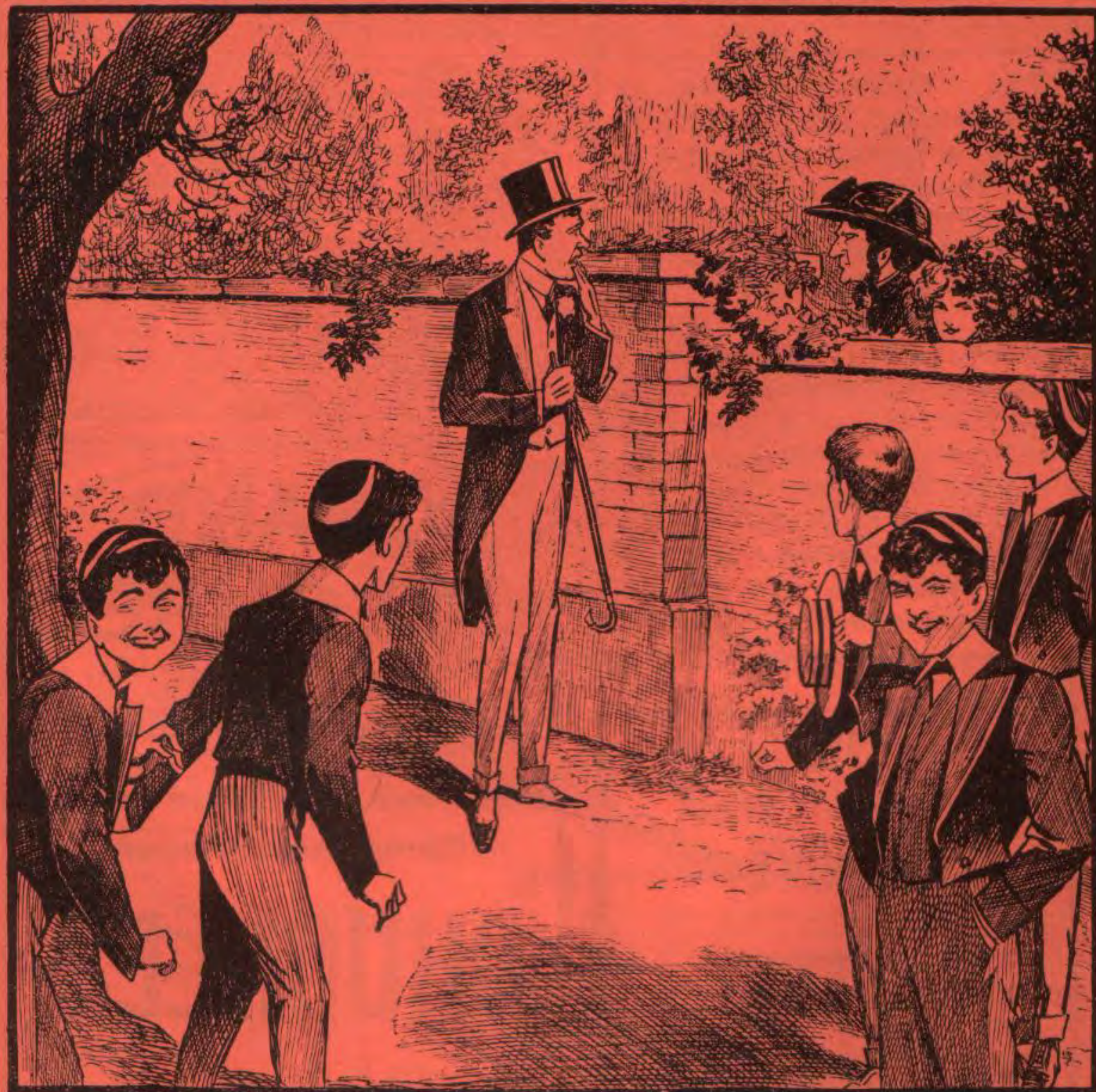


Great War Number. (See inside.)



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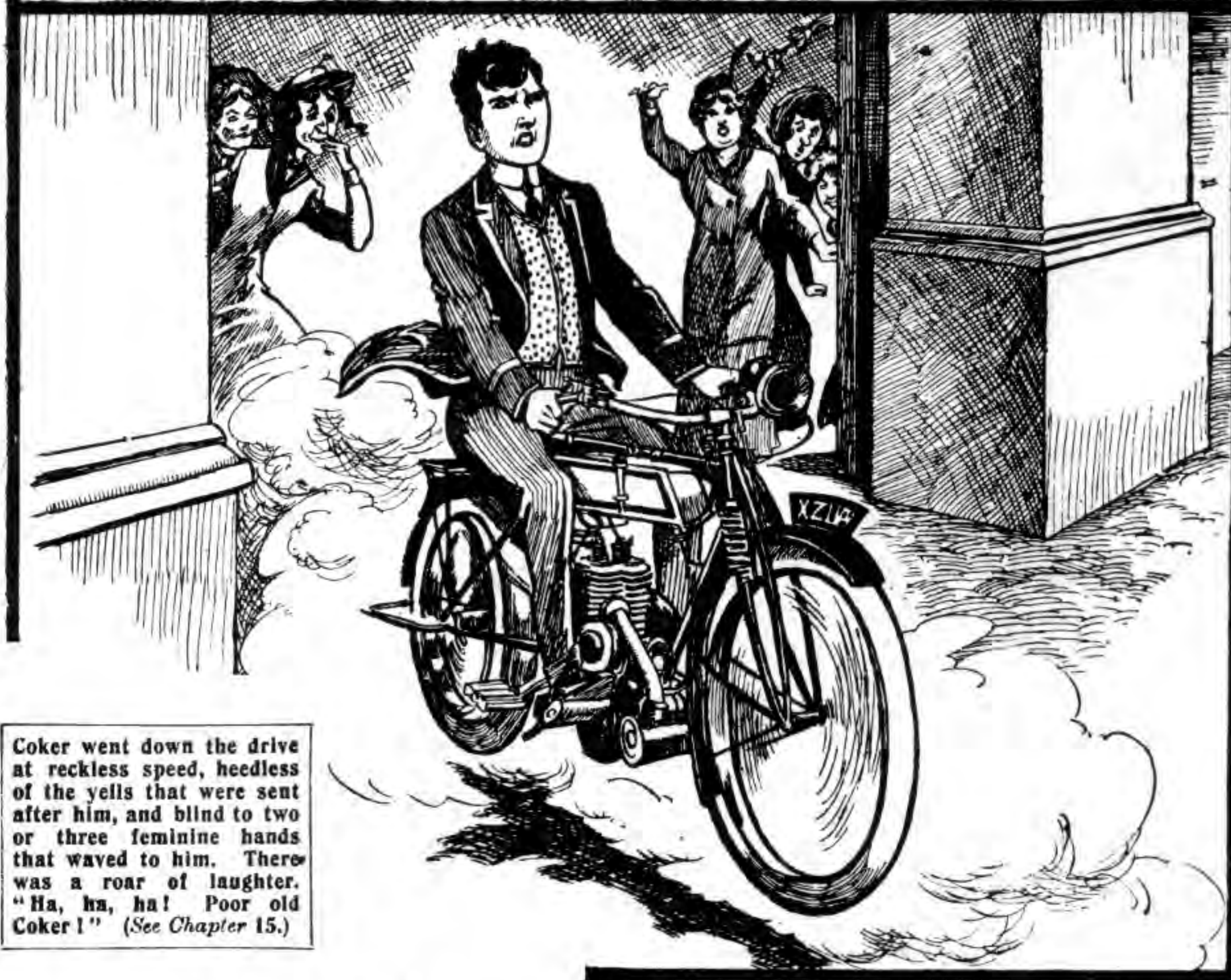
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COKER'S CONQUESTS

A Grand, Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.
By FRANK RICHARDS.



Coker went down the drive at reckless speed, heedless of the yells that were sent after him, and blind to two or three feminine hands that waved to him. There was a roar of laughter. "Ha, ha, ha! Poor old Coker!" (See Chapter 15.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Coker Astonishes the Natives.

"COKER!"
"Oh, crumbs!"
Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry of the Remove uttered those ejaculations simultaneously, as they looked into Coker's study in the Fifth Form passage at Greyfriars.

They were surprised.

Horace Coker of the Fifth Form was standing before a glass trying on neckties. On the study table five or six neckties of various hues—most of them gorgeous—were laid out.

Coker was so engrossed in his unusual task that he did not see the juniors at the door; he did not even hear their ejacu-

lations. With wrinkled brow and intent eyes Coker was tying a necktie that was positively dazzling in its hues, rivaling the celebrated coat of Joseph in its many colours.

There were several unusually high collars on the table. Coker's Sunday topper was there, too, brushed with unaccustomed care till it shone like a mirror. Coker's clothes, too, were unusually "natty." His trousers had evidently been pressed; their crease was perfect. His boots were almost aggressively shiny, and there was not a speck of dust upon them.

The chums of the Remove could only stare.

Coker of the Fifth, as a rule, was anything but a dandy. He rather prided himself upon caring little about clothes. His big boots were generally far from shiny; his trousers, as a

rule, bagged at the knees, and his study-mate, Potter, averred that his necktie always looked as if he had been trying to hang himself. Coker was, in fact, a little slovenly in his person—at all events, his best friend would never have called him a "nut."

And now—

"Well, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "What's in the wind? Has Coker joined the Noble Society of Nuts? Is he off his rocker—what?"

"Coker, old man!" murmured Harry Wharton.

But Coker did not look round. His eyes were fixed upon his reflection in the glass. He was cocking his head first on one side, and then on the other, to take in the full effect of that necktie. Then he shook his head slowly.

"No; the purple one looks better!" murmured Coker.

And he turned round to the table to take the purple one. Then his eyes fell upon the astonished juniors in the doorway.

"Hallo!" said Coker. "What do you fags want?"

At another time the chums of the Remove would have resented that term. The Remove—the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars—did not fag, but Coker, high and mighty Coker always called them fags. For Coker was a very great and important personage—according to Horace Coker. He barely condescended to notice the existence of juniors at all, excepting for the purpose of putting them in their place. That was Coker's principal mission in life—putting juniors in their place. Coker had a very high-handed way of dealing with juniors which frequently led to trouble in which the great Coker did not always get the best of it.

But just now the Removites had come to ask a favour of Coker, so they judiciously ignored the opprobrious term.

"We want you to umpire for us this afternoon, Coker," said Wharton.

Coker shook his head.

"Sorry!" he said. "No time this afternoon. Got an engagement."

"Something very special on?" asked Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"Well, yes—rather special. How do you think this necktie looks, kid?" asked Coker, trying on the purple one.

Bob Cherry cocked his eye at it.

"Gorgeous!" he said. "Knocks spots off the best sunset I've ever seen. Beats the Futurist pictures hollow."

"What's the little game, Coker?" asked Wharton. "Are you starting as a nut?"

Coker coloured a little.

"Fellow wants to look decent sometimes," he remarked.

"The question is, whether purple goes with the colour of my eyes? A necktie should harmonise with the colour of the eyes."

Wharton and Bob Cherry simply gasped. Coker, who had never been known to care a brass farthing what he wore, was worrying about the colour of his necktie harmonising with the colour of his eyes. It was too much!

"Are you off your rocker, Coker?" gasped Bob.

"Perhaps, on the whole, the pink one with blue spots—that's the best," said Coker musingly. "It's striking without being gaudy—"

"Funny without being vulgar," suggested Bob.

Coker frowned.

"You fags cut off!" he said, with a wave of the hand.

"I can't umpire for you to-day. Buzz off!"

"Can't we stay here and see the show?" asked Bob innocently. "This is as good as anything I've seen on the cinema."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker made a stride towards the grinning juniors. But he stopped short. A tussle with the fags would have rumpled his immaculate attire. It was the first time that such a consideration had had any weight with Coker of the Fifth. But it appeared to have very great weight with him now.

"Cut off!" he exclaimed. "I can't lick you now. Clear out!"

The juniors chuckled, and stood their ground. If Coker,

for the first time in his life, was afraid of rumpling his clothes, they were quite safe in remaining there and pulling the Fifth-Former's leg. And they were so astounded by this new and extraordinary development in Coker that they wanted to know the reason. Coker did not look as if he had gone "off his rocker," as Bob elegantly expressed it; but if he was perfectly sane, it was very mysterious indeed.

"Are you going?" roared Coker.

"No," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "We're waiting to be chucked out."

"You—you cheeky young rotter! You know I can't handle you now!" growled Coker.

"Why not?" grinned Wharton.

"I'm not going to spoil my clothes kicking you fags about!"

"He's had his trousers pressed!" said Bob. "It isn't a dream!" Bob rubbed his eyes, as if to make sure that he was awake. "No, it isn't a dream! He's had his trousers pressed."

"And his hat brushed!" said Wharton, in great wonder.

"Look at his topper! It's been brushed!"

"And those neckties!" murmured Bob. "Coker, old man, how many of them are you going to wear at once?"

Coker glared at the fags, and then turned back to the looking-glass. He appeared to be satisfied at last with the pink necktie with blue spots, and he proceeded to tie it very carefully. He jerked his head somewhat uncomfortably in his unusually high collar as he tied the necktie artistically.

"You fellows coming?" came Frank Nugent's voice from the end of the passage.

"You come here!" called back Bob Cherry. "Bring the other chaps! Coker is providing us with a free entertainment!"

"Better than a cinema!" added Wharton.

"Clear off!" roared Coker ferociously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh came along the passage in surprise. They were still more surprised when they looked into Coker's study.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Nugent. "What the dickens—"

"This takes the giddy biscuit!" pronounced Johnny Bull.

"Coker the nut! Ha, ha, ha!"

"The nutfulness of the esteemed Coker is truly terrific!" exclaimed Hurree Singh, in wonder. "What is the why and whereforefulness, my august Coker?"

The irritated Fifth-Former glared at the Removites. Coker's temper was always a little short in dealing with juniors. But he was at a hopeless disadvantage now. He was greatly inclined to charge at the grinning juniors like a bull, but he realised only too clearly that if he did they would take a fiendish delight in "mucking up" his beautiful raiment. So Horace Coker restrained himself.

The necktie having been successfully negotiated, Coker put on his coat. As a member of the Fifth, Coker was entitled to wear "tails" instead of Etons. His coat was generally baggy and somewhat dusty, but now it was spick-and-span as a new shilling. Coker had evidently been at work on that coat.

Bob Cherry covered his eyes with his hand, as if overcome.

"What is it the poet says?" he murmured. "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever. It must have been Coker that Keats was thinking about."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker took up his silk hat in one hand and his cane in another. Now, apparently, Coker was ready to sally forth. Harry Wharton winked at his chums, and they blocked the doorway with their persons, standing as firm as a Macedonian phalanx facing the enemy. Coker came towards them—and stopped.

"Get out of the way!" he commanded.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you let me pass?" roared Coker ferociously.

"Will we let him pass?" murmured Bob Cherry.

"I don't think!" grinned Nugent.

"Not this afternoon!" chuckled Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker glared at them, and simply writhed with rage. To charge the juniors was to ruin the effect of several hours of thoughtful care expended upon his clothes. For once the great Coker, the readiest fighting-man in the school, as a rule, shrank from the combat. The smallest fag at Greyfriars could have checked the mighty Coker with impunity at that moment.

"Look here—" began Coker desperately.

"That's all right; we're looking!" said Bob Cherry affably. "We don't often see a sight like this! We're looking with all our eyes!"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific, my esteemed Coker."

"I—I—I'll smash you!" roared Coker.

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FRANK RICHARDS

Contributor a Splendid Complete School Tale
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"CHUCKLES," 14



Buzzzzzz! The buzzing ceased close by Coker's head. "He's settled!" hissed Uncle Clegg. "Old still, Master Coker, 'old still, and I'll smash him!" Whack! "Yaroo!" roared Coker, leaping to his feet, as the folded newspaper descended on his head. "Ow! You dangerous maniac! Stop it!" (See Chapter 3.)

"Come on, then!" said Johnny Bull invitingly. "We're waiting to be smashed! We're ready to be smashed! We're yearning to be smashed!"

"The smashfulness will be—"

"Terrific!" chuckled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker panted. The Famous Five blocked his doorway, and it was impossible to pass without a struggle. At any other time, Coker would not have hesitated to tackle five juniors at once—or a dozen! Coker was a mighty man with his hands—indeed, some of the fellows compared him to the celebrated Panormus whose strength was enormous.

But Coker, who would not, as a rule, have given way an inch to the biggest fellow in the Sixth, was held at bay—not by the juniors, but by his clothes! And the young rascals chuckled with glee as they watched him, and wondered what he would do. For once in his life, the great Coker had no choice but to climb down.

"Look here, you kids, don't be beasts!" said Coker, choking down his rage, and speaking quite civilly—for Coker. "I've got to keep a very particular appointment this afternoon."

"Well, keep it!" grinned Bob. "Who's stopping you?"

"The—the fact is, I—I'm going to see my cousin!" jerked out Coker. "I want to look decent! Now I've told you, let me pass!"

"Oh, my hat! A lady in the case!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 342.

FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

"A COOL CARD!"

"Gentlemen," said Harry Wharton, "Coker, having confided to us the tender secret of his heart—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And there being a lady in the case, it is up to us to let Coker down lightly. Therefore, if Coker says 'Please pretty,' we'll let him pass—unragged!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky young beast!" yelled Coker.

"Shush! We are letting you down lightly," said Wharton reprovingly. "You've only got to say 'Please pretty!' and you're as free as air."

"Say 'Please pretty!' Coker!" chortled the juniors.

"You—you young rotters! I won't! Get out of the way!"

"No fear! I'm fixed here, for one!"

"And I, for another!"

"The fixfulness is terrific, my esteemed Coker!"

"I—I shall be late!" gasped Coker. "I've been rather a time over those neckties. Will you young beasts let me pass? If I start on you I'll smash you!"

"And what about your clobber?" chuckled Nugent.

Coker almost foamed. But he realised that he was helpless.

"I—I—I— Let me pass!"

"Say 'Please pretty!'"

Coker gulped.

"P-p-please pretty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors stood aside, and Coker, giving them an almost

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homicidal glare, passed through the doorway, and strode down the passage. A yell of laughter followed him.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

And the young rascals of the Remove, greatly enlivened by their victory over the great Coker, took their way to the cricket-ground in the best of spirits.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Finds a Friend

"HARRY, old chap—"

Billy Bunter spoke in his best friendly tone, as he planted himself in the way of the chums of the Remove.

But his friendliness was wasted. If anything irritated Harry Wharton in the most thorough manner possible it was being called "Harry, old chap!" by William George Bunter.

"Don't 'Harry, old chap' me!" growled Wharton. "Scat!"

"Oh, really, Harry, old chap—"

Harry, old chap, gave the Owl of the Remove a gentle push, and strode by. Billy Bunter blinked after him angrily through his big spectacles, and caught Nugent by the sleeve.

"I say, Franky, old fellow—"

"Rats!" said Frank; and he gave Bunter a push and walked on.

"Look here, you rotter—" howled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "What a sudden change from an old fellow to a rotter!"

"I say, Bob, old man—"

"N.G., Bunt!"

"Eh? What do you mean by your silly N.G.?" growled Bunter.

"I mean I've got no money to lend, so you may as well call me a rotter at once, without the preliminary!" chuckled Bob.

"You—you beast! I say, Johnny, old chap—Johnny—You rotter, Bull, to walk away while I'm speaking to you! Inky, old man—"

But Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh were striding away. Billy Bunter blinked disconsolately.

It was a hot afternoon, and Bunter was athirst. In Mrs. Mimble's tuckshop was ginger-beer galore, but Bunter had striven in vain to convince Mrs. Mimble that the best way of doing business was to give extensive credit to really good customers. Mrs. Mimble, like Pharaoh of old, hardened her heart; and there was no ginger-pop for Bunter unless he could produce the cash value of the same. And Billy Bunter—having been disappointed about a postal-order, as he would have explained—was in that unhappy state known as "stony."

"Rotters!" muttered Bunter. "They're all rotters! And Todd's a rotter! Actually, he won't make a little loan to his own study-mate, though I've explained to him till I'm tired that I'm expecting a postal-order this evening at latest. And there's Smithy, rolling in money, and won't lend a chap a single bob. He's a rotter, too! And Mauleverer—of course, he was bound to go out for the afternoon, just when I happened to be stony. He's a rotter! They're all rotters!" concluded Bunter despairingly. "I'm wasted in this school! I've a jolly good mind to ask the pater to take me away, and send me to St. Jim's, where I've got friends who can appreciate me. It would serve them jolly well right! After I'd gone they'd know what they'd lost!"

And Bunter shook his head grimly, as he contemplated that dreadful vengeance upon the unappreciative Removites of Greyfriars.

"Hallo, fatty!"

Bunter blinked round, and blinked again at the sight of Horace Coker. Coker, in neat and well-brushed attire, with a polished silk topper, and a new gorgeous necktie, and a flower in his coat! Billy Bunter fancied for a moment that his spectacles had deceived him. Was this Coker—Coker, the most slovenly fellow in the Fifth!

It was Coker. He was coming from the direction of the Head's garden, where he had evidently obtained from Mimble, the gardener, the choice blossom that bloomed in his buttonhole.

"M-m-my hat!" ejaculated Bunter.

The surprise of the fat junior was very pleasing to Coker. He was dressed to kill, and he liked to make an impression. He affected a lofty contempt for "nuts"; still, it was pleasant to know that he could be as nutty as the nuttiest nut if he chose. He gave Billy Bunter a gracious nod.

"Anything doing?" he asked.

"No," groaned Bunter. "I've been disappointed about a postal-order, and I'm stony, Coker. Fellows I've treated in the most lavish manner—h'm!—have refused to make me a small loan. The ingratitude of some fellows is—is simply

extraordinary! I say, Coker, have you got a bob about you?"

"Dozens!" said Coker genially.

Bunter blinked at him enviously. He knew that Coker's Aunt Judy, who doted on Horace, sent him any amount of money. None of Bunter's aunts ever looked after William George in that way. Bunter felt that it wasn't fair. A big, clumsy ass like Coker had a rich and affectionate aunt, and here was he—William George Bunter—a good-looking, intelligent chap—a fine fellow all round, in fact—with nobody who cared whether he went thirsty that hot afternoon or not. At that moment Bunter felt that he would have been quite willing to "swap" all his uncles and aunts, and his brothers and sisters thrown in, for Coker's Aunt Judy.

"Hard up—eh?" said Coker, still very genial.

"Yes," said Bunter hopefully. It was unprecedented for the Fifth-Former to take the slightest interest in whether he was hard up or not. Coker was generally too lofty to notice the existence of fags at all, excepting to cuff them or slang them. It dawned upon Bunter that Coker wanted something from him, and so his hopes rose. "I say, Coker, old man, if you've got a bob you don't want—"

"I haven't!" said Coker.

