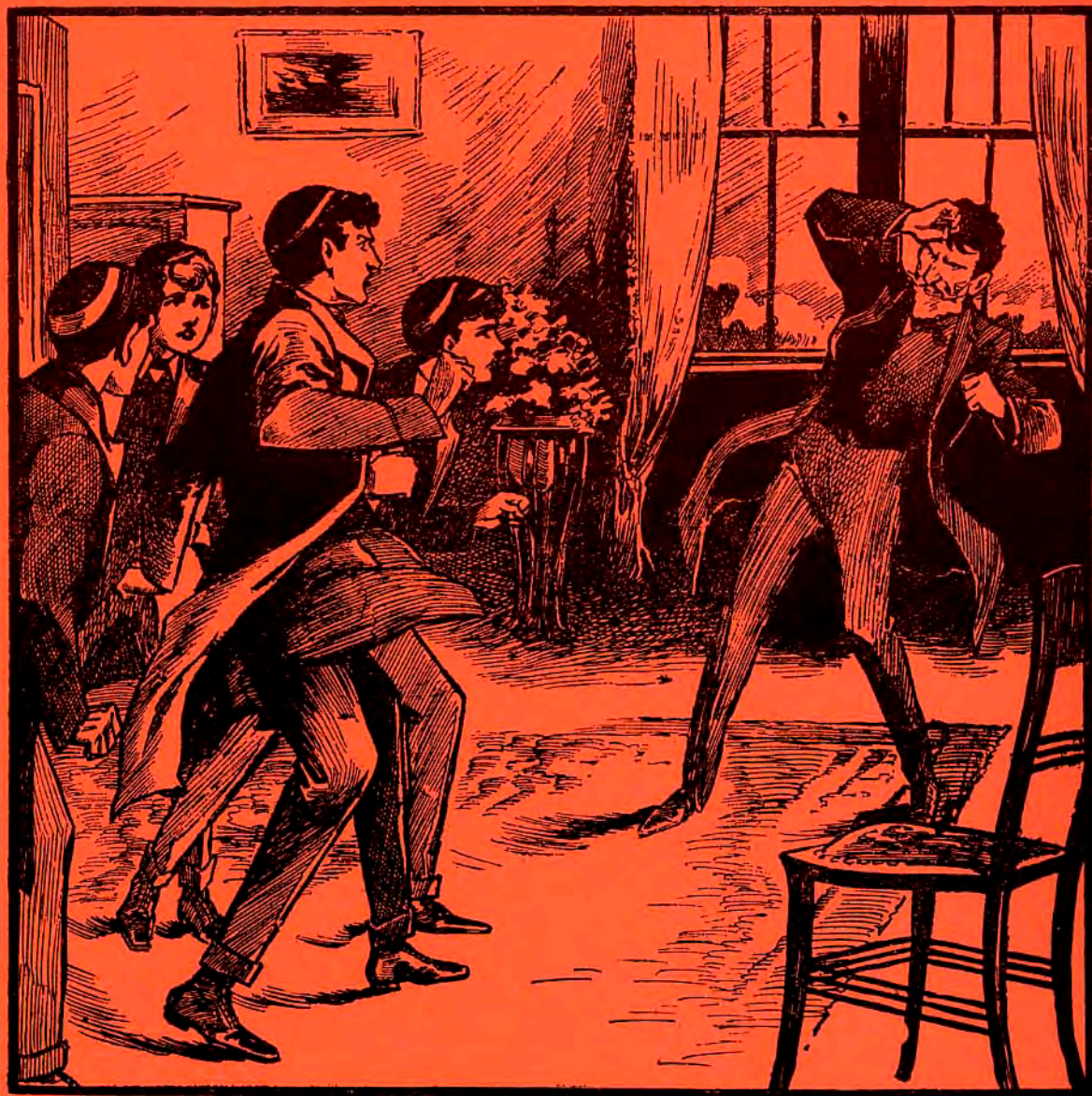
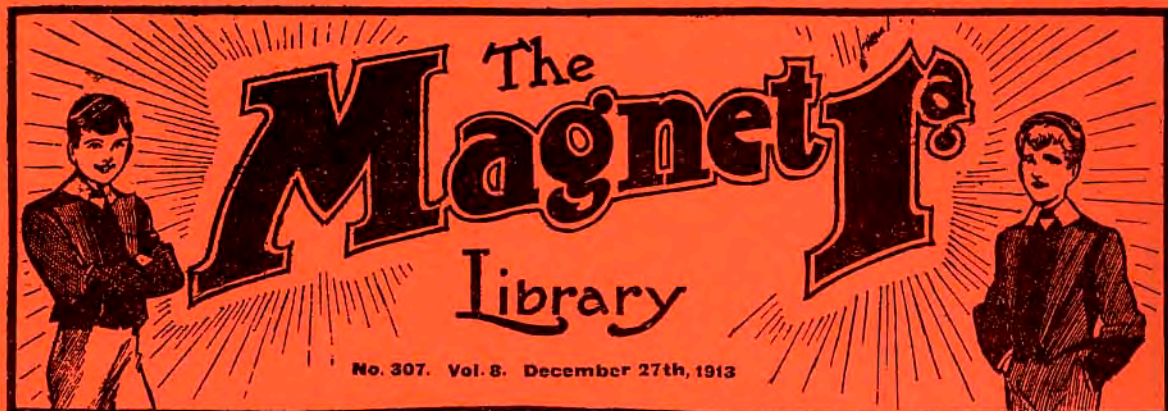


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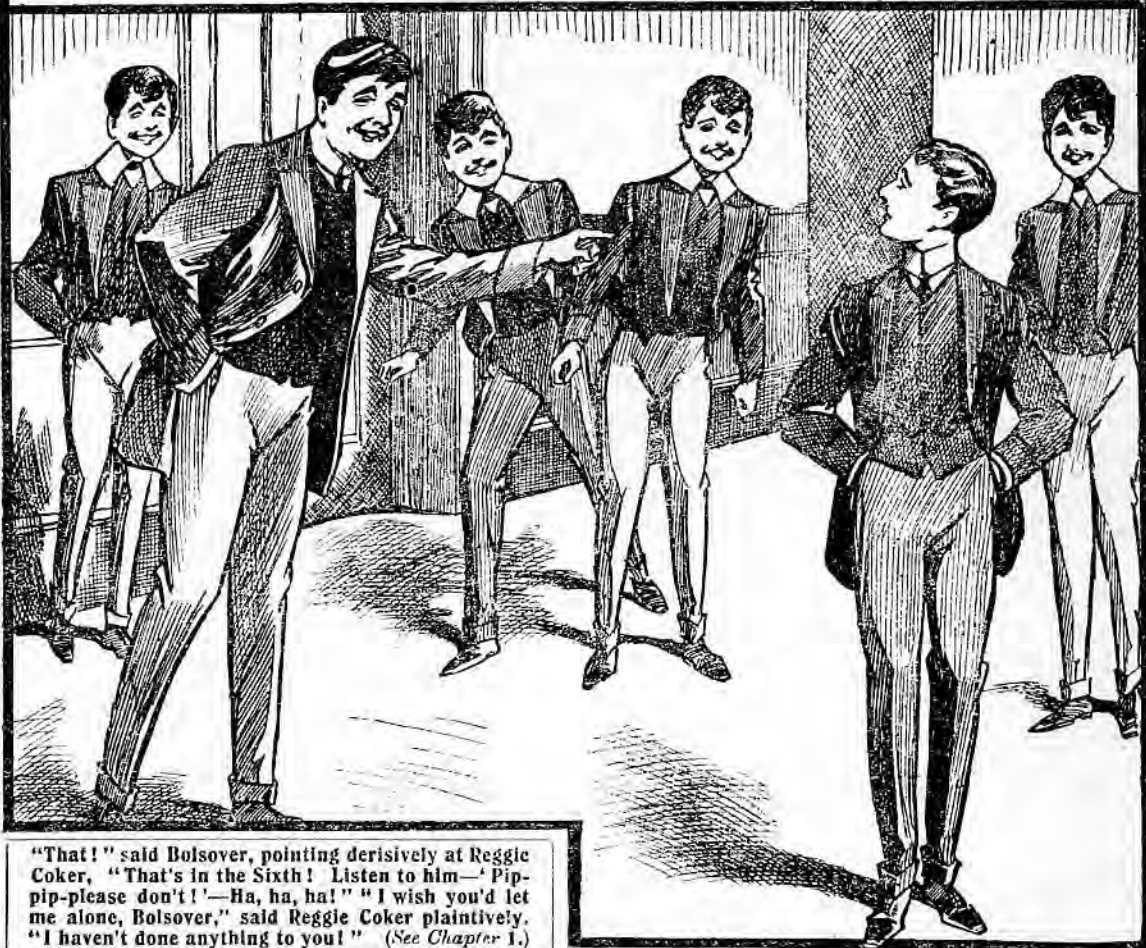


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obliged if you will
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Good Old Coker!

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



"That!" said Bolsover, pointing derisively at Reggie Coker, "That's in the Sixth! Listen to him—'Pip-pip-please don't!'—Ha, ha, ha!" "I wish you'd let me alone, Bolsover," said Reggie Coker plaitively. "I haven't done anything to you!" (See Chapter I.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Spanked!

"P IP-PIP-PLEASE don't!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Pip-pip-please, Bolsover!"
"And that!" said Bolsover major, of the Remove, in tones of profound and intense disgust. "That's in the Sixth Form!"

Harry Wharton looked out of the common-room at Greyfriars as he heard the quavering tones of Coker minor, and the loud, bullying voice of Bolsover.

There was a crowd of juniors in the passage, and Bolsover, the bully of the Remove, towered head and shoulders over most of them. In the midst of the grinning crowd stood Reggie Coker—Coker minor of the Sixth!

Reggie Coker was very little older than the juniors round

him, and he was smaller in size than most of them. It really wasn't his fault that he was in the Sixth Form at an age when other fellows were in the Fourth or the Shell. He couldn't help being an abnormally clever youth—any more than his big brother Horace could help being several sorts of a duffer. But a good many of the juniors didn't like it. They thought it was like Coker minor's cheek to be in the Sixth. There were fellows—fags in the Third Form—who could have licked him with one hand. And yet he was in the Sixth—the top Form in the school—a kid who couldn't hold his own at games, or in the gym., or with the gloves on. And the fact that Coker minor was a good-tempered and inoffensive fellow made some of the juniors only the more ready to rag him.

"That!" said Bolsover, pointing derisively at Reggie Coker. "That's in the Sixth! Listen to him—'Pip-pip-please don't!'—Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wish you'd let me alone, Bolsover!" said Reggie Coker plaintively. "I haven't done anything to you, have I?"

"The Sixth ought to be proud of him—I don't think!" grinned Skinner, of the Remove. "He's a credit to them!"

Reggie Coker looked round helplessly at the circle of grinning faces, and wished devoutly that his big brother Horace would come along the passage. Horace Coker—Coker major—wasn't blessed with brains like his young brother. He was only in the Fifth, and it was whispered at Greyfriars that he would still have been in the Shell if his Aunt Judy had not come down to the school and fairly bullied the Head into giving him his remove. But Coker major, though he wasn't a genius like Reggie, was big and burly and powerful, and always ready for a fight—qualities that conduced more to comfort at Greyfriars than any amount of intellect.

Reggie Coker made an effort to push through the ring. But Skinner pushed him back, and Coker minor did not even have resolution enough to hit Skinner.

"P-p-please let me pass!" he murmured.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, we're not done with you yet!" chuckled Bolsover major. "Don't blub, my darling; we're not going to hurt you!"

"I wasn't going to blub, you cad!" exclaimed Coker fiercely.

"Hallo! The little beast's got a temper, has he?" exclaimed Bolsover, in surprise. "What did you call me?"

"I called you a cad, and so you are!" said Coker minor. "And if I were big enough, I'd give you a jolly good hiding!"

"Hear, hear!" sang out Bob Cherry. "Good for you, Reggie!"

Bolsover frowned.

"Well, you can't give me a hiding; but I'm going to give you a licking!" he said.

Harry Wharton pushed his way forward. Wharton was captain of the Remove, and this was not the first time he had interfered to stop Bolsover's bullying.

"Cheese it, Bolsover," he said quietly. "You don't want to hit a kid like that."

Bolsover glared at him.

"You mind your own business!" he said. "The little cad has cheeked me, and I'm going to spank him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared at the idea. Spanking a member of the Sixth was a new amusement. And Sixth-Former as Coker was, it was certainly quite easy for Bolsover to spank him if he chose.

"Let him alone," said Harry Wharton. "What do you want to be such a beastly bully for, Bolsover?"

"Rats!" said Bolsover. "I'm not going to hurt him. I'm going to spank him—I've never spanked a Sixth-Former before—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It will be one up against the Sixth, too!" grinned Bolsover. "Now, Reggie, come on—come to your uncle!"

"I—I— Let me alone!" howled Reggie Coker, as Bolsover seized him in his powerful grasp. "I—I— Please don't, Bolsover!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton hesitated, undecided whether to interfere or not. That he would chip in if Bolsover hurt the little Sixth-Former he was determined. But so long as it was only a harmless ragging, he was not called upon to do so. Coker minor was slung across Bolsover's knee, amid roars of laughter from the juniors. Bolsover sat on the oaken bench in the passage. Reggie kicked up his legs wildly, and squirmed in the powerful grasp of the Remove bully. He was not so much afraid of being hurt as of the terrible indignity of being spanked in public by a junior boy! A Sixth-Former spanked by a boy in the Lower Fourth! It was too awful—but there did not seem to be any help for it.

"Go it, Bolsover!"

"Spank him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A big, burly fellow came down the passage from the other end, as Coker minor wriggled on Bolsover's knees, and the Remove bully raised his large, heavy hand to administer the first spank.

"Hallo, you kids, what are you making all this row about?" he exclaimed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Here's Coker of the Fifth!"

"Yes, here I am!" said Horace Coker. "And you kids had better make a bit less row, or—why—what—Reggie!"

Coker seemed turned to stone for a moment as he caught sight of his young brother, squirming and wriggling on Bolsover's knees. Bolsover's heavy hand came down—smack!

There was a yell of anguish from Reggie.

Then Horace Coker gave a roar like a bull, and rushed forward. His grasp was on Bolsover in a moment. Reggie rolled on the floor, gasping—and Bolsover whirled round in the herculean grasp of Horace Coker.

Biff, biff, biff, biff!

Coker major was hitting out terrifically.

Bolsover roared and struggled.

He was a big and powerful fellow, more than a match for most fellows in the Remove, the Fourth, and the Shell, but he was not by any means the equal of Coker major of the Fifth. Coker of the Fifth was a great fighting man, and was popularly reputed to be able to lick anybody in the Fifth or Sixth excepting Wingate. Certainly he made short work of Bolsover. The bully of the Remove simply did not have a look-in. He had plenty of pluck, and he put up a gallant fight, but Coker wiped the floor with him. And the crowd of Removeites looked on with undiminished cheerfulness. They had been amused by the ragging of Coker minor, and they were far from displeased by the licking Bolsover was getting.

It was so seldom that the bully of the Remove was licked that he was badly in need of it—and now he was getting it.

"Ow! Rescue!" roared Bolsover at last. "Pile in, Remove!"

Coker had quite licked him. Now Coker had sat down on the oaken bench, and dragged Bolsover across his knees, just as the little Sixth-Former had been dragged over Bolsover's knees. And Coker's heavy hand rose and fell.

Smack, smack, smack!

Bolsover was getting the spanking now.

"Rescue! Ow, ow, ow! Rescue!" yelled Bolsover.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Reggie Coker chirruped:

"Go it, Horace! Thump him, Horace! Ha, ha, ha!"

Smack, smack, smack!

"There!" gasped Coker major, pitching Bolsover off his knees at last. "That's a lesson for you. You'll learn in time to leave my minor alone! Come on, Reggie!"

And Coker of the Fifth walked away with his minor.

Bolsover sat up on the floor.

"You rotters!" he roared. "Why didn't you help me? Why didn't you pile on Coker, you beasts? Harry Wharton, you rotten funk, why didn't you chip in?"

"You only got what you deserved," Wharton replied curtly. "It's jolly decent of old Coker to stand up for his minor. If he hadn't stopped you, I was going to. Go and eat cake!"

And Wharton went back into the common-room.

Bolsover limped away scowling, followed by loud chuckles from the juniors. The ragging of Coker minor had turned out somewhat unfortunately for the ragger, owing to the powerful intervention of Coker major—and it was quite a long time before Bolsover of the Remove was able to sit down with any degree of comfort.

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.



Bolsover's heavy hand came down—smack! There was a yell of anguish from Reggie Coker. "Let me alone! P—P—Please don't, Bolsover!" "Ha, ha, ha!" (See Chapter I.)

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Bunter is Useful!

COKER MAJOR marched his minor into his study in the Fifth Form passage.

Potter and Greene, Coker's study-mates, were there. Potter and Greene did not look pleased by the sight of Reggie Coker. Horace Coker's way of taking up his minor's quarrels on all occasions worried his study-mates. When Reggie had first come to Greyfriars, and had been put into the Sixth over his major's head, Horace had cut up rusty, much to Reggie's distress. But he had soon come round, and since then he had devoted himself to keeping Reggie's end up for him, since Reggie could not keep it up for himself. But for his big brother in the Fifth, Reggie's life in the Sixth would have been much harder. But fellows in the Sixth, like Loder and Carne, who would have made his existence a burden to him otherwise, did not care to bring upon themselves the wrath of Horace Coker. For Horace had no respect whatever for the high and mighty Sixth, and he would have slogged Loder, the prefect, as readily and cheerfully as he slogged Bolsover of the Remove, or Hobson of the Shell. But Potter and Greene, as they confided to one another, although not to Coker, were fed up with Reggie.

"Hallo!" said Potter, as the two Cokers came in. "What about that feed, Horace, old man?"

Coker of the Fifth shook his head.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"RUCTIONS IN THE REMOVE!"

"Haven't had Aunt Judy's letter yet," he replied.

"Rather inconsiderate of the old lady to keep you waiting," remarked Greene.

"Oh, it will come along," said Coker. "It's going to be a tenner, too. Aunt Judy always gives me a tenner on her birthday, and I give her a present. We'll have the feed to-morrow. The funds will run to something for tea, anyway."

"Good! Your minor can fag at getting tea for us," said Potter.

Coker glared at him.

"My minor fag!"

"Yes. He's only a kid, you know."

"He's in the Sixth!"

"Yes. That's a little joke of the Head's on us," yawned Potter.

Coker frowned.

"If you are going to be funny, Potter—"

"I don't mind getting tea, Horace, please," said Reggie timidly.

Coker snorted.

"Sixth-Formers don't fag!" he said. "My minor's going to be treated with as much respect as any other Sixth-Former, or I'll know the reason why! And we're not going to have tea yet. I'm going to give you a boxing lesson, Reggie."

"Oh!"

"I say—" began Potter and Greene together. They were by no means disposed to have their tea put off while

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. Order Early!

Coker minor received instruction in boxing. They had been waiting for Horace Coker to come in to tea, too. Coker was going to stand the tea.

"You chaps buzz off for a bit, will you?" said Coker off-handedly. "You'll be in the way here while I'm giving my minor a boxing lesson."

"Look here—
"Clear off, will you?"

And Potter and Greene, giving Reggie Coker glances that indicated feelings inexpressible in words, cleared off. Coker dragged two pairs of boxing-gloves out of a drawer.

"Take off your jacket!" he said.

"I say, Horace—"

"You've got to learn to stand up for yourself, Reggie!" said Coker of the Fifth sternly. "You can't be in the Sixth Form and let fags in the Lower Fourth spank you!"

"I—I almost wish I wasn't in the Sixth!" murmured Reggie.

"Stuff! It's an honour to the family!" said Coker. "You've got all the brains of the family, and I've got all the muscle. But you've got to learn to keep your end up. Get those gloves on, and I'll knock you about a bit. You mustn't mind if it hurts you. It's all for your own good, you know."

"Oh, dear!" murmured Reggie.

Reggie Coker donned the gloves in rather a gingerly manner. He squared up to his powerful major, feeling very much as he might have felt if he had been tackling a particularly large and dangerous bull. Coker of the Fifth sailed in, and hit out, and his minor collapsed on the floor with a gasp.

Coker of the Fifth stared at him.

"What did you fall down for?" he demanded.

"Oh, dear! You knocked me down!"

"You oughtn't to fall down for a tap like that. It was only a tap. I'll hit you really hard next time, and you'll see the difference," said Coker.

"Oh, dear! Please don't!" gasped Reggie. "I—I'll take your word for it, Horace. I will, really!"

"Jump up!" said Coker encouragingly. "If you're hurt a bit, you know, it will teach you to take your gruel without whining."

Reggie rose reluctantly to his feet. There was a tap at the door of the study, and it opened, and a fat face adorned with a big pair of spectacles looked in. It was the face of Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove, and the fattest junior at Greyfriars.

"I say, you fellows!" said Bunter, blinking round the study. "Can I help you?"

"Good idea!" exclaimed Coker heartily. "This fat idiot can stand up to you, Reggie, and you can knock him down just as easily as I can knock you down. It will be splendid practice for you. Come right in, Bunter!"

"Ahem! I—I say—I didn't know you were boxing!" stammered Bunter. "I—I thought you were going to have a feed, and I was willing to help in the cooking, and—"

"And in the eating, I suppose?" grinned Coker. "Well, we're not having a feed. We're having a boxing lesson. Come in!"

"Ahem! Excuse me, Coker! I—I'm rather pressed for time—Yar-o-o-oh!"

Bunter roared as Coker of the Fifth caught him by the collar and swung him bodily into the study.

"Get those gloves on!" said Coker.

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"Don't hit at his face, Reggie, in case you bust his barnacles," said Horace Coker. "But hit as hard as you can at his chest."

"Right-ho!" said Reggie, much encouraged. "I think I could lick Bunter, Horace."

"I—I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter, in dismay. "I—I don't want to box, you know. I—I came here for a feed. I—I—"

"Get those gloves on!" roared Coker.

Bunter hastily put the boxing-gloves on. Coker of the Fifth was not a fellow to be argued with.

"Now toe the line!" said Coker. "If you can lick my minor I'll stand you a bob."

"Oh, I can lick him easily enough," said Bunter. "I'm rather a dab at boxing, you know, and I'm an athletic chap, too. But I don't want to hurt him. On the whole, Coker, I'd rather not. I'm rather pressed for time—"

"Pile in, Reggie! Put your hands up, Bunter, or you'll get my boot!"

"Oh, really, you know—"

Biff! biff!

Reggie Coker's boxing-gloves came thumping on Bunter's chest, and the fat junior staggered back with a roar. Then

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he piled in himself, rushing at Coker minor, his arms going like a windmill.

"Stand up to him, Reggie!" encouraged Horace Coker. "You'll lick him! It's splendid practice for you! Hard as you can! Never mind if you hurt him! It will do him good!"

Biff! biff! biff! biff!

"Yar-o-o-oh!" roared Bunter. "Look here, I've had enough!"

"Rot!" said Coker. "You're not licked yet!"

"Ow—ow—ow!"

"I'll make it half-a-crown if you lick my minor!" said Coker generously.

