes on this occasion.

There, standing in front of the Head's desk, was a ferocious-looking giant fully seven feet high, who bared his fangs in a crool grin as Mr. Lickham stared at him!

It gave Mr. Lickham a tremendous shock for a moment. But his long training in preserving a calm demeanour stood him in good stead, and, apart from nodding at the neeze and going deadly white, he gave not a hint of his inner feelings.

"You scent for me, sir," he said, quietly, taking a sniff at the Head's smelling-salts.

"Eggsactly!" smiled Dr. Birchmell. "I want to interdooce you, Lickham, to a new boy who is joining your Form to-day. Hall, this is Mr. Lickham, your Form-master. Lickham, this is your new pewpil, Sloggem Hall!"

"What?" hooted Mr. Lickham.

Before he could say more, a huge hand the size of a large ham grasped his own puny palm in a vice-like grip and caused him to perform a dubblo somersault and collapse on the floor in a yelling heap!

"Yaroooooo!" roared Mr. Lickham.

"Pleased to meet yer!" growled the eggstraordinary new boy, in a rumbling voice that seemed to come from the bowels of the earth. "I 'ope as 'ow we'll get on well together!"

"What the merry dickens!" gasped Mr. Lickham as he staggered to his feet again.

Dr. Birchmell smiled at his subordinite.

"Sloggem Hall, my dear Lickham, is—ahem!—a somewhat unusual new boy," he remarked. "He is rather big for his age, and he duzzent know his own strength. Nevertheless, Lickham, I think you will grow to like him, and I am sure you will find him a willing pewpil, eh, Hall?"

"Wot!" growled Sloggem Hall, in his thunderous voice. "I've come to be learnt lessons, I 'ave. Wot!"

"Bless my sole!" gasped Mr. Lickham, shuddering a little at the new boy's axcent. "But—but you appear to be a grown man. Rather an overgrown one, in fact!"

"Perish the thought, Lickham!" larfed Dr. Birchmell. "Hall is a meer stripling, and when he finds himself among Form-mates half his size, I am sure he will soon find his level. Take him away, allot him a study, and then let him meet his new skoolfellows."

Mr. Lickham nodded dumbly, and lod the way out like one in a dream.

While he was opening the door, the Head beckoned Sloggem Hall back for a moment.

"Remember, Hall," he whispered, giving the new boy a sly wink, "nobody must know that you are a budding world champion, fully grown up. I am axcepting the jennerous fees you are paying for your education solely on the condition that you keep up the pretence that you are only an overgrown skoolboy. Is that quite plain?"

"Wot!" As plain as your face, guv'nor!" whispered back Sloggem Hall.

Then, wearing a savvidge grin on his battered face, he followed Mr. Lickham out.

There were many stares as the towering grate new boy stalked along through the passages beside Mr. Lickham. Nothing quite like Sloggem Hall had ever been seen at St. Sam's before.

The first person Mr. Lickham interdooced Hall to was Burleigh, the kaptin of the skool. Burleigh farly blinked when he heard that the giant was a new boy in the Fourth.



# THE NEW Greyfriars Herald



No. 126 (New Series).

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

March 2nd, 1935.

"What the thump—" he eggscloimed.  
"How do, yung covvey!" thundered Sloggem Hall, and Burleigh culledered furiously.

"Look here," he cried, hawtily. "You can't call me 'yung covvey' while you're in the Fourth, even though you are seven feet high. It simply isn't done!"

"Isn't it?" retorted Sloggem Hall, with a horse guffaw. "Well, it's going to be done while I'm 'ere, anyways, yung covvey! And 'ere's some-think for your impurence!"

So saying, the amazing new boy gave Burleigh just a light tap on the chin.

The effect of that light tap on Burleigh was remarkable. He went flying away, whizzing round like a catterpult as he sailed through the air, just as if he had been fired out of the mouth of a cannon! Only the wall stopped him from a jerney of 20 or 30 feet, and even that showed a vizzible dent after he had hit it!

"Few!" whissled the spectators, while Mr. Lickham turned deadly pail.

"Now wot about those Form-fellers I've gotter meet?" growled Hall.

"Th-th-there they are," stammered Mr. Lickham, pointing out Jack Jolly and a crowd of Fourth-Formers.

"This is Jolly, whose study you will share. He is kaptin of the Fourth."

"Ho, 'o is, is 'e?" roared Sloggem Hall. "Well, Jolly, you'd better forget that kaptin bizness quick. From now hon, I am the kaptin of the Fourth!"

Jack Jolly eyed the new boy with flashing eyes.