"Why, you said you had dozens—"

"Dozens of bobs," agreed Coker. "But not one I don't want! I want 'em all! See? Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. Coker's joke was very feeble, but a laugh cost nothing, and Bunter was willing to go into convulsions over it, if necessary, to secure a loan. "He, he, he! Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!"

"Hallo! What's the matter with you?" said Coker, staring at him. "Something gone wrong with the works—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bunter. "He, he, he! Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat!"

"Ho, ho, ho! Ha, ha, ha! He, he, he!"

"For goodness' sake, stop that row!" exclaimed Coker. "Blessed if it don't sound like my motor-bike back-firing."

"Oh, really, Coker—(He, he, he!)—if you've got that bob, Coker—(Ha, ha, ha!)"

"Come along with me," said Coker.

"Eh?"

"I'm going for a walk."

Bunter blinked at him in amazement. To be asked to go for a walk with a Fifth-Former was an overwhelming honour for any junior. Bunter's company, too, was not generally sought for with great eagerness, especially by seniors.

"You—you want me to go for a walk with you, Coker?" stammered Bunter.

"Yes. Come along!"

"I—I say, it's jolly warm for walking." Coker's invitation was a great honour, certainly, but exertion without profit was not exactly in Bunter's line, and he preferred hanging about the tuckshop, with a lingering hope of extracting a loan from somebody even to the tremendous honour of walking out with Coker.

"Yes, it's warm," agreed Coker. "But I'll stand you a ginger-beer."

"Eh?"

"Two or three, if you like."

Bunter wondered if the sun had affected Coker's head.

"I'm on!" he said. "This way to the tuckshop."

"Afterwards!" said Coker. "We pass through the village, and you can get your ginger-beer at Uncle Clogg's. Come on!"

"Like a bird!"

And Billy Bunter trotted on beside Coker, his fat little legs going like machinery to keep pace with the big Fifth-Former's mighty strides. They passed Potter and Greene of the Fifth as they went out, and Potter and Greene stared after them in amazement.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Potter. "Did you see that, Greeney?"

"I'm dreaming!" said Greene. "That can't be Coker, dressed up to the nines. Why, he wasn't bagging at either knee, and there wasn't any dust on his jacket! And his topper didn't look like a busby. It always does."

"And he's taking Bunter of the Remove out for a walk!" said Potter wonderingly.

"Must be sunstroke!" said Greene.

And Potter agreed that it must be sunstroke.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Convincing Proof.

COKER of the Fifth went down the lane with long strides, and Billy Bunter puffed and blew by his side. Bunter was not famous as a pedestrian, and he had to exert himself to keep up with Coker. Bunter, in his own mind, rather agreed with Potter and Greene's opinion that it must be sunstroke. For if Horace Coker was in his senses,

what did he mean by dressing himself with as much care as Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove, bestowed upon his toilet? What did he mean by wearing an orchid in his coat? And what did he mean by taking a Remove kid for a walk and promising to stand him two or three ginger-pops? If it wasn't sunstroke, it was a very deep mystery indeed.

Bunter was panting heavily by the time they reached the village. He stopped outside Uncle Clegg's little shop.

"Here we are, Coker!"

"Eh?" said Coker. The Fifth-Former had not spoken a word during the walk, apparently being immersed in his own thoughts. Bunter had not tried to guess the subject of his reverie; all his thoughts, personally, were bestowed on the promised ginger-beer.

"Here's Uncle Clegg's!" explained Bunter.

Coker looked round.

"Uncle Clegg's! Oh, yes! All right! I'll come in."

Bunter gasped with relief as he sank into a chair in the shady shop. He was very glad to get out of the sun and very glad to sit down. Uncle Clegg came wheezing out of his little parlour, and served the ginger-beer.

"Another!" said Bunter.

Uncle Clegg looked at him significantly. Uncle Clegg did not give credit, especially to Billy Bunter. He knew Bunter.

"It's all right; I'm paying," said Coker, throwing a half-crown on the counter with the air of a prince.

"Mad!" murmured Bunter. "Mad, of course! Must be!"

"Eh? What did you say, Bunter?"

"I—I said you're a jolly good chap, Coker. I suppose I can have some tarts, just—just to go with the ginger-beer?"

"Yes, if you like."

"Jam-tarts, Mr. Clegg!" said Bunter. "Buck up, please!" He was afraid that Coker might change his mind. There was no telling how long the effect of the sunstroke might last—if it was sunstroke.

But Coker did not change his mind. He watched Bunter consuming ginger-beer and jam-tarts, somewhat impatiently, but not grudgingly.

"How long are you going to be?" he demanded.

"Gr-r-r-m-m-m!" said Bunter. That was all he could say for the moment, as his mouth was quite full.

"No time to waste," said Coker. "Look here, while you're gorging I'll tell you what I want!"

"Orright!"

"You're a beastly ventriloquist," said Coker. "I've heard the kids say so, and you played a rotten trick on me once, which you couldn't have played if you hadn't been a silly ventriloquist."

Bunter looked alarmed. For a moment he feared that Coker had brought him there to take vengeance for that ventriloquial trick. But Coker's face was quite serene.

"I—I say—I—you know—"

"You are a ventriloquist, fathead? You played a trick on me—"

"I—I didn't! I—I'm not a ventriloquist!" stuttered Bunter, alarmed by Coker's frown. "That—that's only a joke of the fellows, Coker, old man."

Coker's face fell.

"You're not?" he ejaculated.

"Nunno!"

"Then leave those tarts alone!" exclaimed Coker, wrathfully. "You fat fraud! I thought it was all right. You—you fat spoofer! You're no good, then."

Bunter jumped. He had evidently made a mistake. Coker did not want to lick him for that old ventriloquial trick; he wanted him to ventriloquise. Coker's extraordinary conduct was explained now, to a certain extent. It was not sunstroke. He wanted Billy Bunter's services as a ventriloquist, though what he could possibly want the aid of a ventriloquist for passed Bunter's comprehension.

"I—I say, Coker—"

"Leave those tarts alone!" roared Coker.

"But—but I say, I am a ventriloquist—a jolly good ventriloquist," spluttered Bunter. "I—I didn't catch on. It's all right; I'm a ripping ventriloquist—simply ripping! I'm a regular dab at it, in fact. Simply splendid! Gimme those tarts."

"Liar!" growled Coker.

"B-b-but I am, you know," said Bunter, in dismay. Coker had jerked the dish of tarts away, out of reach of Bunter's fat and sticky hands. Bunter had only eaten five so far, so his appetite was only whetted. "I say, you know, any of the fellows will tell you so. I'm simply a marvel at it, I am really! Gimme those tarts."

"You're such a rotten liar!" said Coker, in his charmingly frank way. "Look here, show me how you can do it, and if it's all right you can have all the tarts you like."

"I'm on!" said Bunter promptly.

Uncle Clegg had gone back into the little parlour. Bunter piled into the tarts, and Coker watched him with growing impatience.

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"Well? I've got no time to waste!" he exclaimed.

"Wait a minute!" gasped Bunter. "I—I always do it better after a feed."

Coker jerked the tarts away again.

"You'll do it before a feed!" he said. "Now, then, pile in! I tell you I've no time to waste. I'm late already."

Bunter cleared his throat.

"All right! I'll give Uncle Clegg a surprise. You watch me."

Coker watched him, doubtingly. He had heard a great deal about Bunter's ventriloquism, but he wanted to make sure. As a matter of fact, Bunter had the peculiar gift of ventriloquism, and long practice had made him a master of the art. It was certainly a gift. Bunter would never have acquired it by means of his intellectual powers.

"Well, go ahead!" growled Coker.

"Shop!" called out Bunter, in a high, feminine voice. Coker looked round towards the door, whence the call seemed to proceed, and stared as he saw that there was no one there. He stared at Bunter.

"That—was that you?"

"Sh! Here comes Clegg!"

Uncle Clegg toddled out of his little parlour.

"Yes, ma'am!" he said. He looked round for the supposed female customer, and looked surprised at not seeing her.

"Why, wot—"

"I want arf a pound of 'am!" came a voice from behind Uncle Clegg.

The old gentleman swung round in astonishment.

"Look 'ere, ma'am, you ain't no right behind my counter! Why, what—where—how—" Uncle Clegg simply gasped at the evidence of his eyes that he was alone behind the counter. "Why, where's that 'ooman?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker.

Buzz-z-z-z-z-z!

It was the vicious buzzing of a wasp close by Uncle Clegg's ear, and he made a sudden wipe with his hand to drive it away. Coker roared. He could see that there was no wasp.

Buzzzzzzzzzz!

"Ow!" gasped Mr. Clegg, as the buzz sounded in his other ear. "Ow! Gerroff, you beast! I never could stand wopses!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There ain't nothing to larf at, fur as I can see, Master Coker. There ain't nothing to larf at in a beastly wop—grrrr! Gerroff!" roared Uncle Clegg, as the buzz came behind his head. "Ow! Blow that blessed wop! They allers come round 'ere on these 'ere 'ot days! My word, I'll smash 'im!"

Uncle Clegg snatched up a newspaper and doubled it, and glared round with a murderous expression for the wasp. It buzzed behind his head again, and he made a terrific swipe with the doubled paper, and there was a crash as he knocked a bottle of sweets off the shelf behind him.

Smash!

Coker sank into a chair and gasped with merriment.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Shet up!" roared Uncle Clegg. "There ain't nothing to larf at. My word! I'll smash that there wop, if I smash up the 'ole shop. Grrrr!—you brute!"

Buzzzzzzzz!

Whack!

Crash!

A pile of sardine-tins came tumbling down as Uncle Clegg slashed round furiously at the elusive buzz. Uncle Clegg almost foamed with rage. He came out from behind the counter, following the buzz of the supposed wasp, and glaring in search of it.

Buzzzzzzzz!

The buzzing ceased close by Coker's head.

"He's settled!" hissed Uncle Clegg. "'Old still, Master Coker—'old still, and I'll smash him!"

Whack!

"Yaroooh!" roared Coker, leaping to his feet as if he had been galvanised, as the folded newspaper descended on his head. "Why, you silly old fool—"

"Got 'im!" said Uncle Clegg, with deep and savage satisfaction. "That's stopped his buzzing, confound 'im!"

"Ow, ow! You dangerous maniac—" Coker made a jump to pick up his topper.

"Sorry, Master Coker, but I got 'im!" said Mr. Clegg, retreating behind his counter. The buzzing had certainly stopped now.

Coker rubbed his head, and examined his silk hat savagely. He smoothed it out with great care and glared at Bunter. He was greatly inclined to take summary vengeance upon the too-clever ventriloquist.

"You—you fat idiot—you—"

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"I—I'm sorry—he, he, he!—I didn't mean—he, he, he! Are you satisfied now, Coker, old man? He, he, he!"

Coker made a stride towards Billy Bunter; but remembering that he required the services of the fat junior he stopped short, and contented himself with a glare.

"Yes, you fat idiot! Come on!"

"I say, what about the tarts—"

"You can gorge afterwards. Come on, there's no time to waste."

"But I say, Coker—"

"Oh, come on!" Coker jerked Bunter out of his chair, and whipped him out of the shop, without even waiting for the change from his half-crown—not that Bunter had left much change.

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter. "I'm ready! Where are we going?"

"Come on, and don't jaw!" said Coker crossly.

And he marched the ventriloquist of Greyfriars down the village street.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Secret.

BILLY BUNTER trotted on beside Coker, in a state of great astonishment. He had given the Fifth-Former a most convincing proof of his powers as a ventriloquist, and Coker ought to have been satisfied; though as a matter of fact he did not look very satisfied. What Coker wanted him to do was a mystery. Bunter began to wonder again whether it really was sunstroke after all.

Coker led the way through the old High Street of Friar-dale, and down the next street towards the river. He stopped at last on the bank of the shining Sark. At this point there were several pretty detached villas, with long gardens sloping down to the river, and gates giving on the towing-path. One of the gardens was thickly shaded by large trees, and the gate at the end was almost hidden by flowering bushes. It was within sight of this particular gate that Coker had stopped.

"Stay here!" he said shortly.

"But I say—"

"Shut up, and wait for me!"

Coker walked away with a cautious manner towards the garden-gate. Bunter blinked after him through his spectacles. He had hardly a doubt left by this time that Horace Coker had taken leave of his senses. Coker was approaching the garden-gate as cautiously as if he were a burglar, fearing at every moment to hear the footsteps of the police. He reached the gate and peered through the high bushes, Bunter watching him from a distance in utter amazement. He came back after a few minutes, with a satisfied expression on his face.

"It's all right," he said.

"What's all right?" said Bunter peevishly.

"She's there!"

"Eh? Who's there?"

"My cousin, of course!"

"Never knew you had a cousin!" growled Bunter.

Coker snorted.

"Of course you didn't! Do you think I should be likely to jaw about her to a fat fag in the Remove?" he snapped. "Now, look here, Bunter; I'll tell you what I want. My aunt's there, too—I knew she would be; that's why I've brought you along."

"Your Aunt Judith?" asked Bunter, brightening. It was from his Aunt Judith that Coker received such splendid tips, and if there was a splendid tip to come now, Bunter hoped to receive his "whack," since Coker was so friendly. But the Fifth-Former shook his head impatiently.

"Of course not, you silly ass! If it was Aunt Judy, I shouldn't be afraid to show myself, should I? Aunt Judy's an old maid, you duffer! How could my cousin Amy be her daughter, you blithering cuckoo?"

"You didn't say she was her daughter—"

"Don't jaw!" said Coker. "Listen to me. That's my Aunt Sophonisba—she's taken that villa for a week or two, you know, to stay in the country!"

"Oh, I see—to be near you, Coker—"

"No, ass! She doesn't like me!"

"I suppose she wouldn't," agreed Bunter. "I—I mean, you—you surprise me, Coker!"

"Shut up! My Aunt Sophonisba is rather a cat. She doesn't like my Aunt Judy, who is a regular brick. Well, as they are at daggers drawn, and I can't keep in with both of them, I had to stick to Aunt Judy—see? So I'm in Aunt Sophy's black books."

"I see! Aunt Judy's rich—I understand."

"You—you fat rotter!" said Coker, in deep disgust. "It isn't because she's rich—only she brought me up, and she's always been a brick to me. But I suppose a fat beast like you wouldn't understand—"

"Oh, really, Coker—"

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"Dry up! Now, you see how the matter stands."

"Blessed if I do," said Bunter, rubbing his nose. "I understand that your Aunt Sophonisba doesn't like your other aunt, and doesn't like you. But what's that got—"

"Oh, you fat idiot! Don't you see? Mrs. Blaine—that's my Aunt Sophonisba—doesn't like me, and won't speak to me! Of course, she could go and eat coke, for all I care—only there's Amy, you see!"

"Ye-es, I see; but what—"

"Amy's my cousin, and a stunning girl. I want to see her, and Aunt Sophy won't allow us to speak to one another. But I'm jolly well going to see her all the same," said Coker determinedly. "Aunt Sophy hasn't any right to shoo me off like a—a chicken, because she's quarrelled with Aunt Judy. I'm willing to be friends, but she ain't. But I'm jolly well going to keep friends with Amy—see? And now they've come down here for a holiday, it's my chance to see Amy again. I'm going to fix it up with her to come and see Greyfriars, if I can—and have tea in the study, and all that—see?"

Bunter saw at last. He burst into a sudden cackle, which made Coker glare at him as if he would bite him.

"Oh, my hat! He, he, he!"

Coker's remarkable care in his raiment that afternoon was explained now. Coker—the big and burly Coker—was "spoons" on his Cousin Amy! Perhaps it was not a very severe case of "spoons," for it did not seem to worry Coker very much at other times. Probably the propinquity of the Blaines had something to do with Coker's sudden determination to see Amy again, in spite of Aunt Sophy. Certainly it was a great opportunity, now that Miss Blaine and her mother were staying so near Greyfriars. But the idea of the huge-limbed, clumsy, big-fisted Coker being "spoony" made Billy Bunter yell.

"What's the matter with you, you crass ass?" demanded Coker, in a low voice of concentrated ferocity. "Do you want me to knock you into the middle of next week, you chortling jabberwock?"

Billy Bunter became serious all of a sudden.

"Ahem! All right; I—I—"

"Shut up! Now you see what I want you to do. I've been by here before, and whenever Amy is sitting in the garden, old Sophy is bound to be there. You've got to get rid of her for me!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"That's where your ventriloquism comes in," said Coker. "I've thought it over, and when I remembered about your rotten ventriloquism, I knew how I could work it. You've got to clear her off somehow—see? Make voices call her, or something—any old thing, so long as you get her away, and keep her away while I talk to Amy—see?"

Bunter did see at last.

"I'm your man!" he said. "I can do it as easy as rolling off a Form. I'll sneak along by the garden fence—there's a path here between the two gardens—and I'll do it all right. And then I'm going to have the tarts."

"Blow the tarts!"

"Look here, Coker—"

"No time to waste. We're late already—"

"I'm not sure that I can consent to helping you deceive an old lady like this, Coker," said Billy Bunter loftily. "A fellow has a conscience, you know. Upon the whole, I think—"

"You—you—you—" Words failed Coker.

"However, I want to oblige you," said Bunter, relenting.

"Did you say a dozen jam-tarts?"

"I—I—I—"

"I'm afraid, Coker, that under the circumstances my conscience—"

"A dozen tarts," said Coker.

"Oh, all right. Twopenny ones?"

"Yes," said Coker, between his teeth.

"And how many ginger-beers?"

"As many as you can guzzle at one sitting, you fat beast!" said Coker desperately.

"Coker, old man, I'll do anything I can for you," said Bunter affectionately. "Rely on me! I'll make the old cat fairly hop!"

"You fat pig, if you call my aunt names I'll smash you!" Bunter jumped back.

"Why, I—I—I— You said you didn't like her!"

"I'm not going to have a worm like you calling her names, if I don't," said Coker. "Hold your tongue, you fat toad!"

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"Shut up! Mind, she's got to be kept away for at least

ANSWERS



Whack! The parasol crashed through the shrubbery and landed on a head that was peering over the wall. There was a terrific yell. "Ow! Yow-ow!" roared Billy Bunter. "Wharrer you at!" "Got him!" gasped Aunt Sophy, with ferocious satisfaction. (See Chapter 6.)

ten minutes, while I jaw to Amy. Now pile in while I watch for her to go."

Coker strode back to the gate and peered through the bushes into the garden. Billy Bunter, who felt himself fully equal to the task imposed upon him, sidled away into the narrow path between the two gardens, clearing his throat for action with a succession of fat little grunts.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Co. Put Their Foot In It.

"WHAT price the river?" said Bob Cherry.

And the Co. nodded assent.

The Remove cricketers had been playing the Third Form that afternoon—out of sheer good-nature, for the Third Form were not in it with the Remove. Bolsover minor, and Tubb, and Paget, and Wingate minor, and the other heroes of the Third, had done their best, but the Remove had simply walked over them. Wharton had declared his innings closed for fifty runs, and then the

Removites had bowled the Third Form wickets to smithereens, as Johnny Bull expressed it, and won hands down. And the sudden collapse of the match left the Remove chums free for the afternoon.

"The Third have given us some practice," said Nugent, with a grin. "Enough for one day. And the river is ripping this afternoon. We'll go down with the current, and have a pull back in time for tea."

"Right-ho!" said Harry Wharton.

And the Famous Five walked down to the boat-house and ran a boat down over the landing-raft into the water.

It was a glorious summer's afternoon. The Sark rippled and sang along the reedy banks, and a good many skiffs were out upon the shining waters. The Famous Five jumped into their boat and floated down on the current towards the old stone bridge of Friardale. Hurree Janset Ram Singh took the lines, and the other fellows reclined in the boat, not taking the trouble to put the oars out, the current drifting them along under the cool shade of the overhanging trees.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, sitting up suddenly in the boat.

"What's the matter?" yawned Nugent.

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"Coker!"

The juniors all followed Bob's glance to the bank. They were still some distance from the stone bridge which spanned the Sark. At this spot the towing-path ran along the river past the gardens of several detached villas, and on the towing-path could be seen Horace Coker, in his unaccustomed "clobber," talking to Billy Bunter of the Remove. Coker and Bunter were too much occupied to have eyes for the river or the boat. They were evidently very much in earnest.

"By Jove!" said Wharton. "It's Coker—and Bunter! Surely the great Horace didn't put on his best clothes to go for a walk with Bunter!"

"Looks like it," said Nugent. "There's something on, anyway. Look at Coker! Is he going to commit a giddy burglary, or is he off his rocker?"

Certainly one or the other appeared to be the case. The two fellows on the bank had separated. Billy Bunter had sidled off in his sly way into the path beside the villa garden. Horace Coker was approaching the gate, almost hidden in flowering bushes at the end of the long garden. And Coker's movements were so cautious that the chums of the Remove stared at him in astonishment.

Coker, in full view from the river, tiptoed to the gate, and peered over into the garden, parting the bushes with a careful hand to obtain a view within.

There he remained, evidently watching someone in the garden, and quite motionless. A stray twig was brushing against his topper and disturbing its beautiful smoothness, but Coker was too engrossed to notice it.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "This beats it! What is that ass up to?"

"He's watching somebody."

"The watchfulness is terrific."

Bob Cherry frowned.

"Can't have Coker playing these tricks!" he said severely. "I'm surprised at Horace! He has put on his best clothes, and brushed his hat, and put an orchid in his coat to come along here with Bunter and spy into a garden! Unless he's gone dotty, I'm afraid Horace is up to some mischief, you chaps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, Coker always considers it his duty to look after juniors and keep them in their place, and bring them up in the way they should go," continued Bob seriously. "It's very good of Coker, though we find him a worry at times."

"We do—we does!" agreed Johnny Bull.

"And it's a poor rule that won't work both ways," said Bob. "What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the giddy gander."

"Hear, hear!"

"Coker looks after us when we don't want him to, so it's up to us to look after Coker, whether he wants us to or not," said Bob. "Far as I'm concerned, I'm quite willing to give up any amount of time to look after Coker and pull his leg."

"What-ho!"

"Ergo—that's Latin—ergo, we'll pull in shore and look after Coker. What business has Coker to spy into people's gardens?" said Bob indignantly. "I'm surprised and shocked at Coker. If Alonzo Todd were here, I know he'd say that his Uncle Benjamin would be shocked and disgusted. We mustn't forget to be good boys while Alonzo is away, or he will be shocked and disgusted with us when he comes back."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Therefore—I mean, ergo—that's Latin—ergo, we're going to take a hand in this little game, and bring Coker up in the way he should go. Shove the boat in! Coker hasn't any eyes in the back of his head, as it happens, so he won't see us. My idea is to walk up behind Coker—he's just shown us how to walk on tiptoe—and give him a yell. It's bound to startle him. What do you think?"