"Oh, I say, Horace!" murmured Reggie.

"Now, pile in, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter made a desperate effort. He would have liked to win that half-a-crown, and he would have liked to lick Coker minor—indeed, he would have been greatly pleased if, by some miracle, he could have licked Coker major too.

But Reggie, though so helpless in the hands of Bolsover, was too much for the fat and unwieldy Owl of the Remove.

Billy Bunter was boxed all round the study, and at last he sat down violently on the floor and refused to rise again.

"Licked!" said Horace Coker, with great satisfaction. "Now, you've made a beginning, Reggie! That is ripping! Later on I'll make you tackle Bob Cherry, or Nugent, or Bull, and see you lick them!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Reggie.

"You can get out, Bunter. I'm done with you," said Coker.

Billy Bunter retreated to the door, and blinked back with a furious glare at the two Cokers ere he departed. He had come there for a feed, and he had received a thumping, and he was not pleased.

"You—you rotters!" he stammered. "Coker, you're a rotten beast! Your minor is a snivelling cad! Yah!"

"What!" roared Horace Coker.

He made a jump towards the door, and Billy Bunter slammed it and fled. Coker rushed out into the passage. But Bunter, if he could not fight, could run when occasion demanded. He disappeared round the nearest corner at terrific speed, and Horace Coker came back to his study with a snort.

"Reggie—"

But Reggie was gone. He had slipped out in the opposite direction when Coker rushed after Bunter. And Coker snorted again. Reggie was grateful to his big brother for his care of him, but he was evidently fed up with boxing instruction.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Caught in the Storm!

"S NOW!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Oh, rotten!"

"What beastly luck! We're in for it!"

The chums of the Remove evidently were in for it. They had been for a long ramble on the cliffs, looking down on the wide waters of Pegg Bay. It had been a clear, sharp winter afternoon when they left Greyfriars, and they had enjoyed their scramble among the great cliffs. They had stopped upon a high point of the cliffs, far above the waters of the bay, to discuss the sandwiches they had brought with them. Far below them rolled the sea, with the black trail of a steamer's smoke crawling across the choppy water. But the fishing village of Pegg was hidden by the great rocks from their gaze. There were four fellows in the party—Harry Wharton, Nugent, Bob Cherry, and Johnny Bull—Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the fifth member of the famous Co., not having cared for a ramble among the cliffs where ridges of snow were thick, and where the keen wind from the North Sea was like the edge of a knife. Hurree Singh felt the keen English winter, and he did not like snow.

The four chums had finished their sandwiches, and were preparing for their descent, to take the homeward path to Greyfriars, when the snow recommenced.

Thick, dark clouds had rolled over the sky, and the top of the great Shoulder was lost in the mists. Mist swallowed up the sea, and the crawling smoke of the steamer. The snow came down in light, feathery flakes at first, but they grew thicker and thicker every moment.

And the chums of the Remove, with one accord, pronounced that it was rotten.

For ease in climbing they had come out without coats, and they were far too lightly clad to walk three or four miles through a heavy snowstorm; and there was no shelter to be had nearer than the fishing village.

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"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"Beastly!" said Johnny Bull. "There's sleet as well as snow, too! It's going to be a thoroughly rotten evening!"

"Looks like it!"

"Well, the sooner we're off the quicker," said Harry Wharton. "No good grumbling; let's get a move on. We've got to get down from here before the path gets too thick with snow, or we may take a tumble and break our giddy necks!"

And the juniors started the descent.

The keen wind from the sea lashed in their faces, laden with snowflakes, as they clambered down the steep cliff paths.

The paths were steep and narrow, and as the snow grew thicker upon them they became more perilous, and the chums of Greyfriars held to one another to avoid slipping.

They reached the lower level at last, but the descent had taken more than an hour, and by that time they were covered with snow, and their clothes were very wet.

To tramp through the blinding storm to Greyfriars was impossible, and it did not seem much more feasible to try to get to Pegg, or to Cliff House. Both were at a considerable distance, over very rough ground.

"We shall have to get into shelter, and wait for it to pass, now we're off the cliffs," said Harry Wharton.

"Where is there any shelter?" asked Johnny Bull.

Wharton reflected.

It was a lonely spot, with a wild beach lashed by the sea, backed by great, frowning cliffs. On the other side of Pegg were bungalows, where summer visitors dwelt in the holiday months, now locked up and deserted. But on this side of the fishing village the coast was too wild and bleak for residence. But Wharton, as he cudgelled his brains to think of a possible shelter, suddenly remembered.

"There's the Spindrift Cottage!" he exclaimed. "You fellows have seen it. Old Captain Spindrift used to live there, and it's never been lived in since. We can get shelter there!"

"Blessed if I know just where it is!" said Nugent.

"Well, it's along the beach somewhere, and it faces the sea," said Harry.

"We shall have to get further away from Pegg to look for it," Bob Cherry remarked doubtfully.

"But we're bound to find it," said Harry; "and we can make a fire there and get ourselves dry while we wait for this beastly weather to pass!"

"Sure no one lives there?" asked Nugent.

"Quite sure. I passed the place last week," said Harry. "Nobody would be likely to come there to live in the winter. Half the time the roads are too bad for the cottage to be reached at all. It's too lonely even for summer visitors. The 'To Let' board has never been taken down since I've been at Greyfriars. Nobody lived there since old Spindrift died!"

"Besides, if anybody lived there, they'd give us shelter. I should think, unless they were giddy cannibals!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather. Come on!" said Wharton.

"Oh, all right!"

And the four juniors tramped on through the blinding snow and gloom. The early winter evening had set in now, darkened all the more by the thick banks of snow massed across the sky. The snow was coming down heavily, thickening on the rough, broken ground like a great white blanket.

The juniors were white with it. Snow lodged on their caps, on their shoulders, and powdered them all over. It was seldom that the chums of the Remove had found themselves in so miserable a plight. In spite of their keeping in motion, their hands and feet were chilled to the bone.

Bob Cherry uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Look! There's a light!"

"Thank goodness!"

"It's the cottage!" said Harry Wharton. "There's someone there! All the better! Buck up, you chaps; we'll be out of this in a minute or two now!"

The juniors hurried on, their heads bent in the falling snow. Standing back to the almost perpendicular cliff, and surrounded on three sides with a small garden—now obliterated under snow—was the cottage.

It was a little, four-roomed building, raised on a wooden platform a foot above the sandy beach, with a covered verandah in front. An eccentric old sea-captain had built it many years ago, and had lived his last days there and died; but no one had been found to succeed him in inhabiting the lonely little building. It was more than a mile from any other habitation, lost in a wilderness of rock and shingle.

Wharton forced open the garden gate with some difficulty, for the snow was a foot thick on the path. The "To Let" board, which had been in the garden ever since the death of Captain Spindrift half a dozen years before, had been removed, as the juniors noticed at once. The cottage was let at last!

From one of the windows a light gleamed, through the chinks of the wooden shutters, which were closed.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"RUCTIONS IN THE REMOVE!"

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ONE
PENNY.

"Somebody there," said Bob Cherry, through his chattering teeth. "Grooh! I shall be glad to get near a fire!"

"Same here!" shuddered Nugent. "We shall be jolly lucky if we don't have beastly colds after this! Grooh!"

Harry Wharton raised the heavy, old-fashioned knocker on the door, and brought it down with a loud knock.

Knock!

The sharp, sudden sound rang through the little building.

Silence followed.

There was no sound of anyone coming to open the door; but almost before the echo of the knock had died away, the light that gleamed from the window suddenly went out, and the building was plunged into darkness.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Mystery!

"GREAT Scott!"

"What the dickens——"

The four juniors uttered exclamations of amazement.

They were standing under the shelter of the verandah now, and as the glimmer of light from the window died away, the darkness fell thick around them, and they could hardly see one another.

The sudden extinguishing of the light astounded them.

That it had been purposely turned out as soon as the knock at the door had been heard they were certain. The sudden darkness had immediately followed the knock. What did it mean?

Wharton raised his hand to the knocker again.

Knock!

The sound echoed through the house.

But, save for the echo, there was no answering sound from within.

What did it mean?

That the house was occupied they knew; but why had the occupant extinguished the light, and why did he refuse to come to the door? A strange feeling crept over the juniors as they stood there, with the snowflake-laden wind beating upon them.

"Somebody's there!" growled Bob Cherry. "Why don't he open the door?"

"Must be dotty, I should think, or an inhospitable beast!" said Harry Wharton. "Anyway, we're going to have shelter! We've a right to ask for it!"

"I should jolly well say so!"

"We can't stay here," said Nugent. "We shall be frozen to death in this wind!"

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Harry Wharton plied the knocker angrily.

The wind was lashing right at the house from the sea, dashing the snow in masses upon them as it fell. The keen blast seemed to penetrate to their very bones. To be shut out of shelter, for no reason at all that they could think of, was bitterly exasperating to the juniors, after they had tramped through the storm to the cottage. They felt their anger rising as Wharton pounded at the knocker.

Knock! Knock! Knock! Knock!

And still no reply came from within the dark and silent house.

"We're not going to stand this!" growled Johnny Bull. "Look here, very likely the house isn't let at all. Some rotten tramp has taken up his quarters in it, and he doesn't want to be found. That's more likely!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Jolly likely!" he said. "No decent man would refuse strangers shelter in a storm like this. Quite likely the rotter hasn't any right there at all. Are you fellows game to make him let us in?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then here goes!"

Wharton left the door, and stepped to the window, through the shutters of which the light had gleamed before their arrival. He rapped sharply on the shutters.

"Will you open the door?" he shouted. "We want shelter from the snow."

No answer. Wharton's shout must have been audible inside the house, but whoever was there did not choose to reply to it.

Wharton rapped again angrily.

"Will you let us in? If you don't, we shall force a way in. You can take your choice. We're not going to stay out here."

Still no reply.

Wharton returned to the door. He tried it, but it was bolted within.

"Look round at the back!" said Bob Cherry.

The juniors, bending their heads to the storm, tramped

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round the cottage, knee-deep in the drifted snow. Behind the cottage, between the building and the cliff, was a small yard, banked up with snow. The kitchen door looked as if it had not been opened since the snow fell. Nowhere near the cottage was a single trace of a footprint. The mysterious occupant of the cottage seemed to be shut up in his lonely residence like a hermit in his cave of old. The snow behind the cottage was banked up so deep that it was almost impossible to reach the kitchen door. There was no ingress that way.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Nugent, gasping as the wind lashed in his face. "Let's get back. It's a bit better under the verandah."

And they tramped back, panting, to the front of the cottage.

But for the light that had gleamed in the window, and had been so strangely and suddenly extinguished, the juniors would have believed that the cottage was unoccupied, and locked up, as the house-agent had left it.

But the light had proved that there was someone there—and their belief strengthened that it was some tramp who had taken possession of the lonely place as a shelter from the inclement weather.

"We're going in!" said Harry Wharton grimly. "There are plenty of rocks close by. We'll batter in the door if the rotter doesn't open it!"

"Good egg!"

The juniors hurried out of the garden. On the beach there were masses of loose boulders, thick with snow. They dragged up a jagged rock, large and heavy, and bore it back into the garden. Wharton and Bob Cherry held it between them, and crashed it upon the lock of the door.

Crash!

The door shook, and the whole house rattled with the shock.

"One or two more like that, and we'll be in!" said Johnny Bull. "Go it!"

Crash!

The door groaned and shook, and the lock creaked ominously.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! That's fetched him!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

There was a sound of sudden footsteps in the little hall inside. The violent attack on the door, which would soon have burst it open, had brought the mysterious occupant of the house out of his grim silence.

A sharp, angry voice called out from the interior.

"Stop that! Do you hear? How dare you attack my house in this way?"

"Well, we've woke him up, at all events," said Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"We want shelter from the storm," said Harry Wharton quietly, in reply to the angry voice. "Will you let us in?"

"This is not a shelter for tramps!"

Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"We're not tramps—we're schoolboys!" he replied. "We want shelter till the snow stops. It won't hurt you to let us in."

"I shall do nothing of the kind."

"Only for an hour or two."

"I repeat that I shall not admit you. I order you to get off my premises at once!"

The four juniors breathed hard.

"You rotten hound!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Haven't you any decency? Ain't you a Christian, you beast? Let us in? We're three-quarters frozen!"

"That is no business of mine. I am an invalid, and I refuse to be troubled. Go your way!"

And the sound of receding footsteps was heard. The unseen man had gone back to his room, apparently considering that the matter was at an end.

The juniors looked at one another dubiously.

If the man was really the tenant of the cottage, he had a right to refuse them admission, cruel and brutal as the refusal was, and they could not force an entrance without an infraction of the law. But it was incredible that any householder should be so unfeeling for no apparent cause.

"It's some scoundrel who's planted himself here!" said Wharton, with conviction. "I dare say a lonely place like this is often used by tramps. It stands to reason that no decent man would refuse us shelter."

"Yes, rather!"

"The rotter hasn't any right here. We're going in. Heave that blessed rock at the door again."

Crash!

It was a more terrific shock than before, and under the force of it the lock burst, and the door flew open.

The heavy rock fell from the juniors' hands and bumped into the house as the door flew back violently against the

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wall. Wharton and Nugent, almost losing their balance, staggered in after the rock.

There was an exclamation of fury from someone unseen in the darkness.

"You scoundrels! You have broken into my house!"

"Your house be blowed!" said Bob Cherry. "You're only some rotten tramp, and you know you are! You haven't as much right here as we have."

"Leave my house!"

"Rats!"

"I order you——"

"You can order till you're black in the face!" said Harry Wharton grimly. "But unless you can prove that you're the legal tenant of this house, we don't go. Why can't you show yourself if you're an honest man? A decent man needn't be afraid for his face to be seen."

Bob Cherry had been feeling in his pocket. He had an electric pocket-lamp there, which the juniors had used while exploring a cave in the cliffs. He drew it out and pressed the button, and a sudden flood of light shot through the little hall.

The gleam of the electric lamp fell upon the hitherto unseen man, standing in the open doorway of the room adjoining the hall.

All the juniors saw him at that moment, clearly shown up by the sudden blaze of the electric light.

He was a short, slim man, with a long, thin, cadaverous face, clean-shaven, a beaky nose, and little, sharp, brown eyes under heavy brows. He was almost entirely bald, though he did not seem to be forty years of age. His jaw was heavy and square, and his face, never handsome, had at the present moment an expression of mingled fear and savage rage that made it startling to behold.

For a moment or two the man stood blinking in the light, apparently too taken by surprise to move.

Then he sprang back into the room and closed the door, and the juniors heard the key turn in the lock.

The man had vanished; the light of the electric lamp gleamed upon the panels of a locked door where he had been standing.

And from all the juniors came an exclamation of bewildered astonishment.

"My hat!"

"This beats the giddy band!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Tenant of Spindrift Cottage!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. stood in blank amazement. Why had the man sprung into the room and locked the door behind him?

A suspicion flashed into their minds that they had to do with a lunatic. Was it possible that the lonely cottage had been taken possession of by some escaped madman?

The juniors looked at one another with startled eyes, the same thought in every mind.

Bob Cherry raised his hand suddenly.

"Listen!" he muttered.

From the locked room came a sound of gurgling liquid and the clink of a glass on a bottle.

The man was drinking!

And that explained it.

"Drunk!" said Bob Cherry, in disgust.

Wharton drew a breath of relief.

"That's it!" he agreed. "He's been drinking. Perhaps it's a bit of delirium tremens that he's suffering from now. Either that or he's dotty. But, I—I say, this place is furnished—it's tenanted, after all!"

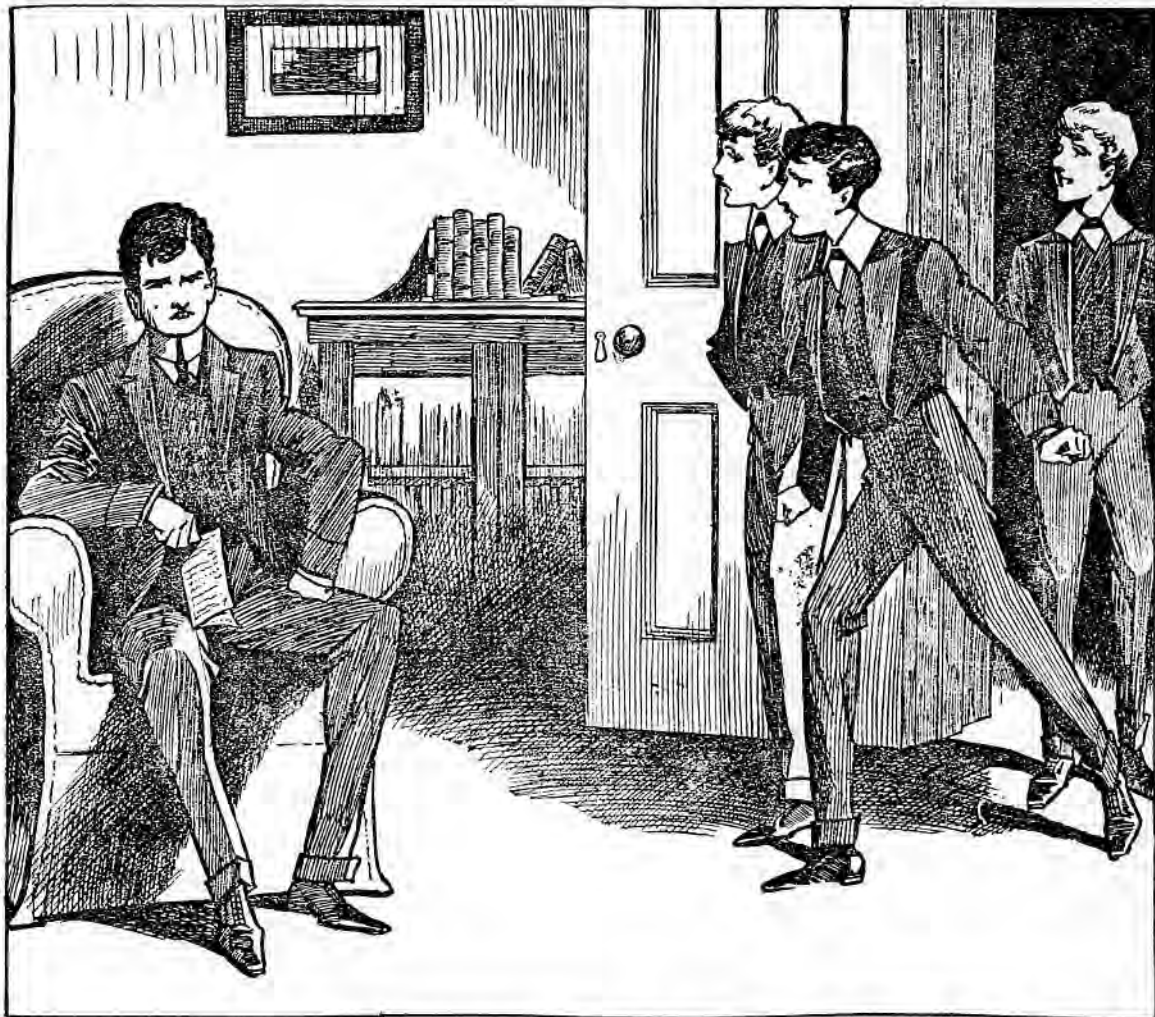
There was no doubt about that.

Bob Cherry flashed the electric lamp about the hall and into the three rooms to which the juniors had access. One was a kitchen, and one a bed-room, and the other a store-room. And the rooms were furnished for habitation. In the bed-room, the bed was unmade; in the kitchen, there were traces of late cooking. The store-room was well provided. The juniors saw, with amazement, stacks of tinned meats and fruits and other provisions. The occupant of the lonely cottage was well provided in case the bad weather should interrupt communication with the village.

The juniors glanced round hastily, and then they gathered in the hall again, and looked at one another very uneasily.

The fact was clear that the cottage, so long deserted, was occupied at last—not by a wandering tramp, but by some regular tenant. And it was equally clear that the tenant was the man who had locked himself in the front room.

It followed that the Greyfriars juniors were in the extremely disagreeable position of having forced their way into an occupied house—an action which, not the most inclement weather could justify in the eyes of the law.



The raiders paused as they caught sight of Horace Coker's face. Something was very wrong—terribly wrong—and a sudden quietness fell upon Harry Wharton & Co. "I—I say, Coker, what's the matter? Bad news from home?" Coker nodded without speaking. "I'm sorry!" said Wharton sincerely. "Clear off, you chaps—no raiding now!" (See Chapter 8.)

"My hat!" muttered Bob Cherry, breaking a painful silence at last. "We've fairly put both feet in it this time. That chap is really the tenant, and the house is let, and we—ahem!—we're giddy burglars!"

"Housebreakers, at any rate!" said Frank Nugent.

Harry Wharton nodded, with a glum look.

"It's right enough," he said. "We didn't know, but it's pretty clear now. That chap is the tenant, and he had a right to refuse us shelter if he liked, though he was an utter beast to do it! There will be a row if he complains to the head about this."

"He doesn't know where we come from," said Frank.

"He could soon find out if he chose to inquire, Franky. But it can't be helped now. The question is, are we going to stay now we're here, or are we going?"

The juniors looked out of the open doorway into the fast-falling snow. To face a tramp of a mile through the snow to the village of Pegg was almost out of the question.

"We can't go," said Johnny Bull.

"I'll speak to the beast, and put it to him as nicely as I can," said Harry Wharton.

He tapped on the locked door of the room. He heard a sound of a glass being set down on the table.

"I want to speak to you!" he called out.

"What do you want?"

"Are you the tenant of this house?"

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"RUCTIONS IN THE REMOVE!"

"Yes. My name is Smith—Joseph Smith!" came back the voice.

"Blow your name!" murmured Wharton. "I don't care twopence whether you're Smith, Jones, or Robinson!"

"What did you say?"

The man's voice was calmer now.

"Ahem! We want shelter from the storm. We're sorry we've busted your door, and we're willing to pay for the damage. We've got money with us."

"I do not want your money!"

"May we stay an hour or two till the worst of the storm is over?"

There was a short silence. The unseen tenant of Spindrift Cottage was evidently thinking. Probably he came to the conclusion that since the juniors were in the house, no further harm could be done by their remaining there. Certainly he could not have turned them out if they had chosen to remain against his will.

"You may stay," he said at last. "But on condition that you keep quiet. I am an invalid, and you have already terribly upset me."

"A beastly drunkard, more likely!" Wharton muttered.

Aloud he said:

"Thank you! We'll be as quiet as lambs, and we'll clear off the minute the weather clears."

"Very well."

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Wharton turned back to his chums.
"May as well get into the kitchen," he said. "There's a fire there, and we can make it up a bit."
"Right-ho!"

The four juniors entered the little kitchen. There was a stove in the room, in which were the remains of a fire. There was coal in a scuttle, and the juniors took the liberty of mending the fire, and soon they had a cheerful blaze going. They gathered round it to dry their clothes.

Outside, the storm was still howling, but the fury of the wind had abated a little. The snow was still falling, but less thickly.

From the adjoining room, where the mysterious tenant of Spindrift Cottage was keeping to himself, there came no sound.

The juniors might have been alone in the house, for any sound of life to indicate the contrary.