"There'll be a ding-dong struggle before you are!" he cried, in a ringing voice. "I'm pretty certain the Fourth will never agree to a beestly booly like you being kaptin!"

"No fear!" cursed the Fourth.

A crool grin spread slowly over Sloggem Hall's ugly dial.

"Ho, so that's it, is it?" he growled. "Well, we'll soon see who's going to be boss. 'Ere goes!"

Without further ado, the giant of St. Sam's stepped forward and distributed a few light taps—and immejetely there was havoc in the ranx of the Fourth. Fellows whizzed through the air and

dropped to the floor with sickening thuds by the duzzent!

In two ticks, Sloggem Hall had slogged them all. Then, leaving behind him a regular battlefield of casualties, he followed the trembling Mr. Lickham up to Jack Jolly's study in the Fourth Form passidge!

Jack Jolly gritted his teeth as he picked himself up.

"My hat! We're up against it this time, and no mistake!" he panted. "That ate lout is a booly and cadd of the first water. But are we going to nuokle under to him?"

"NEVER!" went up a grate shout from the Fourth.

And as the rest of the skool herd that shout, they realised that St. Sam's was about to witness a grate and historick struggle for raktory against the injustiss and terry of the Booly of the Fourth!

(Dickie Nugent continues the adventures of Sloggem Hall, the booly of the Fourth, in next week's number. Don't miss them!—Ed.)

## HAROLD SKINNER describes FLOOD FRENZY IN No. 10



My next-door neighbours Bols-over major and Dupont seem unable to cope with the simplest problem. I was in No. 10 the other evening when the water-pipes burst in one of the bath-rooms on the floor above, and the way those two faced up to the situation nearly brought down my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave!

As soon as the water started dripping down on him from the ceiling, Dupont leaped fully three feet in the air, clutched his neck, and shrieked: "Helas! Helas! Ze vataire come! But we all drown, isn't it?"

Bols-over, meanwhile, stood up slowly, glaring at the ceiling with a glare that might easily have brought it down on his head, and clenched his fists as though he intended to commence a violent assault on it at any moment!

Finding that the flow of water didn't stop in response to his first yell, Dupont started talking to it, accompanying his talk with wild gesticulations and expressive shrugs.

"Why for you come down for to spoil ze furniture of our study, isn't it?" he moaned. "Is it not ridicule zat zis 'appen after zat we buy ze new stuff?"

Then Bols found his voice and spluttered: "Why, I'll—I'll smash it!" What he intended to smash, I don't know. In moments of emergency, Bols rocks always that it's best to smash something anyway!

The flow of water got worse, and Dupont did a kind of Russian Ballet dance all round the study.

Not to be outdone, Bols kicked a chair across the floor and started attacking the door of the cupboard with his fists.

Of course, the obvious thing to do was to dash upstairs and dam the flood, by stuffing one's forearm into the breach—either that or turn off the water at the main!

But do you think Bols-over and Dupont did it? Not on your life!

When I left them, Dupont appeared to be learning to swim on the floor and Bols was having a wrestling match with an armchair.

Potty—the pair of them! That's all you can say about them!

If it hadn't been that, on returning to my own study, I found the water was also getting in there and decided to do something about it myself, I really believe those two coons would have gone on hopping about No. 10 till the water was up to their necks.

Frenzied lot of fatheads about, aren't there?

## BUNTER says—LET'S GO BACK TO BARTER

After reading in a newspaper that in a n y countries are now trading with each other by barter without a penny changing hands, I had a jolly fine idea.

Why not go back to barter at Greyfriars?

I think it's a ripping weeze, myself. After all, munny is only a beestly newsance. It's dirty and curred in germs and always liable to slip through the holes in your pockits, when you've got it. And when you haven't got it, it's a bigger newsance than ever.

For some obscure reason, which I have never been able to fathom, tradesmen seem reluctant to let you have goods without it! So you see, it would be an improvement all round if we abolished munny and went back to barter.

It would certainly be a grate improvement for me, anyway. Being, as you know, an eggseptionally jennerous chap, I am often running short of cash, and that eggspose me to sarkasm and riddicule from that old cat Mrs. Mimble, when I vencher in to the tuckshop to ask for tuck on tick. But in an Age of Barter, I'd simply order what I wanted and pay in pocket-nives, watches, fountain-pens, pencils, tippins et settera.

When the supply of these ran short, I could use my gluvs, collars, caps, et settera.

You may object: "What happens after you've eggshhausted all your personal possessions?" But the objection duzzent seem a very strong one to me.

I have always found that slobber and material needs like that are made good by the skool authorities at the pater's eggspense. But munny is a different matter!