The juniors chuckled. They certainly thought it would. Horace Coker's eyes were glued on the interior of the garden, and he did not turn his head once. It was the easiest thing in the world to walk up quietly behind him and give him a "yell," as the humorous Bob suggested. And the Removes were kind enough to give up their row for the sake of bestowing that little surprise on the great Coker.

They drew the boat silently in to the bank, and moored it to a bush, under a high bluff that concealed it from the towing-path. Then the five Removes stepped ashore. Save for themselves and Coker, the bank was deserted. At a later hour in the afternoon that pleasant walk by the river was much frequented by the youths and maidens of Friardale, and any number of affectionate couples could be seen there at sunset, and later; but in the afternoon there was no one about. Harry Wharton & Co., suppressing their chuckles, stole silently up the bank towards the garden gate over which Horace Coker was peering.

They made no sound, but even if they had done so, Coker

would probably not have noticed it. He was too deeply engrossed.

Billy Bunter had disappeared from sight; but the juniors were not thinking of the Owl of the Remove. All their attention was bestowed upon the great Coker. He did not turn his head for a moment. His eyes were glued upon the garden.

On tiptoe the juniors approached him, so closely that they could have touched the well-brushed coat by stretching out their hands.

Then they halted. The utter unconsciousness of Coker, when they were so close behind him, almost made them burst into a roar of laughter; but they restrained themselves. From the garden came a faint murmur as of voices. It really looked as if Coker were playing the eavesdropper, so it was evidently a proper occasion for the heroes of the Remove to bring him up in the way he should go.

Bob Cherry gave the signal by raising his hand, and all of a sudden the five juniors burst into a tremendous yell.

"Hallo!"

Coker jumped clear of the ground in his sudden surprise.

"Oh!" he gasped.

He swung round like a pegtop.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry affably. "Fancy meeting you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker, still very startled, glared furiously at the juniors. The murmur of voices in the garden had ceased. Evidently the talkers there had heard that terrific yell, and it had startled them as well as Coker. There was a footstep, and a sound of twigs being pushed aside. A severe-looking lady with a Roman nose looked over the palings, and behind her the juniors caught a glimpse of a very pretty girl, who was looking very startled.

"You—you young beasts——" gasped Coker.

"Horace Coker!" snapped the Roman-nosed lady. "Huh!"

Coker swung round again, facing the lady with a dismayed countenance. He was discovered.

Aunt Sophonisba fixed a steely eye upon him. Coker was so startled and dismayed that he forgot to take off his hat. He only stared at the Roman-nosed lady as if mesmerised.

"Horace Coker!" repeated the lady with the Roman nose.

"Horace!" murmured the girl in the garden. She was not looking stern like the Roman-nosed lady, by any means. Apparently she was not displeased to see Coker of the Fifth.

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "Aunt Sophy! Oh!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "One of Coker's aunts! How many blessed aunts has he got, then?"

"The auntfulness of the esteemed Coker is terrific."

The juniors raised their caps politely to Aunt Sophy. But she was not looking at them. She was fixing Coker with a deadly glare.

"What are you doing here, Horace Coker?"

"Aunt Sophy——"

"Don't call me Aunt Sophy!" said the Roman-nosed lady sternly. "You may call me Mrs. Blaine, if you call me anything at all!"

"Oh, auntie!"

"If you call me auntie again, Horace Coker, I will box your ears!"

"Oh!"

"Miss Coker is your dear auntie," said Mrs. Blaine crushingly. "You may call her auntie. How dare you come here, Horace Coker?"

"I—I——"

"I know perfectly well why you are here!" pursued the Roman-nosed lady. "You came here to see Amy, hoping that I was absent. Answer me!"

"I—I was just taking a w-w-walk——" stammered Coker.

"Or else you came here with your rowdy schoolfellows to make a disturbance," said the Roman-nosed matron angrily. "What do you mean, Horace Coker, by screaming out like a—a—a Red Indian over my garden gate?"

"I—I didn't!" gasped the dismayed Coker. "I didn't really! It was these——"

"Then you set them on to do it!"

"I—I didn't, I assure you, auntie—I mean, Mrs. Blaine! I—I——" stuttered Coker.

Aunt Sophonisba raised a stern and bony forefinger.

"Go!" she said.

"B-b-but——"

"Go!"

"I say, Aunt Sophy——"

"Go!"

And Horace Coker cast a dismayed look at his Cousin Amy—and went.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "We seem to

have put our little feet in it this time! I—I say, ma'am

"Go!" commanded Mrs. Blane.

"But, I say, lemme explain——"

"Go!"

"Coker didn't know. We came to jape him, and—and we didn't know——"

"If you do not go immediately I shall call for help!" said Aunt Sophonisba. "I will not have rowdy hooligans making a disturbance on my property!"

The juniors turned red. They did not like being termed rowdy hooligans. But Aunt Sophy's dislike of her nephew Horace seemed to extend to all his schoolfellows. Evidently the Roman-nosed lady believed that Coker had deliberately brought a band of schoolboys there for a "rag." And it was impossible to explain to a lady who declined to hear a word.

"But, ma'am——" began Harry Wharton.

"Ruffians! Depart at once!"

"Oh, mamma!" murmured Amy.

"Silence!" said the Roman-nosed lady. "I will not have impertinence from my own child! I repeat, Amy, that I will not have it! And if these rowdies do not go——"

Horace Coker turned back. Perhaps he spotted a chance of ingratiating himself with his truculent Aunt Sophonisba.

"Clear off, you cheeky fags!" he exclaimed. "Off with you! Clear off!"

And Coker rushed at the Famous Five, brandishing his big fists. The Co. grinned at one another and retreated. There were enough of them to handle Coker of the Fifth, big as he was; but they were kind to Coker. They realised that their little joke had somehow or other caused trouble, and they were willing to let Coker have the distinction of clearing them off. They retreated down the bank, grinning; and Coker turned back towards Aunt Sophy.

"There, auntie——"

"Don't think you deceive me, Horace Coker, by pretending to send away your accomplices!" said the Roman-nosed lady. "Go!"

"But I say, really——"

"Go!"

The Roman-nosed lady really seemed like a gramophone with only one record, "Go!"

Horace Coker snorted and retreated again. But he did not go far. He stopped in the trees on the bank, still hoping that Bunter would do his part, and leave the field clear for him. Harry Wharton & Co. joined him under the trees.

"I say, Coker, old man, sorry!" said Bob Cherry. "We hadn't the faintest idea that you had any aunts and cousins and things here——"

"The sorrowfulness is terrific, my worthy Coker."

"Oh, clear off!" growled Coker. "I'd give you a jolly good licking only—— Clear off, you cheeky young beasts! Scat!"

Coker was evidently not in a reasonable mood. He turned his back on the juniors and watched the garden from behind the trees.

Aunt Sophy, satisfied that the intruders had cleared off, returned to her seat in the garden, triumphant. But Horace Coker was not beaten yet. As soon as the Roman-nosed lady had disappeared he tiptoed back to the garden gate and peered through the bushes.

"My word!" murmured Nugent. "If I were Coker I'd give an aunt like that a wide berth! His Aunt Judy is a little cherub in comparison with his Aunt Sophy."

Bob Cherry suppressed a yell of laughter with difficulty.

"Don't you see?" he gurgled. "It's the cousin—Cousin Amy! Coker—the noble Coker—has been smitten by Cupid! Coker—Coker, oh, my hat!"

And Bob threw himself into the grass and wriggled with mirth. And the Co. gasped with amazement and merriment. They were in the secret at last—the deep mystery was revealed!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Cousin.

AUNT SOPHY sat grimly and squarely in the garden-chair. Amy, with a demure expression on her charming face, sat beside her, and resumed reading to her.

Amy had been reading the local news from the "Friar-dale Gazette" when the interruption came. The Roman-nosed matron, with a stern gesture, bade her resume, and Amy resumed. Perhaps Amy had a suspicion that Cousin Horace was still in the vicinity, and it was quite certain that she did not share her parent's prejudice against Cousin Horace.

She read on from the interesting columns of the "Friar-dale Gazette." But there was destined to be another interruption. The Greyfriars ventriloquist, blinking through the shrubbery from the path beside the garden, was "piling in" at last.

A voice, which appeared to come from the direction of

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the house, squeaked out suddenly in the silence of the garden:

"Please, mum, can you 'elp a pore man on 'is way?"

Aunt Sophy sat bolt upright in her chair.

For a moment she could hardly believe her ears. It was evidently the voice of a tramp asking for alms, somewhere behind the shrubberies in the garden. Aunt Sophy was a very stern lady, and if she was sterner to one kind of offender than another it was to tramps. Aunt Sophy detested tramps and beggars of all descriptions; and the idea of a tramp actually penetrating into her garden to ask for alms almost took her breath away.

"Please, mum——" came the voice again.

Aunt Sophy stood up and took a firm grasp upon her parasol. Aunt Sophy was fully equal to dealing with a tramp. It would have been a very bold tramp indeed who had dared to face Aunt Sophonisba in her wrath.

"Man!" gasped Aunt Sophy, breathless with indignation. "How—how dare you come into this garden! Be off with you!"

"Oh, mum, won't you help a starving man what 'as jest come out of prison——"

"Prison!" shrieked Aunt Sophy. "You ought to be in prison for life, you wretched man! Be off with you!"

"I ain't goin' without some money, mum!"

Aunt Sophy glared round in search of the owner of the voice. But the garden was thick with trees and shrubberies, and he might have been within a dozen feet of her without being visible.

"Where are you?" called out the Roman-nosed lady.

"'Ere, in the garding, ma'am. Won't you 'elp a pore man on 'is way?"

"I have nothing to give to tramps. I will have you arrested! Go out of my garden at once!"

"Perhaps the poor man is hungry, mamma," murmured Amy.

"Silence, child! Where are you, you wretched person?"

"Who you callin' names, mum? I ain't goin', I tell you that! I'll go into the bloomin' 'ouse and 'elp myself, mum!"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Aunt Sophy. "We will see! Stay here, Amy! I will deal with this—this criminal!"

Aunt Sophy marched up the winding garden-path, grasping her parasol firmly, and looking quite equal to dealing with any number of criminals.

As she disappeared among the shrubberies, hurrying towards the house, there came a slight chuckle from the garden gate, and then a voice.

"I say, Amy!"

Amy started and looked round. The bushes were pulled aside, and the face of Horace Coker looked into the garden.

"Horace!" exclaimed Amy.

Coker winked.

"It's all right, Amy! I want to speak to you, you know."

"Mamma——"

"That's all right—she won't be back for a few minutes. I say, Amy, we used to be jolly good pals, and I don't see why we shouldn't speak to one another, just because Aunt Sophy has quarrelled with Aunt Judy. Do you?"

"I—I don't know."

"Tain't our fault!" argued Coker. "I haven't done anything, have I?"

"Oh, no!"

"And you haven't done anything, have you?"

"No," smiled Amy.

"Well, then, why shouldn't we see each other, just because two blessed aunts can't keep the peace," urged Coker. "It ain't fair!"

"It is rather hard," agreed Amy. "But mamma——"

"Oh, of course you must—ahem—respect your mamma, and all that," said Coker hurriedly. "I wouldn't say anything against that. Only we used to be pals, Amy, didn't we?"

"Yes, Horace!"

"And you always said you'd come to Greyfriars some time, and have tea in the study, and let me show you round the school," said Coker eagerly.

"Yes, Horace; but mamma——"

"Mamma be blowed—I—I mean, of course, you must obey your mamma. I wouldn't say anything against that for a moment. Girls ought to, I know that. I uphold that kind of thing very much," assured Coker. "But, all the same, isn't it rotten that you can't come and have tea in my study at Greyfriars, because Aunt Sophy has quarrelled with Aunt Judy? Isn't it now? Is it cricket?"

"Well——"

"So come all the same," said Horace. "You see——"

"Hush!" said Amy, in a shrill whisper. "Here is mamma!"

Horace Coker disappeared as if moved by a spring, as Aunt Sophy's heavy footsteps sounded on the garden-path. Amy sank into her chair again, and appeared very busy with the "Friardale Gazette"—but as she was holding it upside down in her haste, it was extremely improbable that she was really reading it.

A moment later, Aunt Sophy arrived, looking sterner and more Roman-nosed than ever.

"D-d-did you send the man away, mamma?"

Aunt Sophy snorted. Perhaps she intended it for a sniff, but it was really a snort—a decided snort.

"No!" she snapped. "I could not find him! He must have got over the fence! I am sorry I did not find him!"

"You wanted to give him something to eat, mamma?"

"Nonsense, child! I wanted to lay my parasol over his shoulders!" snapped Aunt Sophy. "I have no sympathy with tramps! Let 'em work!"

"I say, mum, will you 'elp a pore man?"

Aunt Sophy jumped as she heard the voice again. The astounding nerve of the tramp in remaining there, and persisting in his demand for alms made her gasp. She made a rush in the direction of the voice, and once more the shrubberies hid her portly form. The face of Coker appeared as if by magic among the bushes by the gate.

"I say, Amy——"

But Coker had no time to say more. Aunt Sophy was striding back, and Horace Coker disappeared like a demon in a pantomime.

"Where can that wretched criminal be?" panted Aunt Sophy. "Oh, dear, I wish I could get near enough to him to——"

"I say, mum——"

"Bless me! There he is again!"

But Aunt Sophy did not rush off this time. She was growing cautious. She had a suspicion that the obnoxious tramp eluded her by jumping over the fence at the side of the garden, when she went in search of him. So, instead of rushing in the direction of the voice, the Roman-nosed lady stepped away cautiously to the side of the garden, and stepped along almost on tiptoe, to catch him in his retreat. There was a high shrubbery at the side of the garden, overtopping the palings, and a rustle in the shrubbery caught her ear. There was someone on the other side of it—peering through from the path outside. She had caught him at last!

Aunt Sophy took a business-like grip of her parasol, and approached the shrubbery on tiptoe. She could not see the person on the other side of it, but she judged his position from the rustle she had heard.

The parasol rose in the air.

There was another rustle of the shrubs; the person outside was evidently trying to peer into the garden. Aunt Sophy judged the position of his head with great accuracy; and brought down the parasol with a tremendous swipe.

Whack!

The parasol crushed through the shrubbery, and landed on the head that was peering over the fence.

There was a terrific yell.

"Ow! Ow-yow! Yaroooh! Wharrer you at? Ow! Yow!"

"Got him!" gasped Aunt Sophy, with ferocious satisfaction. "Now, you bad man——"

"Yaroooh! Ow, ow, ow!"

Billy Bunter staggered away from the fence, his ventriloquism finished, holding his head in both hands. Aunt Sophy had broken her parasol, and she had nearly broken Bunter's head. The fat junior did not stay for any more. He fled down the path, and vanished before Aunt Sophy had a chance of seeing him. But his wild yells showed that he had been hurt; and the Roman-nosed lady was satisfied.

She returned to her seat with a grim smile.

"You may read on, Amy!" she said. "I don't think that person will trouble us any more."

Aunt Sophy was right; the person didn't! The person had retreated to the towing-path, holding his head in his hands and groaning. Amy read on.

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

Horace Coker heard the groans of his ally, and snorted. He did not waste any sympathy on Bunter. He strode angrily away from the gate. He had far from finished his interesting conversation with Amy; and now the fat duffer had spoiled it all. He found Bunter on the towing-path, clasping his head and groaning.

"You silly ass!" growled Coker.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Did she hit you?"

"Yow-ow! Did she hit me?" gasped Bunter. "Do you think I'm doing this for fun, you thumping ass? Ow, ow, ow! Why didn't you tell me your beastly aunt was a prizefighter? Ow! Yow! The old brute has jolly nearly broken my skull! Yow-ow!"

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FRANK RICHARDS

Contributes a Splendid, Complete School Tale in our New Saturday Companion Paper—

"CHUCKLES," 1st

"Look here; go and try again——"

"Catch me!" groaned Bunter. "I'm not going near that blessed old Suffragette any more! I'd rather go into a lion's den. Yow-ow-ow!"

"You shouldn't have let her spot you, you fat fool!"

"Yow-ow! How did I know she was sneaking on to me like a Red Indian? Ow-yow."

"Well, try again—I tell you I haven't had a chance——"

"Yow-ow! I won't! I'll see you hanged first! Your beastly aunt ought to be in Holloway along with the Suffragettes. Yow-ow! I'd like to forcibly feed her—yow-ow! I'd like to scalp her! She's busted my head! Ow! I'm brained! Yaroooh!"

"Look here, you fat idiot——"

"Don't jaw to me!" howled Bunter. "I tell you I'm not going near that old Gorgon again. I wouldn't go near her for a thousand quid! Ow-yow!"

"Idiot!"

Coker strode angrily away. The game was up, for that occasion, at least. Without the aid of the Greysfriars ventriloquist, there was no getting rid of Aunt Sophy; and in Aunt Sophy's presence he dare not show himself. He had succeeded in speaking to Cousin Amy, and that was all; he had not had time to make any plans—to make any arrangements. Coker was exasperated.

"I say, Coker," called out Bunter, forgetting for a moment that he had been brained. "I say, what about those tarts?"

Coker did not reply; he walked on.

"Coker, you rotter! What about that ginger-beer?"

Coker disappeared along the towing-path.

"Oh, the rotter!" groaned Bunter. "Beast! I'm jolly well not going to be swindled! Ow-yow! Oh, my napper! Ow-ow-ow!"

"Ow-ow-ow! Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked round in surprise, and met the grinning gaze of the Famous Five. He blinked at them dolefully.

"I say, you fellows——"

"So you've been ventriloquising, and got caught in the act," chuckled Bob Cherry. "Awfully deep of Coker! I never thought he had brains enough for a scheme like that! But Aunt Sophy is rather a tough customer to tackle, I should say. Ha, ha, ha!"

"The toughness as the august Sophy is——"

"Terrific! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!" groaned Bunter. "I've got a bump on my head the size of a cricket-ball! The old brute very nearly brained me! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, lucky she couldn't quite brain you!" grinned Nugent. "That's where you have the advantage in not having any brains——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" snarled Bunter. "And Coker promised me no end of jam-tarts and ginger-pop for getting his beastly aunt away while he jawed to his silly cousin, and now he's going to swindle me—— Yow! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Bunter.

And he rolled away, still rubbing his head—in search of Horace Coker.

Harry Wharton & Co. stepped into the boat, and pulled away, chuckling. The discovery of Coker's secret struck them as funny, and as they thought over it, they thought that they could see more fun in store. And so they were hilarious as they rowed back to Greysfriars to tea.

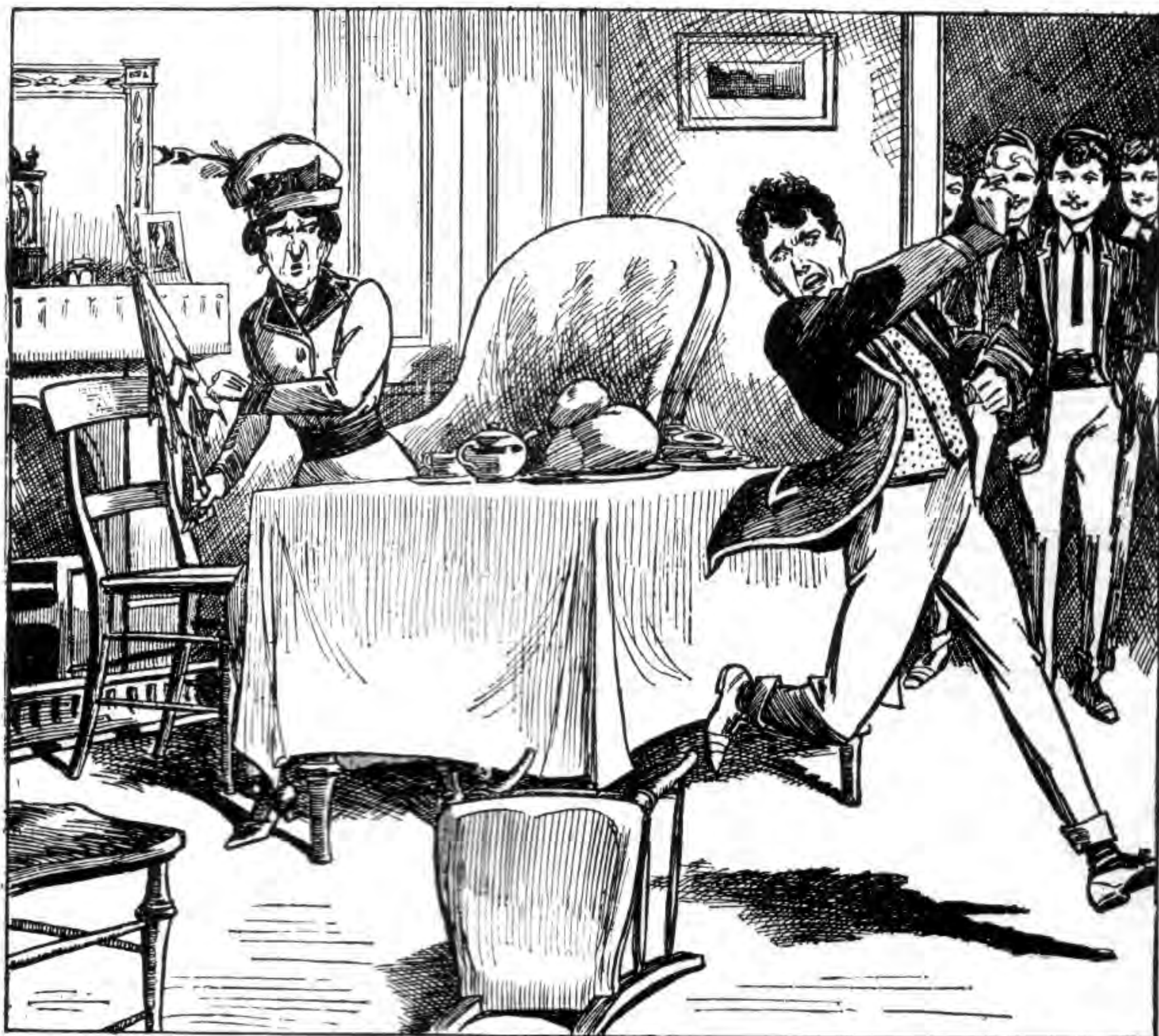
THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Coker is Not Pally.

POTTER and Greene were puzzled. Potter and Greene of the Fifth Form at Greysfriars had the honour and distinction of sharing Horace Coker's study.

As Horace Coker was rolling in money, and Potter and Greene were not overblessed with that useful commodity, they were generally very nice indeed to Coker. Tea in Coker's study was usually quite a festive meal, and when Coker stood jam and ham and eggs and sardines and other good things, Potter and Greene would listen cheerfully to Coker laying down the law on all sorts of subjects. They would let Coker tell them all about cricket, and keep perfectly serious faces; they would listen to his views on the conduct of Wingate, who was captain of Greysfriars and never would put Coker into the First Eleven, and they would not smile. Indeed, a fellow seldom had two more faithful pals than Coker had in Potter and Greene of the Fifth.