They sat and steamed round the fire, and talked in low tones.

The strange adventure puzzled them utterly. Unless the man had been in a dangerous state of drunkenness, something approaching delirium tremens, in fact, it was hardly possible to account for his conduct. And how came such a man to be living in that lonely cottage, without companion or servant of any kind, shut up in solitude in the waste of rock and shingle?

"Must be a bit off his rocker, I should think," Bob Cherry remarked. "I shall be rather glad to get out of this place!"

And the other juniors agreed. The neighbourhood of that decidedly curious tenant of the cottage was not agreeable.

But it was a good two hours before the storm abated sufficiently for the Greyfriars juniors to leave the shelter of the cottage. By that time they were rested, and their clothes had dried before the blaze of the fire.

"Better get off now," said Wharton at last.
He knocked at the locked door before going.

"We're going, Mr. Smith!" he called out.

There was no reply, and Wharton did not speak again. The juniors left the cottage, and tramped away through the snow towards the village of Pegg.

It was an hour's long tramp before they reached the village, and there they stopped at the Anchor Inn, where they were able to get a trap to drive them over to Greyfriars School.

Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh met them as they came in, and he grinned with relief at the sight of his chums safe and sound, his dusky face full of joy.

"I was afraid that some mischance had happened to my esteemed chums in the storm!" he exclaimed. "The afraidfulness was terrific!"

"You young sweeps!" said Coker, of the Fifth. "Been getting into trouble, as usual—what? Your Form-master's been asking for you. If I were Quelch, I'd give you a jolly good kicking all round."

"Lucky you're not Quelch, then!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

And the juniors presented themselves in Mr. Quelch's study to explain the cause of their late return, and as the storm was evidently not a fault of theirs, they were forgiven.

"I was very anxious about you," said Mr. Quelch. "Coker, of the Fifth, suggested that he should go out and look for you, and was, in fact, about to go. I am very glad that you have returned safely."

"Jolly decent of Coker!" Bob Cherry remarked, as they left the Form-master's study. "Cokey isn't such a beast as he makes himself out to be!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And thus ended that curious adventure in the lonely cottage, which was destined, however, to have results that the chums of the Remove did not dream of as yet.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Coker Comes Down Heavy!

THE next morning the Close at Greyfriars was an unbroken sheet of white.

The juniors were glad to see it.

Snow-fights were a very pleasant and exhilarating way of passing the time when the weather made football impossible.

After morning lessons the fellows swarmed out into the Close.

ANSWERS

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Coker, of the Fifth, humorously caught Bob Cherry behind the ear with a snowball, and Bob promptly gathered up a missile and let Coker have it under the chin. Coker roared.

"You cheeky young rascal!"

Coker, of the Fifth, evidently regarded himself as being too lofty a personage to be snowballed by mere juniors. Bob Cherry ought to have taken his snowball as a compliment, in Coker's opinion. But Bob hadn't.

Coker rubbed the snow from his face, and glared at Bob, who was just in the act of despatching a second missile, with the laudable intention of returning Coker's compliment with interest.

Coker shook his fist at the junior.

"Don't you throw that at me!" he shouted. "I'll scalp you if you do!"

Whizz!

The snowball burst on Coker's prominent nose, and he gave a choked gasp and staggered back, and sat down in the snow.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pile in!" shouted Bulstrode, of the Remove. "Coker's volunteering as Aunt Sally!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And a shower of snowballs rained on Coker as he staggered up. The big Fifth Former gave a roar, and charged at Bob Cherry.

Bob promptly fled.

It was not much use his tackling the burly Coker at close quarters, but he was quite Coker's equal at running and dodging. Coker panted after him in a state of slaughterous fury. Behind Coker the Remove fellows followed, pelting him with snowballs from behind.

Coker's cap was knocked off, and snow melted down the back of his neck.

He turned and charged back at his pursuers, and the nimble juniors scattered before his furious rush.

But snowballs whizzed in from all sides.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Coker. "You cheeky young villains, to dare to snowball the Fifth! Oh, crumbs! I'll slaughter you! Oh, my hat! Ow! Groogh!"

Smash, smash, smash! came the snowballs, merrily peppering Coker all over. He made another rush at his tormentors. He succeeded in getting near Harry Wharton, panting after him at a terrific speed; but just as he was about to grasp the junior, Wharton threw himself down, and Coker stumbled helplessly over him and plunged headlong into the snow.

Bump!

"Gro-o-o-o-o-ogh!" came in suffocating accents from Coker.

Wharton jumped up laughing.

Coker scrambled out of the snow, and retreated into the House. He had had enough of the Removeites for a time. A yell of derision followed him from the juniors.

"Don't run away, Coker!"

"Come and have some more!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Coker did not come to have any more. He tramped up to the Fifth Form dormitory to clean the snow off, and get into dry clothes. And when he came down again, Coker, of the Fifth, was very wrathful.

"Those kids in the Remove are getting altogether too cheeky!" he confided to Potter and Greene that afternoon after lessons. "It's high time they were taken down a peg or two, don't you think?"

Potter and Greene heartily concurred. They had had their own little rubs with the Lower Fourth.

"Only yesterday they were ragging my minor in the Sixth," said Coker indignantly.

Potter and Greene sniffed at that. They were more than fed-up with Horace Coker's minor in the Sixth. The Remove could have ragged Reggie Coker baldheaded for all Potter and Greene cared.

"And they had the frightful nerve to snowball me this morning," added Coker.

"And me!" said Potter. "Actually young Nugent caught me behind the ear with a snowball."

"And me!" growled Greene. "Young Bull knocked my hat off! Knocked it right off in the Close!"

"They've got to be taught a lesson," said Coker. "I think we might drop in on Wharton in his study and point out, gently but firmly, that it won't do."

"Right-ho!" said Potter. "But, by the way, we haven't had that feed yet. We can rag the Remove kids any time."

Coker wrinkled his brow.

"I haven't had the letter from my Aunt Judy," he said. "It's jolly queer. She always sends me a tinner on her birthday regular as clockwork. But it hasn't come this time. Some silly delay in the post, I suppose. It will be here next post. It can't be later than that. Aunt Judy never fails."

"Well, I hope she won't!" growled Greene. "We've asked

Fitz to the feed, and it will be a bit rotten if it doesn't come off."

"Don't my feeds always come off?" demanded Coker warmly.

"Yes, that's so," said Potter pacifically. "Let's go and talk sweetly to the Remove kids till the letter comes."

"Come on!" said Coker.

They called for Fitzgerald of the Fifth on their way; and the four seniors presented themselves in No. 1 Study in the Remove. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were there having their tea. The rest of the Co. were in their own studies. Wharton and Nugent jumped up at once at the sight of the seniors. They did not need telling that Coker & Co. had come looking for trouble.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Harry Wharton, backing round the table, and picking up a cushion, the nearest article that could serve as a weapon.

"Only a little heart to listen talk!" grinned Coker.

"You can talk in the passage, if that's all you want," suggested Frank Nugent.

Coker frowned severely.

"You kids are altogether too cheeky," he explained. "Out of kindness—sheer kindness, mind—we're going to give you a lesson. We can't have inky fags snowballing seniors, and that kind of thing. We can't have fags being cheeky to fellows in the Sixth. Upon the whole, we think you'll be all the better for a licking."

"Sure, pile in, and not so much talk," said Fitzgerald.

"Shut up!" said Coker. "I'm talking."

"Faith, and ye generally are!"

"Look here, Fitzgerald—"

"Sure I—"

"Would you mind rowing one another in the passage?" asked Harry Wharton politely. "It's rather bad manners to come and row in another chap's study."

"You cheeky young sweep! Collar 'em!" said Coker.

"Rescue, Remove!" bawled Wharton and Nugent together.

The seniors rushed upon them. The two juniors hit out desperately, but they had no chance. They were bowled over, and the tea-table was tilted over, the whole contents shooting off in a cascade over Wharton and Nugent. They roared furiously, drenched in tea and milk and treacle. Coker & Co. roared, too, but with laughter.

Wharton and Nugent sat dazedly amid the ruins of their tea and their crockery-ware, and panted.

Horace Coker shook a warning finger at them.

"Now let this be a lesson to you," he said. "Keep your place, and be respectful to your elders and betters—ahem!"

"Yaroooh! Oh!"

"Rescue!"

There were hurrying feet and voices in the passage, and Coker & Co. thought it was time to go. They did not want the whole Remove buzzing round them like a hornet's nest. They rushed out of the study, and dashed for the stairs, and a yell and a missile or two followed them from the Removites who were crowding towards No. 1 Study.

Wharton and Nugent picked themselves up dolefully.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, the first to put his head in at the door. "What's the trouble? Have you been stirring up the treacle with your head, Franky?"

"Grooooh!" groaned Nugent.

"Applying milk and jam externally, Wharton?" grinned Peter Todd.

"Oh! Ow! That beast Coker—"

"They've made a muck of the happy home, and no mistake!" chuckled Tom Brown. "Your crocks will want a lot of mending."

"Oh! Ow!" groaned Wharton. "We'll make those beasts sit up for this! Ow! As soon as I've got this jam off we'll raid Coker in his study."

"Phew! That's rather a big order, raiding the Fifth in their own quarters!" ejaculated Bulstrode.

"Well, they've raided us, haven't they?"

"Ye-es; but they're seniors. The prefects may drop on us if we raid in the Fifth Form passage!"

"Blow the prefects!" growled Wharton.

"Oh, we're game!" said Peter Todd. "Coker's got to learn that he can't come here and break up the happy home. Go and wash the treacle off, and let's get on the giddy war-path!"

And half the Remove prepared to carry the war into Africa, so to speak, by a return raid upon the quarters of Horace Coker of the Fifth.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bad News!

COKER of the Fifth chuckled as he returned to his study. He was feeling very satisfied with himself. He had vindicated the dignity of the Fifth, and of Horace Coker, by the rag in the Remove passage. He flattered himself that the chums of the Remove would sing small for some time now. Potter and Greene were equally pleased.

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PENNY.

But Potter and Greene were thinking more about the feed. That long-promised "tenner" from Aunt Judy, which was to supply the whole study with unlimited funds, had not yet arrived. Coker's famous Aunt Judy was in some respects a queer old lady. When she came to Greyfriars to visit her nephew there were smiles among the fellows, though they did not smile in Coker's presence.

Coker had a warm and a quick temper, and he did not allow fun to be made of Aunt Judy. He had fought Walker of the Sixth once for poking fun at Aunt Judy's bonnet. Miss Coker dressed in an early Victorian fashion, and she was a kind, good-hearted, busy little woman, and enormously fond of her burly nephew. Horace Coker was perfection in her eyes.

Aunt Judy had been exasperated by the length of time that Coker spent in the Shell, and her interview with the Head on the subject had been followed shortly afterwards by Coker's remove into the Fifth. All the fellows said that Aunt Judy had ragged the Head into giving Coker his remove—indeed, Bunter solemnly declared that Miss Coker had threatened the reverend and respected Head of Greyfriars with her umbrella on that occasion.

Bunter claimed to have been looking through the keyhole at the time. But the other fellows very properly declined to accept the evidence of a fellow who was capable of looking through a keyhole; and the umbrella incident was discredited.

However it had happened, Coker had been pushed up into the Fifth, much to Aunt Judy's satisfaction and his own. Aunt Judy came down sometimes to see him, and on such occasions she left a tip of never less than a couple of sovereigns, and sometimes even a fiver; for Aunt Judy was rolling in money, and she intended to leave every shilling of it to her favourite nephew.

There was nothing of the legacy-hunter about Coker, however, as Potter had observed privately to Greene; he hadn't brains enough for that. He really was sincerely fond of his kind aunt, and Miss Coker was quite keen enough to see that his affection was genuine, and naturally it pleased her. And instead of merely leaving all her money in her will to Coker, she dispensed a good many tips from it to Coker on passant, as it were, an arrangement which was really very sensible and very satisfactory to Coker.

On all occasions there were tips for Coker whenever his aunt visited him, and on his birthday, and on her birthday, and on his minor's birthday. When Coker wanted a new motor-bike, he had only to mention the fact to Aunt Judy. When he thought of offering a silver cup for a sports competition at Greyfriars, Aunt Judy planked down fifteen guineas to purchase it without turning a hair.

And even the fellows who smiled at Aunt Judy envied Coker his devoted aunt. Potter and Greene grinned about Aunt Judy between themselves, but they confessed that they had half a dozen aunts and uncles whom they would gladly have swapped for Aunt Judy.

And so it was surprising that the tenner had not arrived. The previous day had been Aunt Judy's birthday, and by the first post in the morning the tenner should have come. But it hadn't. All day Coker had expected it, but it hadn't arrived. Now on Thursday it was still wanting. Coker was a little puzzled, and Potter and Greene were very impatient.

Aunt Judy couldn't have forgotten to post it. She never forgot anything where her precious Horace was concerned. Potter had suggested sending a telegram to remind Aunt Judy—with great generosity he offered to stand the telegram out of his own pocket—but Coker shook his head. It would come all right, he said. It was only a delay in the post.

But Potter and Greene were decidedly impatient. There was no tea yet in the study. Coker was hard up, and Potter and Greene were stony. The tenner was badly wanted. Coker's people were well-to-do, and he had a good allowance, but he always ran through it very quickly.

"The post comes in a few minutes," said Coker, glancing at his watch, as he caught the expressions upon the faces of his study-mates. "It can't very well be later than this post, you know."

"I hope not!" grunted Potter. "It's too late for tea in hall now. Got anything in your study, Fitz, in case of accidents?"

"Sure, I've got a loaf of bread and a tin of sardines," said Fitzgerald. "And by the same token, the sardines were opened two days ago, and sure they're a little high; but ye're very welcome to them."

"Thanks!" snorted Potter. "We won't trouble your sardines. Hallo! Here's that fat beast Bunter! What do you want, you Owl?"

Billy Bunter blinked into the study.

"I say, Coker, there's a letter for you."

"Good egg!" said Coker, somewhat relieved. "It's from

my aunt, you chaps. It'll be all right, after all. Did you bring it up, Bunter?"

"Yes, Horace, old man——"

"If you call me Horace old man I'll skin you!" said Coker. "Hand over that letter, and clear off!"

"But, I say, you know, I brought it up because I thought there might be a remittance in it, and—and I thought you might be in a hurry," said Bunter. "It's addressed in your aunt's handwriting, you know, and——"

"How do you know my aunt's handwriting, you fat beast?" snorted Coker.

"Ahem! I—I've seen it, you know. The fact is, Coker, I've brought this letter up to you because—you see——"

"Hand it over!" roared Coker.

"Because I happen to be rather short of money, owing to a disappointment about a postal-order," Bunter explained. "I suppose you wouldn't mind lending me—— Yah! Oh!"

Coker made a rush at him and caught him by the collar, and shook him with vigour.

"Shall out that letter, you fat cadger!"

"Ow! Yow! D-d-don't sh-shake m-m-me!"

"Where's my letter?"

"You'll make my gig-gig-gig-glasses fall off!"

"You fat rotter! Hand over my letter!" exclaimed the exasperated Coker.

"Groogh! Will you lend me——"

"I'll lend you my boot if you don't hand that letter over at once," said Coker angrily, and he lifted his foot ready.

Bunter threw the letter hastily on the table. There was no arguing with Coker's boot.

"But, I say, Coker, you know, I—— Ah! Oh! Oh!"

Bunter went whirling into the passage, and Coker slammed the door after him.

"Beast!" yelled Bunter, through the keyhole. And then he hastily departed. There was evidently no "whack" for him in Aunt Judy's remittance; and he had taken the trouble to bring the letter up for nothing!

Coker opened the letter. It was addressed to him in his Aunt Judy's handwriting, as Bunter had said, and it was evidently the letter he had been expecting for two days.

The letter inside was written in his aunt's hand, a little more shaky than usual, but Coker looked first for the banknote.

It was not there.

Coker, puzzled, opened the letter out, but the banknote was not concealed inside it. There was no banknote at all.

"My hat!" said Coker.

"Isn't it all right?" asked Potter uneasily.

"There isn't a remittance," said Coker.

"Not a remittance! My hat! What are we going to do for tea?" exclaimed Greene, in dismay.

"Sure, and I'll be getting along," Fitzgerald remarked.

"I think perhaps Blundell may not have finished tea yet, and there may be something left. So-long, Coker!"

And Fitzgerald walked out of the study.

Coker did not even notice him go. He was reading the letter now, and as he read it a strange change came over his face.

Potter and Greene watched him curiously. They were annoyed and exasperated at the non-arrival of the remittance. It was too bad, when they had been led to pin their faith upon it. There was no tea to be had, let alone the gorgeous feed they had been anticipating. It was really too rotten, and they were annoyed with Aunt Judy, annoyed with Coker, annoyed with the universe generally.

Coker's face grew quite pale as he read on.

"Oh, my hat!" he ejaculated.

"Bad news?" asked Potter, with as much sympathy as he could muster under the trying circumstances.

Coker did not reply; he did not even hear. He was reading intently. When he had finished, he turned back to the beginning of the letter, and read it over again from start to finish. Potter and Greene showed visible signs of impatience.

"Look here, about tea!" hinted Potter.

Coker crushed the letter in his hand.

"The poor old girl!" he said. "What a rotten shame!"

"Bad news?"

"Yes."

"Remittance coming later?"

"It's not coming at all," said Coker grimly.

"Not at all!" exclaimed Potter and Greene together, in amazement.

"No; not that remittance or any other remittance. Not that I care twopence about that. My aunt's ruined!"

"What!"

"She's lost all her money, every blessed quid!" said Coker lugubriously. "Her solicitor has swindled her, and bolted with the lot!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"That's why the poor old girl hasn't written," said Coker. *THE MAGNET LIBRARY*.—No. 307.

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miserably. "She didn't want to tell me. But she had to write at last. She can't send me that tinner. She hasn't a tinner left in the world, out of fifty thousand pounds!"

"Great Scott!"

"The police are looking for the scoundrel. They think he's gone to America. He's got the money on him. Bet you they won't find him," said Coker. "Oh, crumbs! Poor old Aunt Judy! What a rotten shame!"

"My hat!" said Potter. "Then you'll lose all you were going to get in her will, Coker?"

"Eh? Yes; I suppose so."

"That's pretty rough, old chap."

Coker snorted.

"Do you think I'm thinking about that, you fathead? I'm thinking about poor old Aunt Judy. Oh, I wish I could get hold of that lawyer beast!" exclaimed Coker, hitting terrific blows into the air to express his feelings.

"Must have been rather soft to let a man get all her tin into his hands like that!" said Greene.

"The villain made her believe there was a safer investment, got her signature, and then raised the money, and bolted," said Coker. "Poor old Aunt Judy, she's a simple old soul, not up-to-date in dealing with a lawyer. I hope they'll catch him—we may get some of the money back. The awful rascal, to swindle a woman, and an old woman, too! Now my aunt's ruined, I suppose she'll come to live with my people."

"Sorry," said Potter. "That means no more tenners."

"Blow the tenners!" growled Coker.

"No more tips!" said Greene.

"Hang the tips!"

"I think we may as well go and see Blundell," Potter remarked, and the two Fifth-Formers left the study, in the hope that Blundell of the Fifth had not yet finished tea.

Coker was left alone. He sat in the armchair, his aunt's letter in his hand, his brow corrugated with thought. In that hasty, shaky, trembling writing, he read the trouble that had overwhelmed the kind old lady, and he knew, too, that it was chiefly of him she had been thinking, of the disappointment her loss would be to him. He was to have been a rich man when he grew up, and now——

"Poor old Aunt Judy!" said Coker, aloud, and the tears started to his eyes. "She's been jolly good to me, and I'll be jolly good to her. She shan't ever want for anything while I've got anything, I jolly well know that! The poor old girl!"

And Coker knitted his brows, and tried to think the matter out. Poor Coker was not much accustomed to hard thinking, and the effort made his head ache.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Raggings Are Off!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. came cautiously along the Fifth Form passage.

There were six or seven of the juniors, and they were on the warpath.

They had passed Blundell's study successfully, and heard many voices in it, and now they were close upon Coker's quarters. Saving themselves, there was no one in the passage. It looked as if the return raid was to be a success.

"Quiet!" murmured Wharton. "Now we've got to rush the study, and wreck the giddy place from top to bottom and end to end. We'll smother Coker with ink and jam and ashes and things, and pile his furniture in bits on top of him, and bunk! We shan't have much time to do it in, so every chap has got to pile in and do his best as quick as he can."

"What-ho!" murmured Bob.

"The what-hofulness is terrific, my esteemed chum."

And the Removites chuckled. They were quite prepared to carry out the programme mapped out by Harry Wharton.

They paused outside Coker's study door. There was no sound in the study, so if Coker was there, he was apparently alone.

"Ready?" murmured Wharton, looking round at his followers.

"What-ho!"

"Come on, then!"

Wharton suddenly turned the handle, and flung the door open. With a whoop, the juniors rushed into the study.

Horace Coker was there. He was sitting in the armchair, with a letter in his hand, his face strangely pale and troubled. And his red, healthy cheeks were wet with tears! He looked up at the juniors, and his eyes were dim.

The raiders stopped.

If they had found Coker standing on his head in his study it would have surprised them less than they were surprised now.

Coker—Horace Coker of the Fifth—the big, burly fellow



The gleam of the electric lamp fell upon the hitherto unseen man, standing in the open doorway of the room adjoining the hall. For a moment or two the man stood blinking in the light, then he sprang back into the room and closed the door, and the juniors heard the key turn in the lock. (See Chapter 4.)

who was the toughest fighting man at Greyfriars—Coker was blubbing!

They could not believe their eyes!

Coker blubbing!

Impossible!

But there it was!

The excitement of the raiders died away, their hostile intentions faded. Something was evidently very wrong—terribly wrong. And a sudden quietness fell upon Harry Wharton & Co. after the loud war-whoop with which they had rushed into the study.

"I—I say, Coker, what's the matter?"

"Something gone wrong, old chap?"

"Bad news from home?"

Coker nodded without speaking.

"I'm sorry," said Wharton sincerely. "Clear out, you chaps! No raiding now."

"No fear!" said Bob Cherry.

"The sympathisefulness is terrific, my esteemed Coker," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh gently. "Pray come along—fully, my friends."

And the raiders quitted Coker's study much more quietly than they had entered it.

Harry Wharton lingered behind a moment. He could see that Coker was very much upset, and he quite forgot Coker's raid on Study No. 1, and the reason why he was now in Coker's quarters. After all, old Coker was a good sort in

his way, and Wharton was very sorry to see him in trouble. He would have been glad to help Coker if he could.

"I say, Coker, old man," he began, "is there anything a chap can do?"

Coker shook his head.

"Somebody ill?" Harry asked.

"No."

"Well, I'm sorry," said the captain of the Remove; and he moved towards the door.

"Thanks!" said Coker. "You're very good. I suppose you came here to rag me?"

Wharton coloured a little.

"Well, a Roland for an Oliver, you know," he remarked. "But that's all right. Raggings are off now, if you're in trouble."

"I'm not exactly in trouble," said Coker. "It's my Aunt Judy."

"Not ill?"

"No; ruined."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"Her solicitor persuaded her to let him handle her investments, to re-invest the money," said Coker. "He turned it all into ready cash and bolted."