So if you'll take my tip, lads, you'll join in my agitation and make sure of getting unlimmited supplies of tuck without using tithy looce at all.

Skoolboys! Support this rring slogan!

BACK TO BARTER!

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BACK TO BARTER!



## WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?



Bunter is always boasting about his gold-nibbed fountain pen. The other day he declared it was worth twenty-two carats—and he didn't see the joke at all when Skinner offered to "swap" a bunch of edible carrots for it!



Wun Lung says the Chinese are an honest and scrupulous race, but ruthless enemies. Certainly, while he almost worships Cherry, Wun Lung did not scruple to trick Bols-over major into eating a specially prepared pie!



Bob Cherry showed his skill by "heading" a football fifty-three times without letting it touch the ground. When William George Bunter tried, he only got the ball on his head once—a nasty bang that made his head ring for hours!



Johnny Bull has very muscular arms. When he bought a cheap sheet expander, he succeeded in breaking it at the first attempt—and the manufacturers had to send him a new one! Johnny puts "pop" into his "physical jerks."

# THERE'S A GREAT PLAY COMING

Whoops DICK RAKE

Wibley's production of Shakespeare's "The Tempest" is going to set a new standard for school shows.

With the presentation of "The Tempest," Wibley's fame as a schoolboy theatrical producer will reach truly dizzy heights. "The Tempest," as given by Wibley will be a furore, a sensation, a bombshell—in a word, a Wow!

Wib. is throwing himself feverishly into the oceans of work which a great production like this entails. At any odd moment of the day or night you can see him pacing the floor of his study, thoughtfully rubbing his chin, or sitting in an armchair reading the script. The amount of work the man does is simply incredible!

At rehearsals it's quite a sight to watch him. He stands in front of the stage, coat off and shirt-sleeves rolled back, and tears his hair and moans like a lost soul every time the actors fail to attain utter perfection. But it's just this insistence on the best and nothing less than the best that makes it such a downright certainty the show will succeed!

There's only one drawback about it. That is, the length of time it all takes.

Wib. simply will not pass a line unless it's delivered just as he wants it. And the result in the present instance is beginning to make some of the members of the show quite alarmed.

To reveal the dreadful truth, the only part of "The Tempest" covered so far is this:

"Act I. Scene I.

Master. Boatswain!  
Boats. Here, master! What cheer?"

And that's all! What's more, it has taken six solid rehearsals to reach this point, and Wib's still not quite sure of the way the last word is rendered. Jevver know such a particular chap in your lives?

Oh, he's a great stage man is old Wibley—and there's a great play coming right enough when "The Tempest" is presented at Greyfriars.

It will probably be performed by a company of toothless old gentlemen in bathchairs, round about the year 1999!

## DOWN WITH SNOBBERY

Says Cecil Reginald Temple

One type of chap I can't stand is the snob. Dash it all, why should any one put himself on a blessed pedestal and consider himself better than the rest? It's beestly bad form, to say the least of it.

Treat all men as equals—that's my idea. Naturally, in my own case, there are exceptions. A gentleman has to keep ruffians and boors at their distance, doesn't he? That explains why there's hardly a man at Greyfriars outside my own particular circle that I'd touch with a bargepole!

Have a beaming, brotherly smile for all—that's my principle! Of course, that's not to say you won't have a marble eye and a freezing, supercilious stare always in reserve for the cads. What-ho!

The worst of it is, there are such a lot of these low what-nots about. In fact, the safest thing to do is to wear the freezing, supercilious stare as a general rule, and reserve the beaming, brotherly smile for the favoured few.

One simply must put people in their place and make it unmistakably clear that one is superior to them. The very least a gentleman like myself can do is that.

But not in a snobbish way. Oh, dear, no! I simply couldn't stand the thought of being a snob. Could you?

(As a treatise against snobs, dear old Cecil Reginald's contribution must surely be unique. Of all the footling frumps . . . but no; on consideration, we'll leave the article as it stands, without further comment, and see if it becomes a classic. It should!—Ed.)

## GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!



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Johnny Bull has very muscular arms. When he bought a cheap sheet expander, he succeeded in breaking it at the first attempt—and the manufacturers had to send him a new one! Johnny puts "pop" into his "physical jerks."

Horace Coker, of the Fifth, kicked up an awful fuss when Mr. Prout awarded him one thousand lines for impertinence. Coker says he only spoke three words to Mr. Prout about a Latin exercise. They were: "It's rot, sir!"

Dicky Nugent is a dead no. with a water pistol—as Sammy Bunter will testify. Dicky caught Sammy on the nose with a stream of water, and Sammy "went up in the air," both metaphorically and actually!