Only on rare occasions, when Coker was stony did Potter and Greene show signs of getting fed-up with Coker. On those occasions they sometimes told him what they thought



Coker dodged a little too late, and he received the sunshade across his shoulders. He gave a wild roar, and staggered away. Whack! Whack! The sunshade was a wreck and Coker felt very like a wreck too. He made a wild rush for the study door! (See Chapter 14.)

of him, and there were rows in the study. But Coker was a good-natured fellow, and he never bore malice, being always willing to forget offences, so long as he was treated with the respect due to him as Horace Coker.

Just now Potter and Greene were decidedly puzzled. It was tea-time, and Coker had come in from a walk. He had gone out with Bunter, but he had come back alone—frowning. He strode into his study, and threw himself into an armchair, and frowned yet more deeply. Something had evidently happened to disturb the serenity of the great Coker, and his study-mates wondered what it was.

But when Potter ventured to hint that it was tea-time, Coker made the unexpected retort:

"Blow tea!"

"I'm rather hungry," murmured Greene.

"Blow you, too!" said Coker.

"Ahem! Stony?" asked Potter. "I'm rather that way myself. Otherwise——"

"Same here," said Greene. "If I were in funds——"

"Oh, don't jaw!" said Coker.

His study-mates glared at him. They had been awaiting Coker's return rather anxiously, as it was getting on for tea-time. But he had returned in a cross and unreasonable mood.

"Look here——" began Potter.

"Oh, rats!"

"But I say, Coker——"

"Don't bother!"

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FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

"A COOL CARD!"

Potter and Greene exchanged glances. They were greatly inclined to pile on the great Coker, and use him to knock the dust out of the study carpet. But they were hungry, and tea depended on Coker.

Coker stretched himself in the armchair, his long legs extended, and his hands thrust deep into his trousers pockets. His manly brow was corrugated with deep lines of thought. Potter and Greene regarded him in perplexed silence.

They waited for him to speak, but Coker did not speak. He seemed plunged into deep and unpleasant reflections.

The silence was broken by a tap at the door, and a fat face, adorned with a pair of large spectacles, looked in.

"I say, is Coker here? Oh, here you are! I say, Coker, what about those jam-tarts you owe me?" said Billy Bunter persuasively.

Coker glared round.

"Outside!" he snapped.

"Oh, really, Coker——"

"Chuck that fat beast out!" said Coker. "It's hard lines if I can't have a minute's peace to think in my own study! Fellows jawing about tea, and now a rotten fag coming and bothering about jam-tarts! I call it rotten!"

"But I say, Coker, you know you said—really, you know——"

"I think a fellow's pals might see that he isn't bothered by a fat beast of a fag when he's trying to think something out," said Coker, addressing space.

"Certainly, old chap!" said Potter, only too glad to see

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. Order Early.

the great Coker showing signs of recognising his existence again, and thereby scenting a prospect of tea. "Out you go, Bunter!"

"Look here——"

"Outside!"

And Potter and Greene seized the Owl of the Remove together, and swung him into the passage. Billy Bunter roared indignantly:

"I say—— Leggo! I say, you fellows, Coker owes me some jam-tarts—— Oh! Yow!"

Billy Bunter fled along the passage, and Potter and Greene commenced operations with their boots. The fat junior being thus disposed of, Potter and Greene returned into the study, and fixed their eyes hopefully upon Coker.

Coker had thrown himself back into the armchair, his eyes fixed upon space, and his brow corrugated once more in deep thought.

"I say, Cokey, old fellow!" murmured Greene, venturing to break the silence at last.

Coker did not reply.

"Coker, old chap," said Potter affectionately, "do you know it's past tea-time?"

Coker grunted.

"Don't you feel peckish, Coker?"

Grunt.

"I suppose we're going to have tea—what?"

Grunt.

Potter's hopes sank to zero, and Greene's accompanied them. There was no getting anything out of Coker—not even words. There was only one possible conclusion—Coker was stony, and there wasn't going to be any tea. And at that depressing reflection both Potter and Greene felt naturally indignant at having wasted so much time upon Coker.

"What's the matter with you, you silly ass?" demanded Potter, with a very decided change of tone.

Horace Coker was no longer an old fellow or an old chap, apparently. He had changed with startling suddenness into a silly ass.

Grunt.

"Are you understudying the prize porker in the Courtfield Cattle Show, Coker?" asked Greene sarcastically. "If so, I must say you are doing it very well—you're doing it quite to the life!"

"To the manner born!" said Potter.

Grunt.

Still Coker refused to be drawn. Potter and Greene were as much exasperated now as they were puzzled, and they were very curious, too, to know what could possibly be the matter with Coker. Coker had his moods and tempers, so to speak; but his study-mates had never seen him quite like this before. To all remarks he replied only with the same inarticulate grunt, and it was not surprising that Potter and Greene were getting fed-up.

"I suppose you think it's entertaining to sit there and grunt like a bally pig in a bally sty!" howled Potter, quite losing patience. "Well, if you think that it's entertaining, Coker, I can jolly well tell you that it ain't entertaining!"

"Not a bit of it!" said Greene. "Of all the pigs that ever pigged, I think Coker is about the piggiest! That's my opinion!"

Grunt.

"Have you gone deaf?" roared Potter. "You champion ass—you thumping duffer—haven't you got a voice left? What's the matter with you?"

"Eh?" said Coker irritably. "What?"

"Oh, you've found your voice at last, have you?" said Potter sardonically. "It ain't a pretty one, but I'm glad you've found it! When are we going to have tea?"

"I don't want any tea!"

"Ain't you hungry?"

"No—yes! Don't bother!"

"He doesn't know whether he's hungry or not," said Greene, with a snort. "I suppose it's sunstroke. I thought it was sunstroke this afternoon when I saw him going out with Bunter, with a flower in his coat. Yes, it's sunstroke!"

"Is it sunstroke, Coker?"

Grunt.

"Look here, you burbling jabberwock——"

Coker sat upright in his chair, and glared.

"Can't you shut up?" he demanded. "What do you want to go on parroting for, like a pair of blessed Poll-parrots, when a chap's trying to think?"

"Oh, you're trying to think, are you?" sneered Potter. "Not much good your trying, Coker! What have you got to think with, I'd like to know?"

"If you're stony, say so, and we'll go and try our luck in Hall," said Greene. "No good you trying to think where tea's coming from, if you're short of cash."

"Tea! Fathead!" snorted Coker, with withering contempt. "Do you think I'm thinking about tea? Br-r-r-r!"

"Well, I don't see why you can't think about tea at tea-

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time," said Greene, reasonably enough. "If there's anything the matter, tell your pals about it, and we'll see it's all right. We'll talk it over, over tea, if there's anything awry——"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Now, be pally, Coker, old man——"

"Oh, cheese it! I'm trying to think!"

"I suppose it gives you a pain," agreed Potter, with heavy sarcasm. "It would! Hadn't you better put a wet towel round your napper?"

"If you fellows don't stop jawing," said Coker, with concentrated ferocity, "I'll sling you out of the study on your necks! I've got something to think out, and I can't think it out with a couple of Poll-parrots jabbering in both ears! Shut up!"

"Look here, Coker——"

"If you're not off your silly rocker, just explain——"

Coker gave a growl and jumped up. He seized a cricket-stump from the corner of the study, and rushed at his study mates. His expression was so ferocious that Potter and Greene were quite alarmed.

Potter made a wild leap through the doorway, just escaping a lunge of the business end of the stump.

"Oh, my hat! He's cracked!" Potter gasped.

Greene, who was further from the door, dodged round the table in great alarm. Coker pursued him, brandishing the stump. Greene made a wild break for the door, and the stump whistled down behind him, missing him by a few inches. Greene bounded into the passage, breathless.

"Oh, my hat——"

"Look here, Coker——"

Slam!

The door closed violently. Potter and Greene exchanged looks, and yelled through the keyhole at Coker, and then hastily departed before he could come out with the stump. Decidedly Coker was not pally.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

All Together.

"TODD! Where's Todd?"

Billy Bunter blinked into No. 7 Study in the Remove passage in search of his study-mate, Peter Todd. Tom Dutton, the deaf junior, who shared No. 7 with Bunter and Todd, was doing lines at the table, but there was no sign of Peter. Bunter dabbed Dutton on the back, and Tom Dutton looked round with a grunt.

"Where's Todd?"

"Eh?"

"I've been swindled!" said Bunter, his fat face red with indignation and fury. "Todd's got to help me get my rights. Where is he?"

"Not that I know of," said Dutton, with a shake of the head.

"What?"

"There isn't any fight that I know of."

"Oh, crumbs! Where's Todd, you fathead? Have you seen Peter?"

"Whose feet?"

"Nobody's feet, you ass!" shrieked Bunter. "I'm looking for Todd. I want Todd."

"If you mean that my feet are odd, you'd better say so plainly, and I'll wallop you," said Dutton, frowning. "What's the matter with my feet, you silly owl?"

Billy Bunter gasped. Great lung power was required for a conversation with Dutton of the Remove, and Bunter was short of wind. But he wanted very much to find Peter Todd, so he collected his vocal powers, as it were, and tried again.

"I want to find Todd!" he bawled. "Tell me where Todd is!"

"I haven't seen any bodies, and I don't know what you're talking about," said Dutton crossly. "If you're pulling my leg——"

"Todd!" shrieked Bunter. "I want Todd!"

"Oh, Todd! Why don't you speak plainly? I'm not deaf, but I can't make out what you say if you mumble in your tummy like that. He's gone to tea in No. 1. Let me get on with my lines, and don't jaw."

And Tom Dutton resumed his lines. Billy Bunter snorted as he rolled out of No. 7.

"Gone to tea!" he muttered wrathfully. "The beast! He didn't tell me he was going to tea. The rotter! I'm jolly well going, too, I know that!"

And Billy Bunter rolled along to No. 1 Study, and bumped the door open, and toddled in.

There was a merry party gathered round the table in No. 1, which belonged to Wharton and Nugent. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Inky were there, and Peter Todd and Mark Linley. There was quite a festive spread on the table,

and Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed through his big spectacles at the sight of it.

"So you're here, Toddy?" he growled. "I've been looking for you. I think somebody might offer a chap a chair."

"I'll offer you a boot if you don't travel," said Todd.

"Oh, really, Todd! I say, you fellows, I've been swindled!"

"Go on!" murmured Bob Cherry. "That's the first time you've ever conjugated the verb to swindle in the passive voice, Bunter. It's generally, with you, 'I swindle'—not 'I am swindled.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you, I've been swindled!" roared Bunter. "I think a chap's own study-mate might stand by him when he's been swindled."

"Can't stand by you," said Todd. "You can sit by me if you like, if you can find a chair."

"I'll try that cake," said Bunter, helping himself. There was no chair to be had, but that was a trifling circumstance. The feed was the important thing in Billy Bunter's eyes, and he lost no time in beginning. "I say, you fellows, you pretend that you're the head of the Remove in this study. Well, then, you ought not to let a Remove chap be swindled by a beastly Fifth-Former! Coker's swindled me! I look to you fellows to help me to get my rights."

"Bow-wow!" was Bob Cherry's contribution to the discussion.

"I helped Coker this afternoon," went on Bunter, with his mouth full of cake. "I stood by him like a Trojan! He wanted to get his silly aunt out of the way while he jawed to his silly cousin. He promised me a dozen jam-tarts—twopenny ones—if I played a trick to get the old cat away!"

"The what?" said Todd.

"The old cat!"

"Will you lend me a stump, Wharton? I'm trying to teach that fat boulder manners."

"I—I mean the old lady," said Bunter hastily. "Well, she hit me over the head with a beastly parasol, the old old abem!—lady! Look at that bump on my head!"

The juniors looked at it. But if Bunter expected sympathy, he was disappointed. There was a ripple of laughter in No. 1 Study. Apparently the juniors considered that bump on Bunter's head as funny.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" snorted Bunter. "Of course, I couldn't go on ventriloquising with a blessed old—ahem!—lady going for me with a parasol, so I hooked it. And now Coker won't pay up. I went to his study, and Potter and Greene kicked me out. You mayn't believe it, but they did. Gimme that cake, Todd, you beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There isn't anything to cackle at!" roared Bunter. "I was jolly nearly brained by that old Gorgon! And now Coker won't pay up. After all I've done for him, too! I want you fellows to back me up. I'm not going to be swindled. The silly ass is spoony on his silly cousin, you know, and that blessed old aunt can't stand him at any price. No wonder, either. If Coker were my nephew, I know I'd jolly well give him a thundering good hiding every day regularly. Are you going to pass me that cake, Todd, or are you not?"

"Not!" said Todd.

"Well, I'll have the jam, then," said Bunter. "I suppose you fellows don't mind if I finish the jam." Bunter apparently took silence for consent, for he proceeded forthwith to finish the jam. "Now, what are you fellows going to do? It's up to you to prevent a chap in your own Form from being swindled by a Fifth-Former. Any more jam?"

"That's the lot."

Bunter grunted.

"I must say you chaps don't look after a fellow very well when you have him in to tea. Never mind, I'll sample the biscuits."

"My hat!"

The biscuits occupied Bunter's attention for some minutes. The chums of the Remove had nearly finished tea, which was fortunate, for Bunter was travelling through what was left at a great speed. The biscuits were finished, and Bunter secured the cake at last, and finished that. Then he blinked round the table.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Like something more?" asked Frank Nugent sarcastically. "You've left the milk-jug and the jam-jar!"

"I know I'm jolly hungry," said Bunter. "I had a long walk with that beast Coker, and now he won't pay up! I must say this is a rather measly spread to have a fellow in to. You might do a chap better than this."

The Remove fellows could only look at him. As Bunter had invited himself to tea, and finished everything that was on the table, his remark was cool, to say the least.

"Now, about Coker," went on Bunter, after blinking round carefully, but in vain, in search of something more to eat. "I think you fellows ought to see that I get my due. Don't you?"

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FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

"A COOL CARD!"

EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

Bob Cherry closed one eye at his chums.

"Right on the nail, Bunter!" he said heartily. "We'll see that you get your due."

"Oh, good! Just settle what's to be done, and all do it together," suggested Bunter.

"Ripping idea! You fellows ready?"

The Co. grinned, and they all rose to their feet at once.

"Quite ready!"

"Good! We'll do exactly as Bunter suggests settle what to do, and all do it at once," said Bob.

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"Come on, then!"

Bob Cherry raised his boot, and Bunter started back in alarm.

"What—what are you going to do, you ass?" he ejaculated.

"We're going to kick you out of the study, and we're all going to do it together," explained Bob. "That's your due!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now then, all together!"

"Look here! I— Oh! Whoop!"

Billy Bunter was swung round, and then the chums of the Remove acted—all together. An army of boots met together on Billy Bunter's fat person, and he departed through the doorway like a stone from a catapult.

"Now, then, all together!" roared Bob Cherry. "Jump on him!"

"Yaroo!"

Bunter did not wait to be jumped upon. He picked himself up with wonderful celerity, considering the weight he had to lift, and disappeared down the passage at a record speed. The chums of the Remove had given him his due—though Bunter did not look at it in that light—and they were satisfied. Bunter wasn't satisfied; but then, as Bob Cherry philosophically remarked, some people never are satisfied.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Got It!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. grinned when they met Coker of the Fifth in the Close the next day.

Coker of the Fifth was wearing a very thoughtful expression.

Apparently he had not yet succeeded in thinking out the problem.

Coker's plan had been quite good. With the assistance of the Greyfriars ventriloquist to get the truculent Aunt Sophonisba off the scene, he had succeeded in exchanging a few words with Cousin Amy. But that was all. Coker wanted Cousin Amy to come to Greyfriars. Coker would have been very proud to show off his pretty cousin before all the school, under the envious eyes of seniors and juniors.

And why shouldn't Cousin Amy come? Because two old ladies had quarrelled with one another, two cousins who had been great pals were separated. Coker felt that it was unjust, that it wasn't fair—that it wasn't cricket. And certainly Coker was right there—it wasn't.

But he couldn't see what to do. Another visit to River Lodge was out of the question; Aunt Sophy would be on the watch now.

And after that terrific crack on the head which had broken Aunt Sophy's parasol, the Remove ventriloquist's services would not be available. Billy Bunter would sooner have understudied Daniel, and entered a lion's den, than have ventured within reach of Aunt Sophonisba's powerful arm again.

But what was to be done?

Horace Coker prided himself upon being a brainy chap. It is true that the other fellows mostly regarded Coker as an ass. That was simply a difference of opinion. As a brainy chap, Coker felt that he ought to be able to think of some way out of the difficulty.

But he hadn't done so, so far. He wore a deep wrinkle of thought in his brow, and that was all. So far, nothing but the wrinkle had resulted from his mental efforts.

"Penny for 'em!" Bob Cherry remarked affably, as the juniors encountered the great Coker in the Close after dinner.

Coker started.

"Eh! Oh, sheer off, you fags!" he said brusquely.

"How is Aunt Sophy?" asked Nugent.

"Still running?" inquired Johnny Bull.

Coker frowned and stalked away. The chums of the Remove grinned cheerfully.

"Poor old Coker in a fix!" sighed Bob Cherry. "Barred off by a ferocious aunt! I call it very rough on Coker. And what a wrinkle he's growing! Looks as if he's been trying to think, or something of that sort. He shouldn't start these

things suddenly. We shall have our Coker collapsing from brain-fag soon."

"There goes Bunter on his track!" chuckled Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter had been thinking about the debt due to him from Coker, all the morning. Indeed, his mind had been so engrossed with the subject, that when Mr. Quelch had demanded to know what was the staple product of Lancashire, Bunter had absent-mindedly replied "Jam tarts!"; much to the astonishment of the Form-master, who promptly gave him fifty lines in return for that piece of information.

After morning lessons Bunter had looked for Coker, but had not found him; Coker, as a matter of fact, having retired to the Cloisters for a quiet think. During dinner Bunter watched the Fifth Form table, however, determined that Coker should not escape him again. And after dinner he tracked him across the Close with a deadly eye. If persistence could do it, Bunter intended to have those jam-tarts—two-penny ones—and that ginger-beer. He had "done" many fellows in his time; but it roused his indignation to boiling-point to be done himself. His thoughts ran incessantly on the jam-tarts. Like Rachel of old, he mourned for that which was lost, and would not be comforted.

Coker was striding away with his usual big strides, when the Owl of the Remove came panting after him.

"I say, Coker—"

Coker did not turn his head.

"Coker, old man, back-pedal a bit; I want to speak to you!"

Bunter put on a spurt, and reached Coker, and jerked at his sleeve.

Coker looked round irritably.

"Cut off, you fat bounder."

"What about those tarts?"

"Eh!"

"You don't mean to say you've forgotten!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "You know what you promised me for spoofing your blessed aunt—"

"Look here," said Coker desperately. "If you could do it again, Bunter, I—I'd stand you anything you like—"

"No jolly fear!" said Bunter promptly. "The old cat—"

"Eh?"

"The old lady nearly brained me. I've got a frightful



AMBITIONS—No. 19

The wild and romantic life of the cowboy in the Wild West figures largely in the ambitions of many a lad who is tired of the quiet life of the Old Country. To the hardy and open-air lad, the cowboy's life offers considerable attraction, but it is far from being the free and picturesque life that a certain type of fiction would lead us to believe.

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The sight of Coker, crimson with rage, making the tea, almost sent his Form-fellows into hysterics. "Now pour it out!" snapped Miss Bella. Coker poured out the tea, glowering, and after that Miss Bella kept him very busy passing things, and pouring out fresh cups of tea! (See Chapter 15.)

bump on my napper. I shouldn't wonder if I get brain-fever. I'm jolly well not going near the place again. But you've got to pay up all the same. Look here, Coker, old man, you rely on me," said Bunter patronisingly. "I'll help you out!"

Coker snorted.

"You can't do anything but ventriloquise, you fat idiot, and that's no good! You haven't the brains of a bunny rabbit!"

"Anybody in the Remove will tell you what a cute chap I am," said Bunter joffily. "The fellows often come to me—ahem!—when they're in a fix. I'm really a sort of mentor in the Remove. Guide, philosopher, and friend to all the chaps, you know. Some fellows are born brains, and I'm one of them. I know what you want, and I'm just the chap to help you, if you take my advice; I am really, Coker."

Coker looked at him musingly. He was at the end of his own resources. Try as he might, his brain-powers were not equal to the task he had set himself. Whatever dodge he thought of for seeing Cousin Amy, the awe-inspiring figure of Aunt Sophonisba stood like a lion in the path. Potter and Greene could not help him. He knew they would only grin if he confided his worry to them. And, besides, they had been decidedly standoffish since the trouble in the study the previous evening. Bunter certainly wasn't clever, but he had the reputation of being exceedingly sly. It was barely

possible that the cunning of the Owl of the Remove might be of service, where Coker's own mighty brain-powers were at fault. Coker remembered the fable of the mouse that helped the lion, and his expression relaxed.

"What could you do?" he asked ungraciously.

"Let's go to the tuckshop, and—and talk it over," said Bunter.

"Oh, rats!"

But Coker followed Bunter to the tuckshop. In spite of the failure of the visit to River Lodge, he admitted that he owed Bunter the promised recompense, and now that his temper had cooled down, he was willing to keep his word. He threw a half-crown on Mrs. Mimble's counter.

"Feed!" he snapped.

Billy Bunter did not wait to be told twice. He had just had his dinner, but that made no difference to Bunter; he was equal to all demands in that line. His fat, round face glowed with satisfaction as he piled into jam-tarts and cream-puffs and ginger-beer. The half-crown disappeared in record time. Billy Bunter felt, like Alexander, ready to conquer new worlds. But Coker had had enough, if he hadn't.

"I say, Coker, I could do with some more—"

"I dare say you could," snapped Coker. "But you're not getting anything more out of me, you porpoise!"

Coker stalked out of the tuckshop. Billy Bunter was after him like a shot. The moody Fifth-Former sat down on one

of the old benches under the elms, and Bunter plumped down beside him. Coker stared at him grimly.

Billy Bunter was all eagerness to help. If he could help, he saw before him a vista of unending jam-tarts and ginger-pop. Coker had plenty of money, and he spent it like water when he wanted anything.

"I say, Coker, you tell me all about it," said Bunter encouragingly. "I'm just the chap to help you out of a difficulty, you know. I'm an awfully brainy fellow; I have lots of ideas. Look here, you want to see that lovely girl—"

Coker's face relaxed.

"She is a stunning girl, isn't she?" he said.

"Ripping!" said Bunter. "Simply scrumptious! It's a great pity the old lady can't stand you—"

"None of your cheek, you fat beast! She's quarrelled with my other aunt, that's all."

"That—that's what I mean, of course," said Bunter hastily.