"The awful rotter!"

Coker clenched his fist.

"I wish I could get near him!" he said. "I'd like to get in a good upper-cut. But there's no chance of that. He's cleared off."

"I suppose the police are looking for him?" asked Harry.
"Yes. But he's been gone three days, and they can't find him yet. He's supposed to have gone to New York."
"They'll telegraph for him, and have him stopped—"

"Yes, perhaps. If they catch him they'll get the money back—at least, some of it. He has embezzled part of it and lost it in speculation, my aunt says. But he's known to have more than forty thousand pounds with him in bank-notes and securities."

"Great Scott! I jolly well hope he will be laid by the heels!" said Harry. "I wish I could do something to help!"

"Oh, the rotter!" said Coker, gritting his teeth again. "Poor old Aunt Judy! She's awfully cut up, of course. She was going to pay my expenses at the University, and now she won't be able to."

"Rough on you," said Harry.

"Oh, I'm not thinking of that! I'm thinking of the disappointment to her. I can stand it. I've got brains enough to make my way in the world, I hope."

Wharton sincerely hoped so too, but he could not help having some doubts on the point. He did not, however, state his doubts on that point to Coker.

"It's knocked me over a bit," said Coker awkwardly. "Poor old Aunt Judy will be frightfully cut up. She's been very good to me. I'm going to see her. The Head will give me leave, considering what's happened, I suppose?"

"Sure to," said Wharton.

Coker nodded to him, and they left the study, going in different directions.

Horace Coker went to the Head, who, of course, immediately gave him leave to go home after he had heard the news. Half an hour later Coker was hurrying to Court-field to catch the express, his minor going with him to see him off.

Harry Wharton returned to his own quarters in a thoughtful mood. He was deeply sorry for Coker and for Coker's aunt. And all the Co. agreed that it was very hard indeed on poor old Coker.

And they agreed, too, that old Coker was standing it remarkably well. Lots of fellows in his position would have thought of themselves, of their disappointed hopes and their ambitions that now would never be realised. But Horace Coker didn't look at it in that light at all. He was only thinking of the heavy blow that had fallen upon one who had always been kind and generous to him; that was what cut him up.

And the Famous Five agreed unanimously that old Coker was a real brick, although he was several sorts of an ass; and they agreed, too, that they would stand by old Coker and back him up, though exactly what form the backing-up would take, and what use it would be to Coker, did not seem quite clear.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Opinion!

"**D** ONE brown, and no mistake! I always thought there was something fishy about those Cokers, you know!"

Thus Billy Bunter.

Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove, was not troubled with any deep feelings of sympathy for Coker, of the Fifth Form. He regarded the bad news about Coker's simply as an item of information of which he could make the most that was possible. There were a good many fellows who were quite indifferent about the matter—some who seemed to see something quite amusing in it. Skinner and Snoop and Bunter of the Remove were among the latter.

"As a matter of fact," went on Bunter, quite delighted at getting a dozen fellows to listen to his opinions—"as a matter of fact, you fellows, I've suspected this for some time. I fancied that Coker was gassing about his aunt's giddy wealth. You remember my saying so to you, Bolsover?"

"No, I don't!" said Bolsover.

"Ahem! It was to you, Fishy—"

"I guess you never said anything of the sort to me!" retorted Fisher T. Fish. "And I kinder reckon you never said it to anybody, you fat jay!"

"Oh, really, Fishy—"

"I guess you're three or four kinds of an Ananias, Bunter!" remarked the American junior. "You'd better shut your silly head!"

"I knew they were fishy, those Cokers," pursued Bunter, with a scornful blink at Fisher T. Fish through his big spectacles. "Coker never had so much money as he said. Why, he was often too hard up to cash a postal-order for a chap. I know because I've asked him to do it."

"Rats!"

"I shouldn't wonder if it's a fake about the solicitor

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bolting," went on Bunter—"just a yarn, you know, to cover up the fact that they've got no tin. I expect Coker's people are really poor, too. May have to leave Greyfriars, both of them."

"Shut up, you fat ass!" said Bob Cherry, in disgust. "Here comes Coker minor."

"Blow Coker minor!" said Bunter independently. "I'm not going to shut up. I've got my reasons for believing that that yarn about an absconding solicitor is a fake."

Reggie Coker, who had just come in, paused in the passage as he heard Billy Bunter's remark.

Reggie flushed red.

"What's that, Bunter?" he exclaimed sharply. "Are you talking about my Aunt Judy's solicitor, who's bolted with her money?"

Billy Bunter sniffed.

"I don't take that in!" he said.

"You don't believe it?" asked Coker minor.

"No, I don't!" said Bunter promptly. "You can't take me in, you know. I've got my eye-teeth cut. I look on that yarn as a fake."

"You lying cad!"

"Eh?"

"You fat beast!" said Reggie Coker furiously. "I'll jolly well make you talk a bit more civilly about us!"

And he seized Bunter's fat little nose between his finger and thumb and squeezed hard.

Bunter gave a yell of anguish.

"Ow, ow! By dose! Led go! Grooh!"

"Pile in, Bunter! Lick him!" encouraged Bolsover major. "You're bigger than he is, though he's in the giddy Sixth! Pile in!"

"A ring!" shouted Tom Brown. "Give 'em room!"

"Take your barnacles off, Bunter, and pile in!"

Reggie released Bunter's nose and stepped back and pushed back his cuffs. His usually mild and inoffensive face was flaming with anger now.

"I'm ready!" he exclaimed. "Come on, you fat beast!"

Bunter backed away.

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I'm not going to fight that kid!" he gasped. "I should half kill him if I started on him, you know!"

"Funk!" hooted Ogilvy.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Come on, you fat cad!" yelled Reggie Coker, dancing round Bunter, with his fists lashing wildly in the air.

"Come on! I'll thrash you! I'll lick you! Come on!"

"Buck up, Bunter!"

"Put your hands up, you cad!"

"Take his gig-lamps off for him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulstrode jerked Bunter's glasses off, and three or four pairs of hands pushed him closer to Reggie Coker. Reggie tapped him on the nose, and then on his fat chin, eliciting a wild roar from Bunter.

"Pile in!" yelled Bolsover major.

"I—I'm not going to! I—I—"

"If you don't we'll lick you!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Give him the frog's-march!"

Billy Bunter spluttered in dismay. He had to fight Reggie Coker, or to take a licking from the Removites, and he thought it best to fight Reggie. He was taller than the little Sixth-Former, and twice as broad and heavy, and if he had been blessed with pluck, he could have made short work of Reggie. But that was just the one thing that was wanting.

Reggie Coker knew about as much of boxing as he did of flying. His only idea of fighting was to duck his head and hit out wildly. But that method was quite good enough for dealing with Billy Bunter.

Biff, biff, biff! Reggie's fists came thudding on Bunter's fat face and chest, and the Owl of the Remove sat down violently on the floor.

Reggie Coker danced round him ferociously.

"Get up!" he shouted. "Get up! You're not licked yet!"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Get up! Get up and have some more!"

"Grooh! Help!"

"Yah! Funk!" yelled Reggie.

"Ow!" groaned Bunter. "I—I give you best! I—I wasn't really saying anything about—about you—you know. What I really meant to say was, that it was a shame for that rotten solicitor to bolt with the money, you know. That's what I was going to say when you interrupted me. Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!" said Reggie. "Funk!"

And he walked triumphantly away.

Bunter staggered to his feet.

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"I—I say, you fellows," he stammered. "I—I could have licked him, you know, only I thought I'd let him off easy, as—as—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
And Billy Bunter rolled away disconsolately, followed by a shout of laughter.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Aunt!

"HORACE!"

Aunt Judy sat up, trembling a little, as Horace Coker came in.

The kind old lady looked very pale and sickly, and much older than when her nephew had seen her last, at Greyfriars. On that occasion Aunt Judy had watched Horace performing some really remarkable feats at football—and it was fortunate that she did not know anything about the great game, or she might have asked why her dear Horace had kicked the ball through his own side's goal. Aunt Judy had been very happy then, under the firm conviction that her beloved nephew was distinguishing himself in the eyes of his admiring schoolfellows.

Coker was a little tired and dusty after his long journey from Greyfriars. He came over to Miss Judith and kissed her affectionately. Aunt Judy clung to him.

"I didn't quite expect to see you, Horace dear," she said.

"I came as soon as I could get ready, after getting your letter," said Coker cheerily. "Why didn't you tell me earlier?"

Aunt Judy cried softly.

"I hoped the police would be able to catch that wicked man, Horace. I hoped I should not have to write such bad news to you."

"And they haven't got him?"

"No. It is Mr. Rooke, you know—he has been my solicitor for ten years, and I had the greatest faith in him," said poor Aunt Judith tearfully. "He is a wicked and unscrupulous man. It turns out that he has been gambling on the Stock Exchange, and has embezzled a large sum of money—so when he was going to be found out, he determined to run away with the rest."

"The scoundrel!" said Coker, gritting his teeth. "They may find him yet!"

"I—I hope so. He came to me with a story that my investments were not safe, and he advised me to sell out and invest the money in something else, and I was glad of the warning," said Miss Coker. "And then he ran away with the money. The police have found that he booked a passage on the Ruritania for New York."

"Then they'll nail him when he gets there!" said Coker.

Miss Coker shook her head.

"They have communicated with the Ruritania by wireless, and found that he did not take his passage after all. It was only a blind, they say."

"Then he's still in England?" said Coker hopefully.

"Perhaps. But there is no trace of him. The police think that perhaps he had prepared some hiding-place in advance, and went there—or else he may have had all his arrangements made for leaving the country. I am afraid he will not be found, Horace, dear!"

"Rotten!" said Coker.

"It isn't for myself I mind so much," said Miss Coker. "It's for you, Horace. All the money I was going to leave you—"

"Oh, that's nothing!" said Coker. "I've never thought about that, Aunt Judy. I shall be able to make my way all right, you bet!"

"Yes, I know you will!" said Aunt Judith, with a fond glance at her nephew. "You could become anything you chose, Horace!"

"Well, I don't know about that," said Coker modestly; though in his heart of hearts he was inclined to agree with Aunt Judy's fond belief. "But I shall be all right. It's you, you know—what are you going to do?"

"Your father has asked me to come to his house—and if the man is not caught, I shall sell my house, and go to him," said Miss Coker. "It's a very kind of him, Horace. I shall be a poor relation now."

"You will always be my dear old auntie," said Coker, kissing her withered cheek. "You don't think we shall forget all you've done for us, surely? If necessary, I shall work for you when I grow up. You rely on me!"

"My dear, dear boy!"

"I jolly well wish you'd consulted me about that, or the pater," said Horace, with a frown. "By Jove! I'd like to have Rooke by the neck! I'd wring it for him! When was it he cleared out?"

"On Monday night!"

"And nothing has been seen of him since?"

"Nothing, Horace!"

"And he's got the rhino with him?"

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ONE
PENNY.

"The—the what?"

"The cash!" said Coker.

"Yes, yes. He has it in banknotes and securities that can easily be disposed of—more than forty thousand pounds, Horace—all that was left of my fortune!" said Aunt Judy. "If he is caught it may be recovered. But I am afraid he will not be caught."

"I suppose there are descriptions of him published in the papers?" asked Coker.

"Yes. In this 'Daily Mail' his photograph is given."

Coker picked up the newspaper, which was open at the page, giving the description of the missing solicitor.

The photograph was that of a man in early middle life, with a dark beard and side-whiskers—and a bald head. He looked the very picture of professional respectability. Coker shook a big fist at the photograph.

"The rotter!" he said. "I'll keep this! If I could get leave away from Greyfriars, I'd have a hunt for the scoundrel myself. I don't believe the police are much good in dealing with a really cunning scoundrel like this man Rooke!"

"I believe you could do it, dear Horace, if anyone could," said Miss Coker, with a fond smile. "But I am afraid there is very little hope."

"While there's life there's hope," said Coker. "We'll have the beast somehow!"

"I—I was afraid you might reproach me, Horace dear!" faltered Aunt Judith. "You have made me very happy by taking it like this. I don't mind so much now."

"Reproach you, Aunt Judy!" ejaculated Coker, in surprise. "My hat! I should be a pretty sort of a rotter if I did, shouldn't I?"

"I ought to have known you better, my dear boy! I ought to have known that you would be a comfort to me!" said Miss Coker.

"I'll try to be," said Coker. "Anyway, you've always got me, Aunt Judy. You'll be all right so long as you've got me to look after you!"

"You must be hungry after your journey," said Aunt Judy. "How selfish of me not to think of it before!"

"Yes, pretty peckish!" confessed Coker.

And in a very short time, Coker was sitting down to a handsome spread—nothing in Aunt Judy's house being too good for the beloved Horace.

The shock of the bad news had evidently had no effect upon the appetite of Coker of the Fifth.

He made a remarkably good supper.

He talked cheerfully while he ate, and under the influence of his talk, and his presence, the poor old lady cheered up wonderfully.

"You mustn't worry and give in, you know," Coker admonished. "You've got to keep a stiff upper lip, you know. Depend on it, we'll have that rascal somehow. I'm going to take the matter in hand myself!"

Miss Coker smiled faintly.

"But what can you do, Horace?"

"Well, I haven't made any plans yet, of course," said Coker. "I must have time to think it over. I'm going to stop here to-night—I've got leave. To-morrow I'll go back to Greyfriars, and ask the Head for leave. I'll tell him you want me—in fact, you'd better write a letter for me to take to him."

"Very well, Horace!"

"Then I'll start on the job!" said Horace airily. "I'll think over a plan of some sort. A chap with my brains ought to be able to deal with a rascal like this fellow Rooke."

"But, my dear boy—"

"You keep your pecker up, auntie," said Horace. "You can tell me all you know about the villain after supper, and I'll think it out. When I get leave from the Head, I'll start looking for him. You'll see how it'll turn out!"

"My dear, dear boy, I shouldn't wonder if you could succeed, where everybody else has failed!" said Miss Coker fondly.

"You'll see," said Horace confidently.

And whether Coker of the Fifth would succeed in finding the absconding solicitor or not, there was no doubt that he succeeded in cheering up the stricken old lady, and making her feel more hopeful for the future—and that was a great deal. Indeed, Aunt Judy almost felt that she was glad that it had happened, since it had shown her the noble side of her nephew's nature. There had not been wanting envious relatives, who had hinted that the favourite nephew was "on the make," and that Coker's chief concern for his aunt Judy was to have his name in her will. But there was no doubt now that Horace was playing up like a true Briton, and the kind old lady felt that she no longer missed the fortune of which she had been robbed, as she listened to him.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"RUCTIONS IN THE REMOVE!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
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THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Photograph.

THERE was a thaw the next day, and Harry Wharton & Co. when they came out of the School House after morning lessons, found the Close weeping with water. The snow had vanished, and snowballing was over; but there was no chance of football with the ground in its present state.

"Ripping weather—I don't think!" growled Bob Cherry. "We sha'n't be able to play Courtfield to-morrow. I wonder where old Coker is. I don't think he came back last night."

Harry Wharton called to Potter of the Fifth as he came down to the door.

"Heard anything of Coker?" he asked.

Potter shook his head.

"He didn't come back last night," he said. "Some of the chaps say he's going to leave Greyfriars. Poor old Coker!" And Potter went out whistling.

"That's all Potter feels about it," said Frank Nugent, with a sniff. "He might try to look sorry, anyway. I believe it's a fact that Aunt Judy paid Coker's fees here."

"But his people are well off," said Bob Cherry. "Coker won't have to go—that's all rot. Only he won't be rolling in

money as he used to be. It will be rather a change for poor old Coker. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!"

Coker of the Fifth came tramping across the Close towards the School House.

He nodded genially to the chums of the Remove.

Coker, like many another fellow who has had bad luck, had made the painful discovery that his friends were mostly of the fair-weather variety.

Potter and Greene had expressed their sympathy, and gone about their own affairs with as much equanimity as usual. Fitzgerald had said he was sorry, and specially sorry that he couldn't settle a few pounds he owed Coker, and then dismissed the matter from his mind. The fellows who felt most about the matter, curiously enough, were Coker's old enemies of the Remove—Harry Wharton & Co. Coker was not much given to reasoning things out, but he felt instinctively that Harry Wharton and his chums were the fellows he could most depend upon just then, if he wanted help of any sort.

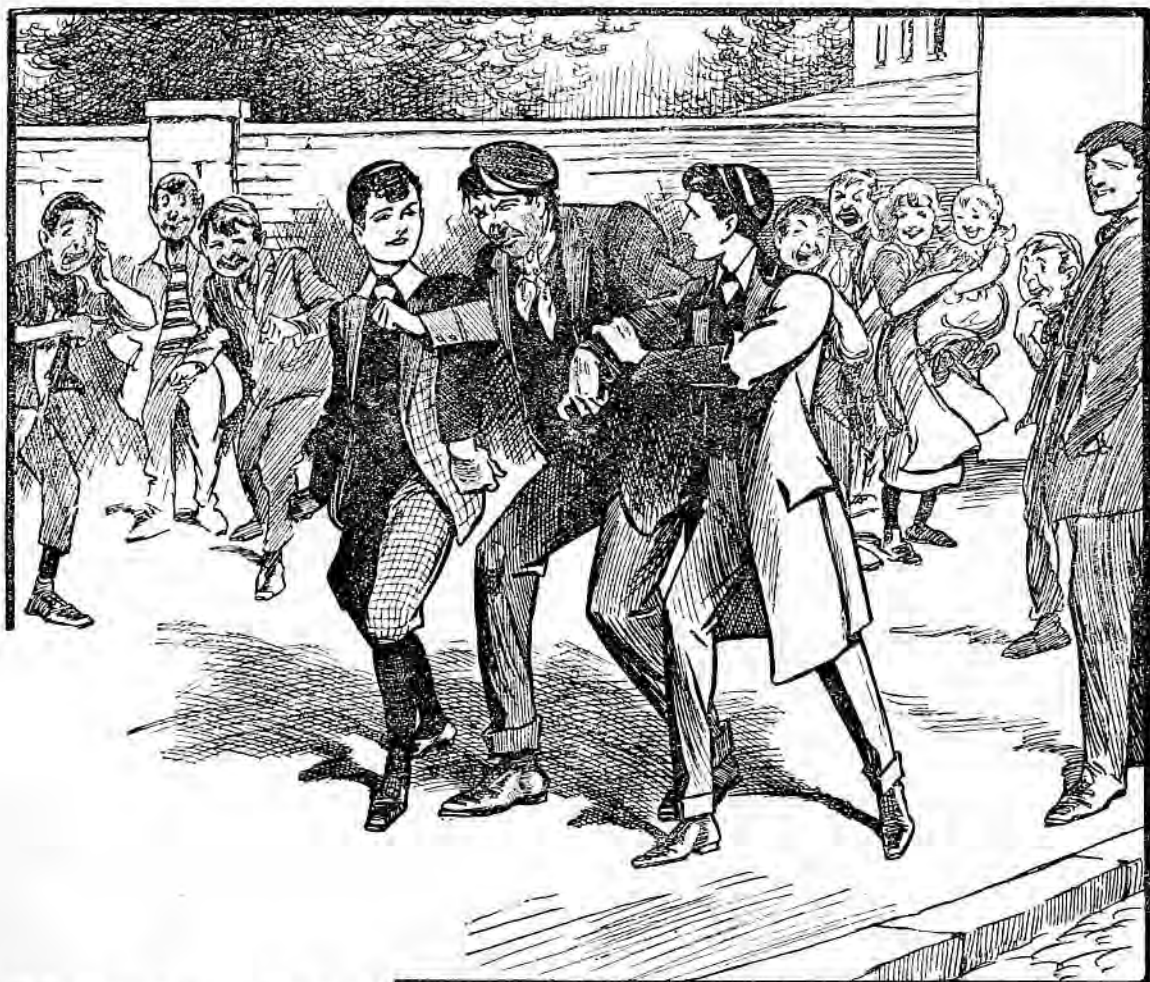
"What luck, Coker?" asked Wharton, as the Fifth-Former came in. Coker might have been his oldest chum by the way he spoke.

"I've seen my aunt!" said Coker, rather glumly. "It's rotten. That beast Rooke has simply cleaned her out."

"I read it all in Mr. Quelch's newspaper this morning," said Wharton. "The police are not on the track yet."

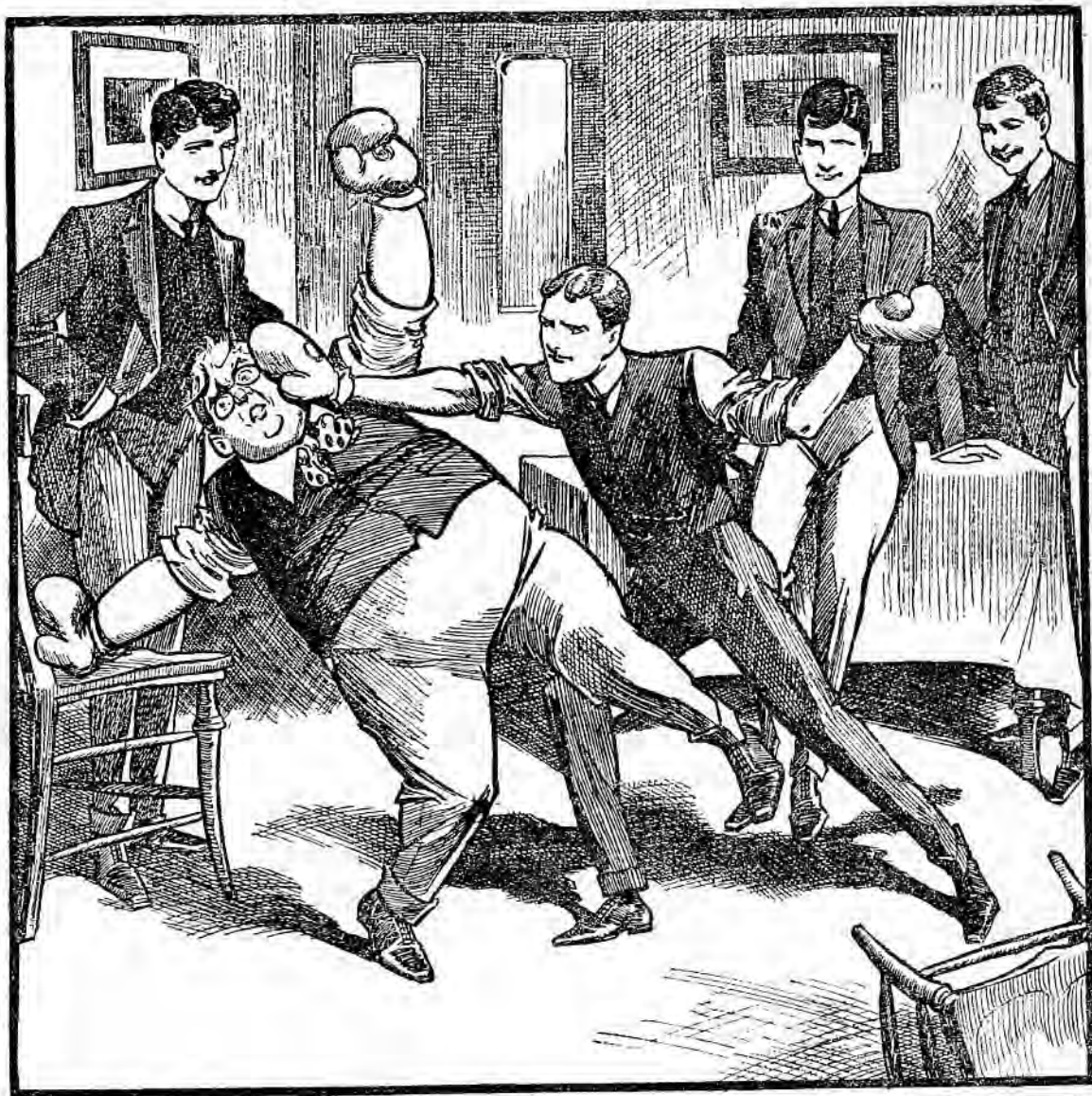


GOOD TURNS.--No. 24.