"Of course, she must really like you personally. I don't see how she could help it. Ahem!"

"Oh, don't talk rot!"

"Ahem! Of course, you ought to see your cousin if you want to—"

"I should jolly well say so," growled Coker. "We used to be topping pals, when Aunt Sophy must go and quarrel with Aunt Judy, and spoil it all. Amy's promised lots of times to come and have tea in my study here. She'd come, too, only—only how am I to fix it?"

"Write to her," suggested Bunter.

"You fat duffer, do you think I haven't written? Aunt Sophy makes her send my letters back unopened."

"Telegraph—"

"Fathead! I've tried that, and the telegrams came back in an envelope addressed by Aunt Sophy."

"Telephone, then!" said Bunter desperately.

"Idiot! River Lodge ain't on the telephone. I've looked in the directory."

"Oh!"

Coker had evidently given the matter a great deal of thought. Bunter wrinkled his fat brows over the problem. Coker stared moodily at the ground. Communications were cut off with Cousin Amy, and he did not see any means of reopening them. And he did not expect any useful suggestion from Bunter. But there was a chance. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings—that was Coker's reflection.

"Look here, you fat chump," said Coker. "You're a sly beast—all the fellows say you're as sly as Old Nick. You're always playing some deep dodge on somebody, just to get a feed, or something rotten like that—"

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"Well, if you could think of some dodge to get into communication with my cousin, and make the arrangements for her to come and visit Greyfriars, I'd feed you up with tuck till you burst!" said Coker. "Now try!"

An offer like that was quite enough to make Billy Bunter think till he caught brain-fever.

He thought hard.

"My hat!" he ejaculated suddenly.

Coker looked at him.

"Well, ass?"

"I've got it!" gasped Bunter.

"Got what?"

"The dodge!"

"Oh, rats!"

"But I have!" yelled Bunter excitedly. "I've got it—easy as rolling off a form! I tell you I've got it!"

"Well, what is it?" said Coker, not very hopefully.

"Advertise!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER. The "Personal."

"ADVERTISE!"

"Yes!"

"Advertise!" repeated Coker. "Are you off your rocker, you silly porpoise? What are you talking about?"

But Billy Bunter's eyes were gleaming through his spectacles with the light of genius. He was convinced that he had "got it." And he was very proud of having solved the knotty problem, and "got it!"

"I mean it," he exclaimed, eagerly. "You know what Spokeshave—I mean Shakespeare—says: 'Sweet are the uses of advertisement'—or something like that. Everybody advertises nowadays—you can't do anything without advertising. Haven't you ever seen the 'Personal Column' in a newspaper? People who're not allowed to write to one another, you know, put in a personal ad., and the other party sees it—"

Coker shook his head.

"They don't get the daily papers at River Lodge," he said. "And Amy wouldn't read the personal column, anyway."

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FRANK RICHARDS

Contributes a Splendid, Complete School Tale
in our New Saturday Companion Paper—

"CHUCKLES," 1d.

"Not a daily paper—the 'Friardale Gazette,'" Bunter explained. "She reads that; she was reading it to your aunt in the garden yesterday."

"By Jove!" said Coker.

Bunter grinned with satisfaction. Coker of the Fifth was evidently beginning to think that there was something in it.

"There's a personal column in the 'Gazette,'" continued Bunter. "Fellows and girls put in paragraphs to one another, you know, and arrange meetings, and so on. If Miss Amy reads the paper, you can depend upon it that she reads that—girls are awfully curious. Well, then, she would be bound to see it. The paper comes out to-morrow, and they take in advertisements for it up to seven o'clock this evening. Lots of time."

Coker shook his head.

"I couldn't put my cousin's name in the paper," he said. "I suppose she'd see the paragraph all right, but so would other people. I can't get my cousin talked about, you duffer. It's N.G."

"You don't catch on," said Bunter patronisingly. "I don't mean put the name."

"Then how would Amy know it was for her?"

"There are ways and means. They never put the name in these personal advertisements," said Bunter. "Sometimes a pet name, sometimes initials, and sometimes something else. For instance, suppose I wanted to put in a paragraph for you without mentioning your name. Well, I should word it like this: 'Will the chap who was talking to me under the elms at half-past one on Thursday, meet me at such-and-such a place?' See? If you read it, you'd know it meant you, and nobody else would know."

"By Jove!" said Coker, impressed. "You're not such a silly idiot as all the fellows think, I will say that, Bunter!"

"It's as easy as winking," said Bunter. "Didn't I tell you to rely on me? I'm a regular dab at getting a chap out of a difficulty. Of course, you couldn't put in such an ad. as: 'Will Amy come and see Horace?' Your aunt might see it, and she would take jolly good care that Amy didn't come."

"Of course she would," agreed Coker. "But don't you speak of my cousin as Amy, you cheeky porpoise. My cousin's Miss Blaine to you."

Bunter glared. Horace Coker was so exceedingly plain-spoken, that it was a little difficult to get on with him. But Billy Bunter thought of the unlimited tuck which was to be the reward of his ingenuity, and he restrained his indignation.

"Ahem! Well, you see what I mean. Amy—"

"Miss Blaine—"

"Well, Miss Blaine, then!" snorted Bunter angrily. "Miss Blaine will read the paragraph, and it must be worded so that she will understand, and nobody else will."

"That's right," said Coker, with a nod. "Not much danger of Aunt Sophy seeing it. She doesn't read the papers herself—she makes Amy read them to her. And if Amy spots the paragraph while she's reading the paper out to Aunt Sophy, she'll have sense enough to keep that bit to herself. Amy's got a lot of sense for a girl."

Coker reflected.

"But how is it going to be worded?" he went on. "Amy's got to understand it, but nobody else; I don't want all the cads in Friardale making jokes about my cousin. It's got to be wrapped up awfully carefully, and yet it's got to be plain enough for Amy to understand. I don't see how it's to be done."

"Leave it to me," said Bunter loftily. "I'll draw it up for you!" He took out a stump of pencil and a greasy fragment of paper from his pocket, and rested the latter on the back of the bench to write. "Now, lemme see—something like this. You don't mind your own name appearing, of course? You want it clear that it comes from you."

"Yea, that's all right!"

"If anybody sees your name, it won't matter. If the fellows chip you—"

Coker grunted.

"If anybody chips me, I'll give him a jolly good hiding!" he remarked. "I'd like to see any fellow chip me, that's all!"

"Something like this, then! Suppose you ask Amy—"

"Miss Blaine!"

"Suppose you ask Miss Blaine to come to tea in your study on Saturday—"

"Saturday's all right," agreed Coker. "It's a half-holiday, and I shall be able to look after her all right, and take her round to see the First Eleven match with Redclyffe. As it happens, I'm not playing in the match; that idiot Wingate doesn't know a good cricketer when he sees one, and—"

"Make it Saturday, then. No need to fix the time—any time in the afternoon—girls are always late, and they can't keep appointments, you know, and Amy—"

"Miss Blaine!"

"Miss Blaine will be just like the rest. We'll say Saturday afternoon."

"Good!"

"Here goes, then. Something in this style: 'H. Coker wishes to see a certain party on Saturday afternoon, to tea in his study at Greyfriars.'"

"I can't allude to my cousin as a certain party. It's vulgar!"

"Look here, Coker—"

"It won't do! If you can't think of anything better than that, it's N.G. Besides, how would she know she was the certain party alluded to?"

"I was only putting a case!" howled Bunter. "Let me finish!"

"Well, don't put cases when we're talking business," said Coker, with a frown. "Just put it how it is to appear in the paper!"

"Of all the silly idiots—"

"Eh?"

"I—I mean, all right! We've got to decide how to word it to make Amy understand—"

"Miss Blaine!" roared Coker ferociously.

"How to word it to make Miss Blaine understand, without giving the game away to anybody else. Have you a pet name for her, for instance, that nobody else knows? I have a cousin I call Snookey, for instance."

"You might!" growled Coker. "But I'd like to hear anybody calling my cousin Snookey, that's all! I'd just like to hear 'em!"

Billy Bunter contained his impatience with great difficulty. The obtuseness of the great Coker made Bunter's task very hard. Bunter wondered inwardly how an utterly howling idiot like Coker had ever risen higher than the Second Form at Greyfriars. But he did not mention that to Coker.

"I—I mean, have you any pet name for her—like that—"

"Of course I haven't! Do you think I'd call her Snookey? You must be a silly ass! All very well for your cousin, I dare say," said Coker with a sniff.

"Then you always call her Amy?"

"Of course I do. It's her name, ain't it?"

"Then it's no good heading it with a pet name, if she hasn't one. Lemme see, what is the colour of her eyes?"

"What's that got to do with you, you silly chump? None of your beastly cheek!"

"I mean, you could put it, 'H. Coker wishes to see the Lady with Blue Eyes, whom he was speaking to on Wednesday afternoon.'"

Coker shook his head.

"N.G.," he said.

"But why?"

"Amy hasn't got blue eyes. Her eyes are grey."

"You—you silly ass!" gasped Bunter. "What difference does that make?"

"Oh, you're too stupid to live!" said Coker. "What's the good of addressing a lady with blue eyes, when Amy's eyes are grey?"

"Make it grey in the ad., you chump!" howled Bunter.

"I was only putting a case!"

"I told you not to put cases," said Coker, with a frown. "Let's talk business. The bell will be going for classes soon. It doesn't seem to me that we're getting any forrader, with you jawing and putting silly cases all the time."

Bunter breathed hard. He felt thankful that he was not Coker's Form-master. How Mr. Prout of the Fifth could endure Coker in his Form without slaughtering him twice a day was a marvel to Bunter. He scribbled again on the paper:

"H. Coker wishes to see the pretty girl with grey eyes who was down by the river on Wednesday. Will she come to tea in his study at Greyfriars on Saturday afternoon?" said Bunter, with considerable satisfaction. "Isn't that all right?"

Coker read it over carefully, and nodded.

"That's not so bad," he remarked. "Amy is a pretty girl with grey eyes; she's bound to recognise that description at once. And my name will show her that it comes from me, and that it means her. I think that's all right."

"Then all you've got to do is to take this ad. down to the office of the 'Friardale Gazette,' after lessons," said Bunter. "They'll put it in, and it will appear in the paper to-morrow, Friday. If Amy—"

"I told you to call my cousin, Miss Blaine!"

"If Miss Blaine sees it—and she's sure to see it—she'll tumble at once. And if she wants to see you—"

"Of course she wants to see me!" growled Coker. "Amy and I are great pals—or were, before those two old donkeys quarrelled!"

"Then she'll come, and everything in the garden will be lovely!" said Bunter. "And I'll tell you what I'll do, Coker. I'll come to tea at the same time, and help to entertain your cousin!"

"You jolly well won't!" said Coker. "I'll have you to tea some time when my Uncle William comes. He's a beast, and it would serve him right!"

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FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

"A COOL CARD!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"Nuff said. Gimme that paper!" Coker put the "personal" in his pocket. "That's all right. I knew I should think it out in the long run!"

"You! Why, I thought it out!"

"You did make a suggestion!" agreed Coker. "I had to do all the thinking, though. All right now—you can cut off!"

"I say, what about the feed, though—"

"You don't get that till afterwards. I'm not sure whether it will work yet. If it's all right, and my cousin comes to tea, you shall have all the tuck you can guzzle. I had to do all the thinking—still, I'm a fellow of my word, and if it works all right, I'll keep my word."

"But I say, Coker, I'm not going to wait till to-morrow!"

"Aren't you?" said Coker, rising. "I don't see what else you're going to do. I know jolly well that you won't get anything out of me until after my cousin has been here."

And Coker, without deigning to listen to the fat junior's expostulations, walked away. Billy Bunter glared after him with a far from chummy expression.

"The silly ass!" growled Bunter. "The crass idiot! The—the howling lunatic! A fellow who's such a silly fool as that oughtn't to be allowed to go about loose. Br-r-r-r!"

The bell rang for classes, and Bunter rolled away to the Remove Form-room with a very discontented expression. But Horace Coker wore a very satisfied look. The problem had been solved at last, thanks to the ingenuity of the Owl of the Remove, and Coker looked forward to the morrow with pleasant anticipations.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing.

HARRY WHARTON & Co. were chatting in the doorway of the School House, after lessons had finished for the day, when Coker came by, wheeling his bicycle down to the gates. The Famous Five bestowed a cheerful grin on Coker.

"Best of luck!" called out Bob Cherry. "Give my kindest regards to Aunt Sophy!"

"Put in a word for me!" chortled Johnny Bull.

"And an esteemed word for my worthy self!" grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Coker did not condescend to reply to the shaft of the Removites. He wheeled his bike away and disappeared. And the Co. chuckled. Their supposition was that Coker was going along the towing-path to brave the terrors of Aunt Sophonisba once more; but, as a matter of fact, Coker's destination was the office of the "Friardale Gazette."

Billy Bunter came puffing up the steps of the School House. He had seen Coker off, and was satisfied that all was going well. But there was one point that was not satisfactory, and that was that Bunter had to wait till the morrow for his reward. But Bunter had been thinking that out, and he had an idea.

"I say, you fellows—"

"May as well get down to the cricket," said Bob Cherry. "No match to-morrow afternoon. We'll go up the river to-morrow."

"I say, you fellows!" roared Bunter. "Hold on a minute! I've got something to say to you—very important!"

"Don't tell us you're expecting a postal-order!" implored Bob. "And don't ask us to cash it in advance. Nothing doing!"

"I'm expecting—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not a postal-order!" howled Bunter.

"My hat! You're not expecting a postal-order!" exclaimed Bob, in astonishment.

"No, you beast!"

"And you don't want a loan on it in advance?"

"No, you rotter!"

"Great Scott! You must be ill, then. Do you mean to say that all your titled relations have forgotten to forget to send a postal-order?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, I'm expecting—"

"Yes, I knew you must be expecting something!" said Bob. "What are you expecting—a cheque, or a remittance in solid gold, stacked in barrels?"

"I'm expecting a jolly good feed to-morrow—"

"Oh, it's a hamper this time, is it? Well, we'll believe in the hamper when we see it—and the same applies to the postal-order!"

"Tain't a hamper!" roared Bunter. "Coker's standing me a big feed to-morrow."

"Coker?"

"Yes. I've given him some advice," said Bunter loftily.

"Some fellows have faith in my judgment. Fellows in my own Form may be jealous of me, but a senior—"

"Oh, come off!"

"I tell you it's so! I'll tell you all about it, if you like. Coker was in a fix, and he consulted me—he naturally would, as the most brainy chap in the school—and I thought it out for him. He's promised me a big feed to-morrow—as much as I can eat—"

"My hat! That will be a tremendous one, then. Coker will have to borrow money right and left."

"This means bankruptcy for poor old Coker!" said Harry Wharton solemnly. "I can see him selling his motor-bike and his Sunday topper, and—"

"And Bunter still hungry!" grinned Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Coker's a fellow of his word," said Bunter. "He's stood me that feed he promised, for helping him yesterday. Now, I've fairly cleared up all the difficulties for him, and he's going to come down very handsome. It's a dead cert. Now, I've got a proposition to make to you fellows. That feed doesn't come off till to-morrow. When it comes off, I'll whack it out with you chaps, honour bright—if you'll stand me a good feed now. There will be plenty for everybody, as Coker's promised—"

"Not good enough!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"But I tell you it's all right!" expostulated Bunter. "I've got Coker right out of his fix. You see, he wants his cousin to come here to tea to-morrow, and his aunt won't let him speak to her, and sends back his letters and telegrams. He had to get a dodge for letting her know—and I thought it out for him. A brainy chap like me—"

"And what's the little game?"

"A paragraph in the personal column of the 'Friardale Gazette,'" Bunter explained. "I drew it up for him. It will work like a charm. Only Coker won't pony up till afterwards in case it doesn't work. Of course, it's bound to work. It was my idea!" added Bunter, as a clincher.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Wharton. "If Bunter's telling the truth for once—"

"Honest Injun!" said Bunter. "Coker's gone down to the office now, to take the advertisement. It will appear in the local paper to-morrow, and you can see it for yourselves, if you like."

"It takes the cake, and no giddy error!" said Johnny Bull. "But I don't believe that Coker would be ass enough to shove his cousin's name in the personal column of a paper. He's nine kinds of an ass, but not ass enough for that!"

"He hasn't put her name in—I thought it all out. It's worded so that Amy can understand it, and nobody else. It's like this, 'H. Coker wishes to see the pretty girl with grey eyes, who was down by the river on Wednesday. Will she come to tea in his study at Greyfriars on Saturday afternoon?' You see, Amy will understand that; but nobody else will guess that it alludes to Amy."

"My only summer hat! Do you mean to say that Coker is shoving that into the personal column?"

"Yes—on my advice!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Coker is a silly ass, and you're another! Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the matter with it?" demanded Bunter. "Amy's sure to see it. I know she reads the local paper. Of course, her mater mayn't let her come out. She might guess that she was coming to Greyfriars. But excepting for that, it's all right. My belief is that she will come."

"She may," agreed Bob, with tears of merriment running down his cheeks; "and so may others."

"Eh? What others?"

"Oh, my hat! You frabjous ass! How many pretty girls with grey eyes do you think there are in Friardale—or, how many girls with grey eyes who consider themselves pretty?"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Why, the towing-path is a regular monkey parade on Wednesdays—early closing day in Friardale and Courtfield. All the young johnnies and all the Mabels and Claras and Jennies in the neighbourhood trot along there on a Wednesday and a Saturday. That advertisement might apply to any of them—any of them who call their eyes grey, and who think themselves pretty. I shouldn't be surprised if half a dozen girls at least think Coker is asking them to tea."

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter.

"Just imagine half the girls in Friardale coming to tea with Coker!" shrieked Bob. "I know Coker is a first-class favourite. Blessed if I know what they can see in him; but I know a lot of the feminine gender in Friardale think a lot of Coker. Perhaps it's his big feet, or his ears—very likely his ears—they're large enough to attract attention anywhere. There's the girl at the pastry-cook's, and the girl at the buffet, and the girl at the sweetshop—they give Coker killing looks, and he never notices it. They'll all think they've conquered him at last."

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OUR COMPANION PAPERS:

"THE GEM" LIBRARY, Every Wednesday.

"THE PENNY POPULAR," Every Friday.

"CHUCKLES," 1d. Every Saturday, 2

"Oh, rot!" said Bunter uneasily.

The chums of the Remove gasped with laughter. The idea of three or four young misses taking that "personal" to apply to themselves, and coming along to tea with Coker, almost doubled them up.

"I say, we won't go up the river to-morrow!" gurgled Nugent. "We'll stay round here and see if Coker gets any answers to his 'personal.'"

"Ha, ha, ha! What-ho!"

"The what-hofulness is terrific! It is very likelyful that the esteemed Coker will have a whole esteemed seraglio to-morrow."

"Look here," said Bunter. "That's all rot! I think it was a jolly good idea, and I feel sure that it will work."

"I hope it will!" gasped Bob. "Oh, I hope it will! I'd give a term's pocket-money to see it work!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I fancy Coker won't be inclined to stand you that feed, Bunter, if it does work. I fancy he will give you a whole set of thick ears."

"Oh, rats! Now, look here, I'm having a tremendous feed to-morrow, and I'll go co. with you chaps, if you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You stand me a feed now, and I'll whack out all I get from Coker."

"Thanks! We're not looking for thick ears, and swollen noses, and bandy eyes," grinned Bob Cherry. "That's all you'll get from Coker if it works. Come along, you chaps!"

"But I say, you fellows—"

But Billy Bunter was left to expend his eloquence upon the desert air. There was nothing doing.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Great Preparations.

HORACE COKER wore a pleased expression in the Form-room on Saturday morning.

Harry Wharton & Co. also wore pleased expressions in the Remove-room.

They, as well as Coker, were looking forward to the afternoon with lively anticipations, but their anticipations were of quite a different nature.

That the personal paragraph might fail, Coker knew. He was prepared for that, though it would be a severe disappointment. That it might have results other than those intended had not occurred to him.

So he was very cheerful that morning, hoping for the best.

Potter and Greene noted his unusual cheerfulness and were glad to see it. They could only attribute it to a remittance, and if Coker had had a handsome remittance it was time that they left off being standoffish. As Potter nobly said, Coker was really a very good sort, and he wasn't going to owe old Coker any grudge just for losing his temper once.

So Potter and Greene looked for Coker when the Fifth Form came out of the class-room. Coker had gone directly to his study, and they followed him there.

Coker was standing in the study, looking round him. He seemed to be appraising the room, not with complete satisfaction. He had tipped the maid that morning very liberally to be extra careful with his study, and certainly it looked as clean as a new pin. But Coker was not wholly satisfied.

"Hallo, Coker!" said Potter affably.

Coker looked round.

"Hallo! Just the fellows I wanted to see!" exclaimed Coker.

"All serene. Anything we can do for you, old chap?" asked Greene, with great affability.

"Yes. You can take all your rubbish out of this study."

"Eh?"

"I want the room to be tidy for this afternoon. Those shabby old books of yours—take 'em away! And those cricket things—can't have cricket-shirts lying round a room like that! You fellows are so horribly slovenly!"

"Slovenly!" ejaculated Potter. "Well, I like that—from you! You've generally got old boots and things lying about."

"Well, take 'em away," said Coker.

"But what's on?"

"And now I think of it, I want you fellows to keep out of the study this afternoon."

"What?"

"I've got a visitor coming to tea," Coker explained.

"Oh, is that it? That's all right! We'll come too."

"Certainly, Coker!" said Greene, with undiminished affability. "We won't leave you in the lurch when you've got a visitor to entertain."

"Thanks! But I can do all the entertaining that's required," said Coker. "I want the study to myself. You fellows can have tea in Hall for once."

"Tea in Hall! When you've just had a remittance!"

"Eh? I haven't had any remittance!"

"You haven't? Then what—"
"Those old books, and that blessed shirt, and those slippers!" said Coker, glancing round the study. "And that beastly cheap American clock—can't have that here!"

"Look here, Coker—"
"I'll tell you what you can do, Potter. Go down to the gardener and ask him to give you some extra-special flowers for me."

"Flowers!"
"Yes. Girls like to see flowers about a place," said Coker thoughtfully. "And—and I wonder if there's time to get a new rug? What do you think?"

"A—a—a new rug!" gasped Potter. "What's the matter with our rug?"

"Well, it's shabby, and some silly idiot has been spilling ink on it."

"You knocked the ink over yourself!"
"Well, it looks pretty rotten, anyway. But I suppose it will have to do. When all that rubbish is cleared away, and I've got some flowers here, the place will look a bit more decent. You chaps can go along the passage and borrow some crocks for me."

"What's the matter with the crocks?"
"They don't match," said Coker, with a serious shake of the head. "There's hardly a cup in the study that matches a saucer."

"What does that matter?"
"It doesn't matter for us, but girls like to see things clean and orderly. Girls notice these things at once. You don't know much about girls," remarked Coker, with an assumption of superior knowledge that made Potter want to hit him.

"So it's a girl who's coming to tea?" demanded Greene.

"Yes, of course! My Cousin Amy."

"Well, we'll stand by you—"
"No, you won't! I'm quite equal to looking after my cousin," said Coker. "Besides, you chaps are so rough-and-ready, Amy wouldn't like you, very likely. She wouldn't be interested in your silly talk about cricket, and things."

Potter contained himself with difficulty.
"I say, Coker, I'd like to see your cousin. I'm sure she must be a ripping girl, if—ahem!—if she's anything like you!"

"She's not much like me," said Coker. "Good-looking in a way— You haven't taken that rubbish away yet. You can stick it all in Fitzgerald's study for this afternoon. And mind you remember to keep out of the study."

"You silly ass!" roared Potter, provoked into plain English at last. "You howling idiot! Blow you, and blow your cousin! I'm off!"

Potter walked away in high dudgeon. Greene stayed a moment to tell Coker what he thought of his personal appearance and his intellectual powers, and then followed Potter rather hastily.

Coker grunted. He had dropped into high-handed ways of dealing with everybody, and it seemed to him the most natural thing in the world to turn his study-mates out of the study. In Coker's opinion, it was up to Potter and Greene to help him in this most important emergency; but evidently they didn't see it in that light. Coker proceeded to improve the study without the aid of his study-mates.

Potter and Greene's possessions were bundled out without ceremony, and dumped down in Fitzgerald's study. Coker's quarters certainly looked more tidy after that. Then the great Coker made his way to the Head's garden and interviewed Mr. Mimble. Five shillings changed hands, and Coker returned to the School House laden with choice flowers.

The Famous Five met him as he came in, and grinned.
"Anything on, Coker?" Bob Cherry inquired innocently.

"Is your Aunt Sophy coming to see you?"
Coker did not deign to reply. He bore the flowers to his study, and then borrowed vases up and down the Fifth Form passage, and put them in. The study certainly looked very nice when Coker had finished.

Coker's preparations had attracted a good deal of attention by this time. Fifth Form fellows came along to look in, and expressed great wonder and admiration at the festive aspect of the study. Coker received a good many kind offers from fellows who were willing to help him entertain his cousin at tea, to all of which he turned a deaf ear. By the time he had finished his decorations the dinner-bell rang, and Coker went down to dinner, feeling satisfied with his efforts. Amy was sure to be pleased—if she came!

After dinner Coker paid a visit to the school shop. Mrs. Mimble was accustomed to receiving lavish orders from Coker of the Fifth, but the order Coker gave her that afternoon surprised her. Money was simply no object with Horace Coker just then. All the greatest delicacies Mrs. Mimble could provide were ordered in the most reckless manner; and Mrs. Mimble's little boy carried a huge basket to Coker's study heavily laden.

Before long all was ready. In the polished grate a nicely-polished copper kettle was ready on a beautifully-clean spirit-stove for making the tea. A spotless tablecloth covered the study table, and the best crockery Coker had been able to

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FOR NEXT
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"A COOL CARD!"

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borrow in the Fifth Form was arrayed upon it. And jams and jellies and cakes and biscuits and preserved fruits and all sorts of delightful eatables were simply stacked on the table. Coker might have been preparing for a siege, instead of a lady visitor, from the extent of the supplies he had laid in.

When all was prepared Coker changed his clothes, and decided, after long and deep thought, upon the purple necktie.

Then he waited for Amy!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Visitor for Coker!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were not busy that afternoon. The idea of going up the river had been dropped. If Coker's "personal" in the "Friardale Gazette" had any results, their afternoon was not likely to be wasted. And they were sure that it would have some results.

Although Horace Coker was generally regarded as an ass by his schoolfellows, feminine eyes looked upon him with more favour. Coker, it is true, was quite unconscious of the fact that he found favour in the eyes of many young ladies in the vicinity; he never thought about girls at all—with the great and solitary exception of his Cousin Amy. But the Co. were quite aware of it, and they knew it was extremely probable that more than one reader of the "personal" would conclude, without a doubt, that it was addressed to herself.

So during the afternoon the Famous Five and several other juniors to whom they had confided their anticipations posted themselves at the school gates on the look-out.

Coker was in his study—at the window. He was keeping his eyes upon the Close, to spot Amy the moment she arrived.

Coker was in a state of almost tremulous expectation. To be disappointed after all his preparations would have been a heavy blow. He was sure that Amy would see the "personal," and that she would come if she could. But Aunt Sophonisba might spoil it all; certainly she would if she had any suspicion. But Coker hoped for the best.

On the Big Side cricket-ground Wingate and the great men of the First Eleven were playing a visiting team from Redclyffe. Coker had offered Wingate his services for that match earlier in the week, and he was glad now that they had not been accepted. Not a thought of cricket was in his mind now.

While he waited in his study he little dreamed that a party of juniors were waiting also at the school gates on the watch. But they were, and they were very much on the watch.

It was Bob Cherry who first spotted a green parasol on the sunny road.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob.

All eyes were upon the green parasol at once.

Under the parasol a pink blouse and a tight skirt could be seen, and the juniors watched with intense interest as the wearer of them came up the road.

Was she coming to Greyfriars?

Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, who was in the waiting group, offered odds of two to one that she was. But the juniors did not listen to Smithy. They watched the approaching figure with a tense interest that was scarcely polite. However, the green sunshade kept the young lady from seeing them, so it did not matter.

Nearer and nearer came the pink blouse and the green parasol, and the juniors were on tenterhooks.

Was she passing?

No! As she came opposite the school gates the lady paused and lowered the parasol and looked shyly round. Then the juniors saw her face and recognised Miss Wiggins of the pastrycook's.

Miss Wiggins blushed a little as she found the eyes of so many juniors upon her. But the Removites all raised their caps very politely.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Wiggins!" said Bob Cherry, with great courtesy. "Make room for Miss Wiggins to pass, you fellows."

"Oh, thank you!" said Miss Wiggins. "Is—is Coker here?"

"Coker! Yes, Coker's indoors. You wish to see Coker, miss?"

"Yes, please. I—I—" Miss Wiggins blushed again. "Coker has asked me to come to tea."

"Good old Coker!" said Johnny Bull. "We'll show you to Coker's study, Miss Wiggins. I suppose you don't know the way?"

"N-no! I—I have never been here before."

"This way!" said Bob Cherry.

"Thank you so much!" simpered Miss Wiggins.

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. Order Early.

"And with mincing footsteps she followed Bob Cherry across the Close.

Horace Coker, at his study window, caught sight of a feminine form and started. But he recognised Miss Wiggins, and grunted. He supposed Miss Wiggins had come about some matter connected with the supply of pastry to the school and gave her no further thought as she passed out of sight with Bob into the House.

But a few moments later there was a tap in the Fifth Form passage.

Tap!

Coker swung round from the window as a tap came at his door. He scowled ferociously for a moment at the idea that some Fifth Form fellow was coming to bother him. Then it occurred to him that Cousin Amy might possibly have come in without his seeing her, and he composed his features into a sweet smile as he called out:

"Come in!"

The door opened, and Bob Cherry looked in. The sweet smile vanished like magic from Coker's face, and he glared.

"You cheeky fag, what do you want?" howled Coker.

"Lady to see you!"

"Oh!"

Coker would have recalled that discourteous greeting if he could then. The lady in the passage must have heard him. However, he composed his features once more into a smile. His facial changes, at short notice, were really remarkable.

"Thank you, Cherry, for showing my cousin up! Come in!" Coker advanced to meet his visitor; and Bob Cherry showed her ceremoniously into the study, and then scudded down the passage, on the point of choking.

Coker came to a sudden halt in the middle of the study as he saw whom his visitor was. He gasped.

"Miss Wiggins! I—I thought——"

Miss Wiggins simpered.

"How nice of you to ask me to tea!" she murmured.

"Eh?"

"You could have asked me in the shop, you know," smiled Miss Wiggins. "It was such an idea—putting the 'personal' in the paper! But I thought it was lovely of you!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Of course, I knew at once that it was meant for me. Fancy you noticing that my eyes were grey!"

"You—your eyes——" stuttered Coker. "Oh, my hat!"

The eyes in question were looking at him very sweetly just then. But Coker was blind to their sweetness. He was puzzled and disappointed and angry.

"And so you think I am pretty?" simpered Miss Wiggins.

"I—I——"

"But I was so glad to come! You were always so shy, weren't you? I suppose that was why you put the 'personal' in, instead of speaking to me. But how did you know that I was down by the river on Wednesday?"

"You—you were——"

"Yes, indeed! I always take a little walk by the river on Wednesdays after the shop is closed."

Miss Wiggins did not add that she generally took that little walk in company with the baker's young man. It was not necessary to tell Coker that.

"I—I—— Have you come here to see me?" demanded Coker blankly.

"Why, yes!"

"What for?"

It was Miss Wiggins's turn to be surprised.

"Why, you asked me to tea," she murmured. "Horace—shall I call you Horace——"

Miss Wiggins thought Coker very shy, but she was evidently not troubled with that complaint herself—not at all.

"I don't understand you," said Coker. "What do you mean? I haven't ordered any pastry that I remember."

"But—but you asked me to tea!" exclaimed Miss Wiggins, greatly astonished.

"I asked you to tea!" howled Coker. "You're dreaming! I didn't do anything of the sort!"

"Why, I have the paragraph here!" exclaimed Miss Wiggins, beginning to be indignant as well as surprised. She jerked a cutting from the newspaper out of her purse and read it aloud:

"'H. Coker wishes to see the pretty girl with grey eyes who was down by the river on Wednesday. Will she come to tea in his study at Greyfriars on Saturday afternoon?' There!" said Miss Wiggins.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Coker. "But that doesn't mean you! Your eyes ain't grey!"

"What! What colour are they, then?" demanded Miss Wiggins sharply.

"Blessed if I know! I've never noticed," said Coker.

"Why, you—you——"

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FRANK RICHARDS

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"CHUCKLES," 1st.

"That's why that villain Cherry showed you in!" growled Coker. "He knew jolly well I wasn't expecting you! I——"

"You wicked, rude, bad-mannered fellow!" said Miss Wiggins, crimson with vexation. "You have done this for a joke."

"I—I haven't."

"You did it for a practical joke, to make me come here and then be rude to me," said Miss Wiggins.

"Oh, I say! I—I——"

"Of course, I didn't want to come to tea with you."

"Then what the dickens did you come for?"

Miss Wiggins did not reply to that question. She was greatly inclined to scratch Coker—indeed, as she afterwards told her friend, Miss Perkins of the draper's, she really didn't know how she kept her nails off the great hulking brute.

"But now I'm here," said Miss Wiggins. "I'll tell you what I think of you, you great, ugly, bad-mannered beast!"

"Oh, I say——"

"If you think any girl would look at you," continued Miss Wiggins, "you're mistaken! You are—you are—ugly!"

"Oh!"

"And rude—and—and—and a pig!" screamed Miss Wiggins.

And Miss Wiggins flounced out of the study before the astonished and dismayed Coker could reply.

Horace Coker sank into a chair and gasped.

"Oh, my hat! I—I never foresaw anything like this! My only aunt, I—I wonder if there are going to be any more!"

Coker was not left long to wonder! There were going to be some more!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Nice for Horace!

"MASTER COKER!"

Trotter the page put a grinning face into Coker's study about a quarter of an hour after the departure of the indignant Miss Wiggins. Coker jumped up in haste. Was it Cousin Amy at last?

"Lady to see you, Master Coker. This way, mum!"

Trotter effaced himself, and the lady entered. Coker was working up a cordial smile of welcome for Cousin Amy, but it faded from his face at the sight of his visitor.

It was a young lady about ten years older than Coker who entered. She wore a picture-hat, of which the adornments swept the top of the doorway as she sailed in. Her features were very prominent, and her complexion very rich. Even Coker's inexperienced eye could see that art had assisted Nature in the production of that complexion. Coker stared at her.

On the second glance he remembered having seen her before, in the station buffet at Courtfield Junction. His first conquest had been Miss Wiggins of the pastry-cook's, his second was the station barmaid. It was Miss Jummer's day off, and the "personal" in the "Friardale Gazette" had filled her heart with joy. A public school chap, though considerably her junior in point of years, was a very acceptable victim to her bow and spear, so to speak. Miss Jummer was very proud of her conquest, and she had evidently put on all her warpaint to come and have tea with Coker.

"Good-afternoon," smiled Miss Jummer.

"Oh, my hat! Good-afternoon!"

"How pretty your room is!" said Miss Jummer.

"Yes, ain't it!" groaned Coker.

"And those nice flowers—how pretty! Do you always have flowers in your study, dear boy?"

"Nunno!"

"Then you placed them here specially for me! How nice of you—Horace!"

Miss Jummer pronounced Horace's Christian name with a delightful affectation of shyness, which would have enchanted Coker if she had been Cousin Amy. But she wasn't!

"Dear me, what grand preparations!" exclaimed Miss Jummer, glancing at the table. "You are a dear, extravagant boy, Horace."

"I say——" stammered Coker.

"The servant looked quite surprised when I asked for you," said Miss Jummer. "Didn't you tell them you were expecting me to tea, Horace?"

"No jolly fear!"

"I really shouldn't have known my way into the house only some nice boys at the gate told me, Horace."

Coker mentally promised those nice boys something later on.

"Aren't you going to shake hands with me, Horace? You—you may call me Sylvia if you like."

Horace Coker didn't want to call Miss Jummer Sylvia, neither had he the slightest desire to shake hands with Miss Jummer.

His only desire was to get rid of her as quickly as pos-

nible. He trembled at the thought that Amy might arrive and find Miss Jumner there. What on earth would Amy think? At the idea of being supposed to be in the habit of having barmaids in to tea, Coker shivered. What would Amy think?

"How silent you are, Horace," said Sylvia Jumner reproachfully. "Really, really one would think you weren't glad to see me—after your delightful little personal paragraph to me, too."

Coker looked round wildly.

"I—I say, you know, there's—there's a mistake!" he gasped. "I—I—I—"

"Mistake?"

"Yes. You see—"

"But how can there be a mistake when you described me so exactly," said Miss Jumner wonderingly. "Here is the paragraph—the pretty girl with grey eyes." Horace, my dear boy, you should really not be so shy. Now let us have tea. Shall I make the tea, Horace?"

"No!" roared Horace.

"Horace, dear boy—"

"That personal wasn't addressed to you, Miss—Miss Plumner."

"You know very well that my name is Jumner, Mr. Coker!" said Sylvia, with a sudden frigidity of manner.

"Well, Jumner, then. 'Twasn't addressed to you. You're mistaken."

Sylvia glared. She had a special glare for customers at the station buffet who required drinks "on the nod." She bestowed it now upon Coker.

Coker backed away a little.

"You see, I—I wasn't thinking of you," he explained. "I'm awfully sorry there's been a mistake. But the fact is, I'm expecting somebody else, so—so—"

"You wretch!" said Miss Jumner. "You have deliberately done this to annoy me. It is a schoolboy joke, I suppose. And I fancied you were a gentleman!"

"Oh, I say! Look here, it looks to me more like a joke of yours," said Coker fatuously. "The description in the personal doesn't apply to you. It distinctly says pretty."

If Coker had hoped to placate Miss Jumner by pointing that out, he was grievously mistaken and disappointed.

Far from being pleased, Miss Jumner looked immediately like a Gorgon, a Fury, and a Suffragette on the warpath, all rolled into one.

"You—you insulting wretch!" she shrieked, and she made a movement forward which caused Coker to dodge hurriedly round the table.

"I say, don't get waxy, you know," said Coker, in alarm. "There's been a mistake. I don't see how you could have made such a mistake, under the circumstances, but—"

"You—you—you—"

"But now I'll explain to you, Miss Thingummy—I mean, Plumner—"

Coker dodged round the table again. Miss Jumner's complexion was redder now, naturally, than any art had ever been able to make it. Coker was not at all expert in dealing with an angry woman. Indeed, he was puzzled to know why Miss Jumner was so angry when he had explained so lucidly that he couldn't see how the mistake had arisen.

"You insulting wretch!" screamed Miss Jumner. "How dare you!"

"I—I—what do you mean? I ain't done anything, have I?" gasped the dismayed Coker. "I say, don't yell like that. You'll have all the fellows here."

The fellows were coming there already. Potter and Greene looked in at the open doorway, grinning.

"Coker's cousin!" murmured Potter. "Ain't she a bute? I say, Coker, introduce us to your cousin."

"'Tain't my cousin!" roared Coker. "It's a mistake. This—this young person thinks I asked her to come here."

"Don't you dare to call me a young person!" shrieked Miss Jumner. "How dare you! I have never been so insulted in my life!"

"Oh, Cokey!" gasped Potter. "Why, that's Miss Jumner of the buffet. I know her now. How do you do, Miss Jumner? I didn't know you were so pally with Miss Jumner, Cokey."

"I ain't pally with her!" yelled Coker. "I don't know her—I haven't seen her, excepting when she's served me with gingerbeer."

"Oh, Coker, draw it mild!" said Greene in a tone of remonstrance. "Miss Jumner wouldn't come unless you'd asked her."

"I haven't—I didn't—I wasn't!"

"He asked me!" panted Miss Jumner. "He put a

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personal in the local paper addressed to me. Look at it! Read it! Now he admits it was a practical joke!"

"A mistake, I said," stuttered Coker.

Potter and Greene read the "personal," and gurgled.

"Oh, this is too rich!" gasped Potter. "You'll be the death of me some day, Coker. I know you will!" Greene could not speak; he only sobbed.

"And after I've come here on his invitation—" pursued Miss Jumner.

"'Twasn't!" roared Coker. "I've told her, you chaps, that it was a ridiculous mistake for her to make. The description ain't a bit like her. Here, you keep off!"

Miss Jumner, exasperated beyond endurance, was making for Coker with outstretched hands.

Coker dodged round the table again. Miss Jumner took a grip on her sunshade, and followed him round. Potter and Greene nearly collapsed in the doorway with merriment. Several more of the Fifth-Form fellows came along the passage, wondering what the row was about, and they stared into Coker's study in amazement.

"What on earth is it, intirely?" ejaculated Fitzgerald. "Is it a Suffragette raid?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's Coker's visitor!" gasped Potter. "He turned us out of the study to have her to tea, and now he's changed his mind, it seems. Oh, Coker!"

Crash!

Coker dodged a little too late, and he received the sunshade across the shoulders. He gave a wild roar, and staggered away. Whack, whack, whack! The sunshade was a wreck, and Coker felt very like a wreck, too. He made a wild rush from the study, shoving his way through the yelling Fifth-Formers, and escaped.

Miss Jumner pursued him into the passage, and Coker bolted into Fitzgerald's study and locked the door.

Miss Jumner, gathering up the wreck of her parasol, sailed away. In the Fifth-Form passage she left a crowd of fellows behind her gasping helplessly. Potter had pinned the cutting on the wall, and the fellows read it and screamed. From the keyhole of Fitzgerald's study came the voice of Coker, in terrified accents:

"Has she gone?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Coker Bolts.

"HAS she gone?"

Coker's voice was almost trembling as it quavered through the keyhole. For once the great

Coker was scared. Miss Jumner at close quarters was a little too much even for Coker of the Fifth. Coker would have faced any number of foes without counting odds; but Miss Jumner was too much for him.

"She's gone!" gasped Potts, almost weeping. "You can come out! Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker unlocked the door and came out. He cast a nervous glance along the passage, and ascertained that the coast was really clear. Then he scowled ferociously at his Form-fellows, and went into his study.

"Any more coming on?" asked Greene.

"Clear off, you grinning jabberwocks!" howled Coker. "Do you think I want a set of burbling idiots round my study when my cousin comes?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We want to see the fun, intirely—"

"Clear off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker rushed for his cricket-bat, and charged the Fifth-Formers, and drove them yelling up the passage. Then he slammed his study door, and sank into his armchair, mopping his perspiring brows, and panting.

"Oh, crumbs! Oh, my hat! Oh, jiminy! Who'd have thought it? Suppose there are some more of them—why, every blessed female in Friardale may think that personal applies to her! That villain Bunter! I'll scalp him! I knew it wasn't a good idea! Oh, crumbs! I'll slaughter Bunter! I'll—I'll— Oh, dear!"

There was a tap at the door, and Coker turned round with a groan. He hadn't much expectation of seeing Cousin Amy now. He would willingly have abandoned the hope of seeing Cousin Amy at all, for some assurance that he would not have any other visitors. But it was not a lady visitor this time. It was Billy Bunter who blinked into the room.

"I say, Coker, I hear your visitor has arrived. I'll come in to tea if you like— Oh, great Scott! Wharrer marrer? Oh!"

Bunter had just time to jump away as the infuriated Coker charged at him with the cricket-bat. Bunter scudded down the passage as if he were on the cinder-path. He did not stop till he was safe downstairs and outside the School House, where he halted to take breath. The Famous Five were on the steps of the School House now, and they kindly thumped Bunter on the back to help him get his second wind.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Chuck it, you beasts! I say, you fellows, Coker's gone mad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I just looked into his study, and he charged at me with a cricket-bat. If I hadn't escaped, he's have brained me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! I say—Hallo, who's this? This ain't Coker's cousin!"

Billy Bunter turned his big spectacles upon a young lady who was advancing across the Close from the gates. The chums of the Remove chuckled joyously. They did not need telling that it was a fresh visitor for Coker.

As the young lady had come in answer to a "personal" describing a pretty girl with grey eyes, it was evident that prettiness was a matter of opinion. The young lady was very plump—almost as plump as Billy Bunter. She had big, red, rounded cheeks, with a little nose almost hidden between them.

Her chin was square—very square—and very determined. She did not look like a young lady whom it would be profitable to argue with. She was dressed in a red "sports" coat, which showed off her ample figure to advantage. There was a coquettish little cap on her head. And she carried a golf-club under her arm. The juniors knew her by sight—she was Miss Bella Squiff, and she belonged to Squiff's Athletic Stores in Courtfield. She was a sporting young lady, and played hockey, and golf, and all sorts of games. She had a very determined eye, and when it fell on the juniors, they ceased to smile at once, and doffed their caps most respectfully.

"Er—good-afternoon, Miss Bella!" murmured Bob Cherry. "You—you want to see Coker?"

"Yes. Show me to his study!" said Miss Bella imperiously.

"C-c-certainly! Just come from golf, I suppose?" said Bob affably.

"Yes," said Miss Bella. "Come, don't waste time."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob, as he led Miss Bella into the House. "I shouldn't care to be in Coker's shoes this time! I don't like the look in her eye."

Bob led the visitor to the Fifth-Form passage, and pointed out Coker's door. Under the circumstances, he didn't care to open that door himself. He might not have been so lucky as Bunter in dodging the cricket-bat.