Two kind-hearted Magnetites offer their assistance to a poor natural—the "village idiot"—who has slipped and fallen in the street—a misfortune which the youthful villagers are inclined to view with amusement.

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Reggie Coker's boxing-gloves came thumping on Bunter's chest, and the fat junior staggered back with a roar. Then he piled in himself, rushing at Coker minor, his arms going like a windmill. "Stand up to him, Reggie!" encouraged Horace Coker. "You'll lick him!" (See Chapter 2.)

Coker sniffed.

"And they won't ever be," he said. "They're no good. The villain has hidden himself somewhere with the money, and I suppose he's going to lie low till the bobbies give it up, and then he'll clear off with the loot. I'm going to take the matter up myself."

"You!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yes; I'm going to hunt for the rascal, and jolly well find him, somehow," said Coker.

"How are you going to start?" asked Nugent.

"I don't quite know yet," Coker confessed; "but I shall manage it somehow. A chap with my brains out to be able to do something, you know."

"Ahem! Exactly."

"I've got the beast's photograph here," said Coker. "Looks a very respectable old johnny. Of course, that's how he came to take Aunt Judy in. If Aunt Judy gets the money back she's going to consult me in future, she's promised. That will be all right; but we've got to get it back."

"Rather a big job," suggested Johnny Bull.

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"Yes, I'm going to slog at it, somehow," said Coker rather vaguely.

"Let's have a look at his chivvy," said Harry.

Coker handed him the photograph.

The chums of the Remove gathered round, and looked at it.

A slightly puzzled expression came over Harry Wharton's face as he scanned the pictured features.

"By Jove!" he murmured.

"Looks a respectable old blighter, don't he?" said Coker.

"Yes; but it's queer," said Wharton slowly. "I know that chivvy. I'll swear I've seen it somewhere."

"Same here," said Nugent. "I'm blessed if I don't know that face, somehow. I've seen him, somewhere or other. I'm sure of it."

Coker looked interested.

"Sure of that?" he asked.

"I feel quite sure," said Wharton positively. "Of course, it may be a man like him that I've seen. But somehow I think it was the same."

"Where did you see him. And when?"

Wharton shook his head.

"That I can't say. But the face is familiar—I know that. I'll try to think it out. It'll come to me some time. Have you got another photograph of the rotter?"

"Yes, two or three."

"Then may I keep this?" asked Harry, "for a time, I mean. I'll be able to think, sooner or later, where I've seen him."

"Keep it, certainly," said Coker. "If you could give me a clue, I'd be jolly glad; but I don't see how you could have seen him. He wouldn't be likely to come anywhere near Greyfriars, of course."

"I suppose not, and yet—"

"Of course, he might have come down to Pegg, to get a ship across into Holland or Germany," said Coker thoughtfully. "Do you think it was in Pegg you saw him?"

"I can't say; but I'll swear I've seen that chivvy somewhere, and lately, too. Not quite the same—there's a difference, somehow—and yet it's the same face." Harry Wharton wrinkled his brows in deep thought. "I wonder where; but I'm certain of it."

"Well, if you think of anything, let me know," said Coker. "I'm going to see the Head now. I'm going to get leave of absence to look for the rotter."

And Coker went in.

The Famous Five remained staring curiously at the photograph.

To four of them it seemed that they had seen that strangely-marked face somewhere before. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh being the only one who confessed that he had no knowledge of it. But Wharton and Nugent and Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry were certain that they had seen it somewhere before.

Where—and when?

Those questions they tried in vain to answer.

"Well, it's no good cudgelling our brains about it any longer," said Wharton, slipping the photograph into his pocket. "It'll come to us sooner or later, I think. There goes the dinner-bell."

And the juniors went in to dinner.

Coker was at his place at the Fifth Form table, looking much more thoughtful than usual. He had obtained leave of absence from the Head, and that afternoon he was leaving the school to make his wild attempt to find the missing solicitor. Now that he was face to face with his task, the difficulties of it were beginning to dawn upon Coker of the Fifth, and he was feeling a little less confident.

His intentions were soon known all over Greyfriars, and a good many of the fellows chuckled at the idea of old Coker playing detective.

"Poor old Coker!" Potter murmured to Greene. "He always was funny, but I think he's funnier than ever now."

"Fairly takes the biscuit," agreed Greene. "Might as well look for a needle in a haystack, too. Poor old Coker!"

"Faith, and it'll keep him amused," Fitzgerald remarked. "And sure he's a comfort to his old aunt, if he goes home. But I fancy he won't find the missing solicitor."

"Ha, ha! Not likely."

Coker came to say good-bye to the Famous Five before he left.

"Haven't thought of where you've seen that chivvy, eh?" asked Coker.

"No," said Harry. "I'm still trying to think."

"Well, if you think of anything, you can let me know; you know my address."

"Right-ho!"

"I hope I shall have some luck," said Coker dubiously. "It's a big job. Anyway, I shall be able to look after my Aunt Judy a bit. She's awfully cut up, and she likes to have me with her. She's been jolly good to me, and it's only fair that I should look after her a bit. Well, good-bye, kids! You might keep an eye on my minor for me while I'm away. Some of the chaps will start ragging him when I'm not here to stop 'em."

"We'll look after Reggie," Wharton promised.

"Thanks!"

And Horace Coker departed.

"Good chap!" said Bob Cherry, looking after him as he strode away. "But how he can possibly think that he's got any chance of finding that fellow Rooke beats me!"

"Of course, that's all rot," agreed Wharton. "I wish he could be found, though. It's curious that we all feel sure we've seen that face before, and yet can't think where we've seen it."

"Jolly curious," agreed Nugent. "I've been turning it over and over in my mind, and I can't get on to it."

"Must have been lately, too," said Johnny Bull, rubbing his nose thoughtfully. "But when and where—that's the rub!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 307.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
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"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
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The chums of the Remove thought it over, and thought it over again and again. The more they regarded the photograph, and the more they reflected about it, the more certain they felt that they had seen the man somewhere—somewhere.

But the questions when and where they could not answer. It was in vain that they tried to "place" him. They were puzzled and mystified, and considerably worried by their failure to solve the mystery. But they did not dismiss the matter from their minds. Sooner or later, Harry Wharton felt, it would flush into his mind when and where he had seen the man—and then there would be something to tell Coker, to assist him in his hopeless search.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

While the Cat's Away!

"COKER's gone!"

Hobson of the Shell made that remark.

The remark itself was innocent enough, but the grin with which Hobson of the Shell accompanied it gave it a peculiar significance.

Gilmore and Price, who were in the study with Hobson, chuckled.

"Really gone?" asked Price.

"Yes, gone home to his dear auntie. He didn't trouble to say an revoir to me!" said Hobson reflectively. "Coker's completely forgotten that he ever was in the Shell."

"Easy enough to get a remove into the Fifth, if you've got a ferocious old aunt to come down and bully the Head!" remarked Price.

"That's how Coker got his remove," said Hobson, "and he immediately became more Fifth-Formy than the Fifth! More than once I've been on the point of licking him for his swank, only—only—"

"Only he'd have licked you," Gilmore suggested sympathetically.

"Well, yes," said Hobson. "He's such a big beast, the Sixth don't care about tackling him. He's licked Walker of the Sixth once—he could whop Loder or Carne if he tried. And Walker's a prefect, too. We've had to stand his swank. And when he had the cheek to have a sneaking, snivelling minor come here and sneak into the Sixth, I really felt as if I should burst a boiler. I did really! As if it wasn't bad enough to have one rotten Coker in the Fifth, to have another rotten Coker in the Sixth!"

"Rotten!" said Price.

"But now Coker's gone!" said Hobson, with the same significant grin.

And his chums chuckled again.

"Dear little Reggie will be feeling lonely without his big brother!" smiled Hobson. "I suggest looking after him a bit. He will be pleased to see his major's old chums in the Shell—the chums he cut as soon as he was hoicked into the Fifth. Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, I propose letting bygones be bygones, and looking after Reggie. Coker will be so pleased when he comes back—if he does come back!"

"Hear, hear!" said Gilmore.

"It so happens that Wingate and Courtney have gone out to Friardale," Hobson observed. "So if there's a bit of a row in the Sixth-Form passage, it won't be noticed."

"Loder and Walker are at home," said Price.

"They love Reggie as much as we do—they'd be jolly glad for the cheeky little sneak to have a ragging. Walker's not forgotten how Coker licked him, and Loder has always been down on Coker minor. He thinks it's a check for a wretched fag to be in the Sixth, and I quite agree with him. I don't often agree with Loder, but I must say I agree with him there. If Loder hears anything going on in young Coker's study, you can depend on it Loder will be as deaf as a giddy post—or as Dutton of the Remove."

And the chums of the Shell—the old friends of Horace Coker before he was "hoicked" into the Fifth—and now his deadly adversaries—left their study to pay a visit to Reggie Coker. As a matter of fact, Hobson & Co. of the Shell were not the only fellows at Greyfriars to consider that Coker major's absence afforded them an excellent opportunity for ragging Coker minor. Quite a number of the juniors resented the fact that a youngster no older than themselves was in the Sixth—and fellows who had carefully avoided coming to blows with the mighty Horace, felt that the opportunity of ragging the gentle Reggie was too good to be lost.

As Hobson and his friends entered the Sixth-Form passage they almost ran into Temple and Dabney of the Fourth. The Fourth-Formers halted, and looked at them inquiringly, at once guessing their errand.

"Going to see Coker minor, you chaps?" asked Temple.

Hobson nodded.

"Yes. Is that where you're going?"

"Exactly!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"We'll go together, if you like!" said Hobson. "We're going as Coker's old friends, you know, to cheer up his minor now he's away. You know what a great chum of ours Coker was—till he got into the Fifth, and gave us the go-by. We feel that it's up to us to look after his minor a bit."

"Just what we think," agreed Temple of the Fourth, with a chuckle. "The dear kid will be quite lonely. Coker rolled me in the snow yesterday. I never forget an act of kindness like that. I'm going to cheer up his minor, too."

And the five fellows made their way to Reggie Coker's study.

Gerald Loder's door was partly open, and Loder the prefect glanced out and saw the juniors pass, and saw them stop at Reggie Coker's door. Loder the prefect could not possibly have failed to know what they were there for, but all he did was to close his door. He intended to remain officially ignorant of all that passed. He disliked the timid, inoffensive Reggie, all the more because he had had to keep his dislike within bounds on account of Coker major.

The fact that Loder was in the Sixth, and a prefect, would have made no difference to Horace Coker if he had found Loder bullying his minor. He would have wiped up the floor with Loder without even stopping to think.

Hobson grinned at his companions as he saw Loder's door close. It was a plain enough hint that they had no interference to look for from the prefect.

"Coast clear, and all plain sailing!" grinned Temple.

"Oh, rather!"

"Come on!" said Hobson.

He opened Reggie Coker's door, without the preliminary ceremony of knocking. Coker minor had a study, which was also a bed-room, like all the members of the Sixth Form.

Reggie Coker was there, sitting pensively at his table. The table was laid for tea; Coker minor had laid it himself. As a member of the Sixth, Coker minor had a right to the services of a fag, and Nugent minor of the Second belonged to him that term. But the little Sixth-Former stood in great awe of his fag—the scamp of the Second Form could have knocked him into a cocked hat in two rounds. When Coker minor timidly requested Dicky Nugent to get his tea, or to take a message, Dicky Nugent would glare at him, and poor Reggie would decide to perform those services for himself. Not that he really wanted a fag, but he would have been glad to keep up his prestige as a Sixth-Former by having one.

Reggie was reading "Sophocles" over his tea—he was that kind of chap. The mere sight of "Sophocles" gave Hobson of the Shell a headache.

Reggie Coker looked up as the five fellows swarmed in, and smiled a sickly smile. It was an awful cheek of juniors to invade a Sixth-Former's study in this way, but Reggie could not pitch them out on their necks, as any other senior would have done. He could only smile and hope that they came with peaceful intentions.

"Having tea—eh?" asked Hobson, with an assumption of affability that raised Reggie's hopes.

"Ye-es, please!" murmured Reggie.

"Where's your fag?"

"He—he doesn't like fagging for me!" faltered Reggie. "I've let him off."

Hobson shook a finger at him.

"Very careless of you, when we've come to tea!" he exclaimed. "Who's going to wait on us, I'd like to know?"

"Have—have you come to tea, Hobson?"

"Of course I have, and I've brought my friends," said Hobson. "We used to be your major's best chums in the Shell. Ain't you glad to see us?"

"Oh, yes!" gasped Reggie.

"Sure you're glad?" demanded Price.

"J-j-jolly glad!" stuttered Reggie.

"Of course, if you didn't want to see us, we'd go," said Hobson. "We'd just wreck the study, and bump you into the ashes, and put the jam over your hair, and go quietly."

"Oh, dear!" said Reggie. "I'm so glad to see you, Hobson. I shall be so pleased if you'll have tea with me!"

"Very well," said Hobson graciously. "As you're so pressing, we'll have tea. What do you say, you chaps?"

"Hear, hear!" said all the chaps together.

"What have you got for tea?" asked Temple. "I hope it's something decent, considering that you've got important visitors."

"I—I have plenty of bread-and-butter!" murmured Reggie.

There was a general sniff from the quintette of visitors. Bread-and-butter evidently did not seem satisfactory to them.

"And there are some sardines," said Coker minor, "and a piece of cake."

"Is that all?" demanded Hobson.

"Yes, that's all. I'm sorry!"

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"RUCTIONS IN THE REMOVE!"

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"I'm afraid we shall have to wreck the study after all," said Hobson thoughtfully.

"There—there's some jam!" stammered Reggie. "I forgot the jam!"

"You'll have to provide something better than that. It's an honour to have fellows like us to tea. Don't you think it's an honour?" roared Hobson, in so loud a voice that Coker minor jumped off his chair.

"Ye-es!" stuttered Coker minor. "I do—indeed I do, Hobson. It's a v-v-very great honour indeed, please!"

"I'm glad you can see that," said the captain of the Shell daskly. "Now, we want a really good spread, and we want a fag to wait on us. As you haven't got a fag here, you'll have to wait on us yourself, see?"

"Ye-es, please!"

The juniors chuckled. Having tea in a Sixth-Form study and being waited on by a Sixth-Former was a novelty, and they liked the idea.

"You understand what you've got to do, you sneaking little rotter?" Hobson demanded, in his most threatening tone.

"Yes, please!"

"Then go and get some grub—sharp! You can get it at the tuckshop. Get plenty, and get it good, or you'll hear from me. Understand?"

"Ye-es, please."

"I dare say a quid's worth will see us through," said Hobson. "But, remember, if there isn't enough, we shall rag you bald-headed!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Buzz off, and get the tuck!" roared Hobson.

And Reggie Coker gasped with affright, and bolted out of the study like a rabbit. And the five self-invited guests roared with laughter.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Coker Minor's Tea-party!

BILLY BUNTER was in the tuckshop when Reggie arrived there.

The fat junior was using all his powers of persuasion upon Mrs. Mimble to induce that good lady to let him have a half-dozen jam-tarts, to be settled for when a certain postal-order, long expected, should arrive. But Mrs. Mimble was deaf to the voice of the charmer. She knew Bunter. And she turned away from him without ceremony when Reggie Coker came in.

Reggie gave lavish orders. He had plenty of pocket-money, and he was only too glad to have a chance of getting rid of his terrible visitors at the expense of feeding them. If he fed them well, he hoped they would go quietly, without ragging him or wrecking his study. Billy Bunter blinked through his big spectacles at the pile of good things accumulating on the counter as Reggie gave order after order.

"Standing a feed in your study, young Coker?" he asked affably.

"Yes," said Reggie shortly.

Reggie wasn't afraid of Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was so hopeless a funk that even Coker minor could lick him.

"Many chaps coming?" asked the fat junior.

"Five," said Reggie.

"Six is a good number for a feed," said Bunter persuasively. "I say, Coker minor, I—I'm sorry we had that little row, you know. You didn't quite understand what I meant to say. I've always felt very friendly towards you, really. I thought it was ripping of the Head to put you in the Sixth, you know!"

"Did you?" said Reggie.

"Yes, really, you know. Can I help you carry those things to your study?"

"No, thanks!"

"There's a lot for a little chap like you to carry," said Bunter. "If there's any cooking to do, I don't mind helping."

"There isn't."

"Never mind. I'll come—I dare say I can be useful," said Bunter. "I don't mind how much trouble I take for a chap I really like."

"Go and eat cake!" replied Reggie.

"Ahem! Now, look here, young Coker—"

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Reggie gathered up his parcels and left the tuckshop, without replying. Billy Bunter followed him. He was turning over in his mind whether he could possibly summon up enough energy to lick Coker minor, and join in the feed by force of arms. Anyway, he did not mean to be left out of the feed if he could possibly help it.

Reggie came back into his study heavy-laden. He found his five visitors making themselves quite at home. Hobson had the armchair, and Temple was sitting on the table. Dabney was eating the jam with a spoon from the jar—Dabney liked jam. Gilmore and Price were playing catch with Reggie's books, which were not improved when they crashed on the floor.

"Here he is!" ejaculated Hobson. "Now, I hope you've got something decent, young shaver!"

"Yes, please, Hobson."

"What's that fat beast doing here?" demanded Price, as Bunter rolled in after Reggie. "Did you bring that freak here, young Coker?"

"Nunno!" stammered Reggie. "I don't want him."

"All the same if you did. Get out, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Get out!" shouted Hobson. "No Remove fags wanted here."

"Look here, I'm going to stay to the feed!" exclaimed Bunter. "Coker minor don't want you, if you come to that! You're bullying him into standing you a feed. Well, I'm going to have my whack!"

Hobson turned a terrific glare on Coker minor.

"Don't you want us?" he roared.

Reggie jumped with sheer nervousness.

"Ye-e-es, please, Hobson," he stammered.

"I thought so," said Hobson. "But you don't want Bunter?"

"N-n-no, please."

"You hear that, Bunter? Don't try to shove yourself in where you ain't wanted. Get out! Lower Fourth fags don't have tea with the Sixth."

"Rot!" said Bunter. "I'm going to stay if you do."

Hobson strode across the study to Bunter. He collared the fat junior without ceremony, and whirled him through the doorway. Bunter went spinning down the passage, and rolled over, shooting along the linoleum with the impetus Hobson had given him. He disappeared down the passage with a yell, and Hobson chuckled and closed the door.

"New you get the tea," he said. "We'll see that you're not bothered by cheeky fags, young Coker."

"T-t-thank you, Hobson."

The visitors watched Reggie Coker getting tea ready. Nobody offered to help him. It was a novel experience to be fagged for by a Sixth-Former, and they enjoyed it.

The door opened, and a fat face looked in.

"I say, you fellows—"

Whiz! A loaf caught Billy Bunter on the chest, and he was hurled out into the passage again. The loaf rolled after him.

"Shut that door, young Coker!"

Young Coker shut the door.

Billy Bunter was not seen again. Coker minor went on getting the tea. There were only two chairs in the study beside the armchair, and Hobson pointed out that fact to the founder of the feast.

"Two more chairs wanted!" he said.

"I—I haven't any more, Hobson."

"Do you want your guests to stand?" demanded the Shell fellow.

"Nunno; b-b-but—"

"Go and get two chairs from somewhere."

"Yes, Hobson," said poor Reggie.

He left the study, and returned with a chair under each arm, borrowed from Wingate's study, the captain of Greyfriars being absent just then. The five visitors sat down round the tea-table. No chair was needed for Reggie Coker, he was not going to do any sitting down. He was wanted on his feet all the time to wait on his guests.

"Well, this is comfy," said Hobson cheerfully, as Reggie served him with ham and tongue, and poured out his tea. "We shall often come and have tea with you, young Coker, if you treat us like this."

Coker minor shuddered at the prospect.

"I take two lumps, Coker minor."

"Yes, Temple."

"More milk, you young ass!"

"Yes, Dabney."

"Haven't you got any mustard?" demanded Hobson.

"Do you mean to say that you expect us to eat ham and tongue without mustard?"

"Oh, dear! I—I forgot the mustard."

"I give you one minute to find some."

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
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Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR"
Every Friday.

"I—I—I'll go and get some, please, Hobson," said the unhappy Reggie. "I—I'm so sorry I forgot."

He was back in less than a minute with the mustard.

"Fill my cup up again," said Hobson. "And not so weak this time. I don't like weak tea. Understand that?"

"Yes, please, Hobson."

"More of that tongue," said Price.

"The tongue's all gone, please, Price," said Reggie, in distress. "Will you have some more ham instead?"

"Call this looking after your guests?" demanded Price indignantly. "Well, I'll make the ham do. My cup's empty."

"Pass the cake!"

"Hand me the sugar, you lazy young boulder! Can't you see I'm waiting for the sugar?"

"Yes, please, Gilmore."

"Look alive, young Coker!" growled Hobson. "My plate's been empty nearly ten seconds. You're not half a fag. Don't you understand I'm hungry?"

"Ye-e-es, please, Hobson."

"Not so much jaw—but look alive!"

The unfortunate Reggie was kept very busy for the next quarter of an hour. Five hungry juniors soon disposed of his provisions, lavish as the supply was. The cake was finished to the last crumb, the jam to the last spoonful. The clearance was complete. By that time Reggie was almost run off his legs.

"I'm not quite satisfied," said Hobson severely. "You'll do better than this next time, young Coker."

"Next time!" faltered Reggie. He fervently hoped there would be no next time.

"Yes; we're coming to tea with you every day till your major comes back. We're not going to let you be lonely—are we, you chaps?"

"No fear!" said all the guests together.

"You're not very entertaining, young Coker," went on Hobson. "A host is supposed to do something to entertain his guests. Can you cake-walk?"

"C-c-c-c-cakewalk!" stammered Reggie.

"Yes, you've got to entertain us."

"Oh, rather," said Dabney. "Pile in, you little beast."

"P-p-p-lease, I c-c-can't cake-walk!" stammered Reggie. Hobson snorted.

"Well," he said reflectively, "let's see you stand on your head. I've never seen a Sixth-Former standing on his head. Go it—on the table."

Reggie groaned. He knew that the young rascals had come there to rag him, and that they were determined to torment him. There was no possibility of getting rid of them, either. If only Coker major had been within hearing; but Coker major was many miles away. Reggie groaned, and submitted.

His essay to stand upon his head on the table was greeted with roars of laughter by his guests. He rolled over, and bumped on the floor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it!"

"Try again!"

"P-p-lease, I can't!" stammered Reggie. "I—I say, don't be beasts, you know! I—I c-can't stand on my head, Hobson."

"You'll stand on your head, or we'll frog's-march you round the study," said Hobson.

"Oh, rather!"

And Reggie groaned dismally, and tried again, amid yells of laughter from Hobson & Co.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Lesson for the Raggars!

HARRY WHARTON and Frank Nugent were at tea in No. 1 Study, when Billy Bunter came in.

Billy Bunter was looking red and wrathful. Nugent reached for a loaf to hurl at the fat junior, and Bunter dodged behind the door.

"I say, you fellows, don't play the giddy goat! I—I've come to tell you—"

"Oh, rats! Get out!" said Wharton.

"They're ragging Coker minor," said Bunter.

"Oh, you can come in," said Wharton, his tone changing.

"Now, who's ragging Coker minor, and where are they doing it?"

Bunter rolled in. As he was not permitted to join in the feed in Coker minor's study himself, he had a natural desire to spoil it for Hobson & Co. And it had occurred to him, after some cogitation on the subject, that Harry Wharton & Co. might be used for that purpose, as the celebrated monkey used the cat to draw his chestnuts out of the fire.

"You fellows promised Coker to look after his minor," said Bunter, blinking at them. "I say, it's rotten, you know. There's five of them in his study—Shell and Fourth Form chaps—and they're making him fag for them."

Wharton rose to his feet.

"Come on, Franky," he said.

Nugent grunted.

"Leave it till after tea," he suggested.

"Well, we promised Coker, you know," said Harry.

Nugent rose, with another grunt.

"Oh, all right," he said. "We shall have plenty to do if we're going to look after Coker minor all the time. Still, a promise is a promise. I'm on."

The two chums called in at Bob Cherry's study, for Bob and Hurree Singh and Mark Linley, and Johnny Bull and Tom Brown joined them. Then Wharton called Penfold and Peter Todd. It was just as well to go in strong force. None of the juniors were averse to a row with the Fourth or the Shell, as a matter of fact. Nine Removites proceeded to the Sixth-Form passage.

The roars of laughter from Coker minor's study showed that the ragging was proceeding. Wharton opened the door, and the Removites looked in.

An astonishing sight met their eyes.

Hobson & Co. were sitting round the table, roaring with laughter, and on the table was Reggie Coker, essaying to stand upon his head.

He rolled over as the Removites crowded in, and landed on the floor with a bump. There was another yell from the ragers.

"Ha ha, ha!"

"Try again, you clumsy ass!"

Reggie Coker sat dazedly on the floor, and gasped.

"Hold on!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "This is where we come in!"

Hobson swung round, and looked a little alarmed at the sight of the crowd of Removites at the door. Harry Wharton & Co. crowded into the study. The room was a large one, but it was pretty well filled by the time they were all inside. Bob Cherry closed the door.

Hobson & Co. were all on their feet now.

"What do you chaps want?" demanded Hobson, with an attempt to carry the matter off with a high hand. "You're not wanted here."

"Fags are barred!" said Temple.

"Did you ask these young rotters here, Coker minor?" demanded Hobson.

"Nunno, please!"

"It's all right, Coker minor," said Harry Wharton reassuringly. "We promised old Coker to keep an eye on you while he was away, and to see that you're not ragged. That's what we've come for."

"Th-thank you," faltered Reggie, brightening up. "You're very good. Those beasts would not be here if my brother hadn't gone away."

"Just so! And they're not coming again," said Harry.

"Ain't we?" roared Hobson truculently. "We'll come here as often as we like, Mr. Cheeky Wharton, and we'll rag that snivelling little beast as much as we please."

"Oh, rather!"

"Well, if ragging is the order of the day, we may as well start," said Harry. "Collar those rotters, you chaps!"

"Hands off!"

"I'll—I'll—I'll—"

"Yaroo! Leggo!"

The Removites piled in with energy. There were nine of them, against five of the ragers, and the latter did not have a look in.

They put up a good fight, however, and there was a terrific struggle in Coker minor's study for a few minutes.

In the course of it, probably more damage was done to the study than would have been done if the ragers had been left alone; but that, of course, could not be helped. Reggie Coker was knocked out of the way, and he sat palpitating in a corner while the tussle went on. The table was knocked over, the chairs hurled right and left. Books and crockery strewed the floor, and were trampled on. The fender was kicked out of place, and the clock swept off the mantelpiece. It was a battle royal while it lasted, and when it ended, the ragers were on the floor, and the victorious Removites were sitting on them.

"Remove wins!" chuckled Bob Cherry, as he ensconced himself comfortably on Hobson's chest. "This is where we smile."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my nose!" groaned Tom Brown. "Some silly ass has shoved his silly elbow on my nose. Ow—ow!"

"Never mind," said Bob. "It's all in the day's work."

"Oh—ow! It's not your nose! Ow!"

"Well, we've got 'em," said Harry Wharton, rising. "Blessed if I know why the prefects haven't come in! We've been making rather a row."

"Ha, ha! We have!"

"They won't come in," grinned Mark Linley. "They

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think we're ragging Coker minor, you see, and you bet they won't interfere."

"And Wingate's out," said Nugent.

"Lemme gerrup!" roared Hobson. "I'll smash you, Bob Cherry! I'll pulverise you! I'll slaughter you! Lemme gerrup!"

"Sit on him, Bob!"

"I'm sitting on him," said Bob calmly. "Are you quite comfy, Hobson?"

"Yow—ow—ow! I—I—I'll—"

"Coker minor! Where's Coker minor?"

"Here I am, Wharton, please," said Reggie feebly.

"Have you got a cricket-stump in the study?"

"N-n-no."

"Well, a ruler, then?"

"Yes, I've got a ruler, Wharton," said Reggie, in surprise. "Do you want a ruler?"

"No, Hobson does. Sit on the bounders, you fellows, and we'll deal with them one at a time. Turn Hobson over."

Hobson struggled fiercely, but he was turned successfully over, and his nose ground into the carpet, as Bob Cherry sat on his back. Penfold stood on his legs.

"Get that ruler, Coker minor," commanded Wharton.

"Here it is, Wharton, please."

"Now thrash Hobson,"

Reggie jumped.

"Wha-a-at!" he stammered.

"You let me alone!" bellowed Hobson. "If you touch me, young Coker, I'll skin you alive! I'll slaughter you! I'll—I'll—"

"Shurrup!" said Bob Cherry, pressing Hobson's features a little deeper into the carpet. "You're dead in this act! Shurrup!"

"Groooogh!"

"Each of these rotters is going to promise, honour bright, not to rag Coker minor any more till his major comes back," said Wharton. "After that, Coker major can take them in hand. Now, Hobson, are you going to promise?"

"No!" roared Hobson. "I'm going to smash the little beast!"

"Then you'll be licked till you do promise. Coker minor, lay into him with the ruler."

"Oh, dear! I—I'd rather not, Wharton, please."

"This isn't a question of what you'd rather do, but of what you've got to do," Wharton explained. "You've got to lick him, or I'm going to lick you. Savvy?"

"Oh, dear!"

"Now, pile in!"

Reggie Coker piled in. As a matter of fact, he was not sorry to pay off some of his score against Hobson in that way. The ruler rose and fell, and the dust came in little clouds from the Shell fellow's lower garments.

Hobson of the Shell roared and squirmed.

But with Bob Cherry sitting on his back, and Penfold standing on his legs, he had no chance of escaping the punishment; he had to take it, and he took it.

Whack! whack! whack! whack! whack!

Hobson roared with pain and fury.

"Now, then, what about that promise?" demanded Wharton.

"Yah! Ow! Go and eat coke! Ow!"

Whack! whack! whack! whack! whack!

"Oh, crumbs! Stop it! Yow! I promise, honour bright, I won't rag the snivelling little rotter! Ow! Leave off! Chuck it! Ow!"

Wharton chuckled.

"That settles Hobson!" he said. "Now for Temple!"

"Here, you let me alone!" said Temple, in alarm. "I—"

Oh!—ah!—ow!—yah!"

Whack! whack! whack!

"I promise!" shrieked Temple. "Oh, my hat! Yah! Yaroo! I promise—anything you like! Stop him! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Dabney and Colmore and Price, yelled out that they would promise, too, without waiting for the ruler. Wharton shook his head.

"Better give 'em half a dozen each," he said. "It will be a warning to them."

And Reggie Coker, who was warming to his work now, whacked away with great energy at the squirming prisoners.

There were roars of fury and anguish in Coker minor's study; and Loder, the prefect, who could hear the din in his room, chuckled. He thought that the obnoxious Coker minor was having a warm time indeed.

"That will do!" said Wharton, at last. "Now, it's understood that all you fellows have given your word, honour

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bright, not to rag Coker minor again before his major comes back?"

"Ow, ow! Yes! Ow, ow!"

"Then kick 'em out!" said Wharton.

And one after another the hapless raggars were ejected from the study.

They crawled away feeling that life was hardly worth living.

Reggie Coker was grinning cheerfully now. After that severe lesson, he was likely to be safe from the raggars.

"Thank you so much, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "I'm really very grateful. I don't think they'll come back any more!"

"If you're ragged again, you let us know," said Harry Wharton; "we'll come along and pile in. We promised old Coker to stand by you, and we're going to do it!"

And Harry Wharton & Co. marched off very well satisfied. Coker minor spent the next hour or two trying to get his study into something like order. And that day, at all events, he was not ragged again.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Wharton's Discovery!

"MY only hat!"

Harry Wharton uttered that exclamation suddenly.

It was Saturday—the day after Coker's departure. Morning lessons were over, but the chums of the Remove were not thinking of football. The ground was something like a bog, and the game had to be given up for that afternoon. But Harry Wharton & Co. had another matter to occupy their minds.

Wharton was sitting at the table in Study No. 1, with the newspaper before him in which was the photograph of Rooke, the absconding solicitor.

The chums of the Remove had stared at that photograph off and on incessantly, trying to figure in their minds where they had seen that face before.

They were more certain than ever that they had seen it—especially the deep-set eyes were familiar to their minds—and yet, so far, they had not succeeded in "placing" it.

But Wharton's sudden exclamation, as he scanned the photograph with knitted brows, showed that something had flashed into his mind.

His chums gathered round him eagerly.

"Got it at last?" asked Bob Cherry.

Wharton raised his face, flushed and excited, from the paper.

"I'm not sure, but I think so!" he said.

"Good egg!"

"The good-eggfulness is terrific, my esteemed chum," said Hurree Singh. "Where have you beheld the honourable and ludicrous rascal?"

"Get your colour-box, Franky!"

Nugent stared.

"My colour-box?" he repeated.

"Yes—quick!"

Nugent obeyed in wonder. What on earth his colour-box had to do with the photograph of the missing swindler was more than he could fathom. But he placed the colour-box on the table, and Wharton opened it eagerly.

He selected a brush, and dipped it in Chinese white.

Johnny Bull tapped his forehead, as if to hint some doubts of his leader's sanity. But Wharton heeded not.

With the brush, he traced round the bearded, whiskered face in the photograph, carefully obliterating all the hirsute adornments of the face.

The juniors watched him with deep intentness.

They understood his object now.

When the beard and side-whiskers were painted out, the face was turned into a clean-shaven one, altering its appearance amazingly.

The sharp features, the close-set eyes, were the same, but the aspect of the countenance was strangely different without the whiskers and the beard.

And an exclamation broke from Nugent and Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry at once.

"I know him now!"

Wharton's eyes were blazing with excitement.

"You know him, chaps?"

"Yes, rather!"

"It's the Johnny at Spindrift Cottage!"

"The beast who wanted to keep us out in the snow!"

Wharton nodded.

"It flashed into my mind all of a sudden," he said. "I knew I'd seen him before, and yet the face didn't seem THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 307.

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the same. All of a sudden, it came on me that when I'd seen him, he hadn't those whiskers!"

"My hat!"

"The man at Spindrift Cottage was clean-shaven, you remember. He had the same features, the same bald roof!"

"And he shaved off his beard and whiskers when he did a guy, of course," exclaimed Bob Cherry excitedly.

"Of course he would!"

"And he had that cottage taken, all ready to hide himself in!" exclaimed Frank. "And that's why he didn't want to be seen!"

"By Jove!"

"Well, this beats it!" said Johnny Bull. "We've stumbled on the rotter quite by accident, while the police are hunting for him up and down the country. Of course, they'd never think of looking for him there—why, even in this neighbourhood hardly anybody even knows the cottage is there, and nobody ever goes there; nobody knows it's let! And if the agent saw his photograph in the papers, he wouldn't think of Joseph Smith, as he calls himself—Joseph Smith is clean-shaven!"

"It took me a long time to tumble to it," said Wharton, "and I shouldn't have guessed, only we were trying to think it out to help old Coker!"

"I remember the way he planked his name on us, too!" said Nugent thoughtfully. "We never asked him his name—he told us as if he wanted us to know!"

"So that if we thought of him afterwards, we should think of him as Joseph Smith," said Wharton, with a nod.

The chums of the Remove were greatly excited.

It seemed too good to be true.

They had thought several times about that strange recluse of Spindrift Cottage; but the matter had been fading from their minds. It was no business of theirs, what the man chose to do, and how he chose to live, and, in a short time, they would have forgotten him. But now—

"I suppose there can't be a mistake?" Johnny Bull said soberly. "You see, it might only be a resemblance—he might even be a relation!"

"Of course, we can't be quite sure," assented Harry; "we don't want to act in a hurry, and put our foot into it. The man may be only an eccentric chap who likes a lonely life—a giddy poet or something—or even an invalid, as he says, who has been ordered to have sea-air, and plenty of it. It's possible. But he's so like Rooke—Rooke without his whiskers—that I really think he's the man. Before we say anything, we've got to make sure, of course!"

"That's the idea. How are we going to make sure?"

"We've got to decide!"

And the chums of the Remove discussed the matter earnestly. There was a doubt in the matter, of course. But in their hearts they felt sure that the self-styled Joseph Smith was the man for whom the police were searching—the rascal who had absconded with Miss Judith Coker's entire fortune.

All the circumstances of the case strengthened their belief. A safer hiding-place than the lonely cottage by the cliffs could hardly have been found. Once safely ensconced there, the hunted man disappeared from the sight of all human eyes.

If he had no secret to keep, why had he attempted to keep the storm-caught schoolboys out of the house, in the driving snow—and when they had forced an entrance, why had he locked himself in a room to avoid their sight?

But for the chance that Bob Cherry had turned the electric pocket-lamp upon him in surprise, they would never have seen his face. Then they would have suspected nothing.

The juniors were bubbling over with suppressed excitement.

To be the means of running down the rascal and recovering the money of which he had robbed Coker's aunt—the thought of it naturally excited them.

And the more they discussed the matter, and reflected upon it, the more certain they were that he was the right man.

"We'll make some inquiries first," was Wharton's final decision. "We can see the house-agent in Friardale who let the cottage. We'll pump him without letting him know what we are after. We'll find out what he knows about the man. If he knows him, or knows that his name is Smith, that settles it. If he doesn't know anything about him, it's another point against the rotter. Suppose we send a wire to Coker, and tell him we're on the track, and then start? We've got nothing to do this afternoon. Footer's off."

"Right-ho!" said the rest.

And the juniors put on their coats, and left the school, eager to get to work.



GLYN'S MECHANICAL TOWSER AT BAY! (An amusing incident in "CAUGHT NAPPING!" the long, complete school tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, by Martin Clifford, which is contained in this week's issue of our companion paper, THE "GEM" LIBRARY. Out on Wednesday Price, One Penny.)

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Coker is Pleased!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. stopped at the post-office in Friarale to send the telegram to Horace Coker. It was a brief message, but very much to the point:

"On the track. Come at once to Anchor, Pegg."

"WHARTON."

"That'll bring old Coker down!" said Harry, as they left the post-office. "By the time we meet him at the Anchor, in Pegg, we'll know all the agent can tell us about the tenant of Spindrift Cottage."

"Good egg!"

And the juniors made their way to the agent's office. Making inquiries after the manner of detectives was a

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rather new experience to Harry Wharton & Co., and it was somewhat doubtful if they would be able to pump the house-agent without betraying the fact that they had a very keen interest in the mysterious tenant of Spindrift Cottage. They found Mr. Smith, the house-agent, in his office. He was smoking a cigarette, and did not seem to be overburdened with business. His look showed that he was wondering what the schoolboys could possibly want with him, but he was very polite.

"You've got a cottage to let, about a mile from Pegg, I think, Mr. Smart?" Harry Wharton asked, by way of a beginning.

"The bungalows?" asked Mr. Smart, with a look of surprise. "Yes. But they don't let until the summer. You don't want a bungalow—eh?"

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"I don't mean the bungalows, but a cottage on the other side of the village, called Spindrift Cottage," explained Harry.

"Oh! That's let."

"Let!" said Harry.

"Yes. Let about a month ago," said the agent carelessly. The juniors looked a little disappointed. If the cottage had been let a month ago, and the absconding solicitor had only disappeared four or five days ago, the matter did not seem to fit together.

"Has the tenant taken possession?" asked Harry.

"Yes."

"Would you mind telling us how long ago?"

"Only a few days, I think. The furniture was sent in about a fortnight ago, and there were orders to the tradespeople about the same time."

Wharton paused. Mr. Smart's manner showed that he had answered enough questions, which, to him, seemed only dictated by idle curiosity.

"Look here! We—we want to know something about that tenant," said Wharton directly. "We fancy we know him. I suppose there's no objection to telling us?"

"Not that I know of," said Mr. Smart.

"His name is Smith, isn't it?"

"Yes—Joseph Smith."

"You've seen him?"

The agent nodded.

"A clean-shaven man, isn't he?"

"No. Grey beard and moustache," said Mr. Smart. "I see you don't know him. Can't be a friend of yours at all."

"But—but he had a bald head?" asked Wharton, somewhat taken aback.

"No. Thick head of dark hair," said Mr. Smart.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Bob Cherry.

"Excuse me, young gentlemen, my time is valuable!" said Mr. Smart, though, as a matter of fact, he did not seem to have anything to do. "If I can do anything for you—"

"Well, we wanted to know about that chap," said Harry Wharton. "We thought he might be someone we wanted to meet. Is he an invalid?"

"Yes. A dipsomaniac, I understand, trying a cure for drink," said Mr. Smart. "Rather a queer chap. I should advise you not to visit him. I understand that he wants to be let alone, and he took Spindrift Cottage to be quiet. Good-afternoon!"

Wharton would have liked to ask some more questions, but it was clearly useless, so the juniors quitted the house-agent's office.

In the street, Bob Cherry whistled dolefully.

"Rather a set-back!" he remarked. "Some giddy slave to drink, you see, ordered by the doctor to stick himself there for a cure. I remember we heard him guzzling, though, so he must have taken some of the enemy with him."

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"I'm quite certain now," he said quietly. "The agent says he's a man with a thick head of hair and a grey beard and moustache. The man we saw at Spindrift Cottage was clean-shaven. Yet he's the same man."

"No law against shaving," Johnny Bull suggested.

"But he couldn't go bald in a few weeks."

"Well, no."

"Just think a minute. Rooke—if it's Rooke—must have taken that cottage before he bolted, to have it all ready to hide in. He came down here to see about it. If he had come here looking the same as usual, the agent would remember afterwards that he'd let the cottage to a man answering Rooke's description. He'd see the description published in all the newspapers. Now, Rooke couldn't shave clean to see the agent—it was before the time he was ready to bolt. But he wouldn't want to look like himself, so he wore a wig—and he either dyed his whiskers and beard, or wore a large false beard over them—when he saw the agent. Very likely he wore a big muffer, or something like that, in this weather, which would make it easier. So the agent only knows him as a man with a grey beard and plenty of hair. But when he's at home in the cottage, not expecting anybody to see him, he wouldn't take the trouble to rig himself up like that every day. We took him by surprise, and that's how we found him clean-shaven and with a bald head."

"I see," said Bob slowly. "And if he ever goes out of doors he goes out got up as he was when the agent saw him?"

"That's my idea."

"Anyway, there's something fishy about him, because he can't be bald and have plenty of hair, too," said Nugent. "Smart says he had plenty of hair. When we saw him he was bald. Yet he's the same man—Joseph Smith. That proves that he was wearing a wig, at least when he saw the agent."

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"And an honest man wouldn't want to disguise himself for such a simple matter as hiring a cottage from a house-agent," said Johnny Bull.

"Exactly."

"It's the man!" said Bob, with conviction.

"I'm sure it's the man!" said Wharton. "Naturally, after bolting, he would get rid of his own beard and whiskers first of all. Otherwise, he would have been known anywhere. And while he's at Spindrift Cottage, if he has to see anybody—I suppose he must see tradespeople every now and then—he's got up as Smart saw him."

"It's a dead cert!" said Bob Cherry. "Only—"

"Only what?"

"Blessed if I care about the idea of going to the police-station with a yarn like that. You see, they'd think we're only kids, and—"

"We're not going to the police," said Wharton. "If he's the man that's wanted, we can nail him ourselves."

"Phew!"

"If it turns out to be a mistake—" murmured Nugent uneasily.

"We shall have to be careful, of course. We'll wait till Coker comes down, and then all go to the cottage together. I don't know whether Coker's ever seen the man, but if he has he will be able to say for certain if Joseph Smith is Rooke or not."

"Well, that's so."

"We'll wait for Coker," said Harry.

The juniors rambled along the shore to the fishing village. They knew the train that Horace Coker would come by if he came, so they knew when to expect him. And they had no doubt that he would come. It was pretty certain that Coker had not succeeded in discovering any clues himself, and so he was not likely to be busy.

They waited outside the Anchor Inn when the time came for Coker's arrival. And Coker was on time.

The burly form of the Fifth-Former came striding down the village street, and the Removites hurried to meet him.

Coker was looking flushed and eager.

"What's the news?" he asked immediately, as he met the juniors.

"We've remembered where we've seen him," said Wharton. "He's near this place, in a lonely cottage. Have you ever seen Rooke, Coker?"

Coker nodded.

"Yes. I saw him once or twice, and never noticed him specially, of course. So far as I remember, he's just like his photograph in the papers."

"But if you saw him you'd know him again, even if he made some change in his appearance?"

"Oh, yes, I'd know him," said Coker. "I remember he had very sharp eyes. I remember telling Reggie once that Aunt Judy's solicitor looked a good deal like a ferret. I'd know the rotter if I spotted him. Let's go after him. I haven't found anything out myself yet. I was trying to make some plans when your telegram came, but somehow or other I couldn't quite decide how to begin."

The juniors grinned. It was not likely that Horace Coker, unaided, would ever have been able quite to decide how to begin.

"But tell me what you know about the man, and I'll see what I think of it," said Coker.

Wharton concisely explained, telling the story in a few words of the adventure in the snow at the lonely cottage by the cliff.

Coker of the Fifth listened open-mouthed, so intense was his interest.

"What do you think?" asked Wharton, in conclusion.

Coker's eyes gleamed.