"That's Coker's study, Miss Bella! He's expecting a visitor!"

"Thank you!"

Miss Bella walked on, and knocked at Coker's door. There came an exasperated yell from within.

"Go away, you silly fathead!"

Miss Bella started, as well she might. She knocked again.

"It is I!" she called out.

Then she opened the door, as there came no invitation to enter. Coker rose wearily to his feet. It was another of 'em. Remembering Miss Junner's sunshade, Coker cast a very anxious eye towards the golf-club. It was a heavy "mashie," and he wished that Miss Bella hadn't brought it.

Miss Bella smiled sweetly at Coker.

"I see you are all ready," she said, glancing round the study. "How sweet of you! It was by mere chance that I saw the personal in the 'Gazette.'"

"W-w-w-was it?" mumbled Coker. He sincerely wished that that chance hadn't happened.

"Yes, indeed! What a very romantic way of asking me to tea!" smiled Miss Bella. "I did not know you were romantic—Horace!"

"Oh!"

"Why didn't you ask me when you were buying your cricket-bat the other day?" smiled the young lady. "Do you know, Horace, I have often wanted to come and see Greyfriars. I should have asked you—yes, really—to show me round the school, only—only you never seemed to notice."

"D-d-d-didn't I?"

"You were always so shy, Horace!" laughed Miss Bella. "But never mind. We're going to be great friends, I can see. How nice of you to have tea all ready! I don't mind telling you that I am quite hungry. I've been playing golf ever since lunch, you know—and there's nothing like golf to make you hungry. I did the whole course in twenty-nine. Then I came straight on here; I didn't want to be late!"

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"Oh!"

Coker was trying to think of something diplomatic to say. That golf-club, and Miss Bella's determined chin, seemed to mesmerise him. After his previous experiences, he was a little dubious about explaining that a mistake had been made. But it had to be done. He couldn't have that fat girl moping up the spread he had prepared so carefully for Cousin Amy. And if Amy should come and find her there—

"I'll make the tea!" said Miss Bella, laying down the mashie. "How very nice of you, Horace! What a dinky little stove!"

"I—I say—" Horace Coker screwed up his courage to the sticking point, feeling a little better now that Miss Bella had laid down the golf-club. "I—I say—Miss Squiff—"

"You may call me Bella, Horace!"

"Thanks awfully, but—but I really don't want to—"

"What!"

"I—I mean I—you see—the fact is, Miss Squiff, I—I wasn't expecting you, and—and under the circumstances—er—good-afternoon!" said Coker.

Miss Bella fixed him with a glistening eye.

"I don't understand you!" she said coldly. "You put a personal in the 'Gazette,' addressed to me—"

"Not to you—not at all—quite a different person—"

"What!"

"A different person altogether, you know—not at all like you—"

Miss Bella's manner became freezing.

"Then why did you put in my description, Master Coker, if you did not intend it to refer to me?"

"I—I didn't!" said the hapless Coker. "I—I said—" He paused in time. "I—I mean, of course, it might apply to lots of girls—I didn't think of that at the time; but—but it wasn't meant for you—ahem!"

"Nonsense!"

"I—I suppose you can take my word for it!" howled Coker.

"Nonsense! I suppose you have changed your mind; or else you think I am a person you can play practical jokes on!" said Miss Bella coldly. "If that is the case, you are mistaken."

"I—I assure you—" gasped Coker, eyeing Miss Bella apprehensively, as she picked up the golf-club. "I—I—"

"I came here in answer to your invitation to tea, and I am going to have tea," said Miss Bella calmly. "Make the tea!"

"What!"

Miss Bella sat down at the tea-table. Coker stared at her blankly. Miss Wiggins had been troublesome, and Miss Junner had been alarming; but Miss Bella was positively unnerving. Evidently she did not mean to have the trouble of walking to Greyfriars for nothing. She had come to tea, and she was going to have tea. Coker almost collapsed.

"I—I say, Miss Squiff—" he said feebly.

Miss Bella was already helping herself. She made a gesture towards the kettle.

"Make the tea!" she said

"But I—I—I—"

"If you think I am a girl who can be insulted, Master Coker, you are making a mistake. I would box your ears for two pins." Miss Bella was not at all sweet now, and her chin looked as square as a rock. "You cannot make a fool of me with your schoolboy jokes. I am hungry, and I am going to have tea. If you don't make the tea at once, I will hit you with my mashie."

"Oh, gad!"

"Now then!" Miss Bella took a businesslike grip on the mashie. "Now—"

"Hold on!" yelled Coker. "I—I'll make the tea."

"Then don't waste time. I'm thirsty. I've been playing golf all the afternoon. You needn't trouble to talk. Make the tea and hold your tongue!"

"I—I say, I—I'm expecting a visitor!"

"How long are you going to be with that tea?"

"I—I—all right!"

Coker, overcome with dismay and rage, proceeded to make the tea. Potter and Greene looked into the study, chuckling. Coker gave them a murderous look.

"Get out, you beasts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker jumped up furious, and Potter and Greene retreated gurgling, to report to the Fifth that Miss Bella Squiff was having tea with Coker. Fellows came along the passage every minute or two to peer in and gurggle. Miss Bella did not seem to mind. She was travelling through the piles of delicacies on the table with a speed that Billy Bunter himself might have envied. The sight of Coker, crimson with rage, making the tea, almost sent his Form-fellows in hysterics.

"Now pour it out!" snapped Miss Bella.

"Look here—"

"Pour it out!"

Coker poured out the tea, glowering. Miss Bella kept him very busy, passing things, and pouring out fresh cups of tea. The piles of delicacies on the table were diminishing now. Miss Bella had brought a healthy appetite with her from the golf links. And she was evidently enjoying her tea.

The fellows in the passage were enjoying it too. In spite of Coker's homicidal glares, fellows came from near and far to look in at the extraordinary sight. The passage echoed with the sounds of mirth from end to end. Bob Cherry came pushing his way through the hilarious crowd.

"Coker! I say, Coker, there's another visitor for you! This way, Miss Hooker!"

Coker stood rooted to the study carpet for a moment. Then he made a sudden rush for the door, scooted out of the study, and bolted along the passage. He left the yelling crowd to deal with his lady visitors. A roar of laughter followed him as he fled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come back, Coker! Come back and entertain your visitors!"

But Coker did not come back! In a state of desperation, he dashed out of the School House by a door in the rear, and reached the bike shed. Five minutes later the hoot-toot of Coker's motor-bike was heard in the Close. He went down the drive at a reckless speed, heedless of the yells that were sent after him, and blind to two or three feminine hands that were waved to him. He rushed to the school gates, narrowly escaping running into Gosling, turned into the road, and buzzed away.

Bob Cherry sank down on the School House steps and yelled with laughter.

"Oh, my hat! Poor old Coker! Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is what comes of being a King of Hearts!" sobbed Nugent. "But to run away and leave his conquests like this—"

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ONE
PENNY.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the cry is 'Still they come!'" gasped Harry Wharton, as two feminine forms appeared in the school gateway. "Coker's only got off just in time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of the Remove almost wept.

Coker of the Fifth was late for calling-over that evening.

When he came in at last, his lady visitors had long been gone—but Coker hadn't been taking any chances.

A hilarious crowd met him on his return. Coker's ferocious scowls only made them more hilarious. No accurate statistics could be had concerning the number of young ladies who had been to see him that afternoon. Bob Cherry said eight; Temple of the Fourth said eleven; Potter and Greene made it fifteen. But Cousin Amy had not been among them. The fellows congratulated Coker on his numerous conquests till Coker was in a positively dangerous frame of mind. Billy Bunter did not venture to claim his reward for that extremely ingenious idea of his—which had failed, according to Coker's view; but which had been a tremendous success from the point of view of everybody else. Bunter was careful to give Coker a very wide berth for the next few days.

From that afternoon it was only necessary to ask Coker of the Fifth if he were expecting any lady visitors, in order to enrage him to boiling point. And it was a long, long time before Greyfriars ceased to laugh over the story of Coker's Conquests.

THE END.

NEXT WEEK

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THE UNCONQUERABLE!



A Magnificent Story of Thrilling Adventure.
By **SIDNEY DREW.**

READ THIS FIRST.

Ferrers Lord, the renowned multi-millionaire and scientist, once again has a surprise prepared for his faithful band of friends and followers! Ching-Lung (the Chinese prince), Rupert Thurston, Gan-Waga (the Esquimo), Prout, Maddock, and Barry O'Rooney—all are gathered together again, and conducted on board the latest vessel which the mighty brains of Lord and Hal Honour, his engineer, have produced. The vessel, which appears to be a peculiarly constructed submarine, bears the proud name Unconquerable. By its amazingly ingenious mechanism, it steers and controls itself perfectly, both above and below water. Then comes the crowning moment of this astonishing trip. "All hands on deck!" shouts the millionaire, "Hold fast!" Then came the miracle. The Unconquerable leapt clear of the water, and, spreading out four vast wings, she righted herself, and skimmed along like a gigantic flying-fish a full hundred yards above the placid sea. The trial is a wonderful success and the Unconquerable is taken back to the cave in the rocks which serves as a hiding-place. Meanwhile, a vessel runs on Windmill Rocks, and the crew are rescued by Ferrers Lord and his men. Gan-Waga goes fishing, but while hauling in a big fish, overbalances and falls into the sea. He comes to the surface in time to see a boat floating past, and, jumping in, is staggered to see the bound forms of Prout and Schwartz, who were supposed to be guarding the Unconquerable! They say that two masked men came into the cave, pressed revolvers to their heads and forced them to enter a boat. A search is quickly made, and Ferrers Lord finds that his wonderful craft has disappeared. He orders the Lord of the Deep to be got ready. The Lord of the Deep actually sights the Unconquerable in the air, and Ferrers Lord argues that something must be wrong with the airship's machinery, otherwise the thieves would have taken her right away. Lord keeps on in chase of the Unconquerable. Barry and Prout go down to the bottom in diving-suits, and come across the Unconquerable resting on the sand. A man is cutting the fouled propeller free, but Prout speaks, and, the enemy being in possession of one of Ferrers Lord's wonderful diving-suits, hears Prout's words, and takes to flight. His work had been successful, however, and before Barry or Prout could catch him, he had got back to his ship, and given the order to start. The two others are caught in a net trailing at the back of the Unconquerable, and taken prisoners. But Ferrers Lord has also heard Prout, and gives chase. Later, Barry gets free, and releases Prout, who is in a very weak state. However, they manage to stun two of the crew, only leaving two to be dealt with. Prout fires at, and wings, one, then they shut the door of what had previously been their prison. A moment later there comes from under the door a sound like the sniffing of some huge beast of prey.

(Now go on with the story.)

Consternation—A Futile Search—A Dog Deal at Sea—The Only Explanation—Two in Two Strange Beds—Baffled.

Aboard the Lord of the Deep consternation reigned supreme. A dozen divers were out, and the submarine cruised in a circle round the rocks. She rose, launched her motor-boat, and, leaving it to search the surface of the sea, sank again. Where were Prout and O'Rooney? Within fourteen minutes of the steersman's urgent signal the submarine was over the rocks. There were no currents there strong enough to sweep away two such skilled, intrepid, and powerful divers, there were no quicksands to engulf them, there were no narwhals or other ferocious deep-sea monsters to molest them.

Every diver runs fearful risks. The instant the water gurgles above his helmet he is gambling with Fate, and his life is at stake. Some trifling defect in the apparatus, the clumsy working of a valve, or a slight leak, might have compelled them to rise to the surface, where the buoyancy of their suits would keep them afloat for hours. The tide was running eastwards, but Ching-Lung looked in vain for the two black helmets.

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OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE GEM" LIBRARY, "THE PENNY POPULAR," "CHUCKLES," 1d. Every Wednesday. Every Friday. Every Saturday, 2

"Use your eyes, Gan," he said. "They are better even than my glasses."

"I done uses dems, Chingy," said Gan-Waga mournfully. "Dey not heres. Dat tells yo' why Chingy. He nots goes two miles an hours."

He tossed a lifebelt overboard, and kept the launch from drifting by means of the oars. The belt drifted away slowly. Gan's meaning was obvious. The current could not possibly have carried their lost comrades out of view, and the sea was as quiet as a millpond on a warm June day.

A Dutch mackerel-boat was the only craft near them. Ching-Lung set the motor going and ran towards her. A dog barked furiously. A man in a dirty red cap looked over the side, rubbing his eyes. He had been sound asleep, leaving his boat to drift. Ching spoke to him in German. He had seen nothing.

"You'll be playing that shut-eye game once too often one of these fine days, mynheer," said Ching-Lung. "A fog will come on while you're asleep, and something will smash into you. No, we don't want any fish. What will you take for the dog? Will that do?"

He held up a sovereign. It was a strange time to think of purchasing a dog, but Ching-Lung had odd fancies. The bargain was made, and mynheer pocketed the coin and swung the little black Schipperke into the launch by its chain. Then, heedless of Ching-Lung's advice, he went to sleep again.

The dog howled mournfully, and tried to leap overboard as the gap between the motor-launch and the mackerel-boat widened.

"Ober deres, Chingy," said Gan-Waga mournfully.

His sharp eyes had made out view-tube and lens-box, of the Lord of the Deep above the water. The prince semaphored "No" with his arms. The submarine rose, and the launch was dragged over its greased ways. The deck closed above it.

Rupert Thurston's face told its own tale of ill-success. Ching-Lung found Ferrers Lord in the saloon.

"We could not find a trace of them," said the millionaire. "Honour and I would not come to a definite conclusion until we saw your signal."

"You mean the boys have been trapped? Is that it? I have been thinking the same thing for a long time."

"Yes; and cleverly trapped—trapped without a struggle," said Ferrers Lord. "At least, we saw no signs of one. How it was done I cannot profess to say, for Prout and O'Rooney would, naturally enough, have been on the watch. This fellow Arkland is not a fellow to trifle with, Ching."

"And what was his object in kidnapping them?"

"Ask yourself," answered the millionaire, shrugging his shoulders. "Why is the Unconquerable dallying here? Why should they risk so much?"

"They thought that one of the men was Hal Honour, perhaps. I see all that plainly enough. Arkland can't navigate her, or something has given way, and he doesn't know how to repair it. Who would have thought that stuttering, half-starved fellow was such a dare-devil? I can play the innocent idiot myself with fair success, but Arkland is an artist. He has made a poor haul for his pains. Prout and Barry can't help him much."

They had no apprehension as to the way Arkland would treat his prisoners. He might attempt to use them as hostages later on, and hold them to ransom as the price of his own safety, but he had nothing to gain by ill-using them. Ben Maddock received this explanation of his comrades' disappearance with indignant scorn.

"Souise me," he cried, bringing down his clenched fist, "it's a hinsult. Tell me again, Shorts, that any such wipers could catch Tom and ould Barry nappin', and I'll cosh you wi' your own rollin' pin. They was never took under water. No, souise me, they was took on the top when they was elpless. They had a haccident, and them pirates clapped rifles to their 'eads and then took 'em. Tell me! Souise me, do it twice, if you dare!"

"Nein, nein; I nod say dot twice," said the cook hastily. "I agree mit you, mine friendt. Bud dis I do say, und am reaty do repeat ut. Barry und Tom dey make tings hot apoart dot vessel. Arkland he be sorry py-und-py. Shaf! He got hold of dwo brize-buckets, yes."

The loss of two such favourites filled the crew with rage. Except for the dog, Gan-Waga would have been utterly disconsolate. Though Gan did all he could to render the lives of the two worthy mariners one long tale of woe, he was passionately devoted to them both. Ching-Lung knew what he was doing when he bought the Schipperke from the Dutch fisherman. The new pet would distract Gan's thoughts from his grief to some extent.

All day long the submarine nosed about the bottom of the sea like a pointer hunting through stubble. All day long Hal Honour sat with the telephone-helmet on his head listening. His meals were brought to him. Occasionally the Lord of the Deep lifted her view-tube clear of the water, and then descended again, flinging a great spear of light into the heart of the under-ocean gloom.

"Seen Gan, Schwartz?" asked Ching-Lung.

"Ja, he gone, and I gif him some meat for dot tog," answered the cook, saluting. "Dot vas dwendy minutes—ach, yes, choost dwendy minutes."

Ching-Lung nodded. He descended into the dark, chilly regions below. A dog barked.

"All right, old chap, you needn't make a row," said Ching-Lung. "I only want to have a look at you."

The prince switched on the electric light. The third of the tanks which, when filled, submerged the vessel, was uncovered, and formed a swimming-bath. It was paved with white tiles, and furnished with steps and diving-boards. When full it held some sixteen feet of water, but it was only half full now.

Gan-Waga floated there sound asleep, with the stump of a cigar between his lips. This was too commonplace a sight to make Ching-Lung smile, but he smiled nevertheless. Afloat beside Gan, and anchored to his arm by a string, was a footbath lined with straw, and in the footbath reposed Gan's new pet, the Schipperke dog, contentedly gazing around.

There was a roar and a hiss. The pumps were at work.

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ONE
PENNY.

Bath and Eskimo began to sail slowly forward. Gan's feet touched the tiles, and so did the footbath.

"We hangses oles Maddocks on de sours apple-tree," warbled Gan in his sleep, "as we goeses marching home."

The water drained away, but the Eskimo was so accustomed to these sudden risings and fallings of the tide that he did not awaken. Ching-Lung whistled gently to the dog. It bounded up the steps and frisked round him. Gan yawned, sat up, and blinked at his naked toes.

"Dat bad 'nuff rudery," he grumbled. "Dey always pullings de bed-clothes offs me. Hoo! Dat yo' up deres, Chingy, hunk? Gets any goods newses, hunk?"

"No news is always good news, Gan," said Ching-Lung quickly. "How are you getting on with your Dutch tyke? He seems a smart little bounder."

"Yaas, he de limits, Chingy," grinned the Eskimo. "Yo' nebber axes old red-nobs him names. I tink we calls him Schwartz, hunk. How dats?"

"I think you'll get a thick ear, or several, if you do," said the prince. "Please yourself; he's your barker. Call him; we're going under."

The dog took a flying leap into his queer kennel, and floated with his master on the rising tide.

"Seeks losts, Schwartz—seeks losts!" cried the Eskimo, and sank.

With a yelp the dog plunged over the side of the footbath and dived. He came up perched on Gan's broad chest, and shook himself.

"Why, you're a couple of amphibians!" laughed Ching-Lung. "Good-bye for the present!"

"Dat a rudeful insultness, Schwartz," said Gan-Waga, "and it not de truths. We nots fibijams. Oles Ching, he de bad 'nuff fibijams. Yo' bites a chunk outs ob him shin. I tink we go to sleepses some morer, and we see oles Prouts and Barry in de mornings. And minds yo' nots snores or pulls de blankets offs me. Dears, dears! I nots sleeps much. I too sorrowfulness. Dears, dears, dears! Nebbers minds, we gets steaks-and-kidney pudden for breakfasts. Jump into beds, and nots forgets abouts de snorings, fo' I most particulars."

Ferrers Lord himself was steering. The searchlight flashed on weed-grown rocks, which the vessel had to rise to avoid. It gleamed on golden sand, and shone like silver on stretches of chalk. Once or twice Hal Honour listened more intently, as the drum caught up the sounds of the deep and carried them to his ears. He grew accustomed to the dull scraping of a trawl dragging slowly along to reap the harvest of the sea, and the pounding of a steamer's propellers.

"You have got to go to bed, old man," said Ching-Lung. "It's not a request this time, but an order."

"I obey," answered the engineer.

Ching-Lung put on the helmet, and Honour threw himself on the couch and closed his eyes. In the conning-tower Ben Maddock uttered a shout and the Lord of the Deep reversed her screws. They were passing over a bed of stiff chalk. As far as the powerful lamp could throw its beams they saw a long and perfectly straight depression, like the first spit turned up by a plough. The ground-irons of a trawl would have made two such depressions in parallel lines. Here there was only one. The millionaire grasped the wheel again, and his eyes sparkled. He well knew what had caused the furrow. It was the steering-fin of the Unconquerable.

Here was a clue at last. The fin ought to have left no such trail, for it acted as a drag when the Unconquerable dived into the water, and should have folded up like a fan. It was plain proof that Master Arkland was in difficulties, that he did not understand the workings of the magnificent and wonderful craft he had stolen. For a mile the submarine followed the tell-tale furrow. Then Benjamin Maddock groaned.

The trail had come to an end. At that point the aero-submarine had risen clear of the chalk.

A Welcome Recruit—Prout's Method of Persuasion—A Fusillade From the Darkness—Job Sanday's Offer Is Declined—Imp on the Watch.

The snuffing sound that had startled Prout ceased, and the door trembled as a heavy body was hurled against it. The Irishman clicked open the barrel of the revolver he had taken from Martin Arkland. The weapon was fully loaded, and it was not a dangerous little toy like the one held by the steersman. Again the door shook, and while it still quivered, the Irishman pulled the trigger.

"Troth, that's when a dure is a dure!" he muttered, holding the candle to the star-shaped, splintered mark, in the centre of which the flattened bullet remained. "There's no jerry-building here, bodad. That mahogany's as hard as steel. Whisht! Phwat was ut, Tom?"

FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

"A COOL CARD!"

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars—Order Early.

Again came the snuffing, the rattling of a chain, and then a deep-throated bark.

"Whoy, it's ould Imp!" cried Barry, bursting into a laugh. "Hi, Oi'm comin', Imp! Aisy, aisy, ye beautiful blackguard!"

He opened the door, and stood clear as Ferrers Lord's splendid Newfoundland rushed in. Barry grasped the chain and clung to it, for in his wild delight at finding friends, the huge dog would probably have knocked him down. As it was, he could hardly hold the monster.

"Good bhoy—good bhoy!" said Barry, who knew the beautiful creature well. "We couldn't have axed for a bether recruit. They've starved ye, eh, the bastes? Go to ould Tommy, and he'll give ye some biscuits. Bedad, ye needn't thry and ate me, ye cannibal! Whoa! He'll kill ye for joy av he gets at ye. Whoa-hoa!"

Imp made a bound to reach Prout, but the restraining chain brought him to his hind legs, and one of his fore-paws scraped down the wall. The electric lamps in the ceiling glowed, for the dog had scraped a switch.

"Well, that takes ut!" said Barry. "Oi've throid three switches meself, and niver a shimmer. Oi thought the current had run droy. Fade him, Tom."

Water the dog wanted more than food. They offered him Prout's discarded coffee, but he refused it. He put up his head and sniffed, and then walked across the saloon, threw up the cover of the ice-pail with his nose, and began to lap thirstily.

"Now ye've had all the food and dhrink we can give ye, Imp," said Barry, "so fust kape near the dure and tell us av anybody comes skulkin' alongs."

Imp wagged his tail. He was a dog of remarkable intelligence, and understood English better than many bipeds. Barry seized the gaoler by the ankles and dragged him out.