"Think!" he exclaimed. "I think we've got him! It's the man, of course. I knew I'd get on the track if I took the matter in hand!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

That was certainly rather cool of Coker. The hero of the Fifth was going to take all the credit of the capture to himself, if the recluse really turned out to be Rooke, and if he was captured. That was Coker of the Fifth all over.

But Wharton only smiled. He did not mind from what point of view Coker regarded the matter, so long as the affair was a success. That was the chief point.

"I'm anxious to get at the scoundrel!" said Coker, clenching his big fists. "I want to give him a really good one—right in the eye! I told Aunt Judy before I left that I was on the track, and left her awfully excited. She's a jolly cute old girl—she had an idea all along that I could handle this matter. It will make the police look rather sick when they find that a Fifth-Form chap from Greyfriars has done what they've been trying to do for a week—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker stared.

"What are you cackling at?" he demanded.
 "Well, I must say it seems to me that it's the Remove chaps, and not a Fifth-Form chap at all, who've done anything so far!" said Johnny Bull indignantly.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Coker. "Don't you be afraid—I'll let you have plenty of credit for having helped me. Let's get along to Spindrift Cottage before dark, and we'll interview Mr. Joseph Smith—and if he's Rooke, I'll rook him!"

And they started off together for Spindrift Cottage.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER. Coker's Capture!

LONELY and silent the little cottage looked, as the Greyfriars fellows came in sight of it. There were still piles of snow banked up in the garden, and all the shutters of the lower windows were closed.

The shadows were lengthening on the cliffs and the shingle, but as yet no light gleamed from the windows.

"Jolly safe place to hide," Coker remarked, looking round with a shiver. "But I should think a chap would soon get fed up with it."

"Better than Portland Prison," Nugent remarked.

"Yes; and when the hue-and-cry's over, he's in a convenient place to take a coasting vessel over to Holland," said Coker. "Jolly deep of him to sneak into an out-of-the-way place like this. I dare say he's got a bottle for company. My aunt's says that it's come out that he had taken to drink, and that was very likely one cause why he embezzled her cash, and then bolted with the rest. But he'll soon be in a place where they're all total abstainers."

And Coker chuckled gleefully.

"Doesn't look as if there's anybody there," Nugent remarked, as they drew nearer to the cottage. "He may be out!"

"We'll soon see."

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Coker set his teeth.

"I know that voice," he said, in a low tone. "I've heard the villain talking to my aunt, you know. That's Rooke."

"Sure, Coker?"

"Bet you my Sunday topper."

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"Then if you know he's the man, we're justified in collar-ing him," he said.

"What-ho!" grinned Bob Cherry. "We'll swear each other in as special constables, and uphold law and order."

"Lend me a hand with that rock!" said Coker.

Crash!

Crash!

The huge, heavy rock thundered on the door, and at the second concussion it burst open. The door flew violently back, and the juniors rushed into the little gloomy hall. There was no one to be seen—and the door of the little parlour was locked. The recluse of Spindrift Cottage had evidently locked himself in the room, as he had done before. Coker hammered on the door.

"Let us in, you scoundrel!" he roared.

"Get out of my house!" came the rasping voice in reply. "I shall have you prosecuted for burglary!"

"Can't prosecute a chap for burglary when you're in gaol!" retorted Coker. "We know who you are, Rooke, you thief!"

There was a startled gasp in the room.

"What—what! My name is Smith—Joseph Smith!"

"If your name's Joseph Smith, we'll pay for the damage," said Coker. "But if your name's Rooke, we're going to take you to the police-station, and my aunt's money along with you!"

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ONE HALFPENNY.

Coker strode up to the door, and knocked a thunderous knock. The crash of the knocker rang through the house. He tried the door, but it was fast. The damage the juniors had done on their previous visit had been repaired.

There was no reply to the knock, loud as it was.

Coker hammered away at the knocker, and the crashes echoed and re-echoed back from the cliffs. But no answer came from within the cottage.

"He's playing 'possum,'" Coker remarked. "Well, we're going in all the same. You chaps got in before by heaving a rock at the door, didn't you?"

"Well, yes," said Wharton. "But then we didn't know that that chap was the legal tenant, you know. I don't know about bursting the door in now. It's against the law, I'm afraid."

"It can't be against the law to arrest a swindling thief," said Coker.

"But we haven't any authority——"

"If he's all right, we'll pay for the damage—we're not beggars," said Coker. "If he don't want his blessed door bust in, he should open it. I'm not going to stand on ceremony when he's got all my aunt's money there, the thief. Lend me a hand with this rock."

"Let's give him a chance first to open the door," said Harry. "He knows we're here right enough."

"Just as you like."

Wharton rapped on the window-shutters with his knuckles. "Mr. Smith!" he called out.

No reply.

"We want to see you, and we're going to!" called out Wharton. "If you don't open the door, we're going to bust it in the same as we did before."

"And jolly quick," said Coker.

A voice, shaking with passionate anger, replied from behind the window-shutters.

"Go away! How dare you trespass in my garden! I will have you prosecuted if you do not go away instantly, you young scoundrels!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 307.

NEXT MONDAY—

"RUCTIONS IN THE REMOVE!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. Order Early!

"What! Who—who are you?"

"I'm Coker of Greyfriars, you villain—Miss Coker's nephew!"

"Oh!"

"Will you open this door?"

There was no reply, and Coker, quite reckless now, seized the rock again, and crashed it upon the flimsy door of the parlour. The door flew open, and Coker sprang into the room.

A man with a grey beard and moustaches, and a dark head of hair, stood facing him, as he sprang in—panting with rage and fear at the sight of the Greyfriars fellows. It was the man the boys had seen before—but he was evidently wearing his disguise now. He had undoubtedly donned it while the knocking was going on at the door.

"Here he is!" roared Coker. "We've got you, Rooke!"

The man panted spasmodically.

"You young ruffian! Leave my house instantly!"

Coker laughed mockingly.

"Rats! We've got you! Where's my aunt's cash?"

"Will you go?" the man shrieked; and he caught up a heavy chair and swung it above his head. "Another step, and I will brain you——"

"Put that chair down, you ass!" said Coker contemptuously. "You can't brain six of us. I tell you we've got you. I know who you are. You're Rooke, my aunt's solicitor—haven't I see you at her house, you rascal?"

"My name is Smith——"

"You've grown a beard jolly quick since Wednesday, Mr. Smith!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"And you were bald four days ago," remarked Nugent.

The man's eyes glittered at them. He recognised the juniors now.

He made a movement as if to rush upon them. But Coker was springing on him like a tiger. Coker might not be overburdened with brains, but he had heaps of pluck. The desperate man lashed at him with the chair, but Harry

Wharton snatched up a cushion and hurled it, and it caught the rascal full in the face. He staggered back as he struck—and Coker eluded the descending chair, and closed with him.

"Now, then!" said Coker, between his teeth.

In the grip of the powerful Fifth-Former of Greyfriars the man had little chance. He dropped the chair, and struggled desperately, but Coker hurled him to the floor, and planted a knee on his chest.

"Now give him a clean shave," said Bob Cherry, with a breathless chuckle.

Coker dragged at the beard and the hair. They came off in his grasp. The bald head and the clean-shaven face the juniors know so well were revealed.

The close-set eyes glared up with savage rage at Coker. But the fury of the captured scoundrel did not worry the Greyfriars fellows. They were sure of their man now, and his capture would justify any little irregularity in their procedure.

"Get a rope from somewhere, and tie him up," said Coker. "Mustn't run any risk of his bolting, in case he's hidden the money."

The hard face beneath him went pale.

"Let me up—let me up!"

"Rats!"

"I—I confess!" panted Rooke. "Let me up! Let me go, and I will hand back the money—every penny of it!"

"You'll hand it back and go to choky too," said Coker coolly. "Get something to tie him with, you fellows!"

Bob Cherry cheerfully tore a cushion-cover into strips, and the man's wrists were bound together, and then his ankles. Then he was allowed to rise and sit down.

Horace Coker surveyed him with great satisfaction.

"You didn't expect us to drop on you here, Rooke, did you?" he remarked. "You see, I took up the matter, as the police were no good, and I was bound to have you in the long run."

The man did not reply. He seemed overwhelmed with despair. His crime had come home to him, and he knew there was no hope.

"Now, one of you kids run off and fetch the police!" said Coker. "Get Inspector Grimes from Courtfield. He'll be glad to come when you tell him what's happened. He can search the house for the cash, too, and take this rotter to the station. Get a trap from Pegg. I'll pay the damage."

"I'll go," said Wharton. "You chaps take care that that rotter doesn't get away."

"What-ho!" said the juniors.

"I'm going to watch him," said Coker. "I won't take half an eye off the beast till he's got the handcuffs on. Hurry up!"

And Wharton departed.

It was a couple of hours later, and darkness had fallen when the Removite returned with Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield, and a constable.

The inspector came fussily in.

Probably he was not over-pleased by the fact that a set of schoolboys had succeeded in capturing the criminal for whom the police of the kingdom had been hunting in vain for the past week. But he was glad enough of the opportunity of clapping the handcuffs upon the wrists of Mr. Rooke.

"Where's the man?" he asked.

"Here he is, inspector."

"He's confessed," said Coker. "And anyway, I know him, and can swear to him. I'm the nephew of the lady he's robbed. And he's got the money hidden here somewhere."

The handcuffs clinked upon Rooke's wrists.

Then the inspector and the constable searched the cottage, and under a loose board in the floor a valise was discovered.

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

and in the valise were banknotes and legal-looking documents.

"Here's the plunder!" said Inspector Grimes quietly.

And Rooke left the house with the handcuffs upon his wrists and the constable's hand upon his arm, and the inspector followed with the valise.

The Greyfriars fellows accompanied them to Pegg, where the inspector took a trap for Courtfield with his prisoner, and Wharton & Co. returned to Greyfriars.

Coker was in high feather.

The absconder had been arrested, the stolen money was recovered, and Aunt Judy would have the greater part, at all events, of her lost fortune restored to her. It was no wonder that Horace Coker was jubilant. He slapped Potter and Greene on the back as he met them in the School House:

"Hallo!" said Potter. "You've come back? Have you chucked up playing detective?"

Coker chuckled gleefully.

"Chuckled it up! Yes, rather!" he said. "You see, I've got the man!"

Potter jumped.

"Got him?" he said faintly.

"Yes, rather!"

"Where is he?" gasped Greene.

"Safe under lock and key in Courtfield Police Station!" grinned Coker. "And the money's been found with him. Won't Aunt Judy be pleased—what? And we shall have that giddy feed after all, my infants!"

"Well, I'm jolly glad!" said Potter, with great heartiness. "I had a feeling—ahem!—that you would be successful all the time, Coker, old man!"

"Just what I was going to say," Greene remarked. "I had a sort of—of presentiment that you would pull it off, Coker!"

"Well, I've done it," said Coker. "Some kids in the Remove helped me a bit. I think we will have Wharton and his friends to that feed. They really helped me, you know. I'm off now to send a telegram to Aunt Judy."

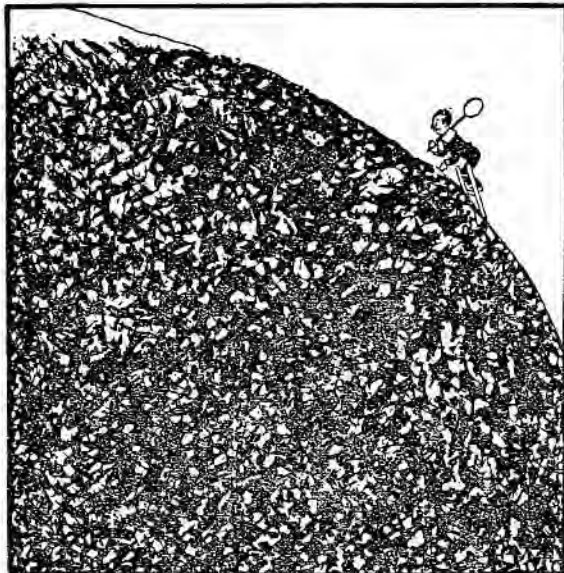
Coker's aunt, needless to say, was overjoyed by that telegram from her dear nephew informing her that the absconder was under lock and key and the money recovered. Miss Coker's opinion of her nephew's marvellous abilities was more than confirmed.

Horace Coker had taken up the matter, and the very next day the criminal was arrested. The facts spoke for themselves, as Miss Coker was never tired of saying. True, Coker loyally explained to her that some junior kids had helped him, but Miss Coker brushed that trifling circumstance aside as of no importance. Her Horace had done it, and her Horace was evidently, as she had always believed, the finest and cleverest fellow in the wide world.

But Coker, even if he was very Cokerish, as Nugent described it, was really grateful to the chums of the Remove, especially for the way they had stood up for Reggie in his absence. Coker minor told his major all about that, and one of Coker's first proceedings was to administer a terrific licking apiece to Hobson of the Shell and Temple of the Fourth.

And the "temper" from Aunt Judy came, after all, and there was a tremendous feed in Coker's study, and Harry Wharton & Co. were honoured guests. And for a time, at least, the hatchet was buried between Coker of the Fifth and the Famous Five, and all was peace and friendship and smiles, and the Removites cheered heartily when Harry Wharton stood up at that great feed to propose the health of "Good old Coker!"

THE END.



Tubbs minor of the First Form sends this little picture drawn by himself. He says it depicts a lovely dream he had last night.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR"
Every Friday.

Our Grand Serial Story!



By SIDNEY DREW, Prince of Adventure Story-tellers.

READ THIS FIRST.

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire, is surrounded in his magnificent London residence by his friends Ching-Lung, Barry O'Rooney, Gan-Waga the Eskimo, and Prout & Co.—the stalwarts of the millionaire's famous submarine, the Lord of the Deep. After a period of inaction there is a rumour afloat that Ferrers Lord is about to start upon one of his great expeditions again. Meantime, the millionaire himself is devoting all his attention to a curiously carved narwhal's tusk which he has picked up in an East-End curio-dealer's shop. The tusk proved to be hollow, and to contain some gold coins and a small wad of parchment, which bears a strange message from the sea. This tells of a mysterious floating island inhabited by strange monsters, which Ferrers Lord determines to go in search of. Thurston immediately christens the phantom island "Mysteria" in advance. All hands board the Lord of the Deep, and the adventurers at last catch sight of "Mysteria." The mysterious island—bare and ghostly-looking—appears to be floating in the sky. It is a mirage, but, as Ferrers Lord points out, there can never be a mirage without a substance. The millionaire determines to start in pursuit of the floating island at once, but a terrific volcanic eruption occurs, in the course of which a blazing fireball falls on the Lord of the Deep, passing through her from deck to keel. The millionaire runs the submarine aground in the bay of the nearest island, and sends Ching-Lung and Thurston with a party of men in the launch to cut some logs. On landing the party are confronted by a curious figure in a red tam-o'-shanter, who warns them that the island belongs to Germany. They ignore the warning, and Redcap—by name Julius Faber—returns with a party of ragged-looking ruffians, and forces them to leave the island by swimming, under cover of the fog. Subsequently, Ferrers Lord leads a night expedition on to the island, and succeeds in recapturing the launch. By dint of his unparalleled ingenuity and hard work, Hal Honour, the engineer, succeeds in repairing the Lord of the Deep sufficiently to allow her to leave her dangerous situation in the island harbour. As they are steaming along one day the bank of fog ahead suddenly parts, and there, not a league away, appears Mysteria—the weird island. A continuous booming, caused by the cracking of shrivelled weeds, comes from the floating island, which also gives forth a disagreeable odour. Before sunrise the next morning, a move is made to explore Mysteria. The landing-party find the island to be an evil-smelling swamp, with little sign of life. They catch a glimpse of a terrifying monster which inhabits a black lake, and then Barry creates a diversion by falling down a deep tunnel and injuring his head. During the course of their explorations, the party walk into a bed of huge anemones. Immediately they are soaked from head to foot by an inky deluge from the plants. Shortly after this adventure, Jimson the parrot is found croaking over a huge bush. When Prout advances to catch his pet, he stumbles over the body of a man whom they have never seen before. The castaway is found to be alive, and is taken aboard the submarine. Thick overhanging branches interfere with progress on the island, so Ching-Lung, aided by Prout and Maddock, set to work to cut a way through.

(Now go on with the story.)

Ching-Lung's Anger—Back to the Submarine.

"Bravo, Ching! You've found it!" shouted Thurston. "Don't I always find it? Great pippins and other fruit of the apple tribe, it's as easy as going upstairs."

Here the cliff was broken and quite accessible to a careful climber. A natural path zig-zagged up its face. At once Ferrers Lord discarded his spiked pole, and began the ascent, motioning them to wait for him. He mounted higher and higher, and vanished.

"Come, lads!"

His ringing voice sounded clear and distinct, although he was invisible.

"You and Tommy had better toss up who goes last, Hal," laughed the prince. "You're both such whoppers, that if either of you slipped it would be like a young avalanche sweeping down on us. I'll start off, anyhow, and if I come a purler you can act as a buffer—two buffers, in fact, for you're both buffers. Here, Barry, you Irish idiot, shove it the other way!"

"Oi beg your honour's humble puddin'," said Barry, shouldering the rifle, whose muzzle had almost touched the prince's spine. "Oi was a bit absint-minded at the toime, thinking of roast pork and apple-saes. Oi apologise, sir."

"I should think so. Let me catch you playing a careless trick like that again, and I'll knock your left ear alongside of your right one," said Ching-Lung angrily. "I'm ashamed of you, man. Are you ill? I've seen a chap killed by that foolery."

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"RUCTIONS IN THE REMOVE!"

Barry hung his head, and the others—even Thurston—looked uneasy. It was a mad and reckless thing to carry a rifle in such a position, but it was Ching-Lung's tone that amazed them. None of them had seen him angry before, although his anger was quite justified, for such carelessness might have resulted in a dreadful tragedy.

"Av yez plaze, sir," said Barry, "Oi shifted the gun this very second almost unconsciously. The thruth is, your honour, that since Oi got howld of that plant my shoulders is so tender that Oi can hardly bear the weight of my shirr, much less the gun, and Oi shifted it onto my arm almost without knowing, sir."

Ching-Lung extended his hand.

"All right, Barry. We'll pretend that nothing has been said. I'm sorry I spoke now, but a lad who was very dear to me was shot dead that way by a clumsy fool when we were shooting partridges. It's all over now. Don't worry about it."

He began to climb nimbly.

"Let me carry your gun, Barry," said Prout kindly. "By hokey, I seed you winnin' once or twice, and wondered what was the matter. I've had a twinge or two myself, and I can feel for you."

"Thank yez, Tom," said the Irishman, "Oi can manage. Oi deserved phwat Oi got and more. And me used to carry a rifle for twinty year! Bedad, ut's loke pins being stuck into yez! But his Ifighness was roight, and Oi respect the

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. Order Early!

brave lad the more for tellin' me his moind. Av it had been the other way about Oi'd have towld him quick!"

"And he'd have took it like you've took it, souse me!" said Maddock.

And there the first and last words of real anger that had ever passed between Ching-Lung and any member of the crew of the Lord of the Deep began and ended. The poles they had brought with them to help them over marshy ground were discarded, for they were only an impediment. They climbed with caution, all except Barry, for Barry had lived for many years among the Tibetan mountains, and was as agile as a goat.

Ferrers Lord was gazing over the roof of the submarine forest when Ching-Lung reached his side. Around them on every hand the sea sparkled in the sunlight, unspickled by funnel or sail. The Lord of the Deep was lying off the shore, and through his glasses the millionaire could distinctly see the figures on her deck.

"This is like living again, old chap," said Ching-Lung, as he greedily breathed the fresh air. "I feel like a convict let out of gaol."

"It certainly smells a little sweeter up here," answered Ferrers Lord. "I wonder if we can attract their attention."

"My handkerchief is as black as jet, or I might manage it," said the prince. "There's no harm in trying. Ah, just what I want."

He picked up a strip of weed that was as dry and hard as ivory, and tied his stained handkerchief to it by two of the corners. At first there was no response, and then a brilliant light flashed and twinkled from the deck of the vessel—a heliograph.

"Yes, we can see you," said the millionaire, translating the flashes. "Ask them about the man."

Ching-Lung quickly signalled.

"How is castaway?"

"Still unconscious. Heart stronger. Hopeful," winked back the heliograph.

"Good luck, bedad! Squirt some beer up here, for we're drier than baked bones," wagged the improvised flag. "It's the only thing to save Barry's life. And don't eat all the pickled onions. So long!"

"Howld one minuto, sor, av yez plaze, and lind ut to me,"

said Barry O'Rooney. "Oi think Oi'm fairly safe at this distance in tellin' Joe that he owns the largest fute and the smallest brain of any man this soide of the Equator."

"What-oo, Chingy! How my Chingy? Hopes yo' butterful 'nough, ole chap!" twinkled the helio; and everybody laughed.

The slope to the summit of the ridge was a gentle one. The millionaire's skilled reasonings and deductions again proved to be correct. They were walking over a mixture of lime and vegetable ivory as hard as concrete, and of an unknown thickness.

"We must drill through it," said the engineer.

"And you commence?"

"At dusk."

"Then we may as well go back," said Ferrers Lord, smiling. "It will be cooler working at night, and I hardly think any of the denizens of Mysteria will visit you up here. Come, lads—homeward-ho!"

Ching-Lung left his flag to mark the spot. They were tired enough before they set foot on the submarine, but it was the oppressive heat more than the actual fatigue that had wearied them. Their appearance made Gan-Waga lie down and roll about in a fit of uncontrollable merriment. At the sight of Joe, Rupert gave a start of apprehension.

"Haven't you washed yourself yet?" he asked in alarm.

"I have, and—scrubbed myself, sir," answered Joe, "but I can't shift it. I got a bit off, but only a bit. It sticks like wax, sir."

"Ho-oo-oo-oo-oh! It never come offs no more!" crowed the Eskimo. "Oh, butterfuls! Ho-oo-oo-oo-oh! Yo' be black fo' altogedders! Oh, good 'nough, grands! Yo' sticks a rings in yo' noses and be cannibals chiefs. Oh, uglinesses! Ha-aa-aa-ah! Chingy, yo' de Black Princes now. Gets de soap and de scrubbing-brushes and washea yo'selfs, yo' dirty boys! He-ee-ee-ee-oh! Ho-oo-oo-oh!"

The prospect of being a negro for the rest of his natural life did not in any way distress his Highness of Kwai-hal.

"We can earn an honest living on the beach at Blackpool or Brighton with a concertina and bones," he remarked. "And think of the money we'll save in burnt cork. I'm going to have a desperate try to shift some of it."

"Shall I peel ya, Chingy?" suggested the Eskimo, producing a murderous knife.

"Not much; I'm no orange, kid!" said Ching-Lung. "I suppose there'll be loud applause when you hear I'm going to wash."

"Ray-ray-roo!" shouted Gan-Waga. "Puts up de flags to snelebraks de events, Tommy."

The prince put in plenty of hand and elbow work with hot water, soap, flannels, and sponges; but he made little impression on the dye, which clung tenaciously to his yellow skin. He might have saved himself the trouble for presently a bottle containing a crimson liquid was brought to his cabin by Joe.

"From the chief, sir," said Joe, saluting. "Six drops to a pint of clean cold water is the dose, sir."