He was still groaning, but fully conscious, and his eyes blazed with hate and rage as Barry bent over him.

"Oi'll put your pal asoide ye, and thin ye won't fale lonely," said the Irishman. "There he is, and, bedad, ye make a purty picture, the brace of ye. Your pal Arkland isn't in a mood for conversation, so we'll have to do the talkin' betwixt us. How many more of ye are there aboard?"

The man made no reply, but he glared venomously.

"Job," went on Barry, "Oi'm no coward to sthrike a helpless man loike Oi was sthruke by you. Oi mane ut's a thing Oi wouldn't do out o' sheer spoite and brutality. Me and my dearest of friends, Mr. Thomas Prout, have come out on top, as we ginerally do. Mither Prout doesn't love ye. Oi'm as kind and gintle as a cooing dove on a three, and Oi'd loike to perfect ye from Prout. Oi requoire the information, so spake up."

Still no answer. Job Sanday licked his dry lips. Prout, playing his part, crawled forward with the open knife in his hand.

"By honey, leave the 'ound to me!" he snarled. "I'll make him find his tongue, if it's only to 'owl. Now, you lubber, now speak, or I slice!"

"No, no, Tom!" cried Barry.

"Shut up, or I'll give you an inch of it to keep you quiet!" yelled the steersman. "Who else is aboard? One, two—must I say three?"

Prout had the lobe of Job's ear between his thumb and finger, and he had distorted his face into an expression of impish ferocity. Job felt the cold touch of the steel against his neck.

"Only the nigger—only Daft Black 'Arry!" groaned the prisoner. "I swear it. I'm not lyin'. Take that durn knife away!"

"Right!" said Prout. "Tell him to come 'ere. Yell your biggest yell, and if it ain't big enough to satisfy me, by honey, I'll have that ear!"

Barry called the faithful sentinel away from the door, and cocked his revolver.

"'Arry, come 'ere! 'Arry, it's all safe! You won't get 'urt!" shouted Job Sanday. "Come along, 'Arry!"

His voice was lusty enough even to satisfy the ferocious steersman. The echo of it was repeated again and again, but there was no reply.

"He's sulking," grunted the prisoner. "Give me some brandy, if you don't mean murder! Oh, my head! Give me some brandy!"

Barry dipped a glass into the ice-pail and neatly knocked the neck off a bottle of Ferrers Lord's priceless old liqueur brandy. The bottle fell, and shed its contents. A succession of loud reports crashed out, and a stream of bullets hissed past the open door. There was a clattering of broken glass and a zipp of tearing woodwork.

Shrill above the rapid explosions of the magazine-rifle they heard peals of maniacal laughter. The dog bayed savagely.

"Swate groves of Ballybunion!" gasped Barry, as he hastily barred the door. "Is ut a consaled batthery we've sthruke?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 342

FRANK RICHARDS

Contributes a Splendid, Complete School Tale
in our New Saturday Companion Paper—

"CHUCKLES," 1^d.

Crack—crack! Crack—crack—crack! barked the rifle, and silence came, only to be broken by a voice so rich and musical that they looked at each other in wonder. The words of the singer reached them distinctly, and he had a voice of purest gold:

"Sailor, beware! Sailor, take care!

Many brave hearts lie asleep in the deep.

So beware—beware!"

In spite of his bonds, Job Sanday had wriggled up, with his broad back against the couch.

"Turn the dog loose on him afore he can reload!" he cried. "He's gone blind-mad, murder-mad! Let the dog go, you durn fool, and follow up quick and blow his brains out! Let the dog go, or we're all dead men! He'll scuttle the ship. You fools—you fools! Ain't your lives any good to you? Turn the dog loose!"

"Many brave hearts lie asleep in the deep.

So beware—beware!"

sang the rich, mellow voice.

Imp broke into another fierce torrent of barking, and scratched and bit at the door.

"Oomph—oomph—oomph!" The mad Zulu was imitating the roar of a hungry lion. Barry O'Rooney sat down and stroked his beard. He lighted a cigar. The situation was an alarming one, and required some meditation.

"Give Job some brandy, Barry!" said Prout. "By honey, he's lookin' a bit sick!"

"Bedad, and so am Oi!" said Barry. "The place smells loike a distillery. Oi niver want to smell or taste brandy again. Oi'll give him champagne instead."

Barry did not intend to risk spilling any more of the spirit, for the pungent fumes that rose from the saturated carpet made his head reel. Job gulped down the wine greedily, and asked for more. Then he closed his eyes.

"What are you goin' to do about that nigger?"

"There ye are!" said Barry. "Do ye expect me to go afther the basto in the dar-rk to get filled up to the neck wid lead?"

"Let me free and give me a shooter, and I'll go and kill the brute!" said Sanday.

Barry chuckled grimly.

"Troth, we couldn't spare ye, Job," he answered. "Ye've no oidea phwat a fancy we've taken to ye. Av ye got hur-rt we'd be after croyin' ourselves into some lingerin' and fatal illness. Give ye a gun, is ut? No, no; we love ye too well for that, bhoy. No, no, no!"

"You're a pair of durn fools!" snapped out Job. "Ain't I as fond of my life as you are of your'n? I give you top-dog. In my own way, I'm honest, durn honest, though I ain't very scrupulous. I don't care a blue hang for your lives, but I want to stick to mine. We brought Black 'Arry because he was safe and cheap, and as good as twenty whin-men to work, if we kept him off the booze. He's found the booze. He's not commenced yet. He'll scuttle this ship or set her ablaze or turn the oxygen on as sure as 'air grows on your chin. It ain't for you I care a bean, as I've told you. Let me go. I'm ready to risk my skin. I'd sooner 'ave a peck of bullets through me than die smothered like a rat in a flooded sewer."

"My friend," said Barry, "whin Oi was born Oi admit Oi didn't know much, but since then Oi have larned that two and two may make four, or, put side by side, sthand for two-and-twenty. Oi don't want to have the pleasure of smotherin' wid you, so be as aisy as you can, for niver a gun do you get from us."

There were only about a dozen biscuits left. Prout was lying down again, tired out and weak.

Suddenly he turned over, and was violently sick.

"Poor ould lad!" muttered Barry. "Ut's not port-wine and brandy he wants. The sthuff is pizen to him, that and the stench of that brandy."

Barry did not even know where the store-room was. He remembered that Schwartz had told them that the Unconquerable only carried provisions for one week.

This meant that they would last three weeks, with economy, for Schwartz was allowing for elaborate luncheons and dinners.

"Gammon or no gammon," thought the Irishman. "Tommy must have proper grub. Faith, Oi'd loike to get to the bottom o' the swindle!"

Naturally enough, an old campaigner like Barry O'Rooney was not easily taken in. The wounded Zulu might be a maniac, or his madness might only be a ruse. Probably he was hiding in the darkness, hoping for a shot, for his wound did not prevent him from handling a rifle.

Moreover, presuming that Job Sanday had not been lying,

There is a limit to all things, and Black Harry would drink himself helpless sooner or later.

"By honey!" said the steersman faintly. "I don't know what's happened to me. I'm just next door to a funeral, my boy!"

"Pish-tush, hold up your pecker, darlint! Oi'll have a bowl of noice beef-tay for ye primsintly. Hallo! Here's another man awake!"

Martin Arkland had opened his twitching eyes. Barry was pleased, for he had been uneasy about the little man. He propped him up beside Sanday.

"It sames a shame to waste champagne on ye, Arkland," said the Irishman, "but Oi'll allow ye to dhrink your own health. Bedad, you're lucky in having such a thick skull, for Oi wasn't gintle! Prisoners of war must be threatred wid decency, so Oi'll patch ye up!"

He bandaged Arkland's head with a torn serviette dipped in ice-water.

"Daft 'Arry is loose out yonder, and mad-boozed, Mart!" growled Job Sanday. "When he's got another bottle o' rum inside, there'll be fumes. He's soakin' himself now. That's why he's so durn quiet. I'm still up to my offer," he added. "Gimme a gun, Irish, and I'll do him in, or let him do me in!"

"Yes, yes!" said Arkland, hoarsely and eagerly. "Let Job try, for mercy's sake! That mad demon will murder himself and all of us!"

"Impy, who's there?"

A Successful Raid—The Pursuit of the Mad Zulu—Barry Shoots at Last—The Return of Black Harry.

The Newfoundland nosed at the door, and wagged his tail. The look of terror on Arkland's thin, sallow face proved that he was in mortal fear of the Zulu.

"Keep your oies open, Tommy," said the boy from the Green Isle; "and shoot quick av ye think ut's necessary!"

"By honey, be careful!" whispered Prout.

Barry opened the door to its fullest extent, letting the light stream out. He expected a volley, but all remained silent. Cutting the cord from one of the blinds, he fastened it to the switch, and put the other end of the cord in Prout's hand, after closing the door. Then he turned out the light.

"Pull that whin Oi've gone," he said. "Oi'm goin' to thrust to the dog, so we'll sneak out in the dar-ck, and bad luck to that naygur av we foind him!"

He patted the dog, and crept out. Imp seemed to realise the necessity for silence. Barry held him lightly by the collar, and peered into the darkness. His thick woollen stockings made no sound, and he guided himself by running his fingers along the partition. Imp stopped, and Barry felt him shake.

"Whisht! Phwat d'ye smell?" he whispered. "Bedad, Oi smell somethin', too! Aisy—aisy! In here?"

Barry dragged the dog round. By the warmth of the air and the scent he knew he had stumbled on the galley. He sent Imp in first to reconnoitre, and then followed himself, for Imp's teeth were at work on a bone, and the sound was reassuring.

Barry struck a match. A pan was simmering on the stove, and when Barry raised the lid an appetising steam of Irish stew greeted his nostrils. On the table were a couple of uncut loaves. Barry smiled, and went to the big cupboard.

Slipping off his tight-fitting flannel shirt, he slipped a couple of tins of soup, a small saucepan, and a bottle of meat-extract into it.

Then he found a chafing-dish, and a tin of methylated spirit. He made a bundle of the loot.

In order to carry the loaves more easily, he spiked the poker through them, and filled a bucket from the tap.

He pointed to the bundle, and Imp picked it up. Barry threw away the match. He listened for a time; then, taking the poker between his teeth, he stole out, carrying the pan of Irish stew in one hand and the bucket of water in the other.

Barry and Imp reached the saloon safely with their loot, and presently a tin of rich turtle-soup was warming on the chafing-dish for Prout. The Irish stew was piping hot, and when Barry triumphantly produced three dripping soup-plates, and various knives, forks, and spoons from the bottom of the pail, Prout grinned.

"Betther than a smack in the oie—phwat? Faith, whin ye've had your soup and a sloice of bread and a glass o' sherry, ye'll crow loike a foightin'-cock, Tommy. Oi didn't forget pepper and salt nayther. We've no towel, so we'll use the curtain. Bedad, Oi loike the aroma of this stew! That's your share, Imp; but don't touch ut yet, for ut's hot. Now, Tommy dear, watch your uncle ate!"

But Barry found more enjoyment in watching Prout take the nourishing soup than in eating himself.

"Now, phwat's the verdict, Tommy?" he asked.

Prout extended his plate for more.

"By honey, it's good!" he said. "It's like new life. Give

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FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

"A COOL CARD!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

me another slice of bread, too, old man. I'm enjoyin' this!"

The Irishman pledged him in a brimming bumper of champagne. The meal had revived them both in body and spirit.

"Oi'll have a smoke for the good of me digestion," said Barry, "and then Imp and I mane to go blackbirring. The longer we lave 'Arry—ut is 'Arry, Oi belave?—to dhrink, the quieter he'll be after getting. As for the chafe and the bhoys, they'll soon tumble to phwat's happened to us, d'ye see, Tom? Av we can settle wid the naygur and turn the searchlight on, sure they'll soon be wid us. Wau of us can get outside and play swate music on the rattle and bell, perviding, av course, they're to be found."

"Do you understand the working of the cursed vessel?"

The Irishman looked over his shoulder. The question had come from Arkland.

"Not a bit. You'll have to do that for us av ut's nade-ful!"

Job Sanday's jaw dropped.

"What! You don't know 'ow to work her?" he screamed. "You say you don't know 'ow to work her? Durn! And she's as tight as a rock. She won't budge a foot up or down, back or for'ard. A mighty big chance there is of your pals findin' us! If Black 'Arry don't end us, we shall starve to death!"

"By honey, you'll have to do the starvin' fust," remarked the steersman, "for we 'appen to be in charge of the commissariat department. You took on a big job, and you seem to have made a bigger mess of it. This is cheerful! Nice thing if it comes to 'aving to eat you, Imp! Here's a pretty kettle of fish and oels! Perhaps you'd be better off if you did starve to death, both of you. The chief has queer ways of dealin' with vermin like you! Barry, this is almost too joyful, ain't it, by honey?"

"Bedad, how can ye tell till ye thry?" said the sanguine Irishman. "Whoy shouldn't we be able to tinker her up?"

"Never! Didn't I tell you, by honey? Didn't I say it all the time? Didn't I say she'd do a bust from the minute I seed that wheel and them engines? By honey, you can't deny it! A boat as runs on its own is wuss than a loaded gun in a monkey's paws. Why, it's safer to go out w' old Jerry Wickens!"

"Troth, who's he? Do Oi know him?"

"I 'ope not," answered Prout. "Some other time I'll tell you 'bout Jerry. Thunder, he's woke up! Silence, Imp! Lie down!"

The Zulu fled, yelling and screaming, past the saloon. Barry removed the key, and applied his eye to the keyhole with much caution. He could see nothing except a red glare that flashed and flickered on the partition. The howling went on. Barry opened the door an inch or two. A powerful negro, naked except for a pair of white drawers, was dancing and bellowing, while he waved a torch of rope above his woolly head. Barry steadied the revolver on his left wrist, and ran his eye along the barrel.

"Faith," he growled, "Oi can't—Oi can't! Oi haven't the heart in me to do ut!"

Though their lives had depended on it, he could not have shot down the wretched, demented Zulu in cold blood. Instead, he turned and grasped the candlestick. When he looked again, Daft Black Harry had disappeared, leaving only a cloud of black smoke and a pungent smell of paraffin behind him.

"Watch out, Tom! Oi mane business this toime!" said Barry.

Unluckily for all of them, Barry had only a vague knowledge of the Unconquerable. The Zulu had gone aft, and, trusting to Imp and the torch, O'Rooney hurried on. He nearly tumbled over the dog. The light of a match showed him that, had it not been for the Newfoundland's sagacity, he would have pitched into an open manhole. A few splashes of oil that had dripped from the torch told him that the Zulu had gone that way. Barry closed the manhole.

"That's a stopper," he muttered. "Faith, his name's Hercules av he shifts that from underneath. We'll go for'ard now, Imp, me darlint!"

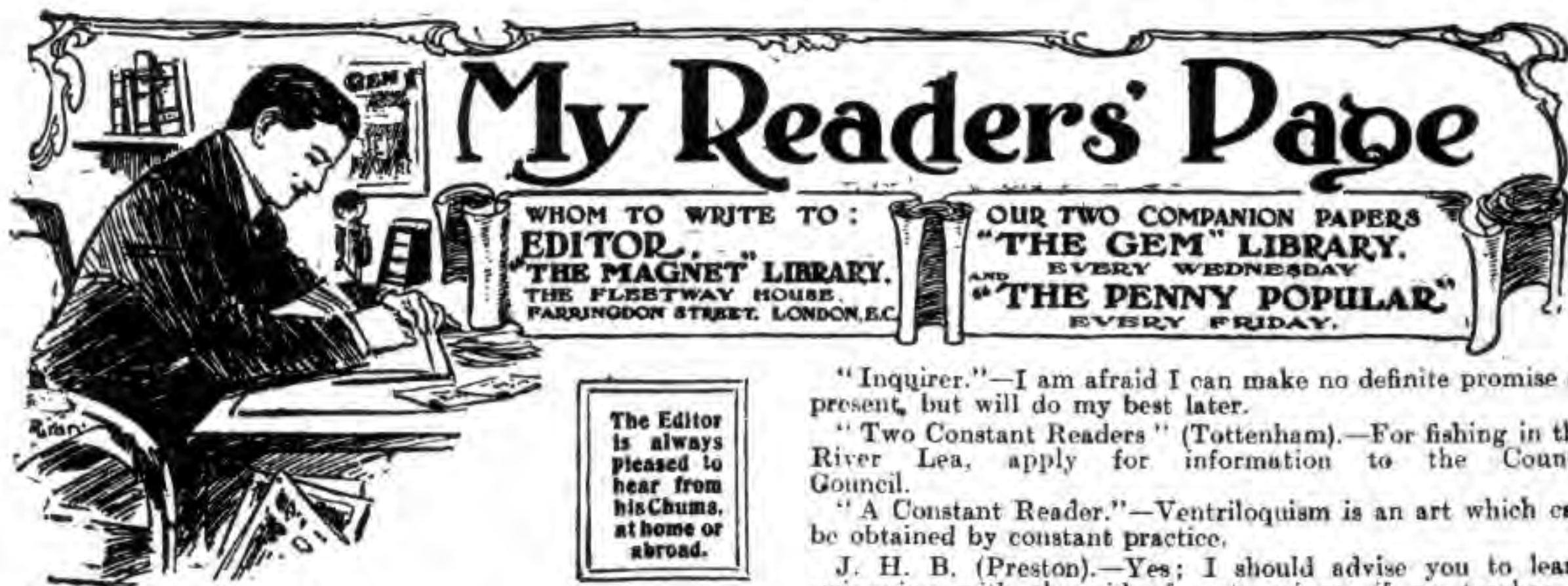
His fingers touched several switches, but he was too wise to expose himself by turning on the light. He did not want either to kill or wound the maniac.

"Arrah! There he is! Heel, Imp—heel!"

The torch flashed red through the darkness, and Barry broke into a run, the well-trained dog cantering behind him. The torch seemed to sink through the plates, and Barry knew that the insane native had gone down a ladder. He followed quickly. Again the torch gleamed, again it sank out of view, and the air struck chill.

(This Grand New Serial will be continued Next
Monday. Order Early.)

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co. at Groyfriars. Order Early.



FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"A COOL CARD!"

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

In next week's grand, long, complete story, entitled as above, a newcomer to the Remove Form at Greyfriars causes something of a stir in the school.

From the first he stands up for himself in a way which is regarded by Harry Wharton & Co. as "very fresh!" Fisher T. Fish and Bolsover also make little mistakes in their methods of dealing with the new junior!

The latter's success in japing the entire Remove Form, and in turning the tables in the neatest possible manner upon Harry Wharton & Co. in the last chapter, shows that the latest recruit to the famous "fighting Form" at Greyfriars well deserves the reputation of being

"A COOL CARD!"

OF INTEREST TO AMATEUR ACTORS!

The following letter, which I recently received from a reader, speaks for itself:

"61, Cambridge Street, Victoria, S.W.

"Dear Editor,—Being a reader of your three weeklies—THE MAGNET, "Gem," and the "Popular" libraries—I write to congratulate you upon the success you have achieved with your books.

"A friend of mine wrote you once about forming a club, and you were good enough to publish his letter, by which means he received numerous replies. I wanted to know if you would be good enough to publish the enclosed request in THE MAGNET. The Amateur Dramatic Society which I wish to start, would have, I think, a good reception by amateur actors. This club would also be the means of occupying our evenings.

"If you could see your way to do this for me, I would be extremely grateful. Wishing you the greatest success,

"Believe me, yours sincerely,
"GORDON CAVE."

I have pleasure in acceding to my chum's request. The announcement he wishes me to make public is to the effect that he will be pleased to hear from fellow-readers of THE MAGNET LIBRARY living in or near London, and aged between 12 and 18, with a view to the formation of an Amateur Dramatic Society. When writing to my reader for particulars, prospective members of the society should enclose a stamped addressed envelope for reply.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Will the following readers please accept my best thanks for their letters, some of which contained useful suggestions: William O'Brien (Ireland); Ralph H. (Liverpool); Mrs. Lillian Carlton; B. North and H. F. (Mile End).

C. Allen (Mile End).—Billy Bunter's father is a stock-broker. Coker of the Fifth is over 16 years of age.

F. Coote (Crouch Hill).—More will probably be heard of Miss Fluffy in due course.

"A Magnetite" (Banbury).—Send application for booklet to: The Secretary, Civil Service Commission, Burlington Gardens, London, W.

Mrs. Scott (South Shields).—Very many thanks for your postcard.

"A Real Magnetite"—Ionides has left Greyfriars. The ages of Bolsover, Skinner, Stott and Snoop are 15, 14, 14, and 14½ respectively.

"Inquirer."—I am afraid I can make no definite promise at present, but will do my best later.

"Two Constant Readers" (Tottenham).—For fishing in the River Lea, apply for information to the County Council.

"A Constant Reader."—Ventriloquism is an art which can be obtained by constant practice.

J. H. B. (Preston).—Yes; I should advise you to learn swimming with the aid of water-wings, if no teacher is available.

Frank Blake (Ireland).—Drop taking lemons for a little time. They are apt to make the blood thin. "Virol" is a good recommendation for putting on flesh.

"Brum" (Birmingham).—Very many thanks for your postcard.

Walter Horton (Westminster).—Very many thanks for pointing out error.

H. Kerr.—No. They won't take a man with bad eyesight in the regulars.

A. S. and R. B.—I am afraid I cannot make any definite promise, but will most certainly do my best.

NEXT MONDAY:

SPECIAL WAR ISSUE.

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Thomas Jones and T. L. (Liverpool).—The character mentioned has, as already stated, been at business some time.

D. J. H. (Bangor).—Dick Rake is in the Remove Form at Greyfriars. Wingate has been captain of Greyfriars ever since Harry Wharton came to the school.

S. Heaton (Crewe).—Lord Mauleverer has no father or mother. The first issue of "The Magnet" was entitled "The Taming of Harry." Harry Wharton is probably superior to Bob Cherry as an all-round athlete.

Rupert Arnold (Australia).—"Mysteria" will probably be published in "The Boys' Friend" 3^d. Library later.

"A Scout."—Why not apply to the County Council?

S. N. (Bournemouth).—I am very much afraid it would decrease the interest in the stories were I to do as you suggest.

Miss Dorothy Pond (Crouch Hill).—Many thanks for your letter and for appreciative remarks about our companion papers.

"Schoolboy" (Battersea).—Write to Messrs. Gamage, of High Holborn, London, W.C., and ask them to supply you with one of their price lists.

C. Symons (Upper Holloway).—Kipps, the schoolboy conjurer, is still at Greyfriars. The Indian junior, Koumi Rao, is in the New House at St. Jim's.

Miss Sophia Jones (Victoria Park).—Bulstrode is the tallest boy in the Remove. Wingate is nearly six feet, and is, I believe, the oldest fellow in the Sixth Form.

(A Grand Article
next week.)

The Editor

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