"What! To drink, you flabtoed Chonkabooz?"

"No, sir; to wash in!" grinned Joe. "And please, may I 'ave the medicine arterwards?"

The mixture worked magically. With the help of Gan-Waga Ching-Lung was his normal colour again in a quarter of an hour.

"Dye removed while you wait by road, rail, or motor-car," he said. "Sure it's all out of my ears?"

"Yo' looks in yo' ears and see ifs yo' nots believes me, Chingy," said Gan. "Yo' a cleans boy once morer. Dat primes stuffs, hunk. I wonder ifs him wash de ginger-red-nesses out of ole Tom Prout's whiskers, Chingy?"

It mattered nothing to Hal Honour whether he was black, white, green, or purple, when there was work to do. While the others were endeavouring to rid themselves of their newly-acquired complexion, the engineer was giving orders and instructions. Not without difficulty, a light but wonderfully powerful petrol motor was landed to work the drill. Naphtha-lamps were also sent ashore, and a portable force followed. And just as the lower rim of the big red sun rested on the watery horizon a light twinkled from the hill-top.

They had begun to drill, as the engineer had promised, exactly at dusk.

When the night mists began to gather over Mysteria the naphtha-lamps glared dimly from the hill. In the saloon Ferrers Lord seemed to take a deep interest in the weather-glass. The barometer was beginning to jump about erratically.

"I hardly like the way the glass is behaving, Thurston." "Why not?" said Rupert. "I'd welcome a blow, for it would do away with this abominable stench."

"That is true, but a heavy gale would be very awkward. If one broke suddenly it would not be easy to get our men



The MIDNIGHT SNOW FIGHT

A rousing story of school life—an exciting complete yarn of a tremendous battle in the snow between rival schools—a tale in a thousand—appears in this week's DREADNOUGHT (out on Thursday), which also contains:

- The Xmas Mutiny**
a thrilling complete story of Christ-mas at sea. Grand Naval Drama!
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and striking Christmas articles. Exceptional value for 1d. is offered by this Christmas Number of the

Dreadnought

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"THE GEN" LIBRARY,
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Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

off. You know how quickly a surf gets up. A storm might break the island in halves.

"And the sooner the better. I loath the floating mass of corruption," said Thurston straightforwardly. "I don't think I shall ever get the stench of it out of my nostrils. It's in everything I eat, everything I drink, everything I wear. Of course, a natural curiosity makes me want to see what's in that beastly cavern; but I shall be devoutly thankful when it's over."

"That is where we differ," said the millionaire, shrugging his shoulders. "I shall be rather sorry."

"Well, there's no accounting for tastes, old chap. Play me a game of billiards to kill time?"

They found Gan-Waga and Ching-Lung engaged in a sort of pantomimic game. For in order to give the Eskimo a ghost of a chance, Ching-Lung had to stand on one leg, holding the cue in his left hand, and make each stroke with the butt-end of the cue. Ching and his comrade from the icy North gracefully resigned in favour of Ferrers Lord and Thurston.

"Old Eskimoses is going to challenge Inman and Stevenson next, Ru," said Ching-Lung. "He made a magnificent break of two that would have made you cheer. He's a born player. My ball was right over the hole, and he potted it with a most glorious and scientific stroke. If he'd coughed it would have fallen in, but he did it. Mar-vee-lous!"

"The balls, please, when you've done talking," said Thurston.

"Beg your humble pardon," grinned Ching-Lung. "I'm getting quite absent-minded! I put 'em in your hip-pocket."

And there Rupert found them. To watch others playing

EVERY MONDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

billiards was not amusing enough for Gan-Waga and Ching-Lung. It says much for the absolute quiet of the sea that a game was possible at all without submerging the vessel. "Fly with me, fly with me! Oh, fly-fly-hi-i with me!" chanted the prince.

"And be my brides, and be-bee-bee my brides!" roared Gan-Waga.

"In sunny lands, in sunny lands, sunny lands—"

"Beyonds the see-ee-ee-ee-ee!" shrieked the tuneful Eskimo.

Ching-Lung shook hands with Gan-Waga.

"I reckon we did that finely, Wagtail," he said. "Can we sing—eh what? Ain't we warblers warbling on the leafy bough?"

"Sing some morer, my Chingey," gurgled the delighted Gan, "and I helpses yo' wid de coalhouse. I likes warblings."

"Certainly," said Ching-Lung. "Wait till I get the proper note."

"Soon we'll be in London town—"

"Sing, my lads, yo-ho-dho!" howled the Eskimo.

"See the king in his golden crown," sang Ching-Lung, one eye turned warily over his shoulder.

"Sing, my lads, yo-ho-ow-oh! Aah! Helps! What's de matter? Oh, ow! Ouch-ah! Wow!"

(Another splendid, long instalment of this grand Serial next Monday. Please order early.)

GRAND NEW FEATURE. No. 10.

OUR WINTER EVENING PROBLEM CORNER.

Bolsover, the bully of Greyfriars, has a mighty contempt for Rugby football, and when he found a rugger ball belonging to Tom Brown in the Close he resolved to kick it "off the earth!" He swung his foot to kick the ball, and so lustily did he boot it that the ball burst in six pieces. Tom Brown witnessed the performance, and was righteously indignant; but he collected the six pieces and endeavoured to put them together again. With great patience he accomplished the task. Do my reader-chums think they can do as well? If you would like to try, carefully cut out the six pieces and see if you can put them together so that they will form the football restored to its original shape. Next week I will show how it can be done.

No. 11 PROBLEM NEXT MONDAY.



THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 307.

NEXT MONDAY—

"RUCTIONS IN THE REMOVE!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. Order Early!



My Readers' Page

WHOM TO WRITE TO:
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 AND
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 EVERY FRIDAY.

The Editor is always pleased to hear from his Chums, at home or abroad.

FOR NEXT MONDAY:**"RUCTIONS IN THE REMOVE!"**

By FRANK RICHARDS.

In next week's grand, complete school tale, entitled as above, Herr Gans, the stout German-master of Greyfriars, finds his pupils of the Remove Form—never very tractable—more unruly than ever. An unfortunate incident, which causes the Removites much amusement, completely upsets Herr Gans's usual good temper, and he handles Lord Mauleverer rather roughly. This, in conjunction with the schoolboy earl's carelessness in losing a £50 banknote, creates a regrettable situation, and Herr Gans is very unpopular for a time. However, the matter is satisfactorily cleared up in the nick of time, and in the end Herr Gans has reason to be thankful for the

"RUCTIONS IN THE REMOVE!"**ANTICIPATION!**

From the contents of my bulging letter-bag I gather that my readers are in a great state of anticipation in regard to the

NEW HALFPENNY COMPANION PAPER

which has been gradually evolved from the suggestions and ideas of my readers themselves, and which will make its bow to the public early in the New Year. I am flattered to find this strong feeling of anticipation, for it shows me clearly that my chums are looking to me with every confidence, born, I think, of the feeling that I have never failed them yet, to give them

SOMETHING REALLY GOOD!

At the same time, my reader-chums' great expectations spur me on to yet greater efforts to obtain for them the most powerful, humorous, and interesting stories by the best authors, and the funniest and cleverest pictures, presented in the brightest and most attractive form.

In our new companion paper I am going to pay very special attention to this latter point. For real brightness, both in the matter of appearance and in the nature of its contents, our latest venture will easily surpass any halfpenny paper at present on the market. So you may safely go on anticipating, my chums, while for my part I will go on doing my level best to ensure that our new companion paper shall come up to the standard of your anticipations—or even beyond—in every single particular.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

E. Neal (Leicester).—Any fancy goods merchant could get you a stamp album. The prices would vary according to size and quality.

F. L. Gunther (Lambeth).—The best thing you can do is to advertise for your chum by name, in some paper which you know he is in the habit of reading.

Navy (Little Holton).—Write to the Admiralty, Whitehall, London, for a booklet on "How to Join the Navy."

H. A. B.—Shorthand can be self-taught. Practice every day is essential. Start with Pitman's Instructor. Your newsagent will get you a copy, price 3s.

V. Hughes (Rugby).—Thanks for letter and verses. Why not send your back Nos. to the local hospital, or distribute them among your friends?

K. Knight, junior (London).—"Impot" is short for "imposition." "Impot" paper is the special lined paper used for writing out impositions.

S. E. Ashley.—Book on electric bell batteries, published by Messrs. Cassell, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, E.C., at 1s. 2d., post free, called "Electric Bells and How to Make and Fit Them," is the best I can recommend you.

A Constant Reader.—The late Colonel Cody was not the famous scout and showman known as "Buffalo Bill."

A. Jefferson (Coventry).—Stamps can be obtained from Messrs. Stanley Gibbons, 391, Strand, London, W.C.

W. H. Bulling (Isleworth).—"Rara Avis" means rare bird.

A. Evans (Upper Holloway).—The verses you sent me are very fair considering the youthfulness of the poet, but are naturally enough, not up to the standard required for publication.

The Two Todds (Nottingham).—Many thanks for your suggestion.

AMATEUR THEATRICALS.—No. 2.

By an Amateur Entertainer.

The next thing will be to consider the matter of choosing your play. It is a mistake for novices to start with too complicated or too long a play, such as some of our greatest masterpieces. The setting and costumes will be altogether beyond the reach of the average club. Ordinary drawing-room plays are by far the best to take as a beginning. You can't get on the high rungs of the ladder without stepping on the first few. McGlennou's, of 10, Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, E.C., publish a series of penny handbooks of humorous drawing-room plays, which should suit admirably. You will find them to be for varying numbers of girls and boys, and there are many from which to choose. They are quite worth while performing, too, and do not require the use of elaborate costumes.

If you are taking on the post of stage-manager, you will want great judgment in allotting parts. Use discretion, but don't give the wrong parts to the wrong persons. A short, thin youth is not exactly suitable for the berth of the tall and handsome hero, nor is a placid, unoffending boy, who looks as though he wouldn't hurt a fly, the right one for the villain of the piece.

Another thing, don't forget to take into consideration the retentive abilities of each member. Some are able to store up paragraph after paragraph, whilst others fail miserably with a few lines. The girls or boys with the best memory should have the longest parts, if possible, and the others shorter accordingly.

Take several copies of the play, enough to be able to supply each member with one, not of his own part only, but of the whole thing, so that he can see his cues, and at the same time understand the tone in which his pieces must be rendered.

Before the parts are learnt you can have a preliminary rehearsal, when each member can read their parts in proper order from the copy. That will give each an insight into the idea of the play, and help them greatly in memorising the pieces.

I should advise one or two of these rehearsals, then, when every part is thoroughly mastered, discard the copies.

I cannot emphasise too greatly the necessity of having every part learnt thoroughly; but, in case of hitches, you will want a prompter. If your company is perfect, the prompter's work should merely consist in standing in the wings, kicking his heels during the process of the play.

That brings me to another hint. For prompter a girl is usually more suitable than a boy, for the female voice can be heard on the stage, but will not "carry" over the footlights.

Things are now ready for the real dress rehearsal, for which parts and actions should all be at the height of perfection.

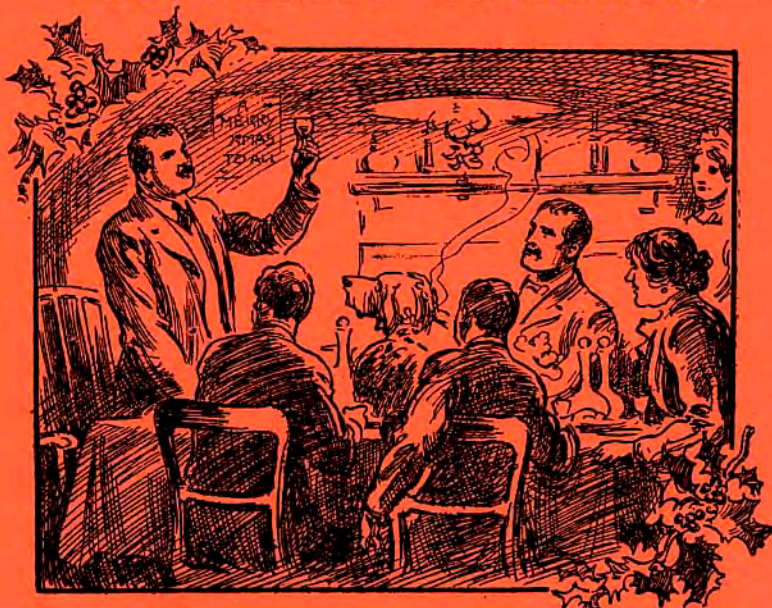
(Some further hints on
 Amateur Acting and Stage-
 Management next week.)



You Will Enjoy Reading This Grand Story.

Sexton Blake's Resolve

A Splendid, Long, Complete Story dealing with an
Amazing Christmas Adventure which befel
THE FAMOUS DETECTIVE.



Mr. Hemming rose solemnly to his feet, and beamed round the dinner table. "Only got few words to say!" he jerked. "Want to tell family I'm lucky to know a gentleman like Sexton Blake!" "No speeches, old friend," said Sexton Blake.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Great Lemur Street Club—Where is Mr. Hemming?—
Sexton Blake Pays.

DOWN in Great Lemur Street there was an unusual number of people gathered, men and women of the working classes, some of them none too well clad, shivering in the cold night air. It was still a matter of three weeks to Christmas, but snow had already fallen, covering up something of the grime of the dingy little street, and there was every promise of a hard winter.

That meant a lot to people of the class who lived in the ugly, flat-fronted houses that bordered both sides of the street. It meant extra firing, better food—if the men were fortunate enough to be in work. Only too often, when the workers found themselves out of employment, it meant shivering before an empty grate—just meals of dry bread.

These people in Great Lemur Street—the women with the shawls wrapped tightly about them, the men with their hands shoved deep down into their pockets—were all gathered round one building larger than the others in the street, and which also had the distinction of standing by itself on a small plot of railled-in ground.

It was a building of wood and galvanised iron, and the lamp over the door showed it to be "St. John's School-rooms." A few shrubs had been planted in front of the building, but it was obvious that they had a struggle to hold up their heads in the soot-laden atmosphere, and they looked bedraggled and dejected—eminently suited to the street. A light covering of snow mercifully hid them just now, making them almost pretty in the light of the lamp that burned over the door, the flame flickering as the sharp wind found its way in through a cracked pane.

"Ain't Mr. 'Emming late in comin' fer the money ter-night?" ventured a thinly-clad young woman, with a pinched face.

"You wants such a lot, you does!" an older woman snapped. "Jest you remember that Mr. 'Emming runs this slate club fer nothin'. Thank goodness there's on'y three more weeks to pay in, fer it's been gettin' 'arder and 'arder to scrape up the money each week—'ad ter sell somethin' ter-day!"

"Same 'ere!"

It was plain that other members of the crowd were beginning to think that Mr. Hemming, the honorary secretary of the St. John's Slate Club, was late, too, for they crowded nearer to the little building, and stood staring at it as if they had never seen it before. The snow was falling heavily now, and, altogether, the night was cold and bleak to any not blessed with good warm clothes.

"Ain't done a bunk, I s'pose?" a man growled suggestively; and his neighbour swung round on him fiercely, his hands clenched.

"You stop that, Bill!" he ordered fiercely. "Mr. Hemming ain't like a man what runs away!"

"Others 'ave," the first speaker persisted.

"Well, Hemming wouldn't," the other man retorted. "He's been a good friend ter me, and I'll make a jolly good job at wipin' the floor with yer if yer says any more against 'im!"

"'Ere, 'ere!" three men standing near by chorussed.

Nearly half an hour went by, and even the men who had championed the absent Mr. Hemming began to growl suspiciously.

"Why doesn't someone fetch the parson?" a man suggested. "He could take the money. Mr. Hemming's ill, like as not."

This suggestion was followed, and a couple of men hurried away to the house of the parson, which was situated in the next street—a thoroughfare which might have been the twin of the one in which the crowd stood. In less than five minutes the men returned, with the

parson between them. He was a little man, with a thin face that seemed to suggest that he, as well as his flock, sometimes knew the meaning of the pinch of hunger. He kept his hands up his sleeves, for he had no gloves, and a woollen scarf was bound round his throat, the ends, flapping behind him, robbing him of any dignity that he naturally possessed.

"Here we are, my friends!" he said cheerfully, drawing a large key from his pocket. "Mr. Hemming must be ill, or he would be here to-night. I can take the money; that is, if"—he laughed, as if making a huge joke—"you can trust me as well!"

The door of the school-room was opened, the Rev. Henry Smeeth turned on the lights, and the men and women came crowding in from the street. There was a good deal of pushing and hurrying to get in, for even the interior of the bare building afforded some shelter.

The place was bare—painfully bare—but scrupulously clean. There were just so many rows of forms, so many desks, and a table and chair at which the teacher sat. It was to the latter that Mr. Smeeth advanced.

"Now we can get to work," he said, in his thin voice, rubbing his red hands briskly together. "Mr. Hemming has put the books out ready, so he must have been here at some time to-day."

"Ain't here now, sir!" a labourer growled discontentedly.

Mr. Smeeth looked up sharply from arranging the books, at the same time picking up an envelope that he had found beneath them.

"I am surprised at you, Roberts!" he said sternly. "If I were a younger man, I—"

"But he ain't here, sir," the labourer persisted doggedly; "an' one does 'ear so much about secretaries bolting with funds that—"

Mr. Smeeth stepped from behind the table, the envelope he had picked up in his fingers, and his face was dead-white with anger.

(Continued on page IV. of Cover.)

"Go," he cried—"go, before I forget my cloth! Mr. Hemming has been a good friend to all of you for years, working for you and with you." The clergyman controlled himself by an effort, and tore open the envelope with shaking fingers. "I have no doubt that this letter explains Mr. Hemming's absence."

Mr. Smeeth drew a sheet of paper from the envelope, smoothed it out, and held it close to his short-sighted eyes. Then a great cry of horror broke from him, and the paper fluttered from his fingers and down on the floor. He staggered to the table, dropped into the chair, and buried his face in his hands.

For fully a minute there was a dead silence in the room, then the labourer who had roused the clergyman's anger stepped forward and picked up the letter. He read it, too, but his face did not go white; it went red—a fierce, angry red—and his jaw set in a hard line.

"Listen ter this!" he cried hoarsely, and read:

"I have gone away. Don't ask why; only know that I could not help myself. May you all forgive me, for I have taken the whole of your money with me."

The man crumpled the letter in his great fingers, and dashed it to the floor. The veins stood out in great knots on his temples and neck, and, though his lips parted, he could not speak at once. When he did so his voice was husky with passion.

"Forgive him," he cried—"forgive the man what's robbed us of the money what was to 'ave given us a little 'appiness at Christmas! 'E don't ask much, mates, do 'e? Why, if I 'ad 'im 'ere—"

The clergyman rose sharply from the table, stepped quickly forward, and laid a restraining hand on the man's arm.

"Forgive," he said softly.

The man angrily shook himself free. He had reason enough to be roused, for, as he said, he had been robbed of the money that he had saved so hardly.

"I'm not going ter lie ter you, sir," he said hoarsely. "I don't forgive him, and—"

"What's all the trouble?" a quiet voice asked; and the angry men and women turned, to find that a quietly-dressed man, accompanied by a bright-faced lad, had entered the room unobserved.

The man's face, noticeable for the firm jaw and steel-grey eyes, was pale, but it was not with the pallor of ill-health.

"What's all the trouble?" the new-comer asked again. "I saw that there was something wrong as I was passing. Is there any way in which I can help?"

By an effort the clergyman pulled himself together, and a certain dignity, from which his starved face and frayed clothes could take away nothing, came to him.

"This is a purely private affair, sir," he answered. "May I ask who you are?"

"Sexton Blake," the new-comer answered quietly; "you may have heard of me."

The man Roberts moved nearer to the great detective, and stood staring into his face.

"I reckon there is somethin' you can do, sir," he said fiercely—"you can 'unt down tho skunk what's bolted with our money. I've 'eard it said as you weren't above 'elpin' a poor cove without bein' paid for it, and why shouldn't you—"

Sexton Blake quietly raised a hand, and the action was so commanding that the angry man stopped speaking.

"Yes, I will find this man for you," Sexton Blake said quietly. "I was horrified last year at the number of cases of this kind, and decided that this year I would take up some of them. Luck has brought me past here to-night, and I am glad of it."

"And do you think you'll get our money back in time for Christmas, sir?" a woman asked tearfully.

Sexton Blake smiled, and drew a cheque-book from his pocket.

"I will make that all right," he said calmly. "I will make up the money, and chance being able to recover it."

"But you may never do so, sir," Mr. Smeeth said shakily, but with an eager light in his eyes. "It's a large sum—quite a large sum."

"I suppose a thousand will cover it?" Sexton Blake queried, taking the top from his fountain-pen.

"A thousand?" Mr. Smeeth managed to work up a laugh, then turned to the books, and flicked the pages over with eager fingers. "Fifty-three pounds eighteen shillings and fourpence," he read out, at last.

Sexton Blake calmly wrote out a cheque, and handed it to Mr. Smeeth. But the clergyman fingered it doubtfully, as if wondering whether or not he ought to accept it.

"I don't like—" he began. But Sexton Blake interrupted him sharply.

"Why should I not do a little good with my money?" he demanded. "Besides, the taking of this money does not rest with you, but with these men and women here."

Sexton Blake swung round upon the crowd, and there was a curiously eager light in his eyes.

"May I help you?" he cried.

There was no articulate answer, yet there was no mistaking what it was.

"Good!" Tinker cried. "Come on, let's give three cheers for the best detective and the jolliest master who ever lived!"

Did they cheer? The little school-room in Great Lemur Street lost the dust from its rafters that night.

Sexton Blake took the little slip of paper from Mr. Smeeth and glanced at it. On it was the address of Mr. Hemming, the missing secretary of the slate-club. The crowd had left the room now, well satisfied with themselves, and only the clergyman, the detective, and Tinker remained there.

"I am sure there is some mistake, Mr. Blake," the clergyman said, in a low voice. "Make sure that he is guilty before arresting him."

Sexton Blake stowed the slip of paper carefully away in his pocket, and his face was set and hard.

"I shall make sure, sir," he answered; "but if I find this Hemming guilty, without extenuating circumstances, I shall not spare him. It is the greatest of crimes to rob the poor. Good-night!"

"Good-night, Mr. Blake!"

The snow was still whirling down, hiding the griminess of Great Lemur Street, as Sexton Blake and Tinker, the collars of their overcoats turned up to their ears, stepped briskly down the street. The Rev. Smeeth stood at the door of the chapel, the snow beating into his face, and looked after them with troubled eyes.

"Hemming!" he muttered brokenly. "Who would have thought it of Hemming?"

(True to his vow to devote his Christmas leisure to bringing to justice the cheats who prey upon working-men and women at this time of the year especially, Sexton Blake quickly gets on the track of Hemming, the missing secretary of the Great Lemur Street Club. How he runs him to earth, and the unexpected result of Hemming's appeal, is related, together with the unravelling of still another slate-club mystery in the continuation of "Sexton Blake's Resolve," the grand tale of the great detective's Christmas which appears in the current issue of our companion paper, "THE PENNY POPULAR." Now on sale everywhere. Price One Penny.)